

**Careers and Career-Stages
of Mainland Chinese School Principals
-A Life-History Approach**

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by**

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my own work and no part of it has been submitted for a degree at this, or any other, university.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lee Kim Kiew', written in a cursive style.

LEE, Kim Kiew

ABSTRACT

This study aims to clarify the major influences shaping the careers of Mainland Chinese school principals. In so doing, it further seeks to explore the part played by the PRC's societal culture in the process of career shaping, and to explore whether stages are recognisable by which their careers can be framed. The study is directed by two main research questions: First, what factors influence the careers of primary and secondary school principals in the PRC? Second, can their careers be conceptualised into stages?

Methodologically, the study adopts an interpretivist paradigm and a qualitative approach, using the social theory of symbolic interactionism to underpin its assumptions. Life-history data in relation to their careers were collected from eleven middle and four primary school PRC school principals through semi-structured interviews. Participant principals were selected on the basis of purposive sampling. Coding of the data was followed by categorisation of the generated codes into career-influencing themes.

Four main career-influencing themes emerged from the data. The first is *Family Background*, especially aspects of family socio-economic standing, and familial environment and expectations with regard to education. The second is *Political Dimension* - with the sub-themes of politically-driven contexts, Party-membership, subservience towards Party dictates, and a strong presence of a politically charged environment. The third is *Significant Strategies/Meanings/Competencies* with the sub-themes of *Guanxi*, qualifications (academic and professional); *Nengli* (teaching-cum-managing competency), and harmonious working relationships with others. The fourth is *Circumstances*, with the aspect of institutional enrolment processes, and a combination of factors that include a proclivity for book learning, timely opportunities and limited options, as its subthemes.

The role of the PRC's societal culture as mediated by the above themes and their effects on the careers of the respondents were identified using the dimensions in Walker and Dimmock's framework for gauging the impact of societal culture on school management.

Finally, a model of the influences on the careers of PRC school principals, and three frameworks on their career-stages were generated from the data.

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CHAPTER 1

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

This chapter opens with a general introduction to the aims of this study. This will be followed by an overview of the field from which this study emanates. From this overview, the objectives of the study, arising from the void in the field concerned, are identified. The methods by which this study plans to achieve these objectives will also be evident. These objectives and methods are then linked to the aims of the study. Finally, the study's outcomes and their significance are explicated.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Little is known in the West about mainland Chinese school principals. What factors influenced their decisions to go into education in the first place? What factors led to their eventually becoming principals? What sort of childhood and schooling experiences did they have? What respective influences did family, socialisation, education, connections and culture have on their careers? Indeed, what are their career trajectories? Do they follow similar paths to those of their counterparts in the U.K. or even those in Hong Kong and Singapore?

Culture refers to the “patterns of thinking, feeling and acting” underpinning “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes members of one group or category of people from another” (Hofstede, 2001:9). An investigation into the lives and careers of school principals naturally embraces culture through its effects on the individual and the society at large, and through the rules, norms and practices of the educational institutions that school principals become involved with. However, little is known about how culture influences careers – especially how the culture of the PRC shapes the careers of school principals. What effects

does the Chinese culture have on the career choices, decisions and development of the careers of Chinese educators? In the midst of globalisation, internationalisation of education and multiculturalism, an inquiry into the effects of a relatively little-understood culture is warranted. It is intended that this study will help fill this void. While there is an existing study (Zhang, 2004) on the subject of careers and lives of PRC school principals, it is of a different topic. Further, its stance of research, this researcher feels, makes unexamined presuppositions of the cultural context to which it is applied, and therefore not altogether appropriate in serving its purpose. In any case, Zhang's (2004) research, the only known study on the subject, is undertaken in a small part in the PRC. The PRC is an immense country.

This study then is essentially an exploratory study on a very little researched topic: school principals in the PRC. In its exploration, avoiding existing cultural assumptions where possible is vital. It has the first primary aim of discovering through a life-history approach, all the relevant experiences, influences and events that have accounted for the career paths of a sample of school principals in the PRC. Its second primary aim is to identify the role that culture has played in the forging of their career paths. Its third aim is to attempt to conceptualise their careers into stages. The achievement of these aims will serve six objectives. These six objectives will be explicated in section 1.3 below following a presentation on the background to this study. The overview will show how these objectives were arrived at from current needs of the field of cross-cultural education management and leadership

1.1 BACKGROUND

1.1.1 The Interest in Teachers' and Principals' Careers

Beginning in the 1980s, in the U.K (see Measor, 1985; Sikes et al, 1985; Burden, 1990; Huberman, 1993, Tickle, 1994; Day et al; 2006; Woods et al., 1997) and other countries such as Switzerland (Huberman, 1993), Denmark (Bayer and

Brinkkjaer, 2005; Steensen, 2007) and North America (Fessler and Christensen, 1992), teachers' careers and lives became an intense topic of focus owing to the high attrition rates of teachers in these countries and amidst global school restructuring and reforms (see Bayer et al, 2009; Walker and Dimmock 1998). These reforms continued into the 1990s. Naturally, educational leadership, and in particular school principalship, also became an intense topic of interest. It will perhaps always be a subject of interest in the field of education because of the impact that principals are believed to have on the quality of education. Gunraj and Rutherford state: "The evidence from research, from inspection and from our own experience makes it clear that the principal is the most significant person in a school" (1999:143) Despite the interest in the impact of principalship on the learning achievements of a school, it has been noted that "there is little information available" (Earley and Weindling; 2004:31) and "surprisingly little" (Southworth, 1999:43) is known of the lives of school principals, the people believed to be central to how schools are run and therefore what learning outcomes are achieved. Ribbins bemoans thus:

If in educational contexts we are comparatively ignorant about who become leaders and why and how prospective leaders prepare for leadership, we also know relatively little about the lives, careers and continuing developmental needs of those who are school leaders. (2003:61)

Cheng (1995), an eminent Asian scholar, similarly bemoans thus. The personal lives of principals in relation to their careers (Gronn, 2003, 1999; Pascal and Ribbins, 1998; Rayner and Ribbins, 1999) hence became an intense topic of interest. Theories and frameworks were produced within different national contexts, generated by their respective national concerns. Globalisation, however, has since motivated pursuits for frameworks beyond those derived from Anglo-American contexts which have thus far dominated the field.

1.1.2 Globalisation and the Interest in the Careers of School Principals

Globalisation has led to increasing multi-ethnicity and multi-culturalism in schools. These can only be expected to increase (Stevenson, 2006; Dimmock and Walker, 2005; Gronn and Ribbins, 1996). Eminent scholars now urge the study of the diverse aspects of principalship in different cultural contexts for the purpose of investigating “how particular societal cultures influence schooling and school leadership in their indigenous studies” (Dimmock and Walker, 2005:3). Gronn argues thus:

The field of leadership studies lack a sound comparative point of reference against which to map leaders’ biographical experiences and activities. It is one thing to scrutinise leaders’ lives in isolation, but the field has remarkably few useful benchmarks or parameters for examining the circumstances of leaders’ lives in relation to one and another, and also in respect of the cultures and societies from which they emerge. Yet, from the perspective of globalisation and the better appreciation of different, deeply entrenched cultural approaches... the provision of such a scheme is timely. (1999:32)

Stevenson (2006), in a paper proposing the development of a conceptual framework capable of informing future research into beginning principalship in diverse cultural concepts, highlights a long-term, systemic crisis in the supply of school principals in many countries, including the U.K (Howson, 2003; Normore, 2004; Hartle Thomas, 2003; Grimmet and Echols, 2001, Whitaker, 2001; Macpherson, 2009). Citing the general situation of U.K. schools, which is generally reflective of many other countries’, Stevenson (2006) explains that the diversity in cultures arising from globalisation is a key factor contributing to the complexity of school management. Amongst the consequences of the mounting pressures on school principalship is the reduction in the number of teachers aspiring to become principals, and the resignations and early retirements of school principals. Stevenson (2006) argues that addressing issues narrowly within one’s national

context no longer suffices. Rather, researchers need to “develop more sophisticated ways of understanding factors that shape individuals’ career paths as they move towards, into and through principalship” (Stevenson, 2006:408). A specific approach for the framework that he proposes is to integrate the concepts of personal socialisation, professional identity and career trajectory, and to link these to wider contextual issues.

1.1.3 Approaches to the Study of Principals’ Careers

Understandably, many studies on principals in the U.K. (Sugrue, 2005; Earl and Weindling, 2004; Day and Bakioglu, 1996) continue to focus on the development or the exercise of principalship within the U.K. Their aim is to conduct research which will contribute towards improving headship in the U.K. Thus, if their studies involve models, the aim is to produce models that relevant parties in the field within the U.K. might use and benefit from. Theories and models that do not reflect the U.K. societal context or are applicable to it are, understandably, deemed questionable in value. With cross-cultural studies, this is not necessarily the case, especially if the topic or the field concerned is fairly incipient and thus at the embryonic stage of empirical-evidence gathering. Where the PRC, and the topic of school principalship from a cross-cultural perspective are concerned, the only known study available in Western literature is Zhang’s (2004) study. The only relevant model is that of Gronn’s (1999), later revised by his colleagues, Ribbins and Rayner (1999). Hence, exploratory studies are needed in the field concerned. By ‘exploratory’ is implied that little is known about the topic to begin with, and thus a study is conducted to find out what there is to be discovered and learnt from for subsequent studies or other purposes.

Currently, two teams of U.K. scholars lead the field in the focus on school principals and their lives within their societal contexts. They have been spearheading and guiding doctoral studies in different cultural contexts and appear

to be laying the groundwork for achieving over-arching goals, which will be discussed below.

Scholars Peter Gronn and Peter Ribbins constitute one team. The four-phase general leadership framework, Formation-Accession-Incumbency-Divestiture, is Gronn's (1999) "timely scheme" (see quote on page 3) for studying lives of school principals. The framework was later revised by Ribbins and his colleagues (1999) to Formation-Accession-Incumbency-Moving On. This revised framework, it is believed, will satisfactorily account for "the microcosmic details of each individual leader's life" and at the same time, have regard for the "broad parameters of history, society and culture" within which it is applied (Gronn, 1999, 32). It is referred to in this study as the Gronn-Ribbin's (1999) framework, although it is referred to, in the studies that have adopted it, as Gronn's (1999) framework. The countries to which this framework has been adopted are Hong Kong (Wong and Ng, 2003), Singapore (Chew et al, 2003), Cyprus (Pashiardis and Ribbins, 2003), Malta (Bezzina, 2007) and in the PRC (Zhang, 2004). The goal of Gronn and his colleagues is to gather data from different cultural contexts for cross-cultural comparison, and for the purpose of establishing a typology of the different types of leaders, or producers of knowledge; their different ways of producing knowledge, amongst others (Gunter, 2006).

Scholars Alan Walker and Clive Dimmock constitute the second team of scholars. This latter team of scholars advocates, a particular principle or stance. The stance is that any framework adopted by a study should be cognisant of the cultural context concerned (Walker and Dimmock, 2005, 2002a, 2002b; Dimmock and Walker, 2005). They opine that existing frameworks, predominantly Anglo-American, are ill-fitting of non-Western cultural contexts by the very fact that they originated from outside of these very same cultural contexts. Walker and Dimmock's efforts are in the promotion of the collection of authentic empirical data from all cultural contexts, but especially non-Western ones and the derivation of culturally contextualised frameworks from such. They see the achievement of these as part of the effort of truly engaging a cultural comparative approach (Walker and Dimmock,

2005; Walker and Dimmock, 2002a, 2002b, Walker and Dimmock 1998). They assert that the full potential of a cultural comparative approach can only be fulfilled if it is stretched beyond individual components to the field as a whole at all levels of operation, “including school organisation, management processes and links between management, leadership, curriculum and learning and teaching” (1998:380). This study subscribes to their advocacy. For the cultural context of its study, the PRC, there exists no culturally contextual framework for its chosen topic of the career trajectories of Chinese school principals. Zhang’s (2004) study of a similar subject, but different topic, was carried out with an *a priori* approach, in its use of the Gronn-Ribbin’s (1999) framework. This study and Zhang’s (2004) share a common focus on the influences on the careers of Chinese school principals. However, another main aim of this study is to focus on their career trajectories, which is not the chief focus of Zhang’s (2004) study, although some information in this regard can be gleaned from it. Hence, in the absence of a culturally-contextualised model or framework on the career trajectories of PRC school principals, this study seeks to develop such a model or framework.

It is not this study’s aim to derive a model that can be readily be used in the way that the Gronn-Ribbins’s (1999) has been and is still being used. This does not serve the field’s embryonic stage of focus on the biographical approach to understanding school principalship across cultural contexts. Rather, this study’s pursuits of a culturally contextualised model/s of the career trajectories of PRC school principals, and the capture and analysis of the cultural influences on such, have fundamental implications on the approach or stance for future cross-cultural research. This will be elaborated on later in the chapter.

1.1.4 Principalship and the Chinese Culture

The different biographical studies (Bezzina, 2007; Zhang, 2004; Wong and Ng, 2003; Chew et al; 2003; Pashiardis and Ribbins, 2003;) on school principals highlighted thus far, are testimonies to the desire for data and information on the

lives and careers of school principals, not just within the U.K., but elsewhere in the world. Scholars in the field of cross-cultural educational administration and management are no longer content with focusing on the academic or professional backgrounds of school principals, but see it as fundamentally important to understand them with a humanistic approach (Shamir et al, 2005; Gronn 2005, 1993; Ribbins, 1996). Gronn (2005) and Shamir et al (2005) argue that for the followers of leaders who are unable to observe these leaders directly, their biographies constitute an information base for their beliefs about the traits and behaviour of leaders. Further, biographies and autobiographies provide views and thoughts of leaders. They afford students of leadership access to these perspectives for framing their own understandings, as well as to verify the authenticity of their leadership based on their backgrounds. Gronn and Ribbins remark that

with 'leadership career' – essentially a mobility pathway or status passage through time – as the conceptual anchorage, there is the added advantage of being able to pinpoint the dialectical interplay between a leader's own sense of agency (fashioned in part by her or him) and the social structures (enabling or constraining possibilities for her or him) in which that agency is embedded. (1996:465)

It is studies of the lives of school leaders captured against their respective cultural backgrounds that scholars in the field of cross-cultural education management and administration now urge.

The interest in the Chinese school principal arises from the interest in the Chinese culture, of which Confucianism is recognised to be a key element, and the increasing interest in the impact of Confucianism on education in Confucian-Cultural Heritage (CCH) countries such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, China and Singapore (Mathews, 2004; Watkins and Biggs, 2001, 1996; Stevenson and Stigler, 1992). The PRC's increasing prominence in the international political and economic spheres, and the fact that little remains known about it, makes it an increasingly interesting topic of study, especially given the great difficulty of

access to first-hand data. Note, for instance, that even an authoritative large-scale and well-funded study resorted to convenience sampling. The Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness Research Programme (House et al, 2004), or simply GLOBE as henceforth referred to, is a study of 62 societies on the relationships between culture, organisational effectiveness and organisational leadership. It drew its sample of 158 respondents solely from Shanghai, out of the PRC's 661 cities (chinatoday, <http://www.chinatoday.com/city/a.htm>). Indeed, in a highly-controlled country run by a single communist party, official data is not readily accessible, even as official practices are not transparent. Moreover, as Zhang's (2004) study shows and this study's findings will confirm, discrepancies between what are official publicly announced rules and regulations, and what is actually practiced, are not only uncommon but have come to be expected. This contributes to the obscurity of the culture and the immense interest in what actually transpires behind the obscurity. Thus for cross-cultural scholars, studies in the PRC, especially those with the aim of capturing authentic data, are worthy of pursuit.

While Anglo-American theories abound, few, if any from non-English speaking cultures, are known to exist. Dimmock remarks that the existing literature in educational leadership and management

has been generated by a culturally homogeneous cadres of scholars from English speaking backgrounds. These scholars represent societies that constitute no more than 8 per cent of the world's population yet they claim to speak for the vast majority. In many instances, they fail to delimit the geo-cultural boundaries within which their models, theories, ideas, findings and conclusions apply. (2002:54).

To continue thus is to perpetuate ethnocentricity and the erroneous notion that any model that contains elements that are unfamiliar or unacceptable to the Western world, is wrong and unacceptable, regardless of the fact that the model reflects what actually transpires within the national context concerned. For the field that this study originates from, data and models truly reflective of its cultural context are

valued. Prior to improving any situation or context, it must first be recognised for what it is.

Different cultures underlie and permeate the thinking, behaviour and lives of different groups of people (Hofstede, 2001; Walker and Dimmock, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 1998; Gronn, 1999). In the absence of an objective measure of cultures (Hofstede, 2001; House et al, 2004) it is only through comparing cultures that we come to understand them. It is believed that culture of the PRC is oftentimes starkly contrasting with Western culture (Watkins and Biggs, 2001; 1999). To conduct research in China is a step towards increasing understanding, not only of Western and Chinese cultures, but also of those in the cultural spectrum between or beyond them. It is through comparing practices and processes of different cultures that greater understanding is gained about these cultures. In addition to it being the birthplace of Confucianism, its increasing prominence in the international economic and political arenas, and the fact that its population alone makes up one-fifth of humanity (chinatoday, <http://www.chinatoday.com/city/a.htm>) makes the PRC a vital culture of scrutiny. Hofstede (2001, 1991), whose original decade-long seminal work with IBM employees, GLOBE (House et al, 2004) seeks to replicate and is used as GLOBE's benchmark, remarks thus,

societal norms consisting of value systems (the mental software) shared by major groups in the population...have led to the development and pattern maintenance of institutions in the society. These include the family, education systems, political systems, and legislation. These institutions, once established, reinforce the societal norms and the ecological conditions that led to their establishment. In a closed society, such a system will have hardly changed at all. (2001:11)

Hofstede's remarks endorse a study relating to the relatively little-known but very important culture of the socialist PRC, which up until the 1980s (Dreyer, 2006), has been closed to the rest of the world. This study, with its focus on the career trajectories of Chinese school principals, appears timely given the many recent

studies on the same subject that have been carried out, not just in the very advance country of the U.K., but also in countries such as Cyprus (Pashiardis and Ribbins, 2003) and Malta (Bezzina, 2003), in a little rural prefecture in the PRC (Zhang, 2004), and elsewhere in the world.

1.1.5 What is known of Chinese Principals

Literature written in English on the principalship in Asia, and certainly in mainland PRC, is extremely sparse and narrow in scope. Literature about the PRC's culture in the context of education, and its impact on school culture and the style of leadership dominate. Clearly, scholars such as Gronn (2003, 1999) and Ribbins et al, (1996), and Walker and Dimmock (2002a, 2002b, 2002c) see the full potential for a cultural comparative approach to the study of educational administration. What of the influence of societal factors on careers in this regard?

The effects of culture on the careers of school principals are fundamental to all other aspects of school leadership and school effectiveness. A survey of the field of literature on the principalship shows it to have proliferated in literature on leadership training and programmes, promotion criteria, role socialisation and identity, leadership effectiveness, morality, skill acquisition, professional knowledge, and professional standards. Empirical studies conducted in Cyprus (Pashiardis and Ribbins, 2003), and a prefecture in the PRC (Zhang, 2004) highlight that for these places, membership with the reigning political party could well be a key determinant for someone being appointed to the principalship. Clearly, this has very fundamental implications for all other named aspects relating to the principalship in these countries. Educational frameworks that are derived in the West but used in countries such as these could well be inappropriate. As earlier discussed, scholars now urge the undertaking of studies on the lives and background of leaders.

While comments on the societal effects on organisations and leadership abound, none is found on its effects on school careers. There first needs to be empirical data on the career trajectories of PRC Chinese school principals and the factors that shaped them.

1.1.6 Careers and Relevant Career Frameworks

The conception of a career being fundamentally two-sided underlies biographical studies of careers. This conception defines a career as comprising an objective and a subjective dimension. The objective career is identified from the public or formal features of a career path: professional titles, statuses and structure of the route of advancement, amongst others. The subjective career, on the other hand, is the individual's feelings and understanding of his/her own career. The study of careers of school principals in this study is referring to the interwoven objective and the subjective careers. The respondents' changing perspectives towards their career movements within their career paths are sought. Recurrent factors cited by this study's sample of principals in relation to the development of their objective and subjective careers constitute their career-shaping themes that this study seeks to capture.

Generally though, researchers have defined the term 'career' and 'career trajectory' based on the aims of their studies. Of the studies on teacher's careers that were carried out in the 1980s and 1990s, most noteworthy being Huberman's (1993), Sikes et al's (1985), and Fessler and Christiansen's (1992), teachers' career paths were not their focus. Rather, their focus was teachers' professional effectiveness and commitment in relation to their personal lives. In these studies, the term 'career' refers to the cycles or stages of professional effectiveness and motivation. These studies thus have a completely different orientation from that of this study. This study's focus is on the objective careers of its sample of school principals – not teachers – and the societal influences on such. This study's chosen aims have nothing to do with teachers' - or for that matter, Chinese principals' – professional

commitment or effectiveness. Where this study is concerned, it is frameworks on the objective careers of school principals that are relevant. These are not adopted for framing this study or for it to emulate them. Instead, they are for comparison with this study's own derived framework/frameworks. This study has undertaken an inductive rather than *a priori* stance, for reasons explained above. It does not seek to adopt any framework. Rather, it seeks to derive its own framework/s from its own empirical data.

Gronn's (1999) Formation-Accession-Incumbency-Divestiture framework is, logically, the primary comparative framework for this study. It was designed, Gronn believes, to "facilitate the detailed comparative biographical study of leaders' careers across time and across cultures" (Gronn, 1999). It was adopted by Zhang (2004) in study in the PRC on the same topic. It is diametrically opposed in stance from that of this study. The common grounds of Zhang's (2004) study and this study will allow for comment on their differences in outcomes as arising from their different approaches, namely, the *a priori* and the inductive approach.

1.1.7 Investigating Culture and Career

For an exploratory study which seeks to let data shape theory, key issues in the contemporary debate on the study of culture need to be noted. They have implications for the kind of tools that a study, such as the present one, might choose to employ.

The concept of culture - and hence, by extension, what constitutes culture - remains contested and abstruse (Dimmock, 2000; Dimmock and Walker, 2005) contested. Wilkinson's (1998) warning that culture tends to be conveniently readily cited as the cause for any phenomena that cannot be ignored. How then are societal influences or traits in this study's data to be identified or validated as such? A review of literature for useful conceptual tools highlights comparison to be the key. Comparison of cultures yields the cultural specificities of a society (Brislin, 1993;

Dimmock and Walker 2005). The very gradual shifts of cultural norms over time (House et al, 2004; Hofstede, 2001) make the comparison of studies conducted in different periods valid. A more systematic solution to this study's need just described above, however, is offered by GLOBE (House et al, 2004) in the form of its nine cultural dimensions.

GLOBE (House et al, 2004) is the most current and large-scale empirical study about societal culture and its effects on organisational leadership. House, the originator and driving force behind GLOBE (House et al, 2004), proclaims of it, "We have a very adequate dataset to replicate Hofstede's (1980) landmark study" (2004:xxv). Multi-method and multi-phase, it was designed to conceptualise, operationalise, test and validate a cross-level integrated theory of the relationship between culture and societal, organisational, and leadership effectiveness. GLOBE's (House et al, 2004) data from some 62 societies on cultural practices and values are based on nine dimensions, essentially quantified cultural attributes (House et al, 2004). Six of its dimensions are drawn from Hofstede's (1980) framework; and three from its own theorising, based on other studies and theories. GLOBE's (House et al) statistical and qualitative analysis of its data also offers for this study, the scores of the PRC relative to those of its other participating countries, in its nine dimensions. Based on the qualitative data of this study, conclusions can be drawn about the PRC's standings – 'strong' or 'weak' – in these dimensions as evidenced in this study's qualitative data. Fundamentally, referencing this study's findings to GLOBE (House et al, 2004) will show if the findings of a small-scale qualitative study on the specific topic of cultural influences on the careers of PRC school principals align with those of a contemporary, authoritative and quantitative study. It also establishes a link between what is apparently a little known field where the focus on principals' careers and lives is concerned, and an authoritative, contemporary study that is truly cross-cultural in approach. In Chapter Seven of this study, some potentials of this link are claimed.

Career, Schein (1976) remarks, is culturally embedded. He notes, for instance that in non-socialist countries, career is equated with personal ambition and is readily

recognised and accepted as such socially. In socialist countries, 'motivation' more aptly describes the socially accepted notion of the term 'career' in these countries. Personal ambition above the system's good is deemed unworthy of the person. Societal cultures and organizational culture, according to Schein,

influence the structure of the external career, prestige associated with given careers, the legitimacy of certain motives underlying careers, success criteria, the clarity of the career concept itself, and the importance attached to career versus family (Schein, 1984: 71)

This study will throw some light on these with respect to the careers of PRC school principals.

Summary

In the preceding subsections, the field of study in which this study is located, and its focus and standpoint with regard to cross-cultural research in its area of focus have been established. The void in its field has also been identified. These are now summarised for the purpose of categorically stating the objectives of this study.

Emanating from a fairly incipient field of focus on the study of school principals from within the field of cross-cultural educational leadership and management, the aims of this study are motivated by a call from the scholars of the field concerned. This is a call for the capture of empirical data on the lives of school principals in relation to their careers, in different cultural contexts. At the same time, the researcher of this study subscribes to the advocacy that a study should take cognisance of its cultural context, and that a model or framework should be culturally contextualised. This translates into the practical actions of using frameworks that are derived from the context itself; and in the absence of such, deriving them, as opposed to using one derived from another cultural context. Literature review revealed the researcher's culture of interest, the PRC, to be of increasing contemporary political and economic global importance, and long-

standing traditional interest, especially because it has been and is a little researched cultural context. Access to empirical data in this context is extremely difficult. The only known study on the subject of school principals' careers in Western literature is that of Zhang's (2004), which is undertaken with the Gronn-Ribbins's (1999) framework, a theoretically-derived framework inspired primarily by two articles appertaining to the U.K. context. The researcher thus undertook a study that would contribute to the field in six ways, or achieve six objectives that would be contributory to its field of origin. These are stated in the following section. How the study means to achieve each of these, also encompassed within the preceding presentation, will also be explicated.

The six objectives of this study are presented here in the logical order of how the achievement of one objective then leads to the next. They are not necessarily in order of their importance.

The first is to capture, through empirical life-history data collected from this study's respondents, major career influencing factors. The second is to identify the cultural traits in these factors, and to identify the effects of these traits on the careers of the respondents. The third is to provide empirical data of the career trajectories of the PRC's school principals. The fourth is to derive culturally contextualised framework/s on the careers of the PRC school principals. The fifth is to portray the career-related experiences of its respondents with their cultural context. The sixth is to make a case for adopting a non-preemptive stance and for not adopting a framework that has been derived from a different cultural context, in conducting research that is focused on culture, or is culture-sensitive.

The above objectives will now be related to this study's research questions. How this study intends to achieve each of its objectives will also be explicated.

This study's objectives will be achieved based only on the empirical data of its respondents, and in employing the key theoretical concepts of comparison, and the validation of factors claimed to be cultural.

This study's sixteen respondents are four primary and twelve middle (junior-, senior-, junior-cum-senior middle) school principals from the four provinces of Gansu, Guangdong, Ningxia and Hubei, and the municipality of Beijing (see Appendix One on pages 219-225). Some of these respondents are retired principals while others are relatively new principals. Their experiences span some or all of the three periods of pre-Cultural Revolution (pre-CR), beginning from the Chinese Communist Party's takeover of the country from 1949 up to the outbreak of the Cultural-Revolution (CR) in 1966; the CR period itself, which is the period from 1966 to 1977; and the post-CR period from 1978 up to the present.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This study's main research questions and guiding questions of this study been crafted to encompass all six objectives of this study. Their aims will now be related to the objectives of this study. The way/s by which the objectives of this study will be achieved is/are also described below. These are also summarised in tables in Appendix One (see pages 221-225) for reference throughout the thesis. This study's research questions are as follows:

(A) What are the major factors influencing the careers of mainland Chinese primary and secondary school principals?

(B) Can the careers of the participant Chinese principals be conceptualised? If so, how?

(1) What childhood experiences may have influenced their choice of career in education and their accession to the principalship?

(2) What school, tertiary and higher education experiences may have shaped their careers in education and rise to the principalship?

(3) At what point in their lives did they decide to enter the teaching profession, and what factors influenced their decision?

(4) How did they accede to principalship?

(5) What influence has the Chinese societal culture played, as distinct from other factors, in shaping principals' careers?

This study's primary objectives are reflected in its two key research questions. The first objective of capturing the career influencing factors of PRC principals is the first aim reflected in question (A). It will be achieved through a collection of their life-history data, and an analysis of these data to distil the key influential themes and sub-themes.

The second objective of analysing how cultural influences affect the careers of PRC school principals is reflected as a second facet of question (A) and explicated with research guiding question (5). This will be achieved in two ways. In the first, GLOBE's (House et al, 2004) cultural dimensions will be used to identify the PRC's cultural dimensions and their effects, from this study's career-influencing themes and sub-themes. The influence of each cultural dimension on the respondents' careers will thus be explicated. The second way is to highlight the cultural specificities of the PRC culture through a comparison of first, the findings of Zhang's (1999) study with those of the studies carried out in the U.K., and then elsewhere in the world to highlight the PRC's cultural specificities. Subsequently, this study's findings will also be compared to those of the same comparative host of studies. The cultural specificities of the PRC will thus be identified. At the same time, comparison between the PRC's cultural specificities identified using Zhang's (1999) findings and those identified using this study's findings, will also be useful towards achieving this study's sixth objective.

The third objective of providing empirical evidence of the career objectives of PRC school principals is entailed by the aims reflected in both questions (A) and (B). It is achieved by capturing each respondent's objective career path in data collection,

and presenting it diagrammatically with an accompanying narrative of its key points.

The fourth objective of deriving contextualised models or frameworks on the PRC's school principals is reflected in Question (B). It will be achieved through an analysis of the relationships of its career influencing themes and sub-themes, as evidenced in the data.

The fifth objective of detailing the experiences and lives of PRC school principals is reflected in Question (A) and the first four research guiding questions. It will be achieved in the presentation of this study's summary of its findings to the research questions, and its provision of the narrative accounts described in relation to the third objective.

The sixth and final objective of making a case, based on evidence, against adoption of a preemptive stance and/or adopting a framework that has been derived from a foreign cultural context in conducting culture-related studies is not reflected in the research questions. It will be achieved through a critical review of the relevant stages of the Gronn-Ribbins's framework (1999). The outcomes of the study relating to the above five objectives are relied upon to make the case.

This study's objectives have been related to the research questions, and how each will be achieved in this study has been explained.

1.3 OUTCOMES AND SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of this study is that it is one of very few empirical studies to be undertaken of mainland Chinese principals and specifically, their lives and careers. It thus fills an existing knowledge gap in the literature on mainland Chinese principalship; especially on the influence of societal culture on the careers of Chinese principals. In so doing, it enables comparisons to be made of the extent to which similar or different forces, for instance, culture and politics, shape the

careers of principals in Chinese and Western education systems. The significance of this study can be seen from the specific outcomes it will produce. There are six outcomes from this study. It will be evident that the outcomes below correspond to this study's objectives that have been stated above.

First, this study will identify the factors that have shaped the career trajectories of its selected principals. On a theoretical level, this is significant for the cross-cultural field of education leadership and management, with its rather nascent focus on the careers and lives of school principals in their cultural contexts. This first outcome fills a void in the field of this study's origin, of empirical data on the topic, particularly data captured in a non-preemptive fashion. The practical significance of this outcome is that apart from informing policy-makers, these will also inform aspirant principals as to how they might attain to school principalship, and assist school leaders in planning the career paths of its potential leaders in relation to the school's overall development.

Second, this study will provide an analysis of the role of the PRC culture in the careers of its school principals. This will be an analysis qualified against the cultural dimensions of GLOBE (House et al, 2004). Such an analysis may be of interest to scholars who advocate that there should be a systematic approach to studying the impact of culture on education. Such an analysis is also important in that it links this study to a contemporary authoritative study on societal cultures. It also affords comparison of this study's conclusions, based on its own data, about how the PRC stands in all of GLOBE's (House et al, 2004) dimensions with those of GLOBE's (House et al, 2004). Although not a targetted outcome, this outcome, it is argued in Chapter Seven, enhances the significance of this study.

Third, the study will provide rare empirical evidence of the career trajectories of Chinese educators. This data itself will be of interest to researchers of the same topic but in other cultures, as well as to aspirant-principals in the PRC.

Fourth, this study will provide a conceptualisation of the careers of its sample of school principals. The theoretical significance of this is the fact that, for the

incipient field from which this study emanates, this helps to fill a void where the culturally contextualised framework of a little researched but important cultural context, is concerned. Its theoretical significance is the significance of the sixth outcome described below. Its practical significance is that, in that it is culturally contextualised, such a framework may be useful to teachers in the PRC in furnishing career guidance to their students on school career development. It will inform aspirant-principals as to how they might attain their goal of attaining to the position of school principal.

Fifth, the contexts and backgrounds of the respondents gained through the life-history approach will be detailed in this study. This will serve the field, in which this study is located, as an authentic form of record of the context/s against which the life experiences of PRC school principals transpired, and the nature of such experiences. It is significant as a reference for those considering the kind of approach to undertake in a culture -related or -sensitive research. In the comparisons that it affords against Zhang's (2004) study, a researcher would be better placed to consider undertaking an *a priori* approach versus an inductive one.

The sixth and final outcome is a culmination of the previous five. It is a case made based on the previous five outcomes. The case is that an *a priori* stance and a framework derived from a different cultural context are counter-productive to achieving the aims of studies that intend to take cognisance of cultural contexts. The study makes the case with reference to the Gronn-Ribbin's (1999) framework. The case made has significant implications for future research, of which there will no doubt be many more that will be conducted in the PRC and elsewhere in the world.

In the ensuing chapters of this thesis, this study's objectives are referred to in reference to the guide in Appendix One (see pages 221-225). This guide is a summary of the various components cited in the section above in relation to the study's objectives.

1.4 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

A total of seven chapters make up this thesis. This first chapter has given the overview of the thesis: its background, aims and objectives and significance.

Chapter Two is a review of literature relevant to the study. It reviews literature on theoretical concepts and frameworks relevant to this study and then specific studies on the careers of school principals.

Chapter Three focuses on the research design and methods of this study. Chapter Four gives a summary of this study's key findings to its first research question. It summarises the study's findings on the factors influencing the careers of Chinese PRC school principals, as well as the role of the PRC's societal culture in their forging. Chapter Five addresses this study's second research question which focuses on the conceptualisation of the careers of PRC school principals. Chapter Six compares the findings of this study with those of other existing studies on the same topic. Chapter Seven presents the conclusions, implications and recommendations arising from this study.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided the background to the motivation and nature of this study; its arrival at the study's specific objectives and consequently, and the study's research questions. Its objectives, research questions and aims, plan of achieving the objectives, expected outcomes and the significance of each have been explicated. It has also highlighted theories and issues relevant to its undertaking. These will be pursued in greater detail in the review of literature relating to them in the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews literature relevant to the aims of the research so as to inform the premise and direction of the study. The review also sets the stage for further discussion of this study's findings in the later chapters of this thesis.

First, it must be highlighted that this literature review does not appear as analytical as most literature reviews. One of the reasons for this is its commitment to theory-building rather than theory verification in an exploratory study. Apart from the reason of space constraint, other reasons include the number of objectives it has committed itself to achieving; and the rich qualitative details required by its adoption of a life-history approach. Furthermore, literature appertaining to its area of focus, a biographical approach to the study of school principals, is sparse because it is a fairly nascent focus in the field of cross-cultural leadership and management. Owing to these reasons, priority is in the induction of its model and theory, and analytical descriptive accounts supportive of such. Thus, those relevant conceptual tools and theories that the study requires for its primary tasks of theory building and comparative purposes need to be presented for their use in the later chapters of this study. Therefore the manner of the review is compelled to be such that relevant tools and frameworks are presented, and the validity and/or credibility for their use as appropriate tools cited. Analysis has been exercised in interpreting these for their use of this study. For instance, the portraitures in the many studies on principalship that are reviewed are basically non-analytical in their stance, resulting in often disjointed descriptions. A fair amount of interpretation and inference was exercised in order to present them succinctly for their use in the later chapters of this thesis. This claim can only be verified by the reader's own reference to these studies (see Hong Kong Wong and Ng, 2003; Pashiardis and Ribbins, 2003; Chew et al, 2003; Zhang 1999). Analysis for this exploratory study, then, consists largely in

deriving the contextualised models and frameworks, and in data analysis to derive the study's model, themes and subthemes, amongst others. The objectives of the review will now be looked at.

This study's research questions follow:

- (A) What are the major factors influencing the careers of mainland Chinese primary and secondary school principals?
- (B) Can the careers of the participant Chinese principals be conceptualised? If so, how?
- (1) What childhood experiences may have influenced their choice of career in education and their accession to the principalship?
- (2) What school, tertiary and higher education experiences may have shaped their careers in education and rise to the principalship?
- (3) At what point in their lives did they decide to enter the teaching profession, and what factors influenced their decision?
- (4) How did they accede to principalship?
- (5) What influence has Chinese societal culture played, as distinct from other factors, in shaping principals' careers?

The first two objectives of this study are the two facets of research question (A). The first, reflected by guiding questions (1) to (4), is the capture of the career-shaping factors of its sample of Chinese school principals. The second, reflected by guiding question (5), is the identification of the role of societal culture in the forging of their careers. Research question (B) reflects this study's third aim of conceptualisation of its principal-participant's careers into stages.

The rest of this chapter is organised into three sections. The first section reviews the literature of theoretical concepts and frameworks relevant to this study's achievement of its objectives. The second reviews existing studies that are relevant to this study's topic. The third and final section outlines the major

historical events in the PRC since the 1960s, and the current education system in relation to the acquisition of teacher training credentials in the PRC today.

2.1 CAREER AND CULTURE

2.1.1 The Concept of Career

Establishing the definition of ‘career’ that is relevant to this study clarifies the basis of and the approach to the derivation of the framework/s arising from this study.

Narrowly defined, ‘career’ is “a chain of possible and acquired hierarchical positions within a particular professional occupation” (Kelchtermans, 2009:29). Essentially, it involves a hierarchy of functionally related jobs within a vocation that an individual moves through (Rolls and Plauborg, 2009). Generally, a career, especially in a biographical study (Stevenson, 2006) has been defined to be of dual dimensions, namely the objective and the subjective dimension (Hughes, 1958; Barley, 1989; Mead, 1934; Schein, 1985). The objective career is the institutional dimension, identified by its public or formal features: professional titles, statuses and structure of the route of advancement, amongst others. It is, in the context of a teaching career, the ‘chronological chain of positions, roles and so on, a teacher is involved in during his or her teaching years’ (Kelchtermans, 1993:445). The ‘subjective career’ relates to the personal dimension, “the moving perspective in which the person sees his life as a whole and interprets the meaning of his various attributes, actions and the things which happen to him” (Hughes, 1937:409). It is a personal and retrospective reconstruction of the individual’s career experiences. Careers, with their fusion of the objective and the subjective dimensions, link individuals to their social structures. It is this traditional definition of ‘career’ that this study is based on. Its first aim is to identify, from the personal interpretations of its respondents’ career development, commonalities that have been decisive in the traversals of their routes of advancement as reflected by their objective careers. The conceptualisation of these routes of advancement or career trajectories, from the position of teacher to

that of principalship and beyond, into stages is the second aim of this study. Frameworks on the careers of school principals are thus relevant to this study.

2.1.2 Gronn-Ribbins' Framework of Accession to Headship

Several frameworks on the experiences of principalship exist, but these are focused on the professional growth into or within principalship. Earl and Wiendling's (2004) and Day and Bakioglu's (1996) capture stages into and within principalship. Given this study's sixth objective (see page 225), it is decidedly Gronn's (1999) framework, in particular its first two stages, that are relevant to this study.

Gronn's (1999) framework is theoretically derived from two pieces of work. The first behind its inspiration is Gerth and Mills's (1964, cited in Gronn, 1999) classic, *Character and Social Structure*, which looks at how institutions shape people. The second is Rosemary Stewart's (1989, cited in Gronn, 1999) article which is "based on a growing body of first-hand observational fieldwork investigations of the day-to-day managers in a variety of settings (including education)" (Gronn, 1999:23).

Of Gronn's (1999) Formation-Accession-Incumbency-Divestiture model, the first two stages focus on character formation and the accession to offices or positions of influence. Its last two stages focus on growth within these positions, and are thus irrelevant to this study. Formation is about "how would-be educational leaders are moulded and shaped by key agencies" (Gronn, 1999:21). The model is premised on the belief that "the self" or character, accounts for an individual accessing to a leadership position. Accession "refers to a stage of grooming or anticipation in which candidates for leadership roles rehearse or test their potential capacity to lead by direct comparison with existing leaders and the field of their prospective rivals for a advancement" (Gronn, 1999:34-36). Competition for a position implies that the position is coveted by those involved. Ribbins and his colleagues, following their studies with other principals, revised the original last Divestiture stage of Gronn's (1999) framework to the 'Moving On stage'. The revised framework encompasses the alternative route of moving on to new

careers after leaving principalship. In this study, this revised framework is referred to as the Gronn-Ribbin's (1999) framework. Studies adopting this framework are essentially portraits of the development of leadership qualities and psychological profiles, within its four prescribed phases, and involving the designated figures of the framework.

Stevenson's (2006) recently proposed approach is for a framework that integrates the concepts of personal socialisation, professional identity and career trajectory and linking these to wider contextual issues. These wider contextual issues are sources of pressures on school principals. They include those relating to accountability, resources, expectations and structural complexities. Stevenson's (2006) proposed framework has a wider coverage than the Gronn-Ribbins's (1999) framework. It seeks to do more than just understand how leaders came to be leaders. It also seeks to understand the pressures on principals. Its over-arching aim is to understand the early formative processes of principalship for the practical aims of alleviating pressures, in the current global context, on principalship to address the long-term crisis of insufficient supply of school principals. It is an approach that warrants examination and development.

The above subsections looked at theoretical constructs relating to careers. The following subsection focuses on culture.

2.1.3 Culture and Some Relevant Issues

A review of the definitions of culture highlights its essence and the conceptual tools needed by this study for achieving its second objective (see pages 222-223). According to Hofstede, societal culture, or culture as it is generally referred to, is "patterns of thinking, feeling and acting" (2001:9), "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes members of one group or category of people from another" (2001:9). Culture is "mental programming...the crystallisation of history in the minds, and hearts of the present generation" (Hofstede, 2001:9), Lindsey defines it as an "aggregation of individual mental models" (2000:24);

and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner as “the way in which a group of people solves problems and reconciles dilemmas” (1997:6). Culture, then, is specificity of practices and behaviours amidst generalities. Brislin explains: “culture-specific concepts represent different ways that people deal with culture-general demands” (1993:71). Dorfman uses the terms “cultural universals” versus “cultural specifics”. The former is found “from the process of cultural convergence” and the latter, “from maintaining cultural divergence” (2004:52). So, for instance, while in every culture, accession to leadership positions is based on merit, in the PRC, is it also based on academic or professional merit as in the U.K.? Or are there other distinguishing features? In the PRC, is the decision to enter teaching arrived at in some typical fashion noticeably different from the way the same decision is made in another culture? What this study seeks is to discern from its empirical data, distinctive patterns in decision-making, behaviours and practices relating to the forging of the careers of its sample of school principals. Clearly, comparison of practices between cultures is a fundamental tool in cross-cultural comparative studies. What makes the comparison of studies conducted over different periods of time valid? Dorfman, a member of GLOBE (House et al, 2004), highlights that Hofstede’s rankings of countries by cultural dimensions in his 1980 study have been replicated in the 1980s and 1990s by several studies of selected countries. Change in the fundamental values, evidence suggests, is very slow and “quite resistant to convergence forces” (Dorfman, 2004:55). Hofstede himself is convinced that “norm shifts will be gradual”, and are rarely produced by “adoption of outside values” but through “shifts in ecological conditions – technological, economic and hygienic” (2001:12).

Wilkinson warns that “Culturalists have a tendency to attribute rather simplistically any residual unexplained phenomena to culture” (cited in Dimmock and Walker, 1998:396). A warning very relevant to an exploratory study, it thus requires of this study a basis for the justification of those factors it claims to be cultural attributes that have shaped the careers of its respondents. GLOBE (House et al, 2004) is the most contemporary large-scale quantitative cross-cultural study. A decade long, it involved sixty-two societies and is focused on the effects of societal culture on managerial leadership effectiveness and organisational behaviour. It is, therefore, GLOBE’s (House et al, 2004)

dimensions that this study means to rely on as the basis of validation for its findings on cultural factors.

This study is about the effects of societal culture on the careers of its sample of school principals, and not on the effects of culture on organisational or leadership effectiveness. It is therefore GLOBE's (House et al, 2004) findings on the cultural attributes of the PRC that are relevant to this study. GLOBE (House et al, 2004) measured both societal practices and values. Practices relate to 'what is' whilst values relate to 'what should be' or is hoped for. Where this study is concerned, it is its findings on 'what is', or practices actually being carried out in the respective societies, that are relevant.

Cultural dimensions, referred to simply as dimensions, are essentially quantified cultural attributes (House et al, 2004). They are "core axes around which significant sets of values, beliefs and practices cluster" (Dimmock, 2000:51). These dimensions and their relevant remarks are summarised in Table 2.1 (see page 30).

Having presented the theoretical conceptions and studies on culture that are relevant to this study, the next section reviews relevant studies on teachers' careers and principal careers.

Table 2.1 GLOBE's Dimensions and Relevant Comments

	Cultural Dimension and its Definition	Remarks
1.	<p>Power Distance</p> <p>The degree to which members of a collective expect power to be distributed equally.</p>	<p>A society with high Power Distance basically has a relatively high degree of class differentiation where few have access to resources, skills and capabilities, amongst others (Carl et al, 2004).</p>
2.	<p>Assertiveness</p> <p>The degree to which individuals in organisations or societies are assertive, confrontational and aggressive in social relationships</p>	<p>Societies that score high in this dimension value competition, applaud assertive and tough behaviour, success and progress, and emphasise results over relationships, amongst others (Hartog, 2004).</p>
3.	<p>In-Group Collectivism</p> <p>The degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations and family.</p>	<p>A high score in In-Group collectivism generally translates into a strong characterisation of close family ties; respect for authority; and fewer rules (Gelfand et al, 2004).</p>

Table 2.1 GLOBE's Dimensions and Relevant Comments (Cont'd)

	Cultural Dimension and its Definition	Remarks
4.	<p>Institutional Collectivism</p> <p>The degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward distribution of resources and collective action</p>	<p>A society that scores high this dimension is characterised by a "future and performance orientation, yet seek to accomplish such orientations through collective efforts, through practices which are concerned with others, and through practices which are not being assertive or power dominating" (Gelfand et al, 2004:463).</p>
5.	<p>Uncertainty Avoidance</p> <p>The extent to which a society, organisation or group relies on social norms, rules and procedures to alleviate unpredictability of future events.</p>	<p>A high Uncertainty Avoidance score reflects a high degree of intolerance of uncertainties in a society (Luque and Javidan, 2004).</p>
6.	<p>Future Orientation</p> <p>The extent to which individuals engage in future-orientated behaviours such as delaying individual or collective gratification, planning, and investing in the future.</p>	<p>Cultures with high future-orientation scores tend to achieve economic success, have members who have a propensity to save for the future, and are intrinsically motivated, psychologically healthy and socially well-adjusted, amongst other things (Ashkanasay et al, 2004).</p>

Table 2.1 GLOBE's Dimensions and Relevant Comments (Cont'd)

	Cultural Dimension and its Definition	Remarks
7.	<p>Performance Orientation</p> <p>The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence.</p>	<p>Cultures with high Performance Orientation scores tend to value training and development, emphasise results over people, reward assertiveness and competitiveness; and have a more proactive and optimistic attitude towards life in general, amongst others (Javidan, 2004).</p>
8.	<p>Gender Egalitarianism</p> <p>The degree to which a collective minimises gender inequality.</p>	<p>A high-scoring society in this dimension will have relatively more women in positions of authority, accord them more status, amongst others (Emrich et al, 2004).</p>
9.	<p>Humane Orientation</p> <p>The degree to which a collective encourages and reward individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and kind to others.</p>	<p>A high-score in this dimension reflects a society where individuals are less self-centered. The well-being of others, besides family and friends, such as community and strangers, are important. There is close-circle social and material support, and values of benevolence, kindness and altruism have high value (Kabasakal and Bodur, 2004).</p>

(House and Dorfman, 2004:30)

2.2 Findings from Relevant Existing Studies

2.2.1 Findings from Studies on Teachers' Careers and the Career Trajectories of School Principals

If comparison is called for to achieve this study's second objective (see pages 222-223), then relevant studies have to be identified. These are decided for the field concerned owing to the paucity of such studies. Zhang's (2004) is the most important by virtue of it also having been carried out in the PRC, and its difference in research stance from that of this study. It aids this study to achieve its sixth objective (see page 225).

2.2.1a Career-Shaping Factors of PRC School Principals in Zhang's Study

The review of Zhang's study is also carried out to identify its findings on the career-influencing themes of its sample of school principals, and for what can be gleaned about their career trajectories. Further, it is also reviewed in the light of how it has informed this study for achieving its aims.

Foremost, Zhang's (2004) lack of enumeration in his study has to be highlighted to prepare the reader for the fact that the review is not as specific as it should be. General descriptors such as "most", "almost all" and "some", amongst others, instead of specific numbers, are used in his report. This emphasises for this study the need to provide specific numbers of respondents in reporting its findings to allow the reader to judge the findings and the analysis of the study for himself/herself. His study also prompts reflection on the choice of terms in relation to this study's aim to be as empirically and culturally grounded as possible.

This study prefers the term 'principal', a globally common term, to Zhang's (2004) term 'head teacher', a term used in the U.K.. Further, Zhang (2004) uses 'junior-high' and 'senior-high', terms used in the North-American context, for lower secondary schooling and upper secondary schooling respectively. This study uses the terms 'junior-middle' and 'senior-middle' because they translate

literally from their Chinese names. In this study, 'middle school' is used to refer to a junior-cum-senior middle school. Both studies, however, similarly use 'certificate' to refer to the certification a primary school teacher receives from a teachers' school; 'diploma' to refer to the certification of a junior-middle school teacher by a teachers' school or college; and 'degree' for a four-year course in a university.

In reviewing Zhang's (2004) study, these influences are all too evident: people, circumstances, contexts, critical personal incidents and means. Unless otherwise stated, the respondents referred to in the ensuing review refer to Zhang's (2004) respondents.

Significant Figures

Significant people of influence are parents, teachers, and peers, as prescribed by his adopted framework. These, according to Gronn (1999), impart values that ultimately lead to their respective communities' selection of them as leaders. Zhang stresses parents, especially fathers, to be the most dominant figures of influence. Other influential figures include local community leaders who designated some respondents to be teachers. "The party", presumably the territorial branch of the CPC, the single ruling political body of the PRC since 1949, is the most significant figure of control in his respondents' careers. Zhang summarises thus: "Many of the Chuxiong head teachers... stress the central importance of the CPC in the appointment of head teachers" (2004:190). Party-secretaries - in Zhang's study, these are presumably school and not territorial Party-secretaries - represent the party as such.

Significant Contexts

Politically charged contexts are obvious. During the CR, some respondents, who were sons of farmers, were able to enter universities because their parents were farmers, a class then exalted by the state. Owing to a severe shortage of teachers arising from the cessation of teacher training during the CR, those who had some level of education were designated commune teachers by their community leaders. After the CR, it was a natural step for these respondents to pursue the requisite training to be qualified teachers.

The impact of the different political contexts on Zhang's (2004) respondents' careers highlights the merit in reporting on this study's respondents in such a way that will allow the reader to refer to the larger life contexts of their experiences. This study's approach is discussed in the following chapter.

Significant Incidents

Critical personal experiences that tend to bring about self-directed and directional change in careers are conspicuously given little recognition. Zhang depicts his respondents, uniformly and consistently, to be a coerced group who had little, if any, room for the exercise of choice: "Most of these head teachers felt they had been forced into a career in teaching" (2004:185); and "a sizeable minority only remained in teaching because of inertia or a lack of realistic alternatives" (2004:195).

Motivating Circumstances

A singular set of circumstances motivated the career behaviour of all of the respondents: their family's poor socio-economic standing owing to their parents being farmers; farming being the only means of livelihood in the failure to procure a salaried job; the country's unique legislations appertaining to residence; and the possibility of a teacher being transferred to work in a city. Farming was not a source of regular income. This motivated many of his respondents to aim for a salaried job. Teaching also offered the prospect of relocation to the city through a transfer to teach in city school. The material standards of living in a city are much higher than in the countryside. Certainly, career prospects are also brighter.

Some inferences, based on the motivating circumstances identified from Zhang's (1999) study, are arrived at. Primary education was not widespread in the past, particularly in the countryside, and compulsory education in the PRC was not implemented until 1999 (Wang, 2003). Furthermore, the key component of China's education is rural education: China's 866.37 million rural population accounts for up to 70.08% of its total population (Wang, 2003:47). In the light of factors, it is evident that seeking out factors that shape the careers of this study's respondents should begin with the factors that account for why they were able to

pursue an education. The careers of those respondents who grew up in rural China began when they were sent to school. The parents of those respondents who were sent to school rather than kept at home to help with farm work, nursed the goal that their children take up teaching as a career, even if it was a fall-back career possibility. According to Zhang (1999), most of the best educated in a rural setting become teachers.

Significant Means/Skills/Strategies

The accession of twenty-one (out of twenty-five) of the respondents to principalship, after the launch of Deng's Reforms, is characterised by the pursuit of higher academic qualifications, namely, college or university degrees or programmes in school administration. This pursuit usually ensues after the respondents have served a certain number of years through a chain of progressively higher leadership positions.

The requisite of Party-membership was duly met. Most of the respondents were Party-members either by the time they were appointed principals, or soon after. Zhang (2004) alludes to the strong political offices of a group of his respondents in their territorial CCP branch to be the catalyst of their swift career development. These offices include that of Secretary of Chinese Communism Youth League, and Secretary to the local Chinese Communist Youth League. Respondent Bai was immediately appointed to head a primary school upon graduation from Teacher's College. Respondent Yin was appointed principal after barely six months into teaching. Yin is quoted thus: "Be good to the leaders and the higher authorities. If so, you will be promoted." (2004:200).

The depiction of how Party-membership was achieved would have given a clearer picture of the Accession stage, where aspirants to leadership "position themselves or jockey with one another" (Gronn, 1999:38) for principalship. This process is not captured in Zhang's (2004) study. While this particular aspect clearly merits investigation, this researcher, not a national of the PRC, was from the outset of the research, hardly encouraged to do this.

Conspicuously absent from Zhang's (2004) study is the use of *shuren-guanxi* (social connections), a term long associated with the PRC, as a career strategy.

Guanxi, which broadly means “relationship” or “relations” (Bian, 1994), is basically “a set of interpersonal connections that facilitates exchanges of favours between people” (Hwang, 1987). Hui and Graen explain, “*Guanxi* ties people together according to the specific relationship between these people” (1997:454). In Yeung’s and Tung’s (1996) study of Chinese citizens, 92% affirmed the importance of *guanxi* in their daily lives, with 72% expressing preference to use *guanxi* over normal bureaucratic channels to advance personal interest and solve problems.

Significant Values

Zhang makes a sweeping claim that Confucian precepts of “honesty, righteousness, diligence, hard work, filial piety, and a sense of personal and social responsibility” (2004:140) have been fundamental to his respondent’s accession to leadership positions. There are no accounts illustrative of how any of these values actually shaped the careers of some of his respondents.

2.2.1b Career Trajectories of PRC School Principals in Zhang’s Study

The general pattern of the career trajectories or career paths of the respondents is the successive attainment of these positions: “subject teacher, to class director, to head of year or group leader of the teaching research office (usually divided into two for science and for arts), to deputy head teacher and finally to head teacher” (2004: 195).

High political offices beyond principalship were also attained to by some respondents: General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Youth League in the City government, Deputy Director of the County Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, and Deputy Governor of a town (Zhang, 2004). Strong political standing, backing or alliances seem to have been behind the promotions to these positions. However, how these positions were actually acceded to is not known.

The review of Zhang's (2004) study thus concluded, those of studies carried out in other contexts will now ensue.

2.2.2 Findings from Studies on Teachers' and Principals' Careers in Other Cultural Contexts

Apart from Zhang's (2004) study, relevant studies focusing on principals' careers and with a biographical approach are decided. Those done in Singapore (Chew et al, 2003), Hong Kong (Wong and Ng, 2003), and Cyprus (Ribbins and Pashiardis, 2003) and the U.K. (Rayner and Ribbins, 1999) are relevant by virtue of the fact they also adopt the Gronn-Ribbins's (1999) framework. Given this study's second objective (see page 221-222), the context of origin of the Gronn-Ribbins's (1999) framework, and the relatively large number of studies conducted in the U.K. make these studies a better choice as a comparative tool for this study than the host of studies earlier cited above.

Fundamentally, the review of these studies is for the purpose of highlighting the cultural specificities of the PRC, and not the U.K. or any other country concerned. Hence, reviewing these studies under the themes emergent from the review of Zhang's (2004) study will be helpful in bringing out the contrast between Zhang's (1999) findings and those arising from the other relevant contexts. For achieving the study's second objective, it is its findings that are of importance for the comparative exercise involved. However, identifying the cultural specificities arising from a comparison that uses Zhang's (1999) study first, and then comparing them with those that arise from using this study's findings, may reflect on the differences in stance between Zhang's (1999) study and this study. This could contribute towards achieving this study's sixth objective (see page 225). This is the approach adopted below. The comparison between this study's findings and those in the review below, will be carried out after their presentation in Chapter Four.

Significant Figures

Without exception, all the studies in the U.K. (Day et al; 2006; Rayner and Ribbins, 1999; Pascal and Ribbins, 1998; Sikes et al, 1985), those in certain countries in Europe (Huberman, 1993; Bayer and Brinkkjaer, 2005; Steensen, 2007); Fessler and Christensen's noteworthy study (1992) in North America; as well as those in Singapore (Chew et al, 2003), Hong Kong (Wong and Ng, 2003), and Cyprus (Ribbins and Pashiardis, 2003) show the individual to have chosen the teaching profession on his/her own. Reasons cited for choosing it include a love for children; an opportunity to work with a favourite subject and fun. Some cite people who influenced them favourably into choosing teaching to include teachers, peers and parents. The U.K. studies (Ribbins and Marland; 1994; Pascal and Ribbins, 1998; Ribbins (ed), 1997), in particular, report diverse critical personal encounters and incidents which motivated individuals to enter teaching (see Sue Matthew in Pascal and Ribbins, 1997; and David Davies in Pascal and Ribbins, 1997) or to vie for principalship. Nevertheless, the individuals made the choice and were not coerced by parents or teachers, or designated by the state.

The decision to enter teaching, however, does not mean a long-term commitment to the profession. It is in the early and mid-career stages that exits from the profession are most frequently made (Day et al, 2006; Huberman, 1993; Christensen and Fessler, 1992; Sikes et al, 1985). This fact underscores the freedom these individuals had with regard to their profession. Clearly, the economic health of their countries offered them choices in terms of employment.

As opposed to school or territorial Party-secretaries in the PRC study - in other words political figures - in the U.K. studies and other studies elsewhere the key people of influence are professionals such as principals and school inspectors. They wield professional influence by way of being inspiring role-models, and mentors, and giving recommendations and endorsement of respondents for the principalship on the basis of their professional competency (see for example, Sue Matthew and Michael Gasper in Pascal and Ribbins, 1997; Helen Hyde and Bernard Clarke in Ribbins, 1997). Political backing does not feature in the U.K. and the other studies, except the PRC (Zhang, 2004) and Cyprus (Pashiardis and

Ribbins, 2003). In the latter study, though, it is mentioned only in passing and related to the 1950s. In Zhang's (2004) study, it is a vital feature.

Significant Contexts

A single respondent cites Cyprus's struggle against its English colonial masters in the 1950s' period as having been disruptive to his education. This pales in comparison to the three historical changes in the PRC's political context. The CR lasted a decade.

Significant Incidents

In contrast to the conspicuous absence of incidents relating to personal, self-directed career actions in the PRC, the U.K. studies (Ribbins and Marland; 1994; Pascal and Ribbins, 1998; Ribbins (ed), 1997) report a host of diverse personal encounters and incidents which motivated individuals to enter teaching. These, again, essentially reflect professionally-related motivations such as a passion for children or the vocation itself.

Motivating Circumstances

The motivating circumstances in Zhang's (2004) study are materially-related. Those in the other cultural contexts concerned, especially the U.K., are professionally motivated. An individual's occupational image of himself/herself is central to the forging of his/her teaching career (Day et al, 2006; Sikes et al, 1985, Huberman, 1993, Fessler and Christensen, 1992). If an individual perceives himself/herself to be pedagogically ineffective, he/she is likely to leave teaching. Higher positions are aspired to only after pedagogical competence (Day et al, 2006) has been achieved.

Significant Strategies

Professional competence (gauged in terms of qualifications, as well as breadth and length of managerial experience), and backing by relevant authoritative figures, are culture-common concepts. Political backing features extremely strongly in Zhang's (1999) study. Chew et al (2003) report backing from "significant others" in the education administrative system as helpful to principal-

aspirants, but this is not to the exclusion of academic and professional requisites and competence. The Hong Kong study (Wong and Ng, 2003), being focused on nine Christian principals, not surprisingly, reports that sponsoring bodies and schools endorse only candidates of the Christian faith.

Significant Values/Qualities

Zhang's (2004) respondents' attitude of acquiescence of state and family (especially father's) directives and decisions stand in contrast to those of personal professional passion and commitment in the other cultural contexts, especially that of the U.K.. This has been highlighted earlier.

Summary

The cultural specificities of the PRC that are apparent are as follows: the employment of *Guanxi*; political factors; and familial influence (that of state being included in political factors). The comparative tool used in the exercise above appears rudimentary. That the cultural specificities can be perceived or named differently suggests the need for a tool that will produce outcomes in a more systematic form. In comparison, the other method of employing GLOBE's (House et al, 2004) dimension for comparative purposes appears more promising for the purpose just described. After the presentation of the findings of this study, it will remain to be seen if more of the cultural specificities of the PRC will surface using this second method in comparing this study's findings with the same host of studies used in the comparative exercise just completed.

The comparative review of the relevant studies on principals is thus completed. A relevant and major study will be reviewed next.

2.2.3 GLOBE'S Cultural Dimensions

The use of GLOBE's (House et al, 2004) dimensions relate to this study's second objective (see pages 222-223). Its dimensions serve as the basis of identification

of cultural traits from this study's career-influencing themes. Thus it is GLOBE's (House et al, 2004) cultural dimensions that are of primary relevance. These have been summarised in Table 2.1 (see page 30), and will be used in Chapter Four. On the strength of the authority of the study, it is argued that its cultural dimensions are the best available tool for this study.

The above subsection has presented findings of relevant existing studies. They will be used in Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis where they will be compared with the findings of this study.

2.3 PRC: HISTORICAL FACTORS AND RELEVANT BACKGROUND

This section provides the relevant historical background of the PRC, and its current requisite educational and training teacher training.

2.3.1 Major Historical Events in the PRC Post-Second World War

The experiences of this study's respondents span three major periods which, referenced to the Cultural Revolution (CR), are referred to as the pre-CR, CR and post-CR periods. The pre-CR period began with the establishment of the PRC in 1949 under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) headed by Mao Zedong.

The Great Leap Forward (GLF) of 1958-1960, a major pre-CR event, was a major socio-economic reform involving the creation of a new socio-economic system of collectivisation of production and life in general. An economic disaster, official estimates held that some eight million people died from starvation because of it (Dreyer, 2006)

The CR, a comprehensive decade-long reform movement launched by Mao in 1976, was dedicated to the ideological pursuit of the ultimate attainment of a utopian egalitarian society (Dreyer, 2006). The political zealotry of the CR saw violent purges of classes and groups of people deemed anti-communist. They

included scientists, teachers, educational bureaucrats, and capitalists. The CR's hallmarks include the CPC's political propaganda; class struggles, or sessions of self condemnation; and beatings and other forms of cruelty expended on the persecuted groups by the Red Army comprising organised urban youths.

Deng Xiao Peng emerged as the PRC's paramount leader after Mao's death in 1978. His post-CR reforms on many fronts to accelerate economic development of the country included the embrace of the market mechanism.

Southern coastal cities and areas became designated Special Economic Zones (SEZs) where more liberal economic laws were enacted to conduce to rapid economic and technological growth. These SEZs include Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Shantou in Guangdong province; Xiamen in Fujian Province; and the entire Hainan Island.

A significant historical event within the period of Deng's Reforms was the Tiananmen Square democracy protests, a series of demonstrations in 1989, involving university students, other intellectuals and labour unions, for greater democracy (Dreyer, 2006).

2.3.2 Laws and Regulations Governing Education

The country's laws governing education changed dramatically over the three periods of pre-CR, CR and post-CR. They impacted eligibility of entry into education institutions which in turn influenced the choice of vocations and development of careers. During the pre-CR and post-CR (Dreyer, 2006; Shirk; 1979; Ross, 1991) periods, career advancements rested on meritocracy. Examinations and qualifications were essentially the tools of assessment.

During the CR, children from families of persecuted groups, namely landlords and intellectuals were officially barred from studying beyond primary school (Dreyer, 2006, Peppers, 1991; Shirk, 1979). Also, all classes were suspended and senior-middle school education was cancelled. Teachers and students were sent

to factories, the countryside, and military camps to be ‘re-educated’ by workers, farmers, and soldiers.

Eligibility for post-secondary education became based on recommendation by one’s production brigade and then approved by the Party authorities at local and higher levels (Shirk, 1979), instead of academic merit. “De-professionalisation” took place as the power of the professionals in education was transferred to national political leaders with the closing down of the Ministry of Education; and local Communist party leaders replaced principals and educators in general in decision-making (Peppers, 2005).

After the CR, pre-CR practices were re-instituted, with new reform policies and practices additionally pursued. The education and careers of the school principals became once again based on competition and academic merit. Deng’s “light ladder” cited in Whyte, 1995) policy of rapidly promoting younger talents based on strong academic performance, into positions of leadership was one of Deng’s Reforms. Other reforms include the implementation of the Principal’s Responsibility System. Principals, instead of school Party-secretaries, became responsible for the personnel, finance, teaching and instruction in their schools. A system of teaching ranks was introduced in 1986 (Cleverly, 1991).

In 1986, the National People’s Congress issued the *Compulsory Education Law*, stipulating the requirement that parents send their children to primary classes for six years and lower junior-middle schooling for three years (see Figure 2.1 on page 46). These nine years constitute Compulsory Education in the PRC (Wang, 2003). Officially, children start school at age six. Apart from regular or ‘normal’ junior-middle school, as it is referred to in the PRC, there are also specialised secondary schools and vocational schools which extend up to the tertiary level. Specialised secondary schools focus training in specialised areas (for example, music, sports, maritime training, tourism) while vocation schools impart skills for jobs in the third industry (for example, transportation, housing, postal industry).

2.3.3 Requisites for Teacher Education

The academic requirements of teachers were stipulated in 1993 and further developed in the 1995 *Provisional Regulations Regarding Teachers' Qualifications* (Wang, 2003). The minimum requisites for teachers of different levels of schools are summarised in Figure 2.2 (see page 47). Note that the ages within the brackets are not part of the requisites, but for easy reference only.

2.3.4 Requisites for PRC School Principalship

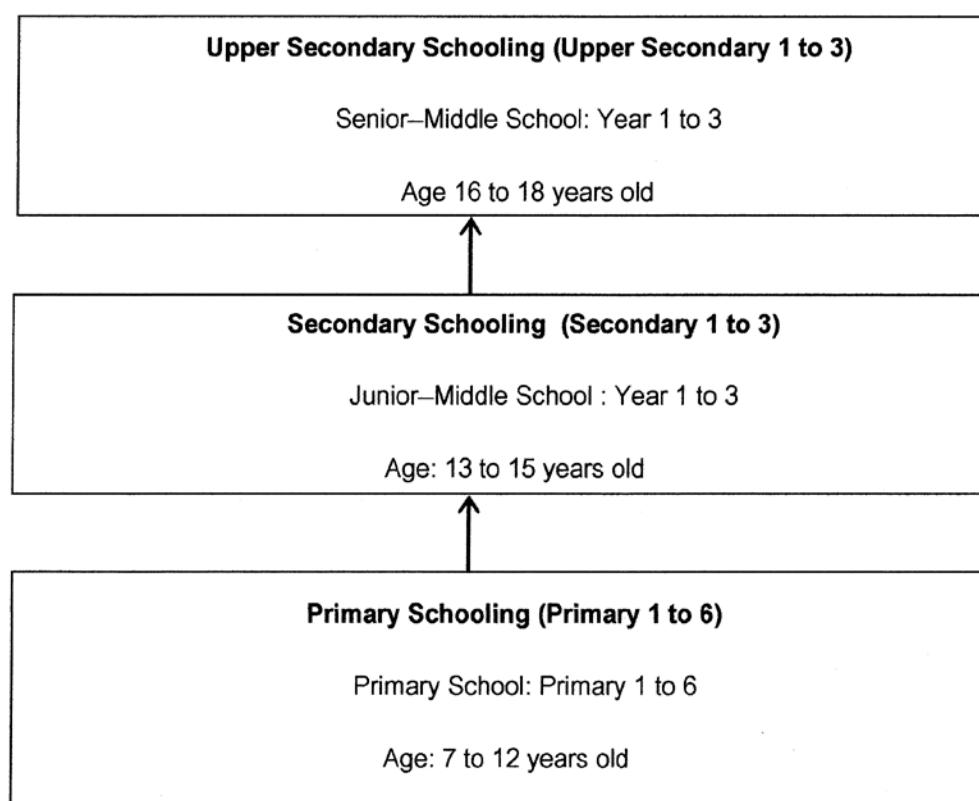
According to the *Posting Requirements and Appointment Conditions for School Principals*, implemented in 1991 (Wang, 2003), primary school principals are to hold qualifications above those required for secondary normal institutions; junior-middle school principals' qualifications are to be higher than diplomas; and senior-middle school principals should hold qualifications higher than that of university undergraduate diplomas.

2.3.5 A School Organisational Structure

In the review of Western literature, only the organisational structure of higher institutions in the PRC (see for example, Wang 2003 and Cleverly, 1991) are reflected. Those for primary and secondary schools are not. Indeed, little pertaining to the lower level educational institutions in the PRC is available in Western literature. To provide the necessary background for the chapters ahead, this study will prematurely present its findings on the general structure of school organisation in the PRC. This is reflected in Figure 2.3 on page 47. Note that the structure varies from school to school. In smaller schools, there may not be any deputy positions. Further, the positions relating to moral education, which in the PRC means political orientation encompassing moral education, are, after the CR, deemed less important than the positions relating to academic learning outcomes. Hence, while a Dean of Moral Education (DME) is, in title, as important as a

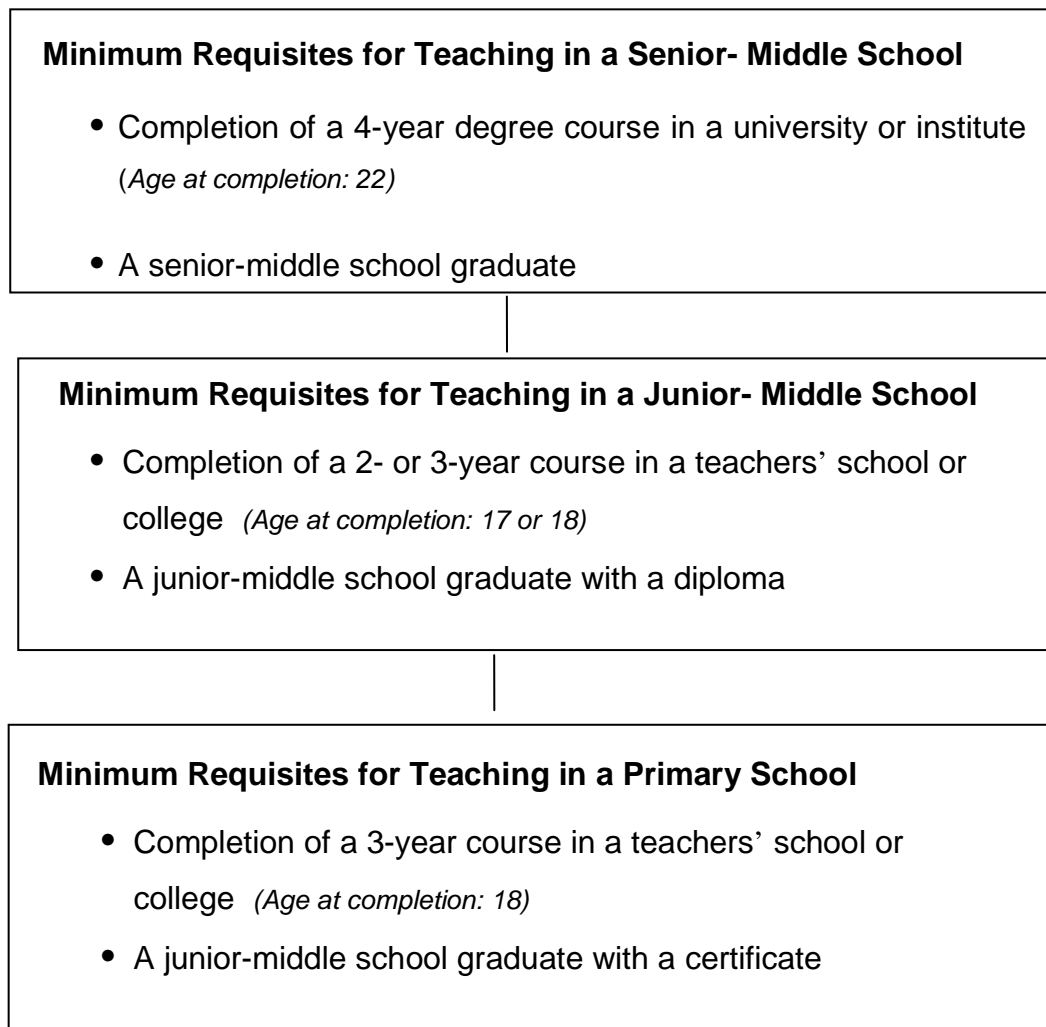
Dean of Teaching Affairs (DTA), in reality it is the DTA who is more respected and more likely to move on to the higher positions. He is in charge of raising academic outcomes. Similarly, while the principal and the party-Secretary are supposedly of equal status, it is usually the principal who is the chief decision-maker. The researcher suspects that it is more a matter of the political dynamics of the area concerned. In any case, in some schools, there are principals who are also School Party-Secretaries.

Figure 2.1 Compulsory Education in the PRC



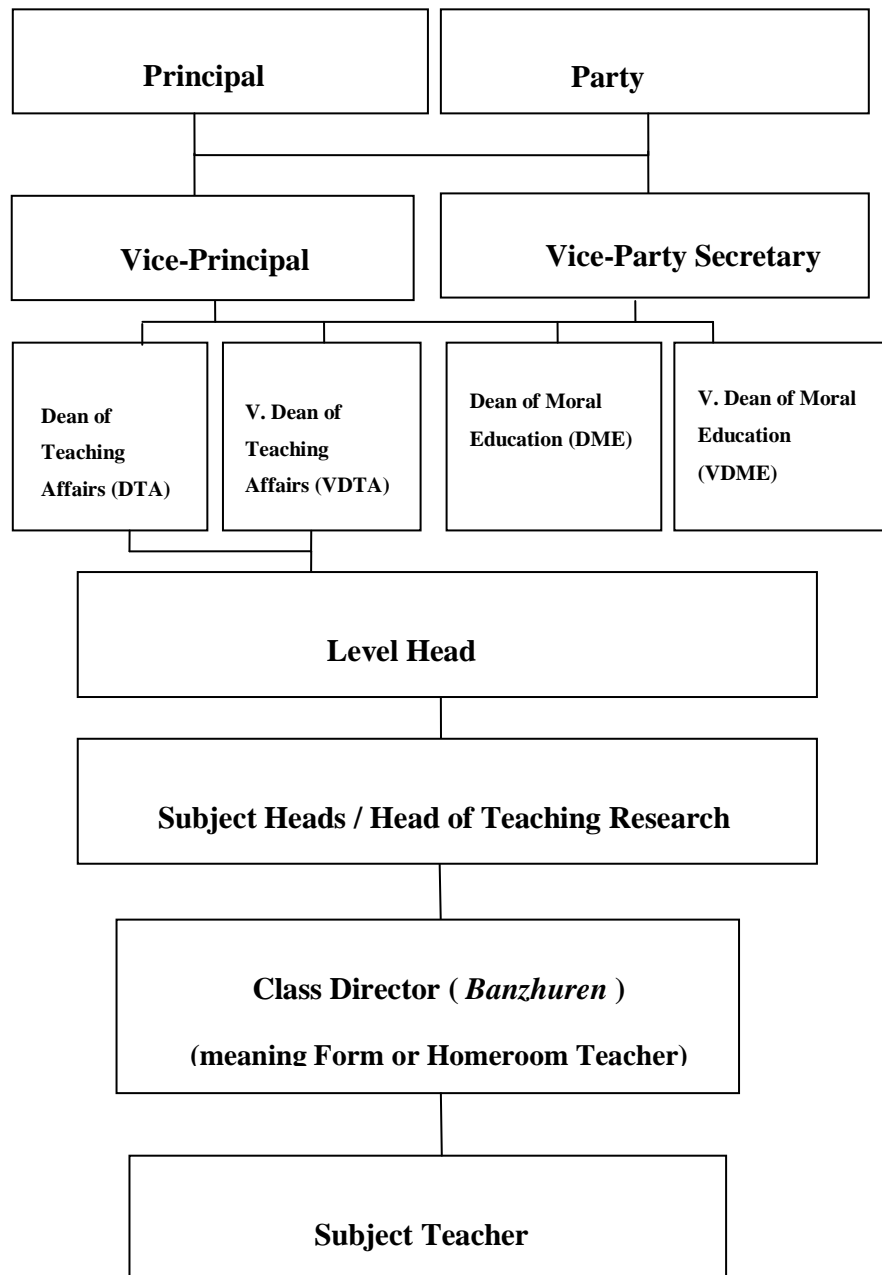
(Wang, 2003; Cleverly, 1993)

Figure 2.2 Requisites for Teacher Education



(Wang, 2003; Cleverly 1991)

Figure 2.3 School Organisational Structure



Conclusion

This chapter has presented, through its review of the sparse literature in its field, relevant theoretical concepts and studies for the purposes of clarifying the aims of the study, and of setting the stage for achieving its objectives in chapters Four, Five and Six of this thesis.

The research design of this study is looked at in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the research paradigm, methods, and research design of the study. The appropriateness of the interpretivist paradigm to the study, and the justification for the adoption of the qualitative research method in this study are first examined. Thereafter, specific details of this study's research design are discussed. These include the research sample, interview schedule, data analysis, as well as the safeguarding of trustworthiness of the study. Prior to their presentation proper, how and why the researcher chose her topic of study is first presented to provide the background to the study.

3.0.1 Researcher's Background and the Research Topic

This researcher, initially a school teacher, subsequently moved into the publishing industry in Singapore. Her teaching experience included a six-month stint in a teachers' college in the PRC. This was to spark her interest in the PRC culture. She moved to Macau, a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the PRC, two years before her pursuit of her doctoral study. This pursuit stemmed from the desire to learn to do field research in a country and culture of her interest. Her return to Singapore at the time of her research was unexpected. Her introduction to grounded theory in the doctoral course intensified her interest in field research, specifically in conducting grounded research in the PRC. An Asian who has lived in Asia all her life, she fully embraces the stance that a culturally contextual non-preemptive approach should be adopted to develop a theory particular to that context, as opposed to the adoption of an *a priori* approach.

Having travelled for work-related purposes fairly extensively in the PRC, the researcher was aware from the very start of her course that research involving the

access of materials or archives of a national institution would be well nigh impossible, as is generally known to be the case with communist countries. The life-history approach thus appeared to be a more viable method. The possible topics within the field of education were narrowed down to be those relating to principals, teachers or students. A review of literature on the PRC and in the field of her course of study indicated the increasing number of studies on school principals. The only existing study on the subject where the PRC was concerned was Zhang's (2004), which had been carried out with an *a priori* approach. The PRC is a very vast and complex country. The researcher thus decided on the topic of the career trajectories of PRC's school principals, with an especial interest in the PRC culture, using the grounded theory and the life-history approach to build theory. Very unfortunately indeed, the difficulty with access of respondents above forced the abortion of the grounded theory method in the early part of her research. Grounded Theory's purposeful sampling (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) proved impossible for the researcher. Consequently, the present method of data analysis, less demanding, even if still challenging in terms of accessing respondents, was finally adopted.

3.1 RESEARCH PARADIGMS AND METHODS

3.1.1 Justifications for Adopting the Interpretivist Paradigm and a Qualitative Approach

According to Usher, paradigms are frameworks "that function as maps or guides"; determine "important problems or issues"; and define "acceptable theories or explanations, methods and techniques" to solve defined problems (1996:2). The positivist and the interpretivist paradigms are two dominating epistemological traditions dominate.

The positivist paradigm holds that a single objective reality exists externally and can be broken down into variables and measured through objective methods (Gall *et al.*, 1998). The researcher and the phenomenon being studied are mutually independent of each other, and thus research is value-free.

The interpretivist paradigm takes the position that multiple realities exist in people's perception of the world (Gall *et al*, 1996). Cohen and Manion explain that with the interpretivist paradigm, “The principal concern is with an understanding of the way in which the individual creates, modifies and interprets the world in which he or she finds himself or herself” (1994:8). It holds that it is impossible to separate facts from values and thus it accepts the inherent subjectivity in any research conducted in relation to people and to the social world (Gall, *et al*, 1996).

That this study's research questions, reflected below, are compatible with the interpretivist paradigm is evident:

- (A) What are the major factors influencing the careers of mainland Chinese primary and secondary school principals?
- (B) Can the careers of the participant Chinese principals be conceptualised? If so, how?
 - (1) What childhood experiences may have influenced their choice of career in education and their accession to the principalship?
 - (2) What school, tertiary and higher education experiences may have shaped their careers in education and rise to the principalship?
 - (3) At what point in their lives did they decide to enter the teaching profession, and what factors influenced their decision?
 - (4) How did they accede to principalship?
 - (5) What influence has the Chinese societal culture played, as distinct from other factors, in shaping principals' careers?

This study is about people's interpretations and reconstructions of their life experiences in relation to their careers, as reflected by questions (1) to (4). As Denzin emphasises: “In the world of human experience, there is only interpretation” (1989:8). Personal choices and values are involved. For this study, the interest is in how each of its respondents “creates, modifies and interprets”

(Usher, 1994:8) their world within their national borders. To address research question (5), this study then seeks to discover those normative patterns of their individual creation, modification and interpretation in their professional contexts that characterise their shared world. It goes further to analyse the impact of these thinking and behavioural patterns on the careers of these individuals as a whole. These patterns (and their effects), arising from subjective individual experiences, are themselves not scientific, value-free or absolute. In short, this study is about processes and building theory about the careers of its respondents.

Positivism and Interpretivism are almost synonymous with Quantitative and Qualitative approaches to research, respectively. Denzin and Lincoln highlight the essence of positivism through the use of quantitative research:

... quantitative research emphasises the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes. Proponents of such studies claim that their work is done from within a value-free framework. (2000:8)

Positivists, in their belief in an objective measurable reality, generally use numerical variables to quantify the reality they seek, a reality that can be timed and generated at will (Gall *et al.*, 1999). They tend to be deductive and to test theories. The mathematical approach supposedly maintains objectivity in that no value judgement on the part of the researcher is involved. On the other hand,

Qualitative research stresses the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasise the value-laden nature of inquiry. (2000:8)

Qualitative research is most suited to research that adopts the interpretivist research paradigm. Denzin and Lincoln explain thus: “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (2000:3). Lincoln and Guba assert that “naturalistic inquiry is not designed at the level of method but at the level of paradigm” (1985:250).

The subjective nature of this study has been discussed. The need to gather in-depth data from the school principals about their careers and life experiences in relation to their careers requires a naturalistic approach. To capture the subjective nature of the respondents in this study, what is needed is the study of their individual situations, each of which constitutes a case, for the purpose of generalising case findings mainly through comparing each case with the other cases. In-depth data gathering thus requires the researcher to interact closely with the objects of the enquiry. In order for data gathering to be effective, the researcher needs to be empathetic to create an atmosphere of trust that would encourage the respondents to speak freely to the researcher. Face-to-face conversational interactions with the respondents are best suited for this purpose. Semi-structured questions act as a guide to ensure that these interactions keep to the topic of the study. At the same time, the senses of sight and feelings that the observation process affords the researcher, potentially gives greater richness to the data than that gleaned from mere reading of filled-in questionnaires or structured interviews.

In short, the exploratory nature of this study on the diverse career experiences of its respondents requires an in-depth study of each of their cases. Ontologically and in practice, interpretivism and a qualitative research method is called for, even as Miles and Huberman (1994:10) argue that qualitative research is “the best strategy for discovery, exploring a new area, [and] developing hypotheses”.

The particular form of qualitative research this study adopts is the life-history approach. Before examining this approach, the epistemological underpinnings of this study, specifically Symbolic Interactionism, will be looked at.

3.1.2 Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic Interactionism is a perspective of the study of the collective life of human behaviour. Originated by George Herbert Mead (1938, 1934, 1932,) and later continued by Herbert Blumer (1962, 1969), its three central tenets are as follows:

1. Human beings act towards phenomena based on the meanings they give to them.
2. The meanings are derived from the social interactions between people.
3. It is through an interpretive process that a person handles and renegotiates these meanings.

An individual reacts to phenomena such as people, activities, situations, incidents, institutions, and so on, based on the meanings he/she attributes to it. In the course of an individual's interactions with other human beings, other people's actions or reactions in turn lead to the individual's further interpretations or re-definitions of his/her perspectives. An individual's actions in life arise out of socialisation: "The meaning of a thing for a person grows out of the ways in which other persons act towards the person with regard to the thing...Thus, symbolic interactionism sees meanings as social products..." (Blumer, 1969:4-5).

How are the aims of this study underpinned by symbolic interactionism? Significant people, events, incidents and circumstances in the life of an individual shape his/her value system. These in turn may influence the individual's goals, including career goals, actions and behaviour. These influence the way they give meanings to their interpretations of other people's actions, immediate environment and experiences in general. There is a constant re-negotiation in the way the individual attributes meaning to his career based on other people's actions. For example, rapid economic development with its many opportunities leads an individual to give more weight to personal material gains than to considerations of the family or the state, as might be the case traditionally. An experience is constituted by the encounter, figures involved therein, the context against which the incident transpires, and the perspective and emotions with which the individual participates in the encounter. Thus, it is in the "moving perspective in which the person sees his life as a whole and interprets the meaning of his various attributes, actions and the things which happen to him" (Hughes, 1937:409), that is, the subjective career, where many factors shape the career of a respondent, as this study has found.

Individuals 'actively create a work identity' (Crow, 1992, Mead, 1934; Hughes 1958) through the internal dialogue between the 'I' and 'Me'. Woods (1992:346) defines the 'I' part of the self as "the more spontaneous initiator of action" and the 'Me' as "the product of viewing oneself as object, as one would be viewed by another". Atkinson and Housley refer to this interaction as 'the tensions in self and its dual nature: the impulsive and creative impulse versus the socialised internalisation of social mores.' (2003:7). The "process of internalisation also means that actors internalise not merely the judgments of concrete specific others, they also develop a sense of the 'generalised others', so that they come into a fully socialised awareness of the social milieu in which they are placed." (2003:7). Hence, to identify cultural factors that influence the careers of Chinese school principals is to identify 'the sense of the generalised others'. It is to identify those factors, in the context of careers of school principals, to which Chinese society as a whole has given meanings, and perhaps also conditioned reactions, in ways that are particular to the Chinese society itself. For example, what interpretation does Chinese society give to the relationship between father and offspring that is different from how other societies interpret the same? How does this different interpretation influence the choice or development of an individual's career?

Hence, an interpretivist paradigm with a symbolic interactionist position is theoretically congruent with the aims of this study. This congruence, in the use of the life-history approach within the qualitative paradigm, is now examined.

3.1.3 The Life-History Approach

A topical life-history is "an account of a life based on interviews and conversations" (Denzin, 1989:188) in relation to a theme or a topic of investigation. Life histories or biographies have been recognised for their being able to give greater insights into the nature and meaning of individual lives or groups of lives (Erben, 1998; Beynon (1985) recognises that the life-history method offers the advantages of capturing subjectivity, providing contextualisation, and allowing for the evaluation of the topic in focus. Firstly,

life-history data's "particular value is in illuminating individuals' subjective reality because it emphasises [the] subjects' interpretations of their day-to-day experiences as explanations of behaviour" (Evetts, 1994:8). Woods echoes this in his remark that life histories "have the advantages of monitoring a developing self within the context of local factors such as home life, parents, school and teachers, and significant others as well as wider concerns" (1992:367). This study's research guiding questions reflect the search for such data.

Secondly, life-history "grounds the individual life in the context of lived experience and the broader social and economic system" (Evetts, 1994:8). For the contextual understanding of culture that this study seeks, it is precisely such data wherein patterns of cultural practices, thinking and behaviour can be found. Historical, social and economic contexts are inextricably part of a culture. Sharp and Gopinathan recognise culture as "an evolving mix of what we term 'traditional' and 'modernising' cultures, which are in turn complexly related to dominant political and economic processes'" (2000:88).

Thirdly, "life histories reassert the complexities of the lived experience for individuals and are less likely to result in the simplifications and generalisations that can arise when focusing on mass phenomena" (Evetts, 1994:8). Each life history is unique. Data collected with a questionnaire, for instance, would be an example of data that is simplified and generalised. Goodson and Sikes remark that with the life-history approach, "chances are that you would get many, many different answers" (2001:2); even as Erben adds that, "individual motivations and social influences have no easy demarcation" (1998:1).

In short, the life-history approach, a qualitative form of research method, serves the aims of this study. It is an approach also underpinned by Symbolic Interactionism.

3.1.4 The Life-History Approach and Symbolic Interactionism

Woods asserts:

The choice of a symbolic interactionist tradition entails that inquiry must be grounded in the empirical world under study. By the ‘empirical social world’ is meant the minute-by minute, day-by-day social life of individuals as they interact together, as they develop understandings and meanings, as they engage in ‘joint actions’ and respond to each other as they adapt to situations, and as they encounter and move to resolve problems that arise through their circumstances.” (1992:348)

The above quote echoes the earlier point discussed in Evett’s exhortation of life-history’s “particular value in illuminating individuals’ subjective reality” (1994:8). It is Dollard who echoes Mead’s (1934) *Symbolic Interactionism* when he remarks thus:

as soon as we take the post of observer on the cultural level, the individual is lost in the crowd and our concepts never lead back to him. After we have ‘gone cultural’ we experience the person as a fragment of a (derived) culture pattern, as a marionette dancing on the strings of (reified) culture forms (1935:5).

Thus, the life-history approach, underpinned by Symbolic Interactionism, is in keeping with the epistemological underpinnings of this study’s aims.

The suitability of the life-history approach within the qualitative paradigm, and the congruence of its epistemological underpinnings with the aims of this study have been addressed. The different elements of this study’s research design will now be discussed.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design refers to the structure of a study, of how the different elements in the study relate to each other (Gall *et al*, 1998). Briefly, a research sample of sixteen respondents from the provinces of Ningxia, Gansu, Guangdong, Hubei and the municipality of Beijing were, through convenience sampling, invited to participate in this study. Data, collected through semi-structured interviews, were

analysed through open coding and categorisation. The specific elements of this study's research design will now be addressed.

3.2.1 Access to Respondents

All the sixteen respondents in this study were introduced to the researcher by the researcher's friends, owing to the difficulty of researching in the PRC. This researcher found the remarks that "school leadership and management (in China) is often seen as 'intrusive', the more so if the researcher is from outside the country" (Dimmock, 2003:35), to be very true indeed. It accounts for why convenience sampling, the weakest form of sampling, was finally resorted to. Zhang (2004), previously a middle-school teacher from the very community that he was investigating, also resorted to convenience sampling.

Dimmock's (2003) suggestion that postgraduates proposing to undertake research within such a setting should seek to enlist the support of allies within the system who have some influence did not work for this study because of the personal nature of the data sought. The researcher was able to procure the help of a principal-training unit in a university in one of the cities that her respondents are from for her research. However, after interviews with some five respondents, the researcher decided to fall back on contacts of personal friends. Interviews with three of the five respondents were completed but ultimately none were included in the study. The researcher perceived that the respondents enlisted through an institution felt under duress to participate, which compromised the quality of the data. It took an average of two weeks before a respondent was available for the first or subsequent interview. These respondents also appeared guarded throughout their interviews. In contrast, the researcher discovered that the respondents introduced by her friends were far more open and forthcoming. Their willingness to participate and their trust of the researcher were based on the researcher's *shuren-guanxi* (social connections) with their friends.

The first request to participate in the study was made by the researcher's friend and it was usually accompanied by an introductory letter (see Appendix Three on pages 227-228) about the study, and the interview schedule (see Appendix Four

on pages 229-231) for the study. The letter furnished the relevant background of the study. Upon the individual's agreement to participate, the researcher made efforts to meet up with the respondent, with or without the mutual friend, so as to start creating the necessary empathy between the interviewer and the researcher for the interview ahead. It was also then emphasised to the respondent that the mutual friend would not be present at the interview or have access to the data. An appointment for the interview, usually about a week later, would then be set up. The researcher would also at this point express to the respondent that reflecting on the questions between then and the time of the interview would very much aid recall of the past.

3.2.2 Research Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling was resorted to in this study for the reasons explained above. While generally recognised as a weak form of sampling, it is nevertheless cited by Goodson and Sikes (2001) as one of the more "frequently" used sampling techniques in life histories.

The relationship of the researcher to the respondents might be seen as that of acquaintances, since it was the first time that the researcher had met each of them. Goodson and Sikes (2001) warn of the implications on the quality of data collected from friends and acquaintances for the reason highlighted by Grumet: "telling a story to a friend is risky business; the better the friend, the riskier the business" (1991:69). However, it is argued that in the case of the PRC, the risk to a respondent in sharing his/her life story is far greater when the researcher is associated with an institution of authority than with a friend or relative because of the PRC's political context. This has been previously discussed at length. Furthermore, Goodson and Sikes assert thus of non-probability sampling techniques that are commonly used in life-histories :

We would argue that all human knowledge and experience as expressed through verbal accounts is in essence biased. Everyone sees the world through frames of reference which are developed as a result of their

possessing particular attributes, or being situated in particular social, historical.....(or whatever) contexts... (2001:25)

In this study, the researcher interviewed current or retired PRC school principals, regardless of their age, gender or the geographical area where they are from. The first criterion for a respondent's participation in the study was that the individual is or was a PRC school principal. The second was that the data furnished by the participant was deemed sufficiently 'thick' by the researcher.

The implications of the research sample for the generablisability of this study is discussed in the section on trustworthiness below.

3.2.3 Research Sample

A sample of sixteen respondents participated in the interview. Their salient features are summarised in the Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 Salient Details of This Study's Respondents

	(1) Pseudonym, Decade of Birth (‘F’ at the end of name stands for ‘Female’)	(2) Grew up in city (C) / Rural Area (County, Town, Village)	(3) No. of years as head/ Primary or Middle School as by the end of 2007 Level of schools headed and/or heading	(4) Rural School/ City School Principal
1.	Bao30s	Rural (village)	9 years, Retired Snr-Mid Sch	Rural to city (village to town to city)
2.	Chu40s	Rural	14 years, Retired Jnr-Mid Sch; Mid Sch	Rural (from village to county)
3.	Deng40s	Rural (village)	5 years, Retired, Mid Sch	City
4.	Fang50sF	City	7 years. Principal of private school Jnr-Mid sch, Middle school	Rural to city (village to city)
5.	Gao50s	City	10 years Snr-Mid Sch; Mid Sch	City
6.	Hong50s	Rural (village)	6 years Jnr-Mid Sch; Pri Sch	Rural (town to village)
7.	Jiang50s	Rural (village)	7 years Jnr-Mid Sch; Mid Sch	Rural to city (village to town to city)
8.	Kang60s	City	7 years Pri Sch	Rural to city (village to City)
9.	Liu60s	Rural (Town)	7 years. Mid. Sch	Rural to City (County to City)
10.	Mu60s	Rural (Village)	5 years. Mid. Sch	City

Table 3.1 Salient Details of This Study's Respondents (Cont'd)

	(1) Pseudonym, Decade of Birth (‘F’ at the end of name stands for ‘Female’)	(2) Grew up in city (C) / Rural Area (County, Town, Village)	(3) No. of years as head/ Primary or Middle School Level of schools headed and/or heading	(4) Rural School/ City School Principal
11.	Pan60sF	City, Rural (City, Village)	10 years, Pri Sch	Rural to City (County to City)
12.	Qing60s	Rural (Town)	4 years. Jnr-Mid Sch; Mid. Sch	Rural to city Town to City
13.	Su70s	Rural (Village)	4 years Pri Sch	Rural (Village to Town)
14.	Wang70sF	City	6 months by September 2008 Snr-Mid Sch	City
15.	Yang70s	City	4 years Pri Sch	Rural to city
16.	Zhang70s	Rural (Cunty)	10 years Mid. Sch	City

The second column reflects the pseudonyms of the respondents assigned by the researcher. The numbers following each name give the decade of the birth of the respondent. The letter ‘F’ is included at the end of a pseudonym to represent a female respondent. This design allows a reader ready access to a respondent’s age and gender with reference to any of the PRC’s relevant historical period. These details, against a particular political context of the PRC, are telling of how influential the political context is/was on the individual concerned. It is in Chapters Four and Five, where the findings of this study will be presented, that these details will be particularly useful. The design is thus as an important step in meeting the criterion of furnishing a thick description in a descriptive study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

The third column reflects if a participant grew up in a rural area or a city. By 'rural' is meant a village, town or county. For this study, the term 'city' above certainly also encompasses municipalities. This column serves to reflect as much as possible the backgrounds of the respondents. This is again done to meet, as much as possible, the criterion of furnishing a thick description in a descriptive study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), as are the details in the fourth and fifth columns.

The fourth column reflects the length of headship experience of each respondent, as well as the sector of the school that they head.

The fifth column reflects if a respondent heads a school in rural China or in a city.

The specific place where each respondent resided and/or worked at the time of the interview is not reflected so as to ensure anonymity of the respondents. It would otherwise be easy to identify each respondent from a certain place, given that their career-paths are reflected in Chapter Five of this thesis. A summary of where all the respondents in the study are/were last heading a school is included in the summary of the features of the sixteen respondents below:

- Seven respondents are from Gansu province: five are from Lanzhou city; one from a village outside of Lanzhou; and another from a city near Lanzhou.
- Three respondents are from Wuhan city in Hubei province.
- One respondent is from Guangzhou city in Guangdong province.
- Three respondents are from Ningxia province: one is from Guyuan city; one is from a village outside of Guyuan city; and one is from Linxia.
- Two respondents are from Beijing.
- As at the end of 2007, one of the respondents is in his seventies; two are in their sixties; four are in their fifties; four are in their forties; and five in their thirties.
- Four respondents are retired from state employ. One of these heads a private school, whilst another is involved in principal training.
- Three of the respondents headed junior-middle schools; eight headed middle schools; whilst five headed primary schools. Two of the primary school principals had previously taught in junior- or senior- middle schools.

- Two respondents are from the Hui minority group; 14 are of Han Chinese ethnicity.
- Three respondents are female.
- 11 respondents grew up in a rural part of the PRC; three in the city.
- Three respondents have only headed schools in a village or a town; four only in schools in a city; whilst another nine, now heading schools in the city, previously headed schools in rural PRC.

3.2.4 Data Collection

Data were collected in at least two interviews with each respondent, with the shortest amount of total time for data collection from a respondent being three hours. The longest amount of time spent with a respondent for face-to interviews and follow-up discussions on the telephone was five hours. On average, the amount of time for data collection from a respondent was approximately three hours. The bulk of the data were from the face-to-face interviews. These interviews were conducted over a period of some sixteen months

The interviews with five respondents introduced by the earlier mentioned principal-training unit, which were ultimately not used in the data analysis, constitute the pilot study. The general interview questions in the interview, being broad to begin with, were adhered to after the pilot study, with no revisions made to them.

Data were primarily collected through semi-structured interviews. The respondents were interviewed in their respective cities, towns or villages in the PRC where they worked. Each interview was audio-recorded. Any clarifications of the data from an interview were made through telephone calls or via electronic mail. The interviews were later transcribed professionally and the transcripts were then given to the respondent for member-checking. Thereafter, the transcripts were used for analysis.

A semi-structured interview is one conducted around a pre-determined set of questions, which nevertheless allows a respondent to speak freely, and the

interviewer to have considerable leeway to probe beyond these questions (Bogdan and Taylor, 1984). Empathy and attentiveness on the part of researcher is paramount (Goodson and Sikes, 2001).

It was important to exploit interviews because they constituted the main source of data collection for this study. Spradley's (1979) good advice was heeded in the course of carrying out the interview. Prior to or at the start of an interview, the context, aim and purpose of the interview were again clarified to keep the interviews relevant to the aims of the study. The interview itself, it was explained to the respondent, was for him/her to articulate his or her story in a life-history fashion.

A general strategy used in data collection was that in the first interview, the respondent would be encouraged to tell his/her story, with minimum interference from the researcher. The pilot interviews showed this to be very conducive to disarming respondents and/or keeping him/her relaxed. Only simple clarifying questions, such as "Are you now referring to your principal or your party-secretary?" were asked. Mostly, it was in the second interview, after the researcher had had time to listen to the first interview in Chinese several times, that more clarifications were sought. As advised by Woods (1985), when following up on details, inconsistencies, non sequiturs, omissions, lack of balance, implausibility and a too "cut and dried" or "black and white" account were clarified with the respondent. Probing questions asked were those that sought clarifications beyond the immediate context that a respondent was describing. An example of this is what the other alternatives to teaching that were available to the respondent and why he/she chose teaching over these options.

Some topics required greater sensitivity than usual. Examples of these are *guanxi* and the Cultural Revolution (CR). These well-educated respondents have read of critical views of *guanxi* in the PRC. The CR, the pilot interviews revealed, is a historical period that most Chinese would rather not discuss. Whenever possible, sensitive questions were also left towards the end of the entire interview. These included those on Party-membership and the CR. This avoided the risk of negatively affecting the degree of his/her openness in the interviews.

Documents from private and public archives, personal journals, school yearbooks, photographs, and audio- and video- tapings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) were, unfortunately, not available for the triangulation of data collected during interviews and for analysis. However, ten of these respondents furnished the researcher with their resumes before their interviews, while six preferred to cover the relevant information in the course of their interviews. The researcher was very conscious of not being perceived as being assertive or demanding, given the sensitivity of the cultural context and the difficulty of access to participants for the study.

3.2.5 Interview Schedule

The interview schedule is the pre-determined set of ordered questions used by the researcher to interview the respondents. They were formulated in the way described below.

The research guiding questions were fractured from the main research question. They directed the researcher to focus on answers relating to ‘who’, ‘when’, ‘what’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ of the main research questions. Questions in the interview schedule (see Appendix Four on pages 229-231) were drawn up, based on the research guiding questions, to provide even finer focus on the kind of data to capture. Certainly, they were also drawn up after studying the interview schedules of other studies (Zhang, 2004; Ribbins and Marland; Ribbins and Pascal, 1998). Some principles guided their formulation.

Grouping the questions under headings and arranging them in the natural chronological order of development aided the respondents in their recall of the flow of events. The questions were deliberately left as open as possible, so as not to constrain the respondents in narrating their stories. However, some helping questions were provided to help prompt a respondent’s memory.

The questions were also designed to not pre-suppose any kind of influence. For instance, the question “How has Confucianism influenced you?”, a question used in an earlier study (Zhang, 2004), was avoided. Responses to such questions tend

to draw culturally or socially approved answers. For the findings in this study to be truly grounded in data, the questions were framed in an open-ended and non-pre-emptive way. An area of exception to this rule, however, was made. The following specific questions on Party-membership were asked of the respondents:

When did you become a party-member?

What office/s did you hold in the party?

How did you go about becoming one?

Was becoming a party-member important to your career? How so?

These questions were asked near or at the end of the interview if the subject was not raised by the respondent himself/herself during the course of the interview. In all five pilot interviews, none of the respondents brought this sensitive topic up on his/her own accord. Hence, after the pilot interviews, the questions on Party-membership shown in the Interview Schedule were included in the interview but not reflected in the Interview Schedule given to the respondents. In other words, these questions were considered probing or cross-checking questions. To include them would have caused unnecessary suspicion or fear and scare off potential respondents. After all, when asked these questions in an interview, a respondent could refuse to answer the questions and he/she would not be under duress to answer them. They could also refuse to approve the use of these details when the transcripts of their interviews were given to them. For these reasons, the researcher did not consider it unethical to exclude them from the Interview Schedule.

3.2.6 Recording of Data and Translation

The interviews were sound-recorded in full. They were each professionally transcribed into the official script used in the PRC. Each respondent was sent via regular mail or hand-delivered the transcripts of their interview by the researcher for member-checking before they were used for data analysis.

Where translation of the transcripts is concerned, Plummer (2001) highlights this to be essentially a process of ‘transplant[ing]’ a language from one culture to another without loss of original meaning. The researcher strove to achieve verisimilitude (Guba and Lincoln, 1945) in the respondents’ responses. For example, the translation for a respondent who spoke in colloquial Chinese would be done in plain English. The accounts of a respondent who expressed himself/herself in more formal language were translated into more formal English to reflect the same.

3.2.7 Data Analysis

Data from each interview were first analysed by open coding. Categorisation of the concepts generated through open coding then commenced when data appeared to be saturated.

Miles and Huberman state, “Coding is analysis. To review a set of field notes, transcribed or synthesised, and to dissect them meaningfully, while keeping the relations between the parts intact, is the stuff of analysis.” (1994:56). Open coding, also known as generative, conceptual or thematic coding is one where concepts are developed from the data or are allowed to emerge from the data collected. Lincoln and Guba highlight the aptness of an “emergent design” to naturalistic research because “it is inconceivable that enough could be known ahead of time about the many multiple realities to devise the design adequately.” (1985: 41).

A translated transcript was read several times to identify major concepts contained therein. An analysis of the data was done in which identifiable units of meaning were conceptualised. Some of these codes, in themselves or in combinations, were clustered to form themes. A sample of coding from this study is shown in Table 3.2 on page 69. The context of the coding is work-related or career decisions, changes, challenges, influences and plans. Note that the texts highlighted as ‘Clarification’ in parenthesis are responses to probing questions.

Categorisation of codes into themes began after no new codes appeared to be forth-coming with the interviews following those of the thirteenth respondent. How the theme of Political Dimension is arrived at is shown in Table 3.3 on page 70.

Table 3.2 A Sample of the Open Coding of an Interview Transcript

CTR12Feb	Codes
<p>Yes, my <u>circumstances</u> were different. I went into the Institute of Education because of my <u>guanxi</u> – I should have been teaching in a junior-middle school.</p>	<p>circumstances - special, advantageous, <i>Guanxi</i>– social standing of father</p>
<p><u>People in the small town won't ask. They will believe</u> or assume that I am qualified because the college I went to was in the city. This institute of education was not a provincial one, but a lower level one, in a town. It was not that strict.) There were not <u>many <i>rencai</i> [talents]</u> within in a town.</p>	<p>provinciality of small town – allows for bending of rules; ruse/strategem – deliberate act for career advancement context – Deng's Reforms</p>
<p>Someone like myself with a college degree was considered a <u><i>rencai</i> (talent)</u>.</p>	<p>context –Deng's Reforms</p>
<p>Being a new graduate, I was rather over-confident I taught only in English. The faculty Dean was very upset because his class asked that I teach them in his place. He felt I had made him lose face – he was, after all, an Associate Professor and I was only a teaching assistant – not even a lecturer yet. That's when he started making life difficult for me....asking me about my comings and goings... <u>I wouldn't have any of it.</u> So, I headed south. Many people were heading to the <u>SEZs</u>. I just told them I was going on a 3-month leave...</p>	<p>conflict with superior - competition, jealousy Personality, Family Background – cadre's son Context-DR, Defiance of authority/rules</p>

Table 3.3 Categorisation of Codes

From Data	Codes	Sub-themes	Theme
School Party-secretary, city party-secretary, district chief, village chief, principal, Ministry of Education, Chief of Education Bureau, Chief of Personnel Organisation	Figures of control over careers	Political Figures of control	Political Dimension
"must obey the party", "be a flowing soldier", "organisations' rule", "party members should do this"	Attitude towards career – obligation	Subservience to party's dictates	
"Joined the party", "party-member"	Party-membership	Party-membership	
"no choice", "they - the state – pays my salary", "no retreat" of employment, penalty,	State – only employer	Concentration of power	
Party-secretary , chief of education bureau	Final Deciding Authority	Concentration of Power – Figures	
"production unit approved of my application to go to the university", "I wasn't supposed to go to senior middle school since I my family used to own land", "sent down to a far out place when the CR broke out", "promoted to Dy Chief of Education County"	Contextual parameters - CR, Deng's Reforms	Politically-Driven Contexts	

3.2.8 Ethics

From the guidelines furnished by British Education Research Association (BERA) (<http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications>), the following summarises the responsibilities this researcher feels she has towards the participants of this study.

A respondent's participation must be one of voluntary and informed consent. He/she must be informed of his/her right of withdrawal from the study at any point he/she chooses and be allowed to exercise this right. No form of duress or coercion should be used to re-engage the participation of a respondent who

wishes to discontinue. A letter introducing the purpose of the study, giving assurance of anonymity and confidentiality was first presented to a respondent. Also, as earlier mentioned, the researcher decided not to continue to enlist participants through the principal training unit of the university she first sought the help of because she felt that the participants felt under duress to participate.

The welfare and interests of all participants should be protected. In relation to this, the research norm of ensuring the anonymity of the respondent and confidentiality of their data was observed. A participant's data must be used in such a manner that it does not breach the promises of confidentiality and anonymity. Should data need to be accessed by a third party, the respondent's permission should be obtained. Essentially, meeting all these responsibilities rests on honouring the guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity. At the outset, anonymity and strict confidentiality were stressed. Confidentiality, it was explained to the respondents, meant that the data would only be accessed by the researcher and transcribed by a transcriber. Anonymity was guaranteed in that any detail that might be revealing of who a respondent was would not be known to the transcriber or appear in the thesis. These details include the names of the respondent and the schools wherein they worked. Given the small number of respondents drawn from any of the places, maintaining the anonymity of the respondents required even greater vigilance, especially when their career trajectories are also included in this thesis. How this was exercised has been earlier discussed. Further, respondents were given the transcripts of their interviews for comment and for approval for them to be used for analysis in this study.

Participants must be informed of how their data will be used. This was also addressed in the introductory letter to them.

Being ethical in this research relates a great deal to being sensitive to the feelings of the respondents. How sensitivity was exercised with regard to the topics on CR and *guanxi* during an interview has been discussed.

Another aspect of ethics and trustworthiness relates to the respondents' understanding of the researcher's position. The introductory letter in Appendix

Three (see pages 227-228) reflects the researcher's relevant background that was presented to the respondents. Altogether, the fact that this study's respondents were introduced to her by her friends, that the researcher is not of PRC nationality, and is not a school principal herself were construed in a positive light. The respondents implicitly trusted that the researcher was not cooperating with a local body of authority. They also implicitly trusted that they will not have to live with the founded or unfounded threat of someone, who has detailed personal information about them, living in their country. Finally, they also implicitly trusted that the information they provided would not be used against them from outside of their country.

3.3 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE RESEARCH

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985:290) trustworthiness translates into "How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account?" Trustworthiness thus comprises the four aspects of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

3.3.1 Credibility

Ensuring credibility is addressing the question "how can one establish confidence in the 'truth' of the findings of an inquiry for the respondents with which and the contents in which the inquiry was carried out?" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:218). Five major criteria recommended by Lincoln and Guba for ensuring credibility are discussed below.

To meet the criterion of prolonged engagement in the research field as best as possible, the interviewer captured data from each respondent in at least two interviews amounting to no less than three hours. Follow-ups for clarification were made via electronic mails or telephone calls. Persistent observation of the

respondent was not relevant since the study is focused on personal historical events.

Triangulation, the cross-validation of data by methods and by sources, was unfortunately not possible to pursue. Only published historical texts such as those reviewed in the previous chapter were used to validate the historical events and their contexts that respondents referred to. Triangulation by other sources through means such as private and public archives, personal journals, school yearbooks, photographs, and audio- and video- tapings rarely took place. Only some respondents chose to furnish the researcher with their resumes. Apart from resumes, some respondents showed awards that they had won. Triangulation via corroboration of a respondent's account through alternative sources was not pursued because it was often not possible to and, when possible, was not a viable pursuit given the cultural context of the PRC. It was often not possible because significant figures such as friends, teachers, family members, and ex-colleagues and superiors of the respondents who played a part in the career of a respondent, were often not physically present to be interviewed. They were either deceased, no longer in contact with the respondent, or did not live in the same place as the respondent. To fully pursue triangulation, at least for this study, might have rendered this study impossible. Apart from the fact that it would demand resources beyond the means of the researcher, interviewing any relevant figures in a respondent's life-history would have very likely have been interpreted, by a PRC respondent, to be an investigation. To insist on it being necessary to respondent's participation in the study was likely to scare off any voluntary respondent.

Positioning relates to reflexivity, the removal or the minimisation of biases in the analysis owing to the researcher's own preconceptions. Prior to embarking on the study, the knowledge that the researcher had on the topic was gained from the literature review of the relevant studies presented in Chapter Two of this thesis. The review of relevant literature on cross-cultural differences prepared the researcher to be sensitive and critical of the context she would be studying. Again, her unique position of being Chinese by race, with her forefathers having been from the PRC, and yet having received a fairly Western education in

cosmopolitan Singapore, was certainly advantageous in providing her with some cultural attunement to the PRC culture, and at the same time, detachment from it.

Negative case analysis refers to the inclusion of a particular case in which elements of the data that do not support or appear to contradict patterns or explanations are emergent from data analysis (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Such deviant cases would help refine an analysis until it can explain or account for a majority of cases. In this study, since convenience sampling was resorted to, school principals of different age-groups, gender, and geographical areas were included in the analysis, making it difficult to claim a typical or particular profile of the respondents. At the same time, it would also have been difficult to find a respondent with characteristics not within the range of characteristics of the respondents in the study. The procurement of respondents on a purposive basis, as oft-stressed, was extremely difficult for this study.

Referential adequacy refers to establishing some kind of benchmark against which future data analyses and interpretations or critiques might be used to test the adequacy of the study. This was achieved through the audio recordings of the interviews in this study.

Finally, for member-checking, the transcripts of interviews were returned to the interviewees for their comments or changes to be made to the transcript, and finally for approval of its use for data analysis.

3.3.2 Transferability, Dependability and Confirmability

Transferability is the extent to which findings can be applied to other context/s. Lincoln and Guba assert that "in a strict sense", this is "impossible" and that "the naturalist can only set out working hypotheses together with a description of the time and context in which they were found to hold" (1985:316). Consequently, the naturalist's obligation in meeting the criterion of transferability is to furnish a thick description or a wealth of relevant data that will enable those generalising from the study to decide if the theory derived is indeed generalisable to their case/s. In data collection, the researcher strove to achieve this by seeking out the

particulars of a situation. Even the details relating to the educational attainments of the respondents' parents and siblings, as reflected in Appendix Five (see pages 232-234), were captured. In the presentation of the findings in the following chapter, the researcher strove to achieve this by providing as much of the specific details surrounding a phenomenon as possible, and in citing the number of respondents concerned in reporting a finding. Nonetheless, the researcher can make no generalisable claims of the findings of this study to other mainland Chinese school principals. The findings apply strictly to the sixteen respondents of this study. The PRC is an immense country and convenience sampling was after all resorted to. Thus, as Lincoln and Guba (1985) advise, with the help of thick descriptive treatment of data and the fullness of contexts provided in this study, it is left to others decide on the generalisability of the findings of this study to their own situations.

3.3.3 Dependability

Dependability is about ensuring that the results of a study are stable and replicable (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Developing an "audit trail" is Lincoln and Guba's suggestion for improving the dependability of a qualitative study.

To meet this requisite, as well as for easy retrieval of records for data analysis, a system of reference was adopted to reference the different documents (original transcripts, code notes, field notes, coded transcripts, code notes, and so on) involved in the study. This is reflected in Appendix Six (on page 235).

3.3.4 Confirmability

Confirmability translates to "the extent to which the data and interpretations of the study are grounded in events rather than the inquirer's personal constructions" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:324). Triangulation, unfortunately, could not be pursued in this study, as earlier explained. More importantly perhaps, is that in this study, no existing framework, especially one derived from a cultural context

very different from that of the PRC's, has been adopted. Empirical grounding of the study is also achieved through the generation of concepts from the data itself (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Furthermore, in this study's data analysis, the broader conditions of a phenomenon under study were carefully taken into account. This was first and foremost a primary motivation for adopting the life-history approach, namely, that different social, economic and other relevant contexts are captured. Hence, the different contextual parameters of the CR or Deng's Reform periods, are taken into account in data analysis.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the methodological underpinnings of the study. It has examined the methods and rationale for the different aspects of data gathering involved in the research process. How the data were collected and analysed was also discussed, along with design issues to secure trustworthiness.

The following chapter, Chapter Four, will present the findings of the study to its first research question.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS (I)

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings to the first research question, question (A), and its related guiding questions (1) to (5). The first section of this chapter relates to the first objective of this study. Its second section relates to the study's second objective.

The main research question, (A), and its specific research questions are as follows:

(A)What are the major factors influencing the careers of mainland Chinese primary and secondary school principals?

(1)What childhood experiences have influenced their choice of career in education and their accession to the principalship?

(2)What school, tertiary and higher education experience may have shaped their careers in education and rise to the principalship?

(3)At what point in their lives did they decide to enter the teaching profession, and what factors influenced their decision?

(4)How did they accede to their principalship?

(5)What influence has the Chinese societal culture played, as distinct from other factors, in shaping principals' careers?

4.1 THE CAREER-INFLUENCING THEMES OF RESPONDENTS

This section relates to the Question (A) and research guiding questions (1) to (4).

Four major emergent themes and their respective sub-themes that reflect the influences on the respondents' education and career paths, are reflected in Figure 4.1 on page 79. Essentially, data relevant to "Factors contributing toward a teaching career and its development" were coded, and the codes then categorised to form these themes and sub-themes..

Henceforth, throughout this thesis, the term "the respondents" refers to this study's 16 participants. Also, the main career-influencing themes will be italicised, while their sub-themes will be underlined.

Following the presentation of the findings to the last sub-theme under each theme, the key norms identified from these themes and sub-themes are highlighted in point form under 'Summary'. These are essentially the interrelationships of, not just the themes and sub-themes preceding the Summary, but the interrelationships of all the themes and sub-themes of the study, that have become apparent from the most recent preceding presentation. These are highlighted for their diagrammatic summary in Figure 4.2 (on page 111), which will in turn be used for the achievement of this study's fourth objective (see Appendix One on pages 221-225) in the following chapter. The first theme is that of *Family Background*.

4.1.1 Family Background

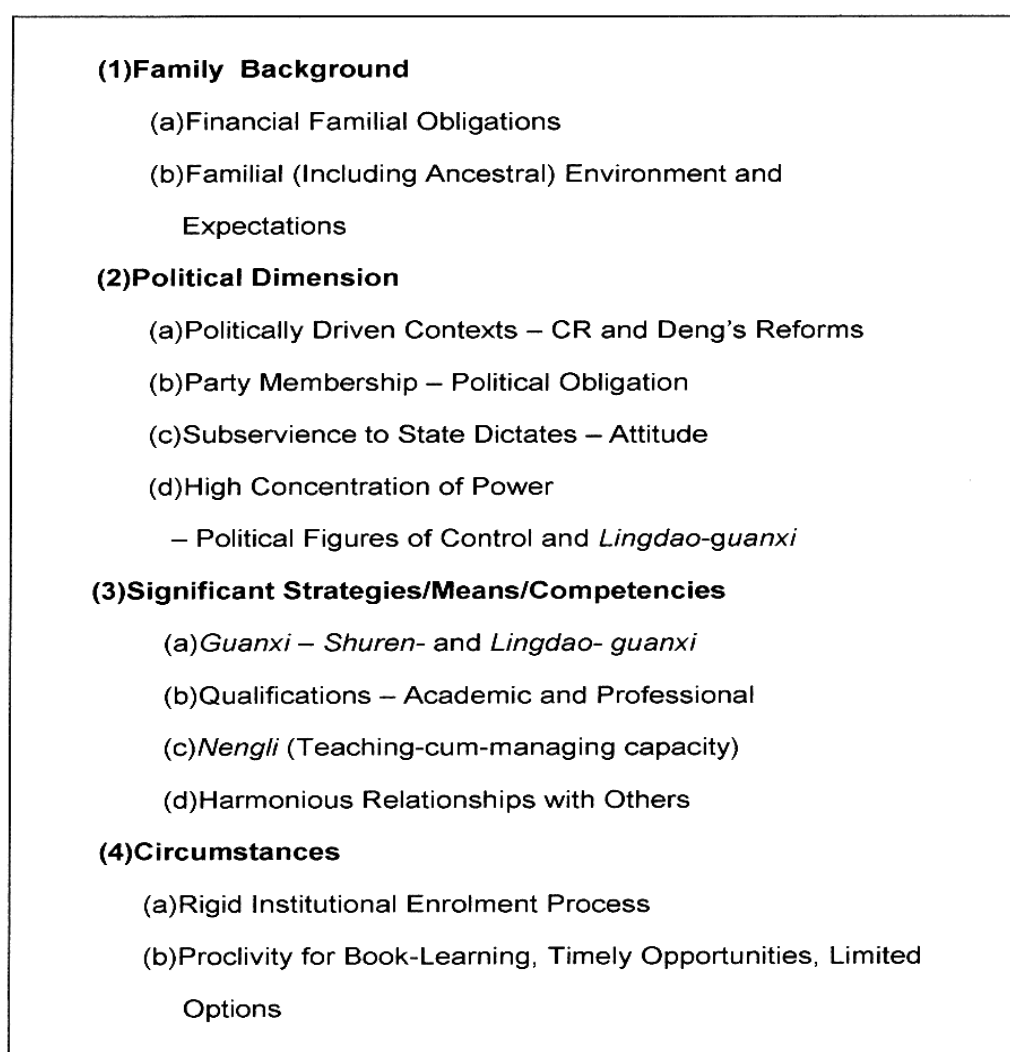
The different aspects of the respondents' family background that were influential are as follows: the socio-economic standing of the respondents' families; familial expectations and conduciveness of home environments with regard to education; and the occupations of parents and ancestral tradition.

4.1.1a Socio-Economic Background – Familial Financial Needs and

Obligations

The socio-economic background of a respondent is primarily given by the occupations of parents and home location. Those who lived in rural areas (villages, towns or counties) were generally poorer than those who lived in cities. They were farmers, poor for the lack of regular incomes. These are generalities. Mu60s's parents were farmers, but he described his farming community as one that is not poor but "alright". Liu60s's parents were both uneducated but his father's regular income as a soldier, rendered the family financially comfortable.

Figure 4.1 Career-Influencing Themes and Sub-themes Emergent from this Study



The number of times that the financial needs of a respondent's family stood as a factor in their education and career is hard to ignore. Teachers' schools' provision of food, lodgings and a monthly stipend accounted for why some respondents entered teacher's school instead of pursuing their senior-middle school. A respondent's family financial threshold could border on survival level. Throughout his three-hour interview, Su70s dwelled on food no less than four times. Privations were to fuel his drive to be more than just a poor farmer, like his parents, scratching out a living.

My memories of childhood are of days of semi-hunger...but not for my auntie. She didn't live on a half-filled stomach. And that's because she ate state food [meaning she was a 'cadre']! We were poor farmers. But not my aunt. I learnt young: eating state food is the way out... (Su70s).

When he was accepted into teacher's school, it was the first time in Su70s's life that he "could have three full meals in a day". After graduation from teacher's school, Su70s had the opportunity to go to college:

Ten us were given that opportunity...I just had to give the Dean of the college an electric rice cooker...My father told me he could not support me. It would be expensive living in the city. So, I decided to forego the opportunity and start earning an income as a primary school teacher. (Su70s)

Even though education was provided free by the state, there were nevertheless incidental fees and expenses which rural families found hard-pressed to meet. Typically too, schooling beyond junior-middle (sometime including this level) level could not be found in villages but was pursued in a town, county and city where living expenses were high. The same is true of the PRC today.

Yang70s, who did not suffer the extent of privations that Su70s did, nevertheless faced a similar decision by his parents who were chauffeurs. He explained

My sister, just a year younger, was still schooling. My parents wanted me to apply for teachers' school. I would get an allowance every month from

the teacher's school which would also take care of food and lodging. After two years, I would have a steady job waiting for me (Yang70s).

These respondents' fathers desired their expedient entries into teachers' schools or colleges to alleviate their families' financial strains. Attending medical training schools, for example, which also accepted junior-middle school graduates, required payment of school fees. Vocational schools that had sprung up in the 1980s did not secure jobs for graduates.

Familial considerations similarly prompted Wang70sF to accept the scholarship from a teachers' university. Accepting it would exempt her from the university entrance examination, with the security of a teaching position in her alma-mater, her senior-middle school. She explained,

We heard that preparations for major organised democracy protests were underway in certain universities in Beijing...I was old enough to reflect on the fact that there might be wide and far-reaching major repercussions...the protests might create an uncertain future, however far removed from me they may seem. I had a younger brother who was still studying. I did not want to be in position where I would add to my parents' financial responsibilities. What if I couldn't go to university or couldn't get a job because of the protests? Wang70sF).

While Wang70sF did entertain teaching as a vocation, because "I was always a good student", the Tiananmen Protests of 1989 in Beijing decided it for her. Had she not accepted the scholarship to a "mediocre university", she might have gone on to pursue her honours degree, and then very likely, become a university lecturer.

If Chu40s had not been born to poor farmers, he might not even have starved from the famine caused by the Great Leap Forward (GLF). The GLF cost him his senior-middle school education: "I became a commune kitchen inventory clerk. In that way, I was fed." This was a link in chain of events that would lead him to a rather illustrious career.

Hong50s and Jiang50s were also from poverty-stricken families. In comparison with Su70s, the times (namely, the CR) they were in did not put them in the same circumstances where they had to choose between going to teachers' school and continuing with their education.

Those from better-off families did not have to sacrifice career goals because of financial lack. Six respondents (Gao50s, Fang50s, Pan60s, Mu60s, Liu60s, and Qing60s) were not forced by poverty to take the route towards teacher's schools but were able to go on to tertiary education. Other factors made them choose teaching.

4.1.1b Socio-Economic Background -Familial (Including Ancestral)

Environment and Expectations

The socio-economic backgrounds of the respondents are reflected in their parents' occupations and educational attainments (see Appendix Five on pages 232-234), and the areas they grew up in. Parents of higher socio-economic backgrounds created home environments and had expectations conducive to their children's educational and professional attainments.

As can be seen in Appendix Five, the children of parent/s who were relatively well-educated, also attained fairly high levels of education themselves. These lived in the cities and their parents were therefore of higher socio-economic status than say, parents of, four respondents (Chu40s, Jiang50s, Hong50s and Kang60s), who lived in rural parts of the PRC. However in the case of Kang60sF, whose father was educated but whose mother was not educated, her sisters also obtained a fairly high level of education. One of them also became a teacher. Respondents such as Bao30s and Hong50s each had a parent who was educated, but even their siblings remained farmers. Hong50s explained that girls in villages were not sent to school. Still, the fact that the siblings of Deng40s, Jiang50s and Su70s remained farmers like their parents, is suggestive of the fact that the educational attainments of parents were an important influence on their children's attainments.

The influence of parental occupation on six respondents (Fang50s, Gao50sF, Pan60sF, Yang70s, Zhang70s, and Wang70sF) is unsurprising. Educated and residing in cities, they were likely to have valued education for its intrinsic value and/or economic value. For some, the home environment was no doubt conducive to academic pursuits. Wang70sF said it was the encyclopedic kind of books she had been given to read when she was young that had led to a “rather lopsided development” in that she has “no interest in history or Chinese classics but only in the Sciences”. She later became a Chemistry teacher. Her father, a teacher, and her mother, a doctor, were serving in villages during the CR.

Pan60sF attributes her being ahead in school to the “Chinese classics my parents secretly gave me to read during the CR”. Had this been discovered, both Pan60sF and her parents would have suffered beatings, amongst other forms of persecutions.

Respondents who were not as fortunate as those cited in the above paragraph, faced obstacles which they transcended owing to different factors. One of these is the natural inclination for book-learning, and then a love for it. This is discussed under the theme concerned.

Familial expectations encompass ancestral traditions. For five respondents (Hong50s, Fang50sF, Gao50sF, Pan60sF and Zhang70), in recounting why they were good students, cited the fact that they came from families of achievers. The family’s track record through their academic pursuits, which reflected in their social standing, held implicit expectations for the younger generation to do the same. Pan60sF is cited here as a case in point:

School was effortless. I was naturally a top student. My father was a doctor and my mother a teacher. They both came from families of scholars, doctors and achievers. My grandmother had an education. Prior to the CR, ours was a family of influence noted for scholarliness.

Familial influence is also the form of parental occupation. Educated parents with successful careers were role models - their children implicitly expected the same of themselves.

Familial expectations also encompass obedience to one's parents' wishes. Familial obligations for Qing60s included obeying his father, as was the case for Su70s, and for Yang70s reflected above. Qing60s, a self-confessed "pampered son of a cadre", recalled,

...I had still not done well enough to qualify for a university, even after buckling down and working hard the second time around. I consoled myself with the idea of entering vocation school. At that time, China's economy was doing well. Easy for technical workers to get jobs. In demand. Would not be difficult for me especially – with my father's *guanxi*. But my father said to me 'No, you will re-sit the university entrance examination. A degree will always get you somewhere in life.' Finally, he got me a place in an institute.

Qing60s's father was himself a university lecturer in the city, but the reach of his *guanxi* was not extensive enough to secure for his son a place in a prestigious university. For Fang50sF, Gao50s and Pan60sF, both of their parents were involved in deciding that teaching was their ideal vocation for them.

The fundamental influence of family background, the socio-economic standing of an individual's parents and his/her ancestors in the PRC, is most clearly demonstrated in the context of the CR. Individuals were categorised as rightists, that is class enemies, or leftists, the approved class, based on their family backgrounds. Their education and careers, in fact, their very lives, depended on their categorisation. This is discussed under Politically Driven Context/s, which is under *Political Dimensions*, below.

Summary: Family Background

In terms of the nature of the influence of *Family Background*, the following is evident from the discussion above:

- *Family Background* influences an individual's acquisition of basic education, his/her academic qualifications, and in turn, his/her

professional qualifications (a sub-theme under *Significant Strategies/Meanings/Competencies*). This influence ranges from being conducive to being challenging (see '(F1)*', '(F2)' and '(F3)' in Figure 4.2 (on page 111)).

4.1.2 Political Dimension

The obtrusiveness of the political dimension in the context of the careers of PRC school principals is hardly surprising. China is, after all, was and still is run by a single party, which, up until Deng's Reforms in the late 1970s, was very strongly politically-, rather than economically-oriented. The Party running the country was also the only employer before Deng's Reforms, and then a major employer of teachers after the CR.

4.1.2a Political Contexts

Politics is ultimately the driver behind the change in contexts (pre-CR, CR and post-CR) in the PRC. Within the parameters of each context, incidents transpired in ways that shaped the careers of the respondents.

4.1.2a(i) The Context of the Cultural Revolution

During the CR, an individual's family background and history either afforded opportunities, or caused arrests in career developments. Experiences during the CR changed some respondents' outlook on their lives and careers.

Hong50s's case is most dramatic in demonstrating how one's family background and history can be a punishment. Hong50s "ranted and raved" at being born into a previously land-owning family, a situation "I had no part in making". For the first two years of the CR, Hong50s hid himself and refused to attend school to avoid beatings which were then at their fiercest. One of his major outbursts at his grandfather happened when he was in primary four. After his Politics Teacher denounced him a class enemy during a lesson, the class of about thirty fell upon

him. His grandfather's reply was always the same "You must study because your forebears were all learned people. You have no choice. Establish a great will within yourself." The many persecutions that befell Hong50s were also owing to another 'incriminating' aspect of his family history. Hong50s's ancestors had, during the Qing dynasty, been honoured by the Qing Court with a plaque for rendering service to society by being teachers. This plaque has been "preserved" in the sense of its characters being inscribed onto a new wooden block each time the old one had begun to disintegrate. However, Hong50s became a teacher by force of circumstances rather than by choice. Because he was an excellent student, he was recommended to be a *Minban* teacher when the CR had officially been repudiated. The other option open to Hong50s was farming - a far less attractive vocation for someone of his intelligence.

Chu40s's situation, in contrast, is an example of being from a politically correct family background. After abandoning his senior-middle school education to become an inventory clerk at his commune's kitchen, the poor farmer's third child, served in the capacities of head of a foot-patrol unit and trainer of other clerks. His production brigade thus approved his application for university. Chu40s's university education, which he could only have had because of the CR, led to a fairly illustrious career path (see Figure 5.3 on page 125) which included being the Chief of Education Bureau of the county that presided over his village.

Respondents Pan60s and Wang60sF, both from families of intelligentsia, avoided politics in their careers because of their families' persecution during their CR. Pan60sF said, "What my family...including uncles, aunties and cousins...went through could fill a book.". Her experiences made her turn away from a very likely career in high office, beginning with the position of vice-mayor of a town. Pan60sF was one in a thousand top-performing new university graduates in the country that year to be selected by the state for special grooming. These were appointed to high political positions upon their graduation. They were then expected to learn on the job and thus be groomed for higher offices. Pan60sF's family was anxious for her to become an ordinary teacher. Chairman Mao's words that "there should be a CR every eight or ten years still rang in my

mother's ears". Safety in a low-profile ordinary life, and not the pursuit of a distinguished career, was her goal.

While Wang70sF did not suffer from the CR like her parents (a doctor and a teacher) did, she was influenced by them to "keep a low profile" and shun direct involvement in politics. This was one of the reasons for her entering teaching, and then for not wanting to be a Party-member.

Another rule within the CR context that influenced the careers of the respondents is the absence of examination. On a competitive basis, it is possible that four respondents (Chu40s, Deng40s, Hong50s, Jiang50s), who were still in school, might not have gone on to achieve the level of education that they each did. Certainly, Chu40s, who did not complete his senior-middle education, would not have been able to go on to university.

4.1.2a(ii) Deng's Reforms – Post CR Context

With the change in political orientation to embrace the market mechanism and elitism in the launch of Deng's Reforms, a change in cultural context accounted for the rapid career development of many of the respondents. Deng's policy of promoting young people with academic qualifications was cited by six (Bao30s, Deng40s, Pan60sF, Hong50s, Yang70s, Kang70sF) to be behind their promotions. Bao30s and Chu40s were catapulted to the position of Deputy Chief of Education Bureau at county level from the positions of Vice-Principal (VP) and that of a DTA respectively. Chu40s was chosen from amongst three candidates who met the following criteria: "holding at least a college degree and below thirty-five years of age", amongst others. Yang70s, then a DTA, reported, "A new chief of Education Hall promoted a group of young leaders". It was also because of Deng's Reforms that Hong50s, an underdog of the CR, came to be accepted as a *Minban* teacher. For Bao30s this policy allowed him to, later in his career, in effect retire at fifty-five instead of sixty:

I was asked what I would like to do. I suggested that I be transferred to be School Inspector, a sinecure position. I was a spent force by then. My

health had deteriorated – heart problems from all the stress. I wanted no more of the stress of having to raise passing rates every year. (Bao30s)

The PRC system continued to pay him his school principal salary.

With the total change of context from that of the CR, all those who were *Minban* teachers decided to continue teaching or enter the profession because persecutions of teachers had ceased and the teaching profession became exalted. New parameters, including the state's resumption of teacher training, and expanded provision of programmes and institutions, enabled aspirant-teachers to obtain the qualifications required in the new post-CR context, and to aspire to leadership positions and beyond. Some respondents chose teaching to avoid working directly in a political position.

4.1.2b Political Allegiance to the CCP – Party Membership

Party-membership is a manifestation of allegiance to the CCP. During the pre-CR period, political allegiance was a pre-requisite to career advancement. After the CR, it might still be so, or simply deemed to be very advantageous for career advancement. The PRC State Education Commission's 'National Provisional Requisites for Primary and Middle School Principals' (Ministry of Education of the PRC (<http://www.moe.gov.cn/edoas/website18/26/info5026.htm>), in effect since June 1991, cites "loyal support" of the CCP's directives as a requisite.

Six respondents (Gao50s, Mu60s, Su70s, Qing60s, Pan60sF, Zhang70s), became Party-members before or during university. For most of them, in the words of Zhang70s, it was because they "loved the communist ideals". Four (Bao30s, Jiang50s, Mu60s, Zhang70s) proclaimed themselves fervent about the communist ideals and thus readily embraced Party-membership.

For Fang50sF, Gao50sF, Pan60sF, whose families had suffered during the CR, to be invited and accepted as a Party-member was viewed, in Fang50sF's words, "an honour", "because this means the Party recognises you as someone worthy of grooming". It is also probably out of pragmatism that one accepted such an

honour. To reject it would be an open declaration of non-allegiance to the ruling party. Certainly, the academically strong or university degree-holders were the people who were offered Party-membership. After the CR, it was recognised that teachers and “talents” in general, were greatly needed for the rebuilding of the country.

Hong50s spoke for Yang70s, Su70s and Qing60s in his frank admission that “Party-membership would increase the prospects of career advancement”. Wang70sF was the only exception. Like Zhang70s who also had outstanding scores in the university entrance examination, Wang70sF was courted by student Party-members since she was in the university. Unlike Zhang70s, she declined. She explained,

It’s an outlook my family, my husband and I share. We do not wish to subscribe to any kind of system of beliefs, like a religion or a political party, because we feel they will circumscribe our views and constrain our choices in life.

Her principal had, a year before this researcher’s interview with Wang70sF, told her to expect to take her place upon the latter’s retirement. Wang70sF remarked “There are non Party- members who are principals of schools these days.” She was proven correct.

Effort and certain conditions are needed to meet the criteria for Party-membership. The process of application to be a member does not seem to have changed from the pre-CR days up to today. The minimum age for application is eighteen. There must be two Party-members recommending the application. In the first year, a political investigation of an applicant is conducted. This entails interviewing the applicant about his/her attitudes and desire for party-membership, and interviewing his/her family members, neighbours, close friends and generally those associated with the applicant. The applicant also submits on a regular (for instance, monthly) basis, reports of self-reflection on aspects relating to being a Party-member. On passing the investigation, the applicant is accepted as a provisional member who has to attend regular political lessons and meetings before sitting for an examination. Upon passing the examination, he/she is

deemed an official member. While most respondents cite the time between applying for and passing the examination to be between one and a half and two years, according to a young respondent, “a person who has been recognised to be suitable for Party-membership could be invited and accepted as a full-fledged member overnight.”

The two oldest respondents’ in this study, Bao30s and Chu40s, affirmed that before the CR, Party-membership was not easily attained. The criterion of having a correct political orientation was extremely stringent, and the investigation of the individual’s background, very thorough. In contrast, it is presently easy to attain.

4.1.2c Subservience to Party Dictates

The attitude of resignation, of subservience of an individual’s wants to the party’s decisions, is highlighted as an influence for two reasons. Firstly, the attitude reflects reality. Respondents mostly had to obey because they had no recourse to, for example, other forms of employment. Secondly, the attitude conditioned responses. No efforts by these respondents were made, for example, through their political connections, to escape decisions made by the state.

Seven respondents (Bao30s, Chu40s, Deng40s, Fang50s, Jiang50s, Mu60s and Zhang70s) cited this attitude in response to the question of how they viewed their careers or why they did not pursue other alternatives in their careers. Deng40s could not decline appointment to principalship because it would “go against the organisation’s rule”. Chu40s, when asked what ideals he might have had when he was young said, replied “We didn’t think that way...you basically did what you were told to do...”. Gao50s, when asked about why he could not do anything about being refused by his school to be transferred to the Department for Inspection of Curriculum materials at the Education Bureau, and being compelled to become VP (see Figure 5.6 on page 130), said, “People [meaning “the state”] pay your salary. Where would I go? What could I do?”

The instances cited above reflect the fact that there were no options in their insular world of limited personal resources, that the state paid their way, and that

there were punitive actions to face for disobeying the decisions of the authority. With Jiang50s, Mu60s and Zhang70s, however, it was different. Jiang50s's (see Figure 5.8 on page 133) said that his transfers to the different schools were all decisions made by the village chief and the education bureau based on the developmental needs of the villages. After the CR, building the country through education was a primary concern. Zhang70's case is especially demonstrative of the attitude concerned because his familial circumstances suggest he is not of limited personal resources. Zhang70s shared that he had declined an attractive offer by a headhunting firm to head a private school in a developed country where he was attending training. It was one of three foreign countries he had been sent to for training since becoming a principal. He said, "Loyalty is important to me."

In contrast to the attitude of resignation to the state, the other ten respondents expressed more personal or self-serving motivations. Qing60's and Su70's have been candid about being ambitious. Yang70's spoke for the others when he described his attitude as being "to develop my personal potential to its fullest possible". Even so, the reality remains that the state remains the principal employer of teachers in the country. The number of private schools in the PRC remains relatively very insignificant.

4.1.2d Concentration of Power -Political Figures of Control of Careers and

Guanxi with Leaders

This sub-theme is grouped under the main theme of Political Dimension because a high concentration of power in a singular figure is a feature or a product of the PRC's political system. Unlike other political systems, the PRC's system is such that the careers of educators often directly involve political figures.

A high concentration of power in the individual figures who presided over the respondents' careers, combined with the influence of *Guanxi* in the PRC, had significant bearing on the careers of the respondents. Career goals were attained, in spite of legitimate rules governing a situation, because of the backing from a

political figure. Conversely, there were respondents who were punished in their careers, without regard to legitimate rules, because of someone else attaining his/her career objective/s through his/her political connections. The high concentration of power combined with the fact that the state was and is the major employer of teachers, basically demanded that individuals should be respectful and not disobedient of their school leaders, or else face punitive consequences.

The lengthy discussion under this sub-theme involves two aspects which could be sub-themes on their own but are better placed within the discussion of the present sub-theme. They are highlighted with sub-headings in this section. These two aspects are captioned under Power Concentration and *Lingdao-guanxi*, and Punishment for Defiance of Authority, respectively.

If school principals have to be Party-members, then doubtless, higher level leaders such as chiefs of bureaux, village chiefs, and certainly Party-secretaries, must be Party-members. These are the figures that feature in the accounts below, accounts illustrative of how *guanxi* with leaders influenced the respondents' careers.

4.1.2d (i) Power Concentration and Lingdao-guanxi

The relational tie to a leader is referred to as *lingdao-guanxi*. The cases of Su70s and Qing60s are examples of how it enabled them to evade normal rules. Qing60s attained a position he was not qualified for. He became an Assistant Lecturer in an Institute of Education, rather than a junior-middle school teacher, because of his father's *Guanxi* (see Table 3.2 on page 69).

Unfortunately, Qing60s himself could not explain the dynamics involved in his father's use of *Guanxi* with relevant leaders in the county to make the above possible. It also saved him a lot of face in his punishment from the Institute. He had impetuously left for a southern SEZ city without approval from the Institute after his superior started making his life uncomfortable by exacting tasks of him and tracking his comings and goings. Qing60s said, "I simply told them I was going on a three-month leave." A year later, after the Tiananmen Protests had

resulted in a foreign embargo of PRC goods so that the import and export company he was working for closed down, he had to return to his hometown to face the music. He recounted,

My personal dossier was still with the Institute and if they didn't release it, I wouldn't be able to work elsewhere. My father helped negotiate the punishment which was to serve for a year without pay at the TV and Radio University with the designation of Teaching Assistant and Dean of Office Administration. In the evenings, I would be required to give lectures and was only paid on an hourly basis for these lectures.

Serving penance for his infringement of rules notwithstanding, Qing60s held the title of Assistant Lecturer and Dean of Office Administration in the university.

Su70s's village chief had the main part in deciding the candidates for the role of Superintendent or "Big Principal", who would oversee all the principals of the primary schools in the twelve villages, of which Su70s's was one. Su70s was unqualified for candidacy. Only middle-school principals were eligible. Su70s sought the help of his uncle, a Chief of the Industry and Commerce Bureau in the county which the village was administratively under, to have him named as a candidate. Su70s had, even after graduation from a teachers' training school, approached this uncle to get him transferred to a school in the city. He had been turned down because "my uncle felt I should get training in the village first". Su70s's uncle himself had started his career as a teacher in the village. This time, his uncle acquiesced to his request and "spoke to the Village Chief". However, finally getting voted as Superintendent of the twelve schools took effort in "going to schools after work on my motorcycle, especially to schools in the other village, and making myself known [to leaders of the schools]." Voting by these school leaders was involved. Other respondents (Bao30s, Deng40s, Hong50s), to whom the scenario was presented, were of the opinion that "buying of votes", a phrase all three respondents independently used, had to be involved. When asked if he had to honour any kind of promises of support, Su30 only said, "Yes, but they are only simple ones. Someone wanted to be transferred here and someone else would rather work there instead." Again, the dynamics involved are not clear, including how he was certain those who promised him their votes would indeed

cast them in his favour. Qing60s and Su70s both claimed to have later attained the requisite qualifications for the positions for which they had no formal qualifications.

While Qing60 and Su70s benefited - unfairly - from their personal associations with leaders, Chu40s, Hong50s' and Deng40s were victims to the powerful personal associations of others like Qing60s and Su70s.

Chu40s reported being transferred as Chief of Education Bureau in his town to Chief of the Earthquake Bureau because "the new Party-Secretary wanted to give my position to his friend...I do not know if it was merely on the basis of friendship."

Hong50s, three years after he had built up the primary school he headed in his village, was transferred to head "a smaller and more dilapidated school of only two hundred students". His principalship of the school of almost 500 students was given to his Dean of Teaching Affairs (DTA), who had become the son-in-law of his Village Chief two years before.

Gao50s was the vice-principal of a middle school which was "a fairly good school". He was promoted but to head one of the poorest performing middle schools in the city. Enrolment into middle schools then was based on results and so it had very weak students. Gao50s explained that

the vice-principal of another school was supposed to head it. But he didn't want that school. Who does? We all knew the typical host of disciplinary and morale problems... I got sent in his place and he headed the school that I should have headed – the school where I'd been vice-principal for the last six years. Why? Because he was the classmate of the Party-Secretary of our city. They were in the Political faculty together back at university.

How did he know? Gao50s's reply was "You know of these things." He meant 'through the grapevine'.

Individual leaders were cited as the ultimate decision-makers in all the above cases. They are also the figures of the highest authority involved in the situations concerned.

Lingdao-guanxi was also needed to obtain a transfer or demotion, so as to avoid punishment for wanting these changes. Bao30s recalled,

I had to wait before my *laoxiang* [which means someone from the same hometown] became Party-secretary to ask for a transfer to become principal of the middle school in our city. We had been in university together and had become Party-members at about the same time. He understood why I wanted the transfer. Being a Party-member during our times meant that you stood for integrity...those practices that began to manifest after our country opened up were exactly things Party-membership stood against.

Had Bao30s, a disaffected member party by then, asked for a transfer from someone who did not see his point of view; he could have been punished. Bao30s was transferred as Chief of Education Bureau in a county to being the head of a key middle school in the city. It was not a demotion. Politically, his rank remained that of County Chief. His salary was unaffected and he moved from an institution in a county to one in a city.

Hong50s, however, did not have any political backing in his request for a demotion. His eventual ‘transfer’, in effect a demotion, to be principal of a village primary school, was sparked by his letter requesting to be demoted to a teacher instead of a VP. He cited “unsuitability for being an administrator” as the reason for his request. He explained the situation thus:

my ex-students who had become teachers called me to let me know, months before it happened, that their principal was going to be transferred to take the place of my retiring principal. We all knew the reason for the transfer. His friend, the Mayor of the Town was helping him to escape the increasing complaints of his incompetence, including his mismanagement of school funds. I wanted out for two reasons. I was indignant. I’d expected to be the head of the school where I’d served 25 years. And then I didn’t want to be

subordinate to an unscrupulous character. My work and life would be miserable.

Hong50s was called up for questioning by the county's Chief at the Education Bureau. Hong50s said, "He knew the real reason for my request to be demoted to teacher – his friend's coming to head our school". Hong50s stuck to his story but within two weeks was informed of his "transfer", in effect a demotion because he would be drawing a lower salary than as VP in the county school, but a little more than as a teacher there. If Hong50s had *Guanxi* with anyone above the position of Mayor of the town, he might not have been punished for his requested demotion.

4.1.2d(ii) Power Concentration and Punishment for Disrespect of Authority

Incidents recounted below show that disrespect or disobedience (or what are perceived to be such) of school authorities can lead to punishments. The high concentration of power makes a respondent's career vulnerable to such punishments. The state being the only employer, there are no options of escape (for example, by changing employer) from such punishments.

Qing60s claimed that in his competing for the position of VP in his first school (see Figure 5.13 on page 142), the negative feedback by his principal and Party-secretary on his defiance of authority accounted for someone else being chosen over him. Relationships had soured between Qing60s and his school-leaders the year before. Qing60s had told the VP to his face that he "shouldn't be a VP" when he is "so incompetent". Instead of acceding to Qing60s's request for the list of his new students, the VP had referred him to the list which on the general notice board.

Liu60s and Yang70s share the same experience of having suffered from their retiring principals' jealousy and consequently their principals' negative feedback about them to the representatives from the Education Bureau. In his second school where he was VP, Liu60s applied for a transfer. Liu60s recalled with anger,

I discovered that my principal had been slandering me at the Education Hall, making claims of my being insubordinate to him. I was extremely unhappy. So, I applied for a transfer. The authorities knew, from school inspection, that the school's academic outcomes had improved owing to my efforts, an area under my charge.

Liu60s's principal was jealous of his popularity with the teachers. Liu60s was granted his transfer: "They transferred me to a weak school as away of punishing me for seeking a transfer. Transfers are to be initiated from above." Respondents Bao30s, Deng40s, Chu40s and Qing60s, with whom this was cross-checked, affirmed his last statement. Hong50s' request for demotion and the resulting punishment has earlier been discussed. The experiences of all the respondents do generally reflect their transfers from one school to another had been initiated or decided by the authorities.

Summary: Political Dimension

The discussion under *Political Dimension* reflects the following:

- Political Context/s is the underlying influence of all the themes and sub-themes. Different political contexts determine who the figures of authority are over the careers of teachers and principals, the extent of concentration of power in these figures, and the degree of importance of the following in the careers of PRC school principals: Party-membership, attitude of subservience to state dictates, and *Family Background*. '(P1)' in Figure 4.2 (on page 111) reflect the deterministic influence of Political Context/s on all the other themes and sub-themes. The thicker red line associated with '(P1)' reflect the influence of Political Context/s, and the other associated elements (the other sub-themes), in short, *Political Dimension*, as a macro-level influence. It will be even more evident from the discussion below, how with different political contexts, the efficacy of different significant career strategies/means/strategies vary.

- The degree of power concentration influences *lingdao-guanxi*. ‘(P2)’ highlights this influence which is described as “Positively Correlating”. The greater the degree of power concentration in figures of authority, the more efficacious political connections.
- Party-membership and the attitude of Subservience to Party Dictates also directly influence the career development of an individual. These influences are indicated as ‘(P3)’ and ‘(P4)’, respectively. The first is conducive towards career development. The latter is best described as ‘influential’. These two influences, compared to that of ‘(P1)’ described above, are micro-level influences, as are the other influences within the red box that form the political context. They relate directly to the individual.
- Strong academic results are conducive to one being invited to become a Party-member, at least in the post-CR context. This is reflected as ‘(S5)’ in Figure 4.2 (on page 111).
- During and before the CR, *Family Background* had bearing on one’s acceptance into the Party. This influence is reflected as ‘(F7)’ in Figure 4.2 (on page 111), and described as ranging from “Obstructive to Conducive”.

This study’s third career-influencing main theme will now be examined.

4.1.3 Significant Means/Strategies/Competencies

This theme refers to any means, be they skills or academic and professional requisites that the respondents highlighted to be a significant reason/s for a certain change in their career paths.

The presentation of the findings under the last three sub-themes also partly addresses research question (B) or the third aim of the study, which is the conceptualisation of the careers of the respondents addressed in the last section of this chapter.

4.1.3a Guanxi

The role of *lingdao-guanxi* in the careers of the respondents has earlier been discussed. This segment looks at the role of *shuren-guanxi*, or relational ties with someone (who is not a leader) with whom one is familiar with and trusts, in the careers of the respondents.

At their stage of schooling or post-schooling, Hong50s, Yang70s, Qing60s and Su70s mentioned the use of their family's *guanxi* in getting them into schools or better schools. A friend of the cousin of Hong50's uncle on his father's side, who was in charge of the enrolment of students for the schools in town, secretly enrolled Hong50s into a junior-middle school. During the CR, the offspring of enemies of the state were not allowed to study beyond primary school. Without a middle-school education, Hong50s could never have become a teacher.

Fang50sF's father was a well-respected lecturer in a university. Fang50sF was therefore accepted as a teacher in the university's affiliated junior-middle school after the CR. Officially, she was a worker. It was after teaching for several years "at a lower salary and without the perks, one of which is state-provided housing", that she later went on to acquire her university degree. She was in her late forties by then.

Guanxi is obviously deeply embedded in Chinese society

4.1.3b Academic and Professional Qualifications

After the CR, qualifications became a dominant influence on careers as they became the official bases for career advancement.

All the respondents claimed to be possessing of the necessary academic and professional qualifications for the principalship in their respective organisation. The respondents had also attained the minimum professional ranking of Grade One, which is attainable at least six years after the beginning of a new teacher's teaching career. Five respondents (Gao50sF, Su70s, Qing60s, Jiang50s, and Hong50s) served in capacities they were not qualified for, and then later attained

the necessary qualifications. The cases of Su70s, Qing60s and Gao50sF have been discussed earlier. Hong50s and Jiang50s became *Minban* teachers towards the end of the CR, and then acquired their teaching qualifications through self-study followed by sitting for periodical state examinations. Formal teaching qualifications were needed, unlike during the CR.

4.1.3c *Nengli*

Nengli, which means ‘capacity’ in general and refers specifically to teaching-and-managerial competencies, was emphatically and oft-cited by all the respondents as the reason for their finally being promoted to principals.

The presentation of the findings under this sub-theme is the appropriate place for presenting the phases within a stage of the study’s general conceptualisation of the careers of its respondents presented in the following chapter. This is a stage of ascending the school’s career ladder, which is reflected in the career-paths of all the respondents (see Chapter Five). Progressively higher levels of leadership were acceded to before culmination in the principalship. Two phases within this stage are evident. These phases are presented within this section.

The capacity to juggle teaching and managerial duties is discerned when someone is placed in a managerial position. So for a respondent to demonstrate his/her *Nengli*, he/she has to get himself/herself appointed to a leadership position. Certainly, all the respondents claimed, in varying degrees, pedagogical effectiveness and diligence to have led them to their first leadership role, such as leader of a teaching group or even DTAs, to begin with. For five respondents (Bao30s, Liu60s, Mu60s, Zhuang70s, Wang70sF) though, their tertiary academic achievements had already brought them to the attention of school leaders even before they started teaching. For Chu40s, Deng40s, Jiang50s and Kang70sF, it was the experiences that they previously had. For instance, Chu40s’s first appointment as a school principal entailed mainly supervising the building of the school. During the CR, the construction of buildings in cities was carried out by teams of villagers. He had led such a team. Jiang50s was the student leader of his middle school during the CR. Kang70sF was given the task of taking care of

school accounts when she joined the first city school. Mild probing with regard to her comments that ‘the rascal [her then principal] had no scruples!’ could not bring forth elucidation.

However they came to be noticed, all the respondents reported themselves to have gained respect from their students, fellow-teachers and superiors for their teaching abilities. Students were always the first to bring to attention a teachers’ pedagogical strength. Yang70s said, “Students will praise or denigrate a new teacher within a week.” Thereafter, the results of the final year examinations would usually prove this. Five respondents (Deng40s, Fang50s, Hong50s, Yang70s, Liu60s) cite their students’ strong grades as evidence of their pedagogical effectiveness. The first phase in ascending the career ladder is thus named ‘Gaining Attention of School Leaders’.

The ‘Gaining Attention of School Leaders’ phase commences with the launch of the individual’s teaching career. The duration of this phase varies between individuals, being dependent on amongst other things, the individual’s own level of competency and the number of leadership positions available depends on the size of the school. Schools with big student populations might have DTAs, as well as DMEs.

It is teaching-cum-managerial competency that is stressed by eight respondents (Chu40s, Hong50s, Fang50s, Liu60s, Mu60s, Qing60s, Wang70sF and Zhang70s). Referring to the administrative duties of school leaders. Liu60s said, “You have to have *Nengli* to be able to coach students to produce high examination scores, and at the same time carry out your other administrative duties”. Examples of administrative duties cited by the different respondents include leading a group of teachers on improving learning outcomes of their students, or organising training seminars, addressing the entire school, and organising an examination efficiently, amongst others.

Nengli, proven and developed as a respondent moves from one leadership position to the next, is the legitimate criterion for the career advancement of many of the respondents in this study. The second phase within the stage of ascending the career leader is named the ‘Demonstrating and Building Capacity;

Consolidating Support'. An individual has to establish, in the minds of his school leaders, that he has the qualities of a leader. Simultaneously, through the successively higher leadership roles he/she plays, he/she has to establish, or build, this capacity within himself/herself. This second phase is described below.

4.1.3d Harmonious Relationships with Others

The penalties on the careers of three respondents (Qing60s, Liu60s and Yang70s) for their conflicts with their superiors have been described earlier. Eight others (Bao30s, Chu40s, Fang50s, Hong50s, Mu60s, Liu60s, Yang70s, Wang70sF) stressed that managing one's relationships well is central to successfully carrying out one's administrative duties. This feedback, seemingly stereotypical, was nevertheless not pre-empted or solicited. Gao50s's comments speak for this group, "You can't get things done if you can't get your teachers to co-operate with you. They won't cooperate with you if they don't like you." Deng40s's popularity brought principalship upon him. After four years, on the basis of failing health, he had successfully gotten himself demoted to being a teacher, only to be coerced into principalship four years later. The then principal was extremely unpopular with the seventy strong staff members due to his incompetence. His school was the city's second best school with over a thousand students. Parents and teachers' uproar in the demand that Deng40s become principal again was conceded to.

Good working relationships with fellow teachers were cited by five respondents (Chu40s, Hong50, Liu60s, Mu60s and Yang70s) as a factor for their having been elected a leader. For Hong50s (see Figure 5.7 on page 132) and Liu60s (see Figure 5.10 on page 137), their fellow colleagues' votes cast in their favour accounted for their appointments to the positions of VP and Principal's Assistant (PA) respectively. Yang70s (see Figure 5.16 on page 146) was soon made DTA in his first school in the city, because the then DTA was extremely unpopular with the teachers for the way he lorded himself over them. So, the teachers would communicate through Yang70s instead. Pan60sF was once summoned by the local education authorities on account of the teachers in her school petitioning

against her as a VP. After investigations, the authorities decided that it was only her authoritarian style that was causing discord and she was counselled to change her style of management to a more consultative one.

Humility and fairness in relation to others, four respondents (Bao30s, Hong40s, Wang70sF and Yang70s) expressed, are the keys to managing one's relationship well. Even after attaining the principalship, good relationships are still important to maintaining the position. At the end of an each year, a principal is evaluated by his staff members in the five areas of morality (in the sense of virtue or good qualities), ability, diligence, results and financial scrupulousness (integrity in relation to money). Randomly selected teachers are also interviewed about the principal. This is conducted by representatives of the local education authorities. Qing60s said, "A principal who is heavy-handed or does not get on well with his subordinates is first counselled and given at least three chances to change his style." According to seven respondents (Bao30s, Chu40s, Deng40s, Jiang50s, Liu60s, Mu60s and Gao60s), there have been principals who have failed such an evaluation. Other respondents have yet to come across such an incident, and some view the evaluation as a mere formality.

Summary - Significant Strategies/Mean/Competencies

From the above discussion under *Significant Strategies/Mean/Competencies*, the following are evident:

- *Guanxi* can facilitate the acquisition of qualifications (academic and professional). The effect of its influence is described as "concessional and catalytically fulfilling". An individual who has the right connections is exempted from official rules governing a situation. Consequently, the individual's objectives are fulfilled much quicker than if he/she had to wait till when he/she is able to meet these official rules. The unofficial influence of Guanxi is represented by dashed lines marked '(S4)' in Figure 4.2 on page 111.

- The *guanxi* network of an individual's family members is his/her basic network which he/she expands and builds upon through his/her development. In turn, his/her *guanxi* network is also that of his/her family. In Figure 4.2, (F5)* reflects the influence of *Family Background* on Guanxi. This influence is described as “primary and contributive”.
- The other sub-themes under *Significant Strategies/Mean/Competencies* are official criteria where career development towards principalship is concerned. As earlier pointed out, *Family Background* influences Qualifications - Academic and Professional (see ‘(F3)’ in Figure 4.2). This sub-theme and that of Nengli influence career development from the point when an individual obtains professional training and accreditation onwards. These influences are marked ‘(S1)’ and ‘(S2)’ in Figure 4.2 respectively. Their influences are described as “requisite/conducive”. Qualifications and ability beyond the requisite levels for any particular position conduce to further career development.
- *Family Background* positively or negatively shapes an individual's attitude and interactions with others. In Figure 4.2, (F4)* represents the influence of *Family Background* on Harmonious Relationships with Others. The label ‘(S3)’ represents the influence of this sub-theme, which can also be positively or negatively influential, on the individual's career development.
- Qualifications – Academic and Professional influences *Circumstance*. Having some level of education enabled some respondents to become *Minban* teachers, which in turn prompted them to continue with the vocation after the CR. This influence is reflected as ‘(S6)*’ in Figure 4.2.

This study's fourth main career-influencing theme is examined next.

4. 1.4 Circumstances

Circumstances is basically a set of conditions that prompts a respondent to eventually chooses teaching. The discussions under this theme's two sub-themes are conducted in a more general way to reflect many other aspects involved that accounted for the respondents eventually entering teaching.

4.1.4a Enrolment Process of Educational Institutions

This encompasses both the enrolment process itself, the rules concerned and the aspect of competition, which is involved in respondents' enrolment into teacher training schools and universities.

While their family's financial needs might have prompted Yang70s, Su70s and Kang60s to take the first exit towards financial independence after junior-middle school, it was not what ultimately led them to teaching. Much also has to do with the respondent's performance in the national examinations and the competition involved in getting a place in one's preferred institution. Prior to, or after the final national examination, students must register their preferences for the school or institution for which they wish to be considered. Thereafter, the actual enrolment of students is supposedly carried out on a competitive basis. Both Yang70s and Su70s were able to obtain places in the teachers' training schools of their choices. Conversely, teachers' school was one of Kang60's last options. Kang60s' first few options were for medical schools, which also enrolled junior-middle school graduates for training as nurses and medical personnel in general. However, competition - and of course Kang60's grades - were such that she was assigned one of her last options instead. After tears, she accepted it for fear of faring worse in her second attempt. So, basically a combination of reasons accounted for these respondents finally becoming primary school teachers: family financial standing, preferences and competition.

Deng40s was happy pursuing a four-year wireless communication course in the Physics Faculty. The country's re-organisation of its tertiary institutions along Soviet lines, after the GLF, led to the closing of the Physics faculty in Deng40's

university. After returning to his city, he opted for the teacher-training course offered him. To pursue his original course would require that he repeat his first year whereas with the former, his first year in the previous university was accepted.

Liu60s had been inspired by the powerful edifices that had sprung up in the cities. A very confident top student, he only registered the Architecture Faculty at Tsinghua University as his choice of university. Usually, at least four categories, which amount to between twelve to twenty options (depending on provinces), in order of prestige, are registered. He recalled with disappointment, "My teacher did not stop me but told me to add the line after the first line in the registration form, "Will otherwise accept any university assigned." As well as he did in the examination, he did not qualify for his first option and was posted to a teachers' university. He thought he would live with it but after six months, could not forget Architecture. Liu60s wanted to drop out then and re-sit the university entrance examination at the end of the year. He discovered that a student already enrolled in a university, would not be allowed to pursue the course of action he had in mind. He reconciled himself to his fate.

The rigidity in enrolment institutional rules suggested in the experiences of the Deng40s and Liu60s prompted reflection on the experiences of the other respondents. Apart from four respondents (Fang50s, Gao50s, Hong50s and Jiang50s), whose education were disrupted by the CR, rigidity may be said to be seen from the fact that all respondents' entries into tertiary education, including teacher training, were at designated points in their education. Apart from Chu30s, all the other respondents entered teaching directly from schools or tertiary education. They had no backgrounds in any other vocations.

4.1.4b Proclivity for Book-Learning, Limited Options, Timely Opportunities

The choices made by six respondents (Kang60, Qing60, Pan60, Zhang70, Su70s, Yang70s) have been discussed elsewhere in more relevant contexts. The following are experiences of other respondents that reflect the sub-theme concerned.

The parents of respondents who grew up in rural backgrounds (Chu40s, Deng40s, Hong50s), were supportive when they did well in school, while the parents of Jiang50s, Su70s were not. In Su70s's words, "they did not understand the value of education." However, even for those who had parental support, their home environments could not have been conducive to learning. The educational attainments of their siblings respondents suggest this (see Appendix Five on pages 232-234). Su70s, who rose to the rank of Superintendent, said of his villagers,

They see it as waste of time and money to send their children to school. Most don't complete their primary education. What's worse is that children who've had some form of schooling sometimes refuse to or are unable to plough the fields well. So the villagers say it's better not to send them at all...then they'd at least learn to plough and be used to it from an early age...

It is therefore persuasive when these respondents cite a natural inclination for book-learning and thus a love for it, as factors for their staying in school when most children, like their own siblings, did not. Chu40s, whose three older siblings were not educated and remained farmers, sought help on his own initiative to get himself a place in a senior-middle school in town. Deng40s waited on tables and washed dishes to get himself through middle school.

Respondents Hong50s, Fang50sF and Gao50s chose teaching given the circumstances they found themselves in after having been penalised on account of their family backgrounds during the CR. Hong50s became a *Minban* teacher as the CR was nearing its end. Circumstances were such that teaching emerged as the first opportunity for expediently solving practical basic needs. There was a need for a junior-middle school teacher. His senior-middle school teacher recommended him for the vacancy in the village school. With the CR at its end (although this did not mean that all the CR practices had therefore ceased, or that the general mentality had changed overnight), the principal accepted Hong60. The reasons Hong50 gave for accepting teaching are that "It is easier than working in the fields. And in class, there is no one to lord over me." He earned

work-points instead of a salary. His dream had been to be a “scientist ... or at least a professional in a science-related field”.

Fang50sF might have also become a university lecturer, like her father. The CR broke out and, although a forestry worker, she became a *Minban* teacher. She seemed to have found her niche even then. When the CR ended and she returned to the city, it was convenient to accept the teaching position in the affiliated school of her father’s university. Gao50s never wanted to be in the teaching field because “having been exposed to students and teachers so much, I guess one gets bored with the idea”. He had no idea, like many other respondents, what he might want for a vocation and then the CR broke out, and he was also sent to a remote village. When the CR ended, he chose to enter teaching because “it was more suitable than doing land surveillance”.

For all the four respondents whose education was affected by the CR, choosing teaching also had to do with their capacity for book-learning. Under their circumstances, which included limited options, teaching was not unattractive. It was an intellectual vocation most readily accessible to them. It presented itself as a timely opportunity that served as a pragmatic solution to the basic need for a means of livelihood.

Summary - Circumstances

From the discussion under *Circumstances*, the following are evident:

- *Family Background* is intrinsically involved in the set of circumstances that eventually compels an individual to enter teaching. This influence is reflected as ‘(F6)*’ and described as ‘Ameliorative or Contributive’ in Figure 4.2 (on page 111). For example, the financial background of some respondents contributed to the set of circumstances that forced the decision to enter teaching after the completion of junior-middle school. Also, the value a family sets by education is contributive towards the choice of teaching as a career.

- The influence of *Circumstances* on the entry of a respondent into teaching is described as ‘compelling/coercive’. All the respondents were compelled to enter teaching regardless of whether it was their desired choice of vocation or not (see ‘(C2)’ in Figure 4.2). Certainly, rigid enrolment criteria of institutions coerced some to enter teaching (see ‘(C1)’ in Figure 4.2).
- Qualifications – Academic and Professional influences *Circumstances*. A junior-middle school graduate, for instance, cannot hope to enter a teachers’ university. This influence is reflected as ‘(S6)*’ in Figure 4.2 and is described as “Influential”.

The inter-relationships of this study’s themes and sub-themes, highlighted in point form under ‘Summary’ after the presentation of each set of themes and sub-themes have been diagrammatically summarised in Figure 4.2 (on page 111).

4.1.5 A Diagrammatic Summary of the Relationships Between this Study’s

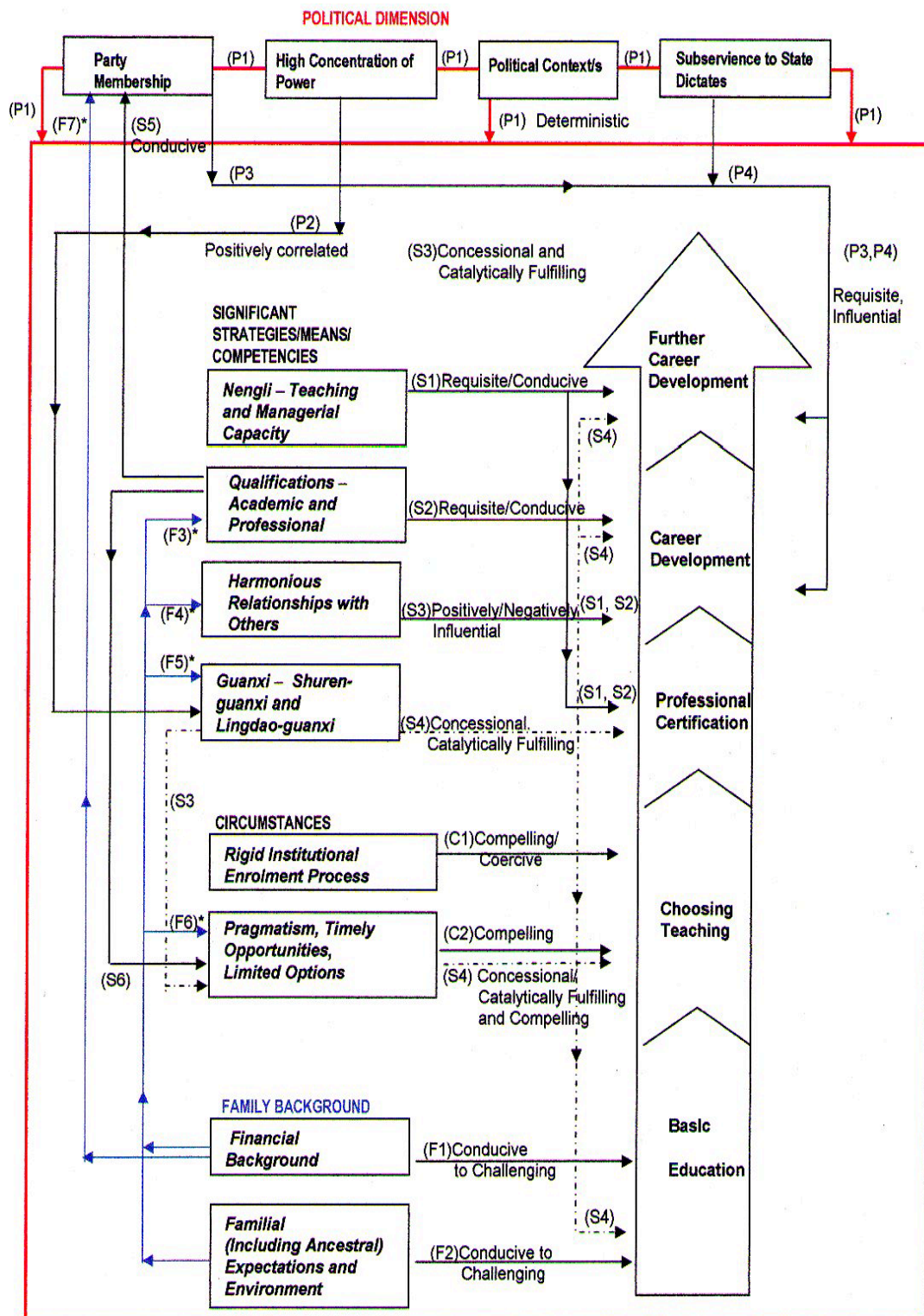
Themes and Sub-themes

Figure 4.2 is the diagrammatic summary of the inter-relationships between the themes and sub-themes presented above. In the figure, an arrow indicates the direction of influence. The texts closest to each line describe the nature of the influence the line marks. The alphanumeric label in front of these words, for example, ‘(P1)’, ‘(S1)’, ‘(F1)’, and so on, serves only for reference of the relationship concerned to its relevant place in the discussion above. For a label containing an asterisk, the description for the influence concerned is found just below the diagram.

It is discernible from Figure 4.2 that *Family Background* is the primary influence within *Political Dimensions*. It affects both *Circumstances* and *Significant Strategies/Mean/Competencies*. The greatest number of arrows emanate from it to these two themes while none emanate from any of them towards it.

Thus, the first aim of the first research question has been fully addressed, and its first objective realised. The second aim or aspect of this research question will now be addressed, which will be for the achievement of this study's second objective.

Figure 4.2 Summary of Influences on the Career Development of Respondents



F(3)* -challenging to conducive F(6)*- ameliorative or contributive
 F(4)* Influential S(6)*- Influential
 (F5)* - primary and conducive

4.2 THE ROLE OF THE PRC'S SOCIETAL CULTURE IN THE CAREERS OF THE RESPONDENTS

This section relates to the second facet of research question (A) and its associated research guiding question (5):

(A) What are the major factors influencing the careers of mainland Chinese primary and

secondary school principals?

(5) What influence has the Chinese societal culture played, as distinct from other factors, in shaping principals' careers?

Addressing these questions will achieve this study's second objective. To achieve this objective, GLOBE's (House et al, 2004) cultural dimensions are relied on to identify from the data, experiences or situations that relate to these cultural dimensions, and then to explicate the effects caused by the cultural dimension concerned. In the presentation of findings to this study's theme and sub-themes (see Section 4.1, page 77), are those experiences and situations wherein the dynamics of influences and their effects have been captured. GLOBE's (House et al, 2004) cultural dimensions, being "core axes around which significant sets of values, beliefs and practices cluster" (Dimmock, 2000:51) are applied to them to identify norms of behaviours and practices. GLOBE's (House et al, 2004) dimensions, their definitions and their corresponding specific questionnaire items, are reflected in Table 4.1 (on page 113). The discussion that follows is with reference to this table.

To avoid being repetitious in using the discussions under section 4.1, relevant sections are cited by way of reference to the themes and subthemes under which they were carried out. It will be apparent also from the ensuing exercise that sometimes the specific questionnaire item for gauging a culture's society standing in the dimension concerned, acts as a better tool than its definition. The conclusions drawn are summarised in this chapter's conclusion, and are also reflected in Table 4.1. The exercise will now ensue.

Table 4.1 GLOBE's Cultural Dimensions and Their Corresponding Questionnaire Items

	Cultural Dimension	Specific Questionnaire Item
1.	Power Distance The degree to which members of a collective expect power to be distributed equally.	Followers are expected to obey their leaders without question.
2.	In-Group Collectivism The degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations and family.	Employees feel great loyalty toward this organisation.
3.	Institutional Collectivism The degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward distribution of resources and collective action	Leaders encourage group loyalty even if individual goals suffer.
4.	Assertiveness The degree to which individuals in organisations or societies are assertive, confrontational and aggressive in social relationships	People are generally dominant in their relationships with each other.
5.	Uncertainty Avoidance The extent to which a society, organisation or group relies on social norms, rules and procedures to alleviate unpredictability of future events.	Most people lead highly structured lives with few unexpected events.
6	Future Orientation The extent to which individuals engage in future-orientated behaviours such as delaying individual or collective gratification, planning, and investing in the future.	More people live for the present rather than for the future.
7.	Performance Orientation The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence.	Students are encouraged to strive for continuously improved performance.
8.	Gender Egalitarianism The degree to which a collective minimises gender inequality.	Boys are encouraged more than girls to attain a higher education.
9.	Humane Orientation The degree to which a collective encourages and reward individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and kind to others.	People are generally very tolerant of mistakes.

(Javidan et al, 2004:32

The extensive discussion under the sub-theme of Power Concentration and Lindgao Guanxi (section 4.1.2d on page 91) underscores the strength of the influence of cultural dimension of Power Distance in the careers of the respondents. Power is concentrated in political leaders. This study concludes that Power Distance is great in the PRC. One's career can be very rapidly advanced, regardless of official rules, on the strength of one's ties with political leaders. One's career could also suffer unreasonably for the lack of or the weakness of such.

The PRC's high Power Distance therefore makes relational ties with leaders a very powerful career strategy. The more political ties an individual cultivates and the stronger these are, the greater is the possibility of the individual achieving his/her career objectives. The higher these ties ascend up the hierarchy of the education system and outside of it, the better placed the individual will be to achieve his career objectives. Weak or non-existing political relations could render an individual's career vulnerable to the ambitions of those who have strong political relations as one of their career strategies.

In relation to In-Group Collectivism, the discussion under this study's major theme of *Family Background* (section 4.1.1 on page 78), and under its sub-theme of Party Rule – Subservience to Party Dictates (section 4.1.2c on page 90) are illustrative of the PRC culture's strength in this dimension. Individuals in the PRC are group- rather than self-oriented. Strong group-orientation of the individual results in career decisions being made under the constraints of familial (including ancestral) and/or state or social needs, expectations and obligations. Older respondents, and especially those of strong communist convictions, evince the attitude of upholding state or party dictates over the personal preferences. The greater the strength of the attribute of In-Group Collectivism, the more externally controlled is an individual's career in the society concerned. This effect is further reinforced by the PRC's strength in Institutional Collectivism which is reflected by the discussion under the aspect of the educational authorities' intolerance of disrespect for its decisions (see section 4.1.2d(ii) on page 91); and that under the sub-theme of Party Rule – Subservience to Party Dictates (section 4.1.2c on page 90). All public schools being under the state which is ruled by the CCP, its

education system is thus the institution concerned for all its teachers throughout the country. The collectivism is oftentimes coercively enforced. Working against the decisions or the dictates of the state would be detrimental to an individual's own interests. The PRC's strength in Power Distance makes it able to effect this, and also allow leaders, in which much power is invested, to abuse this power in effecting it for personal rather than legitimate purposes.

The PRC's low level of Assertiveness is reflected in the following: strong In-Group orientation just discussed above; the discussion under the sub-theme of Harmonious Relationship with Others (section 4.1.3d on page 102); and the aspect of the educational authorities' intolerance of disrespect towards its decisions (section 4.1.2d(ii) on page 96). Acquiescence, obedience and harmony, at least on the surface, are expected of the individual in the PRC's culture. So, qualities such as co-operation with colleagues higher authorities, being or appearing to be more self-effacing in relation to decisions of the authorities, rather than being assertive and individualistic, are advantageous to one's career. They help to smooth one's career path.

Uncertainty Avoidance is a dimension measured using the specific questionnaire item, "Most people lead highly structured lives with few unexpected events" (Javidan et al, 2005:30). It reflects the extent of intolerance on unpredictability of future events that is manifested in a reliance on established rules, practices and social norms to alleviate such unpredictability. This study is unable to conclude how the PRC culture as a whole stands in Uncertainty Avoidance. It only draws the conclusion that the degree of this in the PRC depends on the prevailing political context. From the launch of Deng's Reforms after the CR till the present, Uncertainty Avoidance has been increasing, and relative to the CR and pre-CR periods, it is high. The argument for this conclusion follows.

As a whole, predictability in the lives of people in the PRC, in the historical period (spanning the pre-CR, CR and post-CR) concerned, could not have been high, given the changes in the country's historical political contexts in the space of a little over six decades. Consider too, the extraordinary period of the CR, when the very lives of school educators, especially principals, often hung in the balance. Only after the launch of Deng's Reforms (which extends up to the

present), which saw the implementation of rules and policies aimed at professionalising and ‘depoliticising’ the teaching profession, was stability, and an increasing degree of it, discerned. Apart from this, predictability is manifested in the general institutional rigidity in the PRC’s enrolment procedures and rules (that were re-implemented after the CR), the rather cloistered lives of the respondents (discussed under section 4.1.4 Circumstances on page 105), and the kinds of familial influences and constraints in the face of the limited options most had, given their limited financial means. Certainly, *Guanxi*, the norm widely relied upon for removing personal instabilities, and in itself destabilising for the society as a whole, has always been present. For the individual who uses it to remove the unexpected or undesirable events in his/her own life, it is a stabilising factor. For others, and for the society as a whole, it is destabilising since rules no longer apply, the outcome of situations are not predictable. The less stability there is, the more will *Guanxi* be resorted to as individuals use it to stabilise their own lives. The greater the stability, the less is the need to resort to it. This is not to say that in predictable environments, there will not be individuals who resort to it for achieving their career aims. In essence, the professionalisation of teaching translates into increasing its predictability by using official rules and procedures and the basis of professional competency as the basis for decisions. Hence, this study can only conclude that the PRC has a higher degree of Uncertainty Avoidance, post-CR and up to the present. This higher degree of Uncertainty Avoidance was and is encouraging of the pursuit of academic and professional qualifications, and is probably also de-emphasising of party-membership as a criterion for attaining school principalship. High Power Distance being essentially responsible for the efficacy and the exercise of relational ties with leaders, reducing Power Distance will contribute towards a higher degree of Uncertainty Avoidance.

Similarly, this study concludes that the PRC culture only came to be characterised by a higher level of Future Orientation, after the CR and following Deng’s Reforms. Future Orientation, measured by the inversely-scored questionnaire item, “More people live for the present rather than for the future” (Javidan et al, 2005:30), reflects the extent that a collective’s individuals engage in activities for a brighter future. Experiences of the respondents reflect different

orientations in the different political contexts. During the CR, understandably, educators, the targets of attacks, sought to preserve their lives. They lived for the present then. Many probably lived from day to day. This orientation changed with the dawning of the post-CR revolution. Except for Bao30s, the oldest respondent who opted for early retirement, all the other respondents began investing in the future through the courses and training they pursued, which boosted career prospects. Obviously, they did so because they were rewarded for doing so. This is to say that for this study's context concerned, the PRC's Performance Orientation generally correlates with that of its Future Orientation in its different political contexts. Following Deng's Reforms and up to the present point in time, in the context of this study, the PRC is strong in both Future Orientation and Performance Orientation, where else during the CR, the converse would have been true.

No conclusive statement can be made about Gender Egalitarianism in the PRC. Certainly, a bias against the female gender is seen in the fact that in rural areas, the education of girls was not considered important. Apart from this however, no other data relating to Gender Egalitarianism emerged from this study (which has only four female respondents out of a total of 16) in a dominant way.

The data collected in this study do not reflect on the dimension of Humane Orientation which is measured by its specific questionnaire item, "People are generally very tolerant of mistakes".

Summary

The above conclusions arrived at are reflected in Table 4.2 in the following two pages.

Table 4.2 Summary of This Study's Findings, With Reference to GLOBE's Dimensions, on the Role of the PRC's Culture in the Careers of School Principals

	Dimension	This Study's Finding	Effects on the Careers of PRC School Principals	This Study's (in red) Finding versus GLOBE's Finding (in blue) (House et al, 2004)
1.	Power Distance	High - characterised by high concentration of power in political leaders	Makes <i>Guanxi</i> with leaders a very efficacious career strategy.	High : High
2.	In-Group Collectivism	High - owing to antiquated Confucian influence	<p>Renders the shaping of their careers to be highly externally influenced. Career decisions are made under the constraints of familial obligations.</p> <p>The influence of In-Group Collectivism is arising from the antiquated influence of Confucianism.</p>	High : High
3.	Institutional Collectivism	High - owing to the influence of the communist ideology and/or the authoritarian ruling style of the single-ruling party, the Chinese Communist Party;	<p>Is reinforcing of the effects arising from the more antiquated Confucian influence under In-Group Collectivism.</p> <p>The PRC's strength in this dimension is owing to a coercive collectivity imposed by its single ruling party.</p>	High : High
4.	Assertiveness	Low - the individual is vulnerable to the fact that the state is chiefly, and possibly, the only employer where he/she is concerned;	Makes the ability to cultivate and maintain good working relationships with coworkers and self-effacement in relation to leaders conducive to career development. Qualities of assertiveness, especially if productive of discord and defiance of authority in the work context are liabilities where career development is concerned.	Low : Average

Table 4.2 Summary of This Study's Findings Concerning the Role of the PRC's Culture in the Careers of School Principals (Cont'd)

	Dimension	This Study's Finding	Effects on the Careers of PRC School Principals	This Study's (in red) Finding versus GLOBE's Finding (in blue) (House et al, 2004)
5.	Uncertainty Avoidance	Indeterminate for the PRC as a whole. However, a higher degree is discernible post-CR compared to the pre-CR and CR periods prior	The higher degree of this dimension in the post-CR period is encouraging of the pursuits of academic and professional qualifications for career advancement, while at the same time de-emphasising of party-membership as a criterion for principalship.	Indeterminate : Low
6.	Future Orientation	Indeterminate for the PRC as a whole. However, a higher degree is discernible post-CR compared to the pre-CR and CR periods prior	The higher degree of this dimension in the post-CR period is encouraging of the pursuits of academic and professional qualifications for career advancement, while at the same time de-emphasising of party-membership as a criterion for principalship.	Indeterminate; High
7.	Performance Orientation	Indeterminate for the PRC as a whole. However, a higher degree is discernible post-CR compared to the pre-CR and CR periods prior	The higher degree of this dimension in the post-CR period is encouraging of the pursuits of academic and professional qualifications for career advancement, while at the same time de-emphasising of party-membership as a criterion for principalship.	Indeterminate : High
8.	Gender Egalitarianism	No finding relating to this dimension emerged from this study	-	Indeterminate : Average
9.	Humane Orientation	No finding relating to this dimension emerged from this study	-	Indeterminate : Average

Conclusion

This chapter has presented findings to the two aspects of this study's first research question. It has achieved the study's first objective of capturing career-influencing factors (see Appendix One, pages 221-225). Its first outcome is its identification of four major career-shaping themes and their respective sub-themes which were then diagrammatically summarised in Figure 4.2 (on page 111). Its second outcome is an analysis of the effects of PRC's culture on the careers of its respondents, through the use of GLOBE's (House et al, 2004) dimensions as tool. Table 4.2 on page 118) summarises the conclusions arrived at. This outcome is in partial fulfillment of its second objective, the complete fulfillment of which will be in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS (II)

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings to the second main research question:

(B) Can the careers of the participant Chinese principals be conceptualised? If so, how?

This chapter is organised into two sections. Its first section comprises eight sub-sections. Four of these are on the career trajectories and the profiles of the respondents, and are grouped according to the decade/s of their birth. Each sub-section is followed by a brief discussion of the chief features of their career trajectories. Their presentation serves this study's third objective of capturing its participants' career trajectories. It paves the way for the achievement of the fourth objective, the conceptualisations of their careers. This is achieved in the second section of this chapter.

5.1 CAREER TRAJECTORIES OF RESPONDENTS

Abbreviations used in and notes pertinent to the presentation of the career trajectories of the respondents are reflected in Figure 5.1 below.

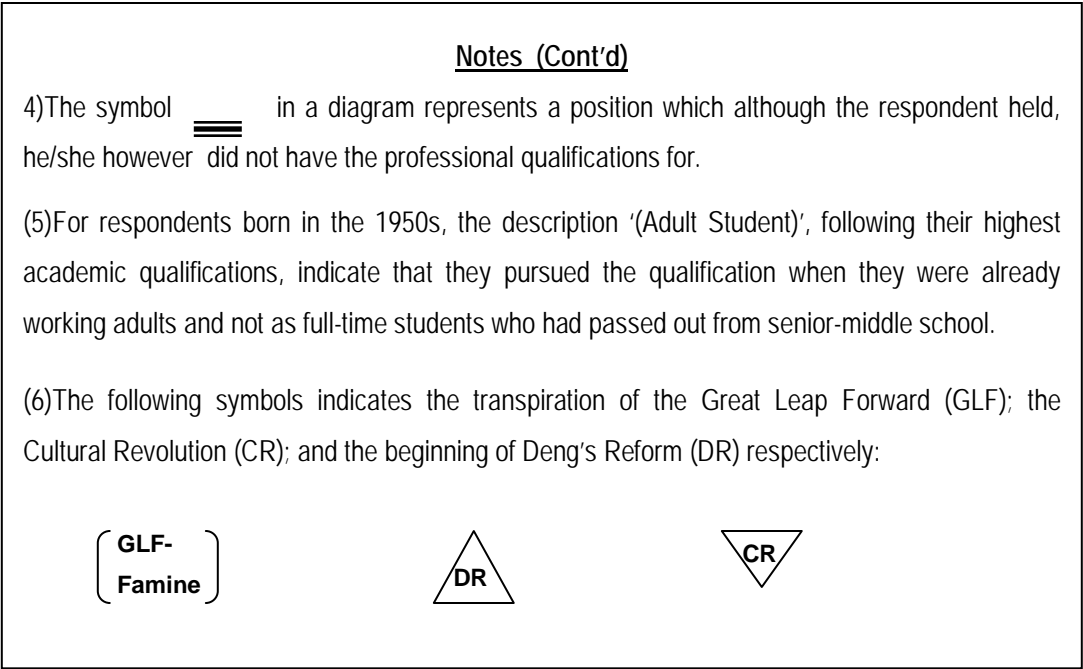
The profiles and career trajectories of the respondents are presented in groups based on their decade/s of birth and in the descending order of the ages of the respondents. Adopting this approach brings together respondents who are closest in age and are therefore likely to have experienced the same kind of historical climate or event.

Many emergent patterns in their career trajectories thus become more readily discernible.

Figure 5.1 Abbreviations and Notes

<u>Abbreviations</u>	
DME – Dean of Moral Education	T – Teacher
DTA – Dean of Teaching Affairs	DTA – Vice Dean of Teaching Affairs
dy - deputy	
VP – Vice-principal	
Dy Chief Ed. Bureau– Deputy Chief of Education Bureau	
Jnr –mid sch – Junior-middle school	cty – county
P – Principal	ed. - education
Party-Sec – Party-Secretary	pte - private
PA – Principal's Assistant	sch - school
Snr- mid sch – Senior-middle school	
<u>Notes</u>	
(1)The diagrams reflect the respondents' career trajectories up to the end of the year 2007, unless otherwise indicated.	
(2)The trajectories are not fully comparable with each other because each school has different leadership positions. For example, some schools may not have the positions of VDTA while other may not have the position of DME, and so on.	
(3)The amount of vertical distance in representing a promotion or demotion is also not strictly representative of the number of positions between the initial and final positions of a respondent. This is because there is no official ranking of the different leadership positions in different schools. For example, even if a DTA is generally recognised as more important than a DME, there is no official rule by which to rank DTA against a DME. There is usually not a well-defined career ladder in a school, and thus the career ladders between schools are not clearly comparable either. Similarly, there is also no yardstick by which to represent respondent Chu40s's rise in position from that a DTA to that of Dy County Chief of Education	

Figure 5.1 Abbreviations and Notes (Cont'd)



5.1.1 Career Trajectories of Respondents Born in the 1930s and 1940s

Bao30s's career trajectory is shown in Figure 5.2. Bao30s became a DTA in a surprisingly short period of time, given that this was before the CR. His school's Party-secretary's high regard for an academically accomplished degree-holder, rare in the poor and underdeveloped county that he had opted to move to from his distant hometown to serve in, accounted for this.

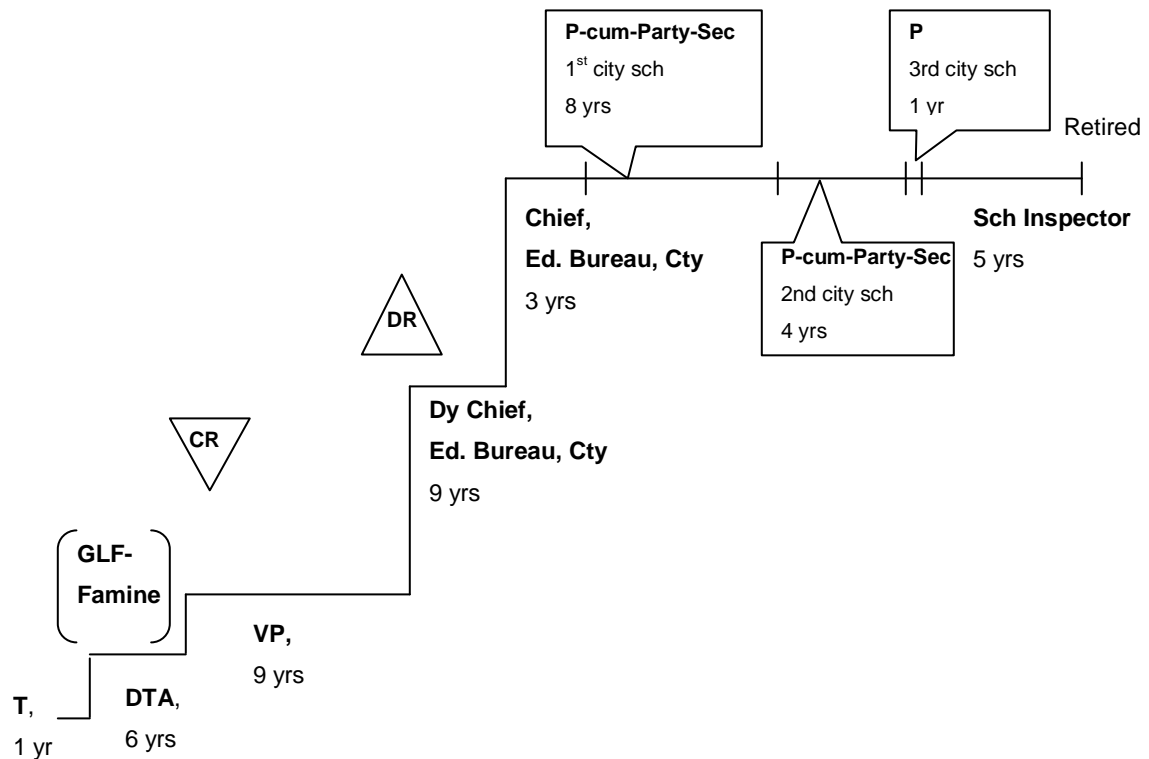
Figure 5.2 Career Trajectory of Bao30s

T (Chemistry T, Snr Mid sch, cnty, 1 yr) → DTA (6 yrs) → VP (9 yrs) → Dy Chief, Ed Bureau, cty (4 yrs)
 → Dy Chief, Ed Bureau, cty (4 yrs) → P-cum-Party-Sec (8 yrs) → P-cum-Party-Sec (4 yrs) → Sch
 Inspector (5 yrs) → Retirement

Age he became principal: 43

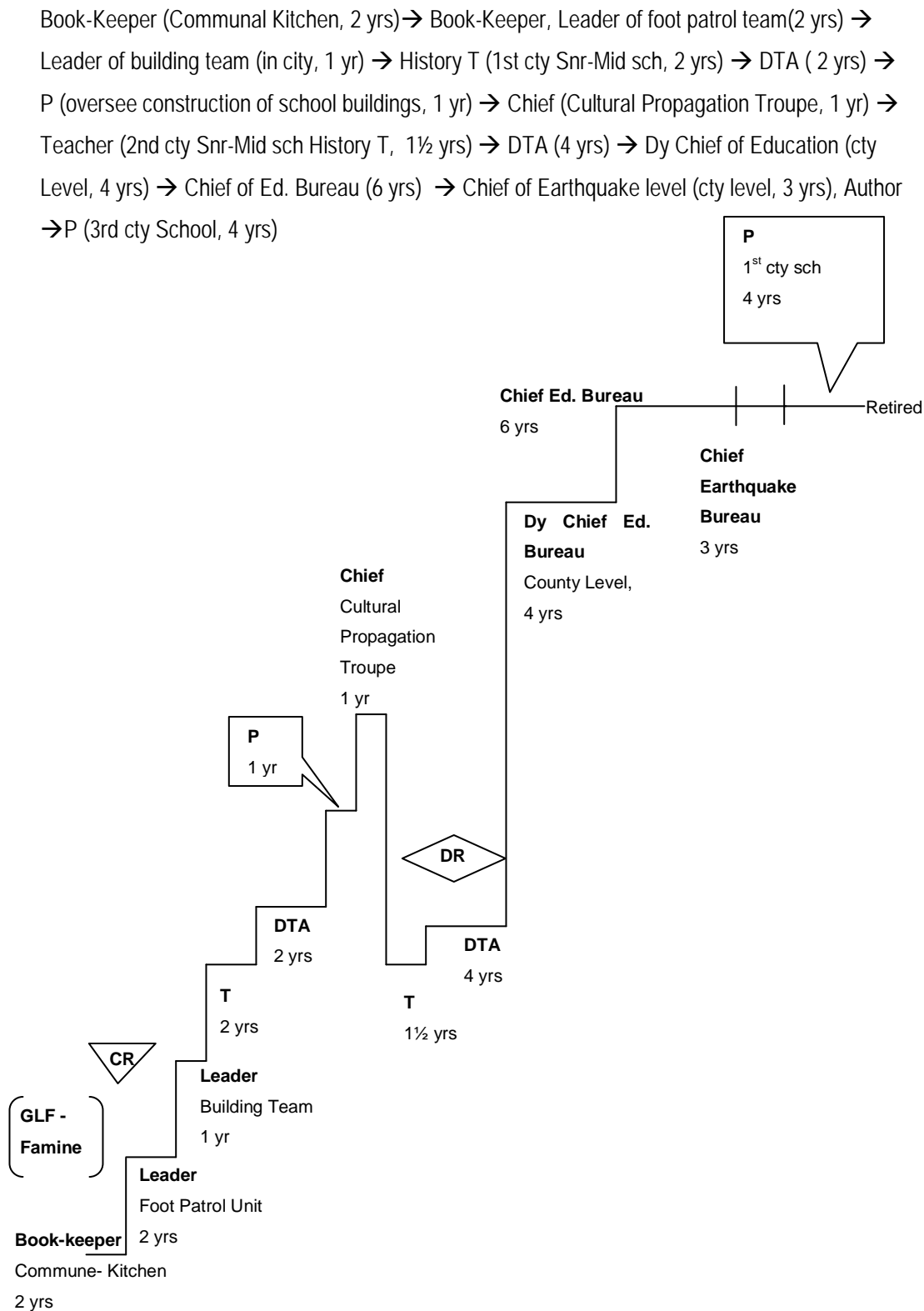
Highest Academic Qualifications: Degree

Teaching Rank: Snr-Mid Sch, High Grade



Chu40s' career trajectory is reflected in Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3 Career Trajectory of Chu40s



In Chu40s's appointment as Chief of a Cultural Propaganda Troupe, his chief responsibility, like in his first appointment, was to oversee the building of the physical structures for the troupe. After the completion of the buildings, Chu40s requested of them to let him return to teaching, a vocation he found "more meaningful than overseeing the erection of edifices." As a foot-patrol team leader, Chu40s had also been an *erhu* (a Chinese string instrument) player in the propaganda team.

Chu40s's attainment of a university degree, his rise to the position of Dy Chief of Education of his county because of this degree, and his transfer to the position of Chief of the earthquake bureau have been recounted in the previous chapter. In this latter position, Chu40s authored a book on the history of his province. He was later successful in his request to head a school instead. Education had always been his passion. This request took place after the Party-secretary who had transferred him to the earthquake bureau in the first place, had been imprisoned for embezzlement of public funds.

Deng40s's career trajectory is reflected in Figure 5.4. Deng40s, motivated by his love for Physics, strove against poverty in order to complete his senior-middle school and university education. His older brother, who had only completed his primary school education, was an odd-job worker. After spending ten years as a worker in a factory during the CR, Deng40s was delighted to return to teaching. His humility in relating to others combined with his highly respected teaching skills, brought principalship upon him. His colleagues pushed for his appointment to principal upon the retirement of their principal. He "could not get out of it", and when he cited his inexperience with school administration, he was given six months to act as VP so as to observe and learn. Deng40s's four years as principal were stress-filled: "I had not learnt to delegate. Some of my subordinates were older than myself and some were previously my superiors." After repeated requests to remain a teacher, he was finally successful in getting himself demoted four years later. He had cited declining health after he was admitted into hospital for a bladder infection. He had also suffered

drastic weight loss in the previous four years. Deng40s was able to return to his passion only for another four years. When the school’s principal literally ran away from his responsibilities by disappearing to another city, Deng40s was once again coerced to become principal. His fellow teachers again petitioned for it. The much-loved Deng40s was asked to stay one more year when he was due to retire. He retired at sixty-one instead. After his retirement, Bai40s’s second career began to flourish. He consults to the local education authorities on how to raise teaching quality of the Sciences, the revision of textbooks, and the training of school principals. He trains school principals and gives trains teachers in schools.

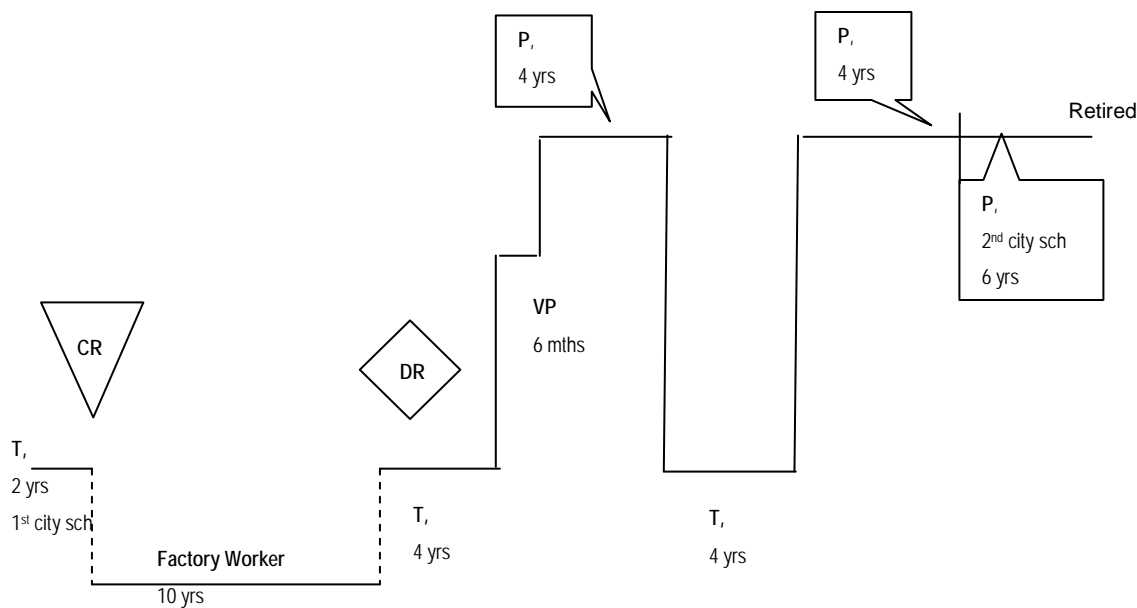
Figure 5.4 Career Trajectory of Deng40s

Physics T (Snr-Mid sch, 2 yrs, 1st city sch) → Car Factory Worker (10 yrs) → Math T (4 yrs) → VP (6 months) → P (5 yrs) → T (4 yrs) → P (4 yrs) → Principal (6 yrs) → P (2nd city sch, 6 yrs) → Retirement

Age he became principal: 37

Highest Academic Qualification: Degree

Teaching Rank: Snr-Mid Sch, Special Grade Teacher (Physics)



***5.1.1a Comments on the Career Trajectories of Respondents Born in the 1930s
and 1940s***

Bao30s's and Chu40s's career trajectories involved rather high positions outside of school. The CR arrested the career development of Bao30s and Deng40s. The CR, however, provided Chu40s educational opportunities that later led to a meteoric rise. With the launch of DR, the careers of these respondents flourished. Bao30s and Chu40s rose to become chiefs of bureaux whilst Deng40s became a Special Grade Teacher and principal.

The following four chronological periods are evident from the above career trajectories. These four periods, henceforth referred to as 'Common Periods' for easy reference, are those of (1)acquiring basic education; (2)acquiring higher or professional education; (3)career development; and (4)further career development. These respondents could not have become teachers without the first two stages. By "basic" education is meant the minimum level of education of eligibility for teacher training. Before and after the CR, this was up to junior-middle school. Prior to the CR though, junior-middle school comprised only two years of schooling whereas after the CR, it comprised four years of schooling. During the CR, there was no training of teachers. *Minban* teachers were generally anyone who had achieved some level of education. The third stage refers to the period of succession to progressively higher positions. This is most evident in Bao30s's and Chu40s's career trajectories. Deng40s's accession to principalship was following a short six-month period as VP from the position of teacher. This period can encompass demotions - as evidenced in Deng40s's career trajectory. The fourth period of further career development refers to the development of a respondent's career beyond that of principalship. For Bao30's and Chu40's, it was to the high position of Dy Chief of Education Bureau at the county level. In the case of Deng40s, it was to a combination of Author, Public Speaker and what is termed Education Consultant.

5.1.2 Career Trajectories of Respondents 1950s

Fang50sF's career trajectory is reflected below.

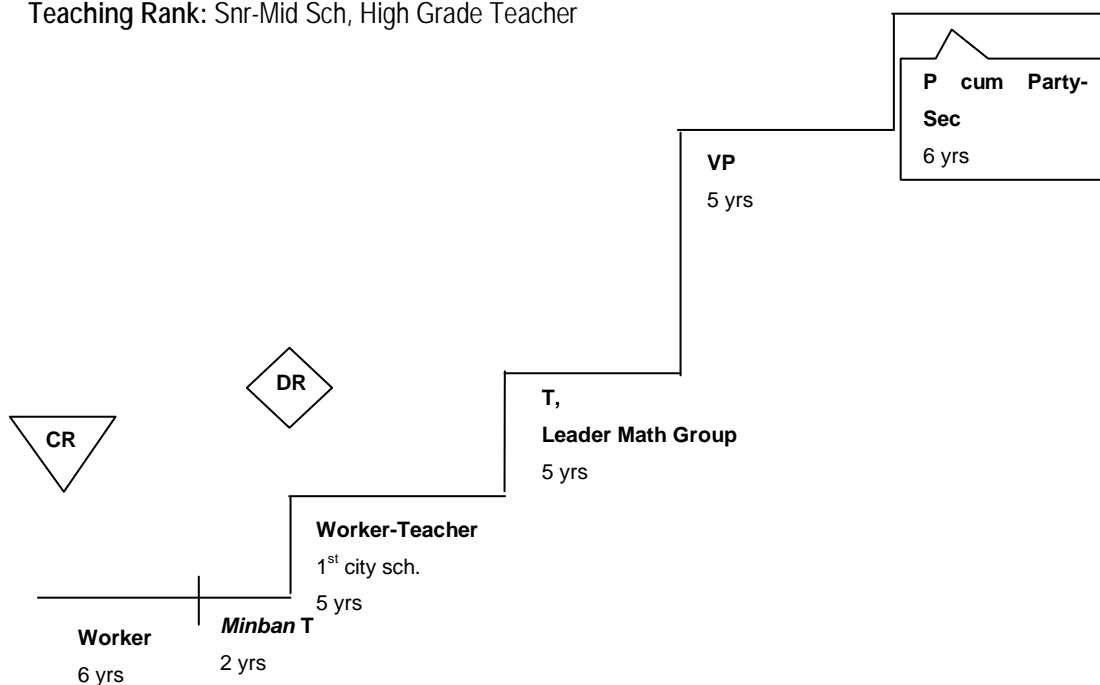
Figure 5.5 Career Trajectory of Fang50sF

Minban T (2 yrs, village sch) → Worker-Teacher (Jnr-Mid sch, 5 yrs) → T, Leader of Math Group, (5 yrs) → 2-yr break to pursue a university degree → VP (6 yrs) → P (5 yrs) → P-cum-Party-Sec (6 yrs) → P, Pte sch (4 yrs)

Age she became principal: 49

Highest Academic Qualification: Degree (Adult Student)

Teaching Rank: Snr-Mid Sch, High Grade Teacher

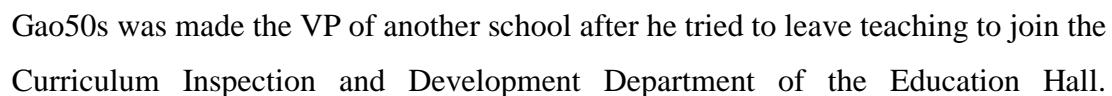


Fang50s's father's professional *guanxi* afforded her the opportunity to teach in his university's affiliated junior-middle school for several years even though she was officially unqualified. Fang50sF was made the leader of the Math teaching team after she had been sent for a year's training at a college. The training did not confer any certification but later allowed her to pursue a degree full-time for only two years. Fang50s suddenly realised that without proper certification, she "might not even be able to stay a teacher...everyone was pursuing further studies after work for higher

Gao50s's career trajectory is reflected in Figure 5.6.

Farmer, Member of propaganda group (village, 9 yrs) → Cadre in Bureau of Land Surveillance and Earthquake Bureau(1yr) → Math T (1st city sch, 2 1/2 yrs) → VDTA (1 yr) → VP (2nd, city sch, 6yrs) → P (5 yrs) → P (3rd city sch, 4 yrs) → P(4th city sch, 7 yrs)

Teaching Rank: Special Grade Teacher (Math)P



Gao50s's appointment as principal of a very poor school in place of the city's Party-secretary's friend has been recounted in Chapter Four. Despite the promotion, Gao50s was very despondent for a long time. Gao50s said,

When you are the principal of a weak school, even the lowly clerks at the Education Hall speak to you in a condescending way. I felt like I could not hold up head whenever I had to go there for administrative matters.

Four years later, his school made remarkable progress owing to, amongst other factors, his hard work and the enrolment of students based on area of residence rather than grades. He came to be recognised as an excellent principal. Consequently, he was transferred to head a better school, a transfer tantamount to a promotion. Gao50s's passion for teaching is seen in the fact that he pursued and obtained the Special Grade Teacher after he became a principal.

For Hong50s, being a *Minban* teacher was an important criterion for his later qualifying to sit for an examination for a teacher's diploma. Hong50s was a DTA for fifteen years because "this was a good school, and the principal competent." Hong50s's transfer to head a primary school of his village has been discussed. Although he was made a principal, this was in effect a demotion because he now worked in a primary school (when he held qualifications as a junior-middle school teacher), and in a village. Three years later, he was to be further "demoted" to head a weaker school. Hong50s's career trajectory is as follows:

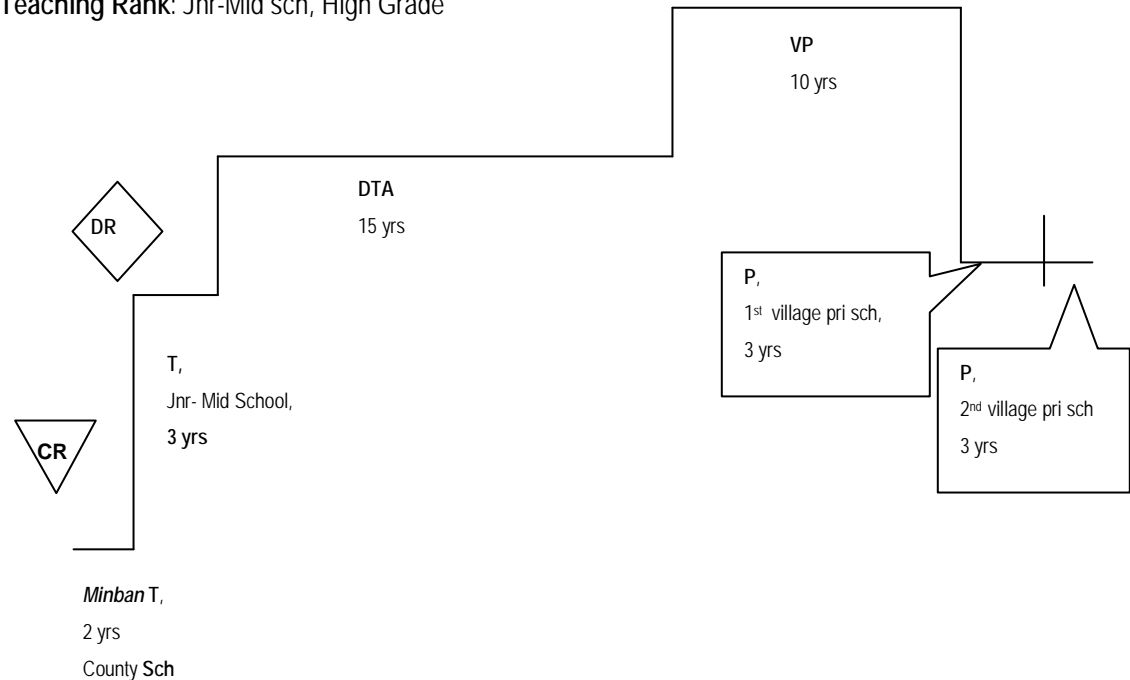
Figure 5.7 Career Trajectory of Hong50s

Math T (Jnr-Mid sch, 1 yr, 1st town sch) → DTA (15 yrs) → VP (10 yrs) → P (1st village pri sch, 3 yrs) → P (2nd village sch, 3 yrs)

Age he became principal: 44

Highest Academic Qualifications: Diploma (Adult Student)

Teaching Rank: Jnr-Mid sch, High Grade



Jiang50s's career trajectory is reflected in Figure 5.8. Jiang50s became a principal in his late twenties, unlike the three previous respondents who were also born in the 1950s but who became principals in their forties. Naturally, different career contexts with their different career structures, opportunities and dynamics accounted for this. Unlike Hong50s's though, Jiang50s's career was forged largely in alignment with the wishes of local leaders and dictated by the developmental needs of the villages and the town which presided over them.

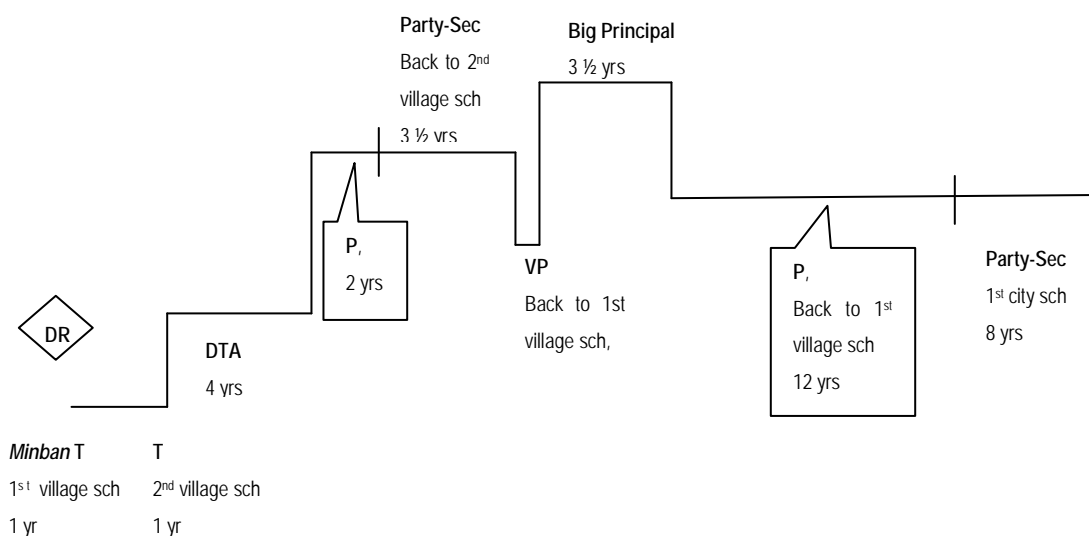
Figure 5.8 Career Trajectory of Jiang50s

Physics and Chemistry *Minban* T (Jnr- Mid sch, 1st village sch, 1 yr) → Chemistry, Physics and Math T (Jnr- Mid sch, 2nd village sch, 1 yr), DTA (4 yrs) → P (2 yrs) → Party-Sec (back to 2nd village sch, 3½ yrs) → VP (back to 1st village sch, 6 mths) → Big Principal (of 5 mid sch and 13 pri sch, 3½ yrs) → P (back to 1st village sch, 12 yrs) → Party-Sec (1st city sch, 9yrs)

Age at which he became principal: 28

Highest Academic Qualifications: Degree (Adult student)

Teaching Rank: Snr-Mid sch, High Grade



Jiang50s became a *Minban* teacher because his village chief told him “the CR is over, we need teachers. You have been educated. You should serve as a teacher.” He had hoped the chief would help him transfer to the city. Jiang50s, a self-declared fervent communist, acquiesced. His very quick rise to leadership positions appears to have had been a natural outcome of his leadership experience – he was the student leader of the major faction that protected teachers in his senior-middle school. Local and county school authorities basically transferred him to schools where there was a need for leadership. He was made Party-secretary in his second village school to provide needed assistance to the principal of the school. He was made VP after he had acquired his degree. Shortly after, Jiang50s was made the Superintendent or Big Principal of some eighteen schools. Surprisingly, Jiang50s expressed no resentment

whatsoever over his demotion to being principal of his first village school. He explained, “There was a new election for a Big Principal. I was quite happy to go back to heading a school. ” Apparently, some of the principals in the schools Jiang50s oversaw were not the most co-operative. After twelve years of heading a village school, Jiang50s “asked the Village Chief and county leaders to let me work in the city”. They finally acceded to his request “in view of the many years of my service in the villages and town”.

5.1.2a Comments on Career Trajectories of Respondents Born in the 1950s

The CR influenced the careers of this group by changing their educational opportunities. Fang50sF and Gao50s, both from urban homes of educated parents, expect their careers to have turned out different and certainly more successful in the sense of positions attained, if the CR had not transpired. Given their proclivities for book-learning, the CR seemed to have made teaching, the most readily accessible intellectual form of vocation, the “best choice under the circumstances” (Gao50s). For Hong50s who grew up in rural China, the CR worked against him where his education and thus career was concerned because of his being from a persecuted class that was, before the CR, a relatively privileged social class. The CR worked to the contrary for Jiang50s, the offspring of poor farmers. He was able to have an education and developed leadership abilities that accounted a great deal for his career development.

The CR disrupted the education of the respondents in this group, especially in the light of the professional teaching requisites that the next political context, post-CR brought. This has implications where the Common Periods, highlighted under the review of the careers of the first group of respondents, is concerned. The Common Periods refer to the periods of (1)acquiring basic education; (2)acquiring higher or professional education; (3)career development; and (4)further career development. For all the respondents, with the exception of Gao50s, the period of acquisition of higher or professional education coincided with the third period. Hong50s acquired

his college diploma while Jiang50s and Pan50s acquired their university degrees – all while teaching. Gao50s acquired his degree before commencing his teaching career proper. The fourth period of further career development applies only to Fang50sF, who became principal of a private school after her retirement. It will probably apply to Gao50s who is a Special Grade Teacher and could, like Deng40s, become an author, a public speaker, a consultant, and/or the principal of a private school as well.

5.1.3 Career Trajectories of Respondents Born in 1960s

The career trajectory of the second female respondent in this study, Kang60sF, is depicted in Figure 5.9 below.

Through social connections, Kang60sF was able to procure a teaching position in a primary school in the city before serving out the mandatory five years in a rural school. The school's principal was able to effect this. However, Kang60sF was to serve as the treasurer for the school. Kang60sF later got herself transferred to a school in another city because "my husband was from that city." This was also through her husband's *guanxi* with the Chief of the Education Bureau of that city. Her having been a treasurer seemed to have been useful to her new school. Thereafter, Kang60sF's career followed the usual progressive route.

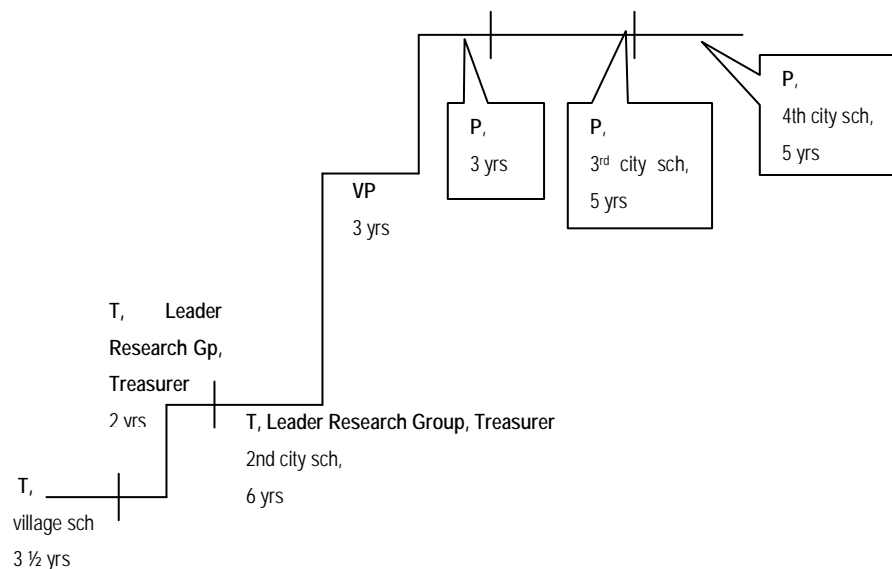
Figure 5.9 Career Trajectory of Kang50sF

Math T (1st village pri sch, 3 yrs → T (1st city sch, 1½ yrs) → T, Leader of Research Group, Treasurer (2nd city sch, 2 yrs) → T (3rd city sch, 6 yrs) → VP (3 yrs) → P (4 yrs) → P (5th city sch, 5 yrs) → P (6th city sch, 5 yrs)

Age she became principal: 32

Highest Academic Qualifications: Degree (Adult Student)

Teaching Rank: Pri sch, High Grade



Liu60s's career trajectory is depicted in Figure 5.10 below. Liu60s's attitude towards material power was a primary reason for his career having developed much later than it should have. He turned down several early invitations to leadership positions of DTA, Deputy Chief and Chiefs of bureaux because he disdained positions others clamoured for. He chose to be a mere teacher so that he could work based on heart-felt relationships with students. Liu60s explained,

My father influenced me deeply. He was a soldier who'd fought in two major wars...one of these was the Korean war. He saw his friends die. He decided that life is short and relationships are the most important in life. He would say this to us very often. ...very patient man was my father.

When he died, a couple of hundreds of people turned up at his funeral...many were people whom he had helped.

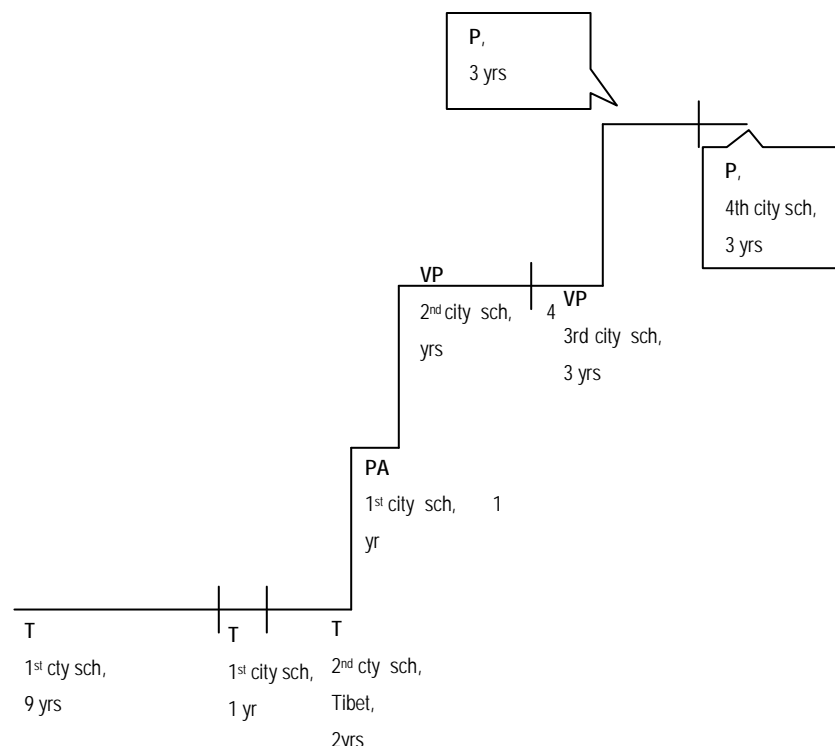
Figure 5.10 Career Trajectory of Liu60s

Chemistry T (Snr-Mid sch, cty, 9 yrs) → T (1st city sch, 1 yr) → Chemistry T (Volunteer, Snr- Mid sch, 2nd cty sch, 2 yrs) → PA (1 year) → VP (2nd city sch, 4 yrs) → VP (3rd city sch, 1 yr) → P (3rd city sch, 3 yrs) → P (4th city sch, 3 yrs)

Age he became principal: 42

Highest Academic Qualification: Degree

Teaching Rank: Snr-Mid sch, High Grade



A top-performing student of his university, Liu60s had been sent to a school in a county because “my girlfriend came from that county”. Top students were normally assigned to schools in a city. His teachers were trying to help him. Romance in tertiary education institutions was not permitted by the state then. The girls’ parents had raised their objections to the relationship because they did not want their

daughter married to a place far away from them. With his unworldly attitude, Liu60s was grateful for his teachers' help. Nevertheless, Liu60s finally married someone else. After nine years, he realised he had outgrown the county. Liu60s's change of attitude towards worldly power took place while serving as a volunteer in Tibet. In a casual after-dinner conversation with a teacher he had known from university, the latter expressed that he himself would go as far up the career ladder as he could because "in high positions, you can accomplish things...I am surprised that someone with your credentials should be content to be a teacher". Upon his return from Tibet, Liu60s vied for the position of Principal Assistant. Once he stepped into that leadership position, his career started to develop fair rapidly.

Mu60s's career trajectory is depicted in Figure 5.11. Although Mu60s never considered teaching a career option, he was receptive to his class superintendent's suggestion to become a teacher. A class monitor since senior-middle school, Mu60s was consistently a class leader (and a member of the student body) throughout his university years. He attributes the smooth development of his career to his sense of responsibility and service to the greater good, qualities emphasised by the Party. Mu60s's first school was in the city. Two years after teaching, Mu60s was voted (by his leaders and colleagues) as the outstanding Party-member in his school. Mu60s's said his school leaders made him Dy DTA to prepare him for the role of the DTA as his then DTA was rather elderly. When the DTA relocated his residence a year later, made DTA Mu60s was promoted to VP after the school's VP was made the head of another school.

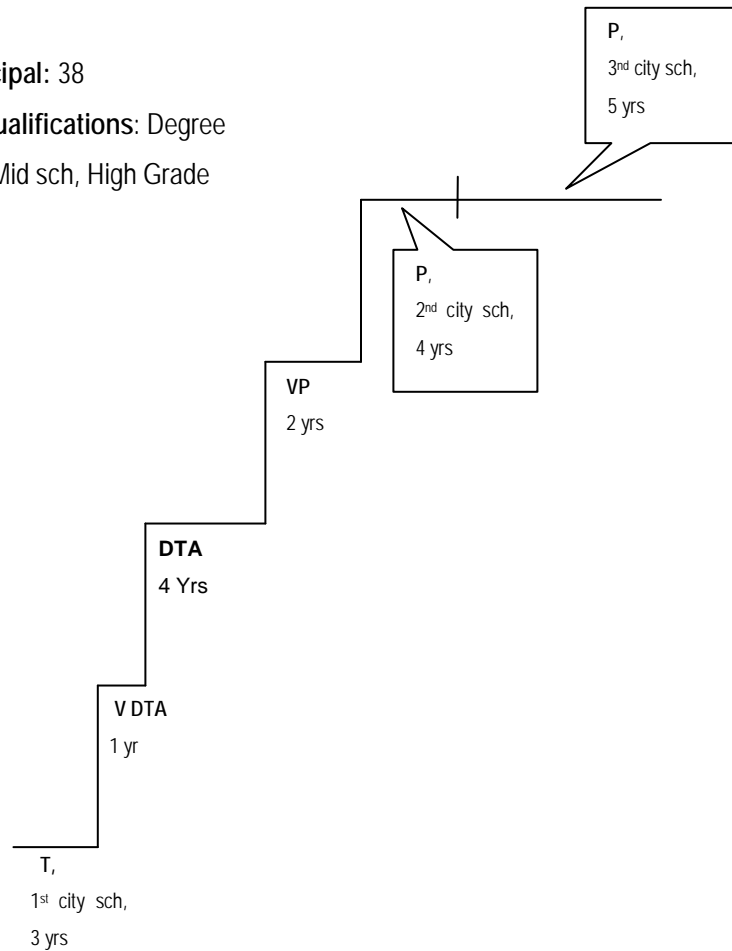
Figure 5.11 Career Trajectory of Mu60s

Chemistry T (1st city sch, 3 yrs) → V DTA (1 yr) → DTA (4 yrs) → VP (2 yrs) → VP (3 yrs) → P (2nd city sch, 5 yrs)

Age he became principal: 38

Highest Academic Qualifications: Degree

Teaching Rank: Snr-Mid sch, High Grade



Mu60s's career trajectory is as predictable as Pan60sF's is unusual.

Pan60sF's career trajectory is depicted in Figure 5.12.

After a year in high office, Pan60sF asked to be allowed to return to teaching. Through her mother's connections, her request was met. She was transferred from the position of Dy Mayor to being a VP in the middle school that her mother used to teach in. The position of VP was in name only: "The principals and teachers were protective of me. They called me 'Little Principal'. I only attended meetings. The duties of a VP were in fact carried out by the other administrators."

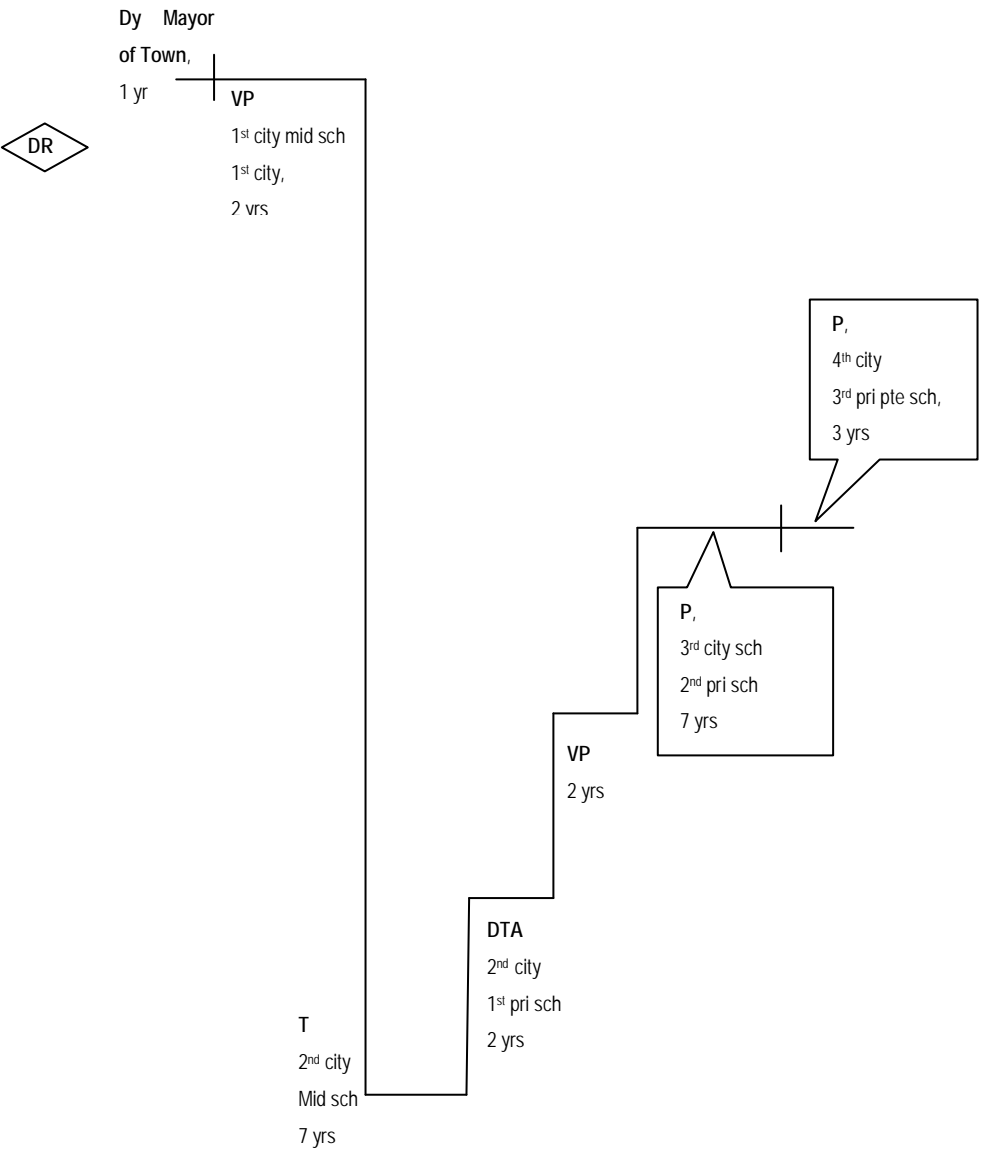
Figure 5.12 Career Trajectory of Pan60sF

Dy Mayor of a town (1 yr) → VP (Mid sch, 1st town sch, 2 yrs) → Math T (mid sch, 1st city sch, 7 yrs)
→ DTA (pri sch, 2nd city, 4 yrs) → P (3rd city, 7 yrs) → P (pri pte school, 4th city, 3 yrs)

Age she became principal: 35

Highest Academic Qualifications: Degree

Teaching Rank: Snr-Mid sch, High Grade



Two years later, Pan60F would return to the city where she had pursued her university education, to marry and settle down. This was when Pan6sF decided that she would be “free of being a specially groomed cadre”. She wrote to the authorities of the city, asking in effect to be demoted to being an ordinary teacher. She cited the many teachers from both her parents’ families as proof that she is better suited to teaching. Successful in her appeal, Pan60sF led the life of an ordinary middle school teacher for the next seven years. The newly opened SEZs began to beckon in the 1990s. Pan60sF’s opportunity to head south came when applications for teachers to be part of a team to start a new school in one of the SEZs were called for by the education authorities in her city. Made the DTA in charge of a group of some 30 teachers, Pan60sF was to spearhead the establishment of the new school. Interestingly, Pan60sF was made principal of a primary school after the principal had been convicted of embezzlement of school funds. Investigations by the education bureau convinced the authorities that she had no part in his misdeeds. The authorities recognised Pan60sF to have been the chief reason behind the success of the school. Pan60sF was later invited to head a private school in another city due to her success as principal of the school she had headed.

Qing60s’s career trajectory is reflected in Figure 5.13. The episode in his career, relating to his leaving for the SEZ has been earlier highlighted. After having lost out on a promotion to VP as a result of conflicts with his superior, Qing60s’s good friend, who was later promoted to head a middle school, asked Qing60s if he would like to be his VP. Qing60s’s friend pointed out to him that with his history of conflicts in his then present school, it would be difficult for Qing60s’s career to advance. Qing60s explained, “A new principal can ask to bring with him/her those he/she thinks would be of assistance to his/her new role.” Qing60s happily accepted.

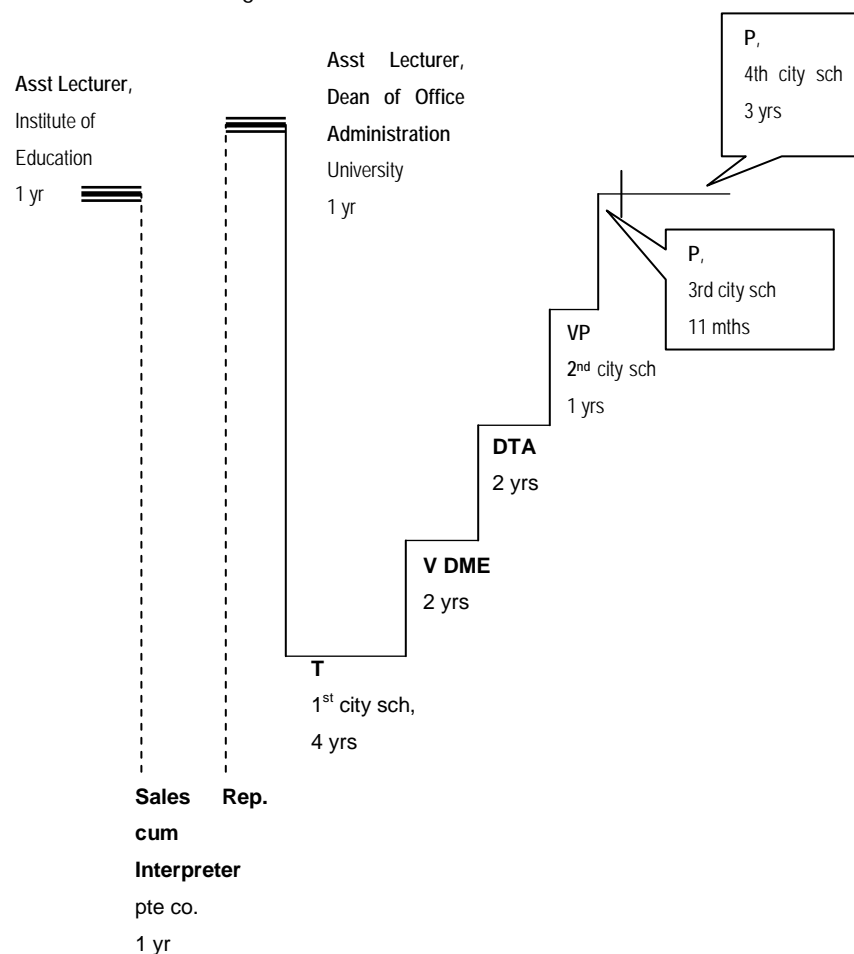
Figure 5.13 Career Trajectory of Qing60s

Asst Lecturer of English (Institute of Ed., city level, 1 yr) → Sales Representative and Translator (Pte Co, 1 yr) → Dean of Office Administration, Asst Lecturer (TV University in town, 1 yr) → English T (Jnr-Mid sch, 4 yrs) → Dy DME (2 yrs) → DTA (2 yrs) → VP (2nd city sch, 1 yr) → P (3rd city sch, 11 months) → P (4th city sch, 3 yrs)

Age he became principal: 39

Highest Academic Qualifications: Degree, Masters Degree in school administration

Teaching Rank: Jnr-Mid sch, High Rank



Qing60s's career trajectory shows that, at least in a city, even with *guanxi*, professional credentials are necessary for promotion – however such credentials come to be obtained.

5.1.3a Comments on Career Trajectories of Respondents Born in the 1960s

Generally, the careers of respondents born in the 1960s seem to have been unaffected, or at least not directly affected, by the CR. These respondents were still studying in schools when the CR was transpiring. Instead, they were to benefit from the launch of Deng's Reforms when their careers commenced. The Common Periods better describe their career trajectories as a whole than those of the previous two groups. For Pan60sF and Qing60sF, though, the launch of their middle school teaching career did not transpire immediately after period (2), the period of pursuing higher or professional education. They were involved in other vocations. Where the third period of career development is concerned, the rise through the ranks to principalship is evidenced in all the career trajectories of this group of respondents. Pan60sF's her career development include a demotion. While it remains to be seen if period (4) will apply to the Liu60s, Mu60s or Qing60s or not, it already applies to Pan60sF who heads a private school.

5.1.4 Career Trajectories of Respondents Born in 1970s

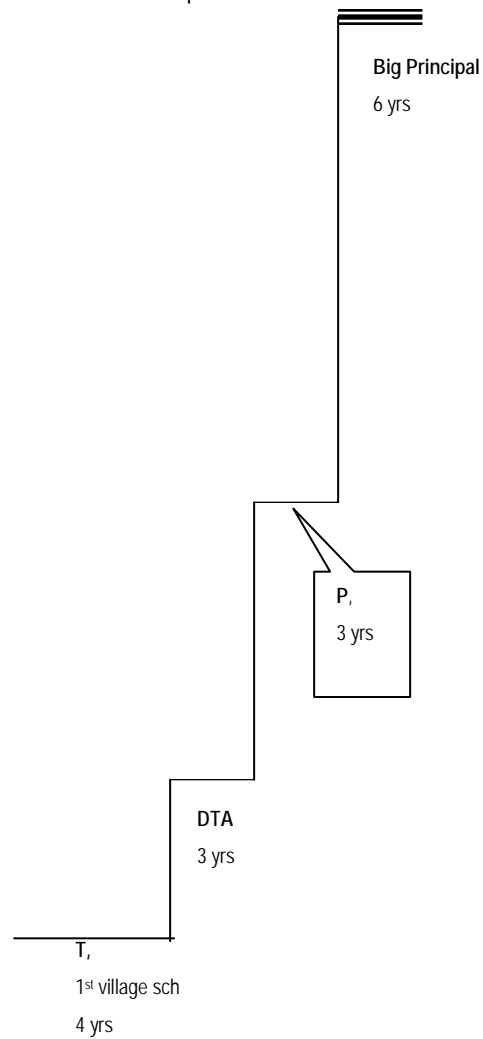
Su70's career trajectory is reflected in Figure 5.14. Su70s was spurred by poverty to take the expedient route to financial independence that teachers' school offered. In the small village school of only seven teachers and a hundred odd students, he became DTA when the then DTA of the school retired. Three years later, when Su70s discovered that another principal would be transferred to take the place of his retiring principal, he adopted a "counter tactic". He told his village chief, "I too no longer want to be the DTA or have anything to do with this school. Please transfer me to another school." The village chief "understood my intentions." Su70s was offered vice-principalship but he declined, and so he was finally made principal. He claimed to be "the only qualified teacher" in the school which the school would not want to lose. Su70s's career trajectory is reflected below.

Figure 5.14 Career Trajectory of Su70s

Chinese Language and Math T (1st village sch, 4 yrs) → DTA (2 yrs) → P(3 yrs) → Big Principal (of 3 mid sch and 12 pri sch, 6 yrs)

Age he became principal: 25

Highest Academic Qualifications: Diploma



While Su70s pursued power, Wang70sF had to be persuaded to accept it.

Wang70sF's career trajectory is as follows:

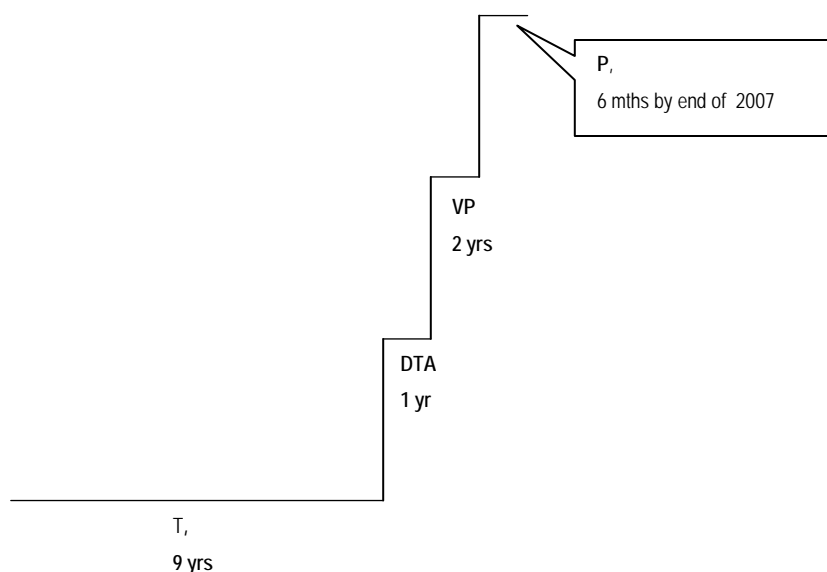
Figure 5.15 Career Trajectory of Wang70s

Chemistry T (Mid sch, 9½ years) → DTA (1 yr) → VP (2 yrs) → P (6 mths by the end of 2007)

Age she became principal: 32

Highest Academic Qualifications: Degree

Teaching Rank: Snr-Mid sch, High Grade



Wang70sF's preference to keep a low profile was consequent of the experiences of her parents (a doctor and a teacher) during the CR. Wang70sF was possessive of her ordinary but, what was to her, an emotionally highly fulfilling role as a teacher. In the early part of her career, she turned down her principal's many requests to take on the role of Dy DTA, even as she had turned down invitations to become a party member in her university days. Nine years later, she was persuaded by her spouse to take on a leadership position for the sake of professional growth. He persuaded her to take it on for five years and then leave to work towards the rank of Special Grade Teacher. She later became a VP, which meant a reduction in income because she no longer had time to write Chemistry assessment books for commercial companies. There was loss of income from the additional hours of teaching. These appear immaterial.

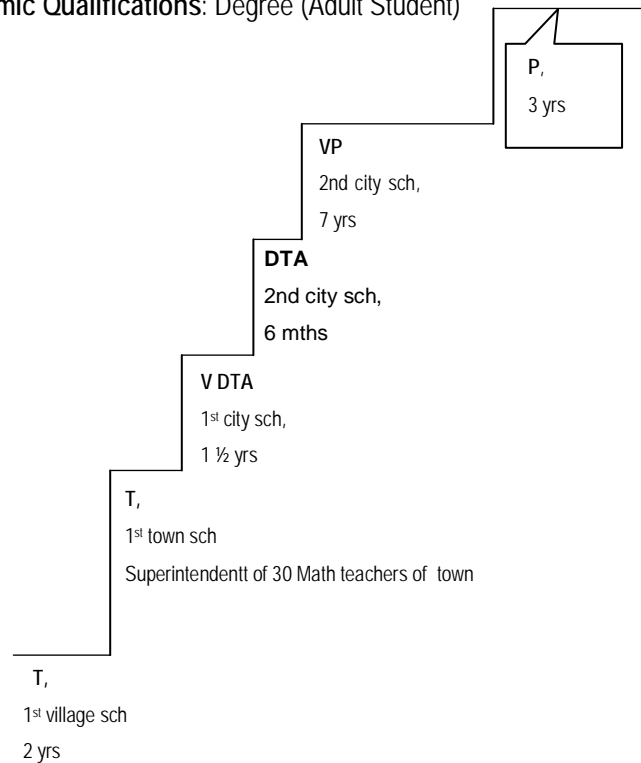
Yang70s's career trajectory is as follows:

Figure 5.16 Career Trajectory of Yang70s

Math T (1st village pri sch, 2 yrs) → T, Supervisor of city's Math teachers (2 yrs, 1st town sch) → VDTA (1st city sch, 1 ½ yrs) → DTA (2nd city sch, 6 mths) → VP (7 yrs) → P (3rd city school, 4 years)

Age he became principal: 31 years old

Highest Academic Qualifications: Degree (Adult Student)



Yang70s's predominantly humiliating experiences with school centered around the subject of Mathematics. Owing to an irresponsible Mathematics teacher in primary three, Yang70s became very weak in the subject. Consequently, Yang70s worked very hard in the subject. He is now a Special Grade Teacher for Mathematics.

Yang70s's parents' way of improving their son's academic results was the use of corporeal punishment, which Yang70s received a fair bit of, in addition to his teacher's humiliation of him in front of a class. He said, "The first day I started my teaching practice, I realised how farcical it was that someone who hated school as

much as I did should now be teaching.” The overwhelming positive response of his students and the endorsement of his mentor, a Special Grade Teacher of Math, of his pedagogical skills during his one-month teacher training practice in his final year at teacher’s college, was to change his entire perspective. He declined the two openings in the banking sector that his parents had finally found for him at his request. The same positive response from village students in the first school where he taught inspired him to become a dedicated teacher for which he was recognised through the many awards conferred upon him. By then, he knew “that it was only a matter of time that I would one day be principal.” He began to focus acquiring the professional requisites.

Yang70s was transferred to the best school in the town and made superintendent of the thirty primary school Mathematics teachers of its fourteen villages despite his being a new teacher. This recognition accounted for Yang70s being accepted as a VDTA in the city’s best school. Its principal was able to secure his transfer from the village school, a year prior to his serving out the mandatory five years of teaching in a rural school: “The principal of that school had very good *guanxi* with the Chief of the Education Hall.” The poor relationship that the new DTA of Yang70s’s school had with the other teachers became an Yang70’s opportunity for advancement. However, six months after this promotion to DTA, Yang70s was promoted to be the VP of a new school, on the request of the new principal of the school. The working relationship flourished only to deteriorate five years later. Yang70s attributes it to jealousy on her part after he had obtained his degree and his Special Grade Teacher ranking, amongst other things. Consequently, in the promotion exercise by a new chief of the city’s education hall, Yang70s’s principal cast doubts on Yang70s’s ability to run one of the district’s best primary school. Yang70s was promoted but to head a very weak school instead. Three years into his principalship, Yang70s remains despondent.

Zhang70s’s career trajectory is as follows:

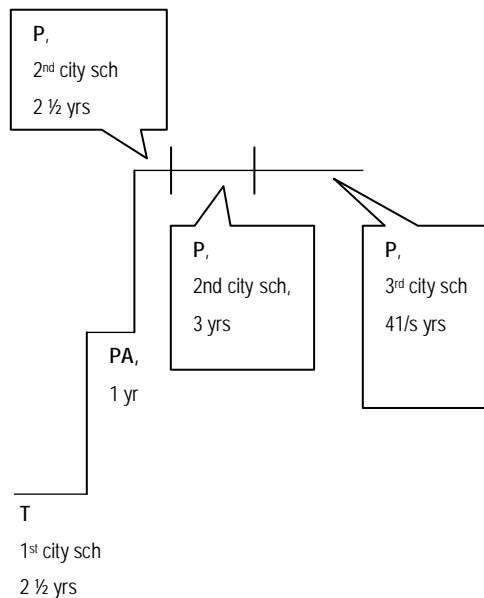
Figure 5.17 Career Trajectory of Zhang70s

Geography T (Snr-Mid sch, 1st city sch, 2 ½ yrs) → PA (1 yr) → P (2nd city sch, 1½ yrs) → P (3rd sch., 3½ yrs) → P (4th city sch., 4½ yrs)

Age he became principal: 28

Highest Academic Qualifications: Teaching Degree, Law Degree, Master's degree

Teaching Rank: Snr-Mid sch, High Grade



The chief of the Propagation Bureau in the city of Zhang70s's university had expressed great interest in having the prominent Zhang70s (a member of the inter- varsity debate team and highly noted student council member) join his bureau after his graduation. Zhang70s, however, accepted a teaching bond from a school because the school was in the city he that wanted to live in – his relations were there. He explained, "I could always move out of teaching later." Zhang70s was made a PA on the instruction of the district's Superintendent for education. He had impressed the Superintendent at an ad-hoc meeting the latter held with the school's teachers about improving learning outcomes. Zhang70s recalled, "My principal called me in a week later to tell me I had been promoted to PA. The Superintendent had told him that I was to be groomed for leadership. If nothing was done towards this end, he, the Superintendent would transfer me out of the school to elsewhere where I would be."

Only three and a half years a teacher, Zhang70s became a principal after emerging as one of the two winners, out of an initial pool of 300 competitors, in the first-ever held public competition for recruiting school principals in his city.

5.1.4a Comments on Career Trajectories of Respondents Born in the 1970s

The last group of respondents, those born in the 1970s, are even further removed from the direct effects of the CR than those born in the 1960s. Their careers are confined to schools, compared those of earlier groups. This is reflective of the increasing professionalisation of teaching after the launch of Deng's Reforms.

Of the Common Periods of (1)acquiring basic education; (2)acquiring higher or professional education; (3)career development; and (4)further career development, the first three periods apply to all the respondents. Period (4) is already applicable to respondent Su70s, a superintendent of principals.

The above section is an achievement of this study's third objective. It also contributes towards achieving its fifth objective. In the following section, the Common Periods identified above, will be used to achieve this study's fourth objective.

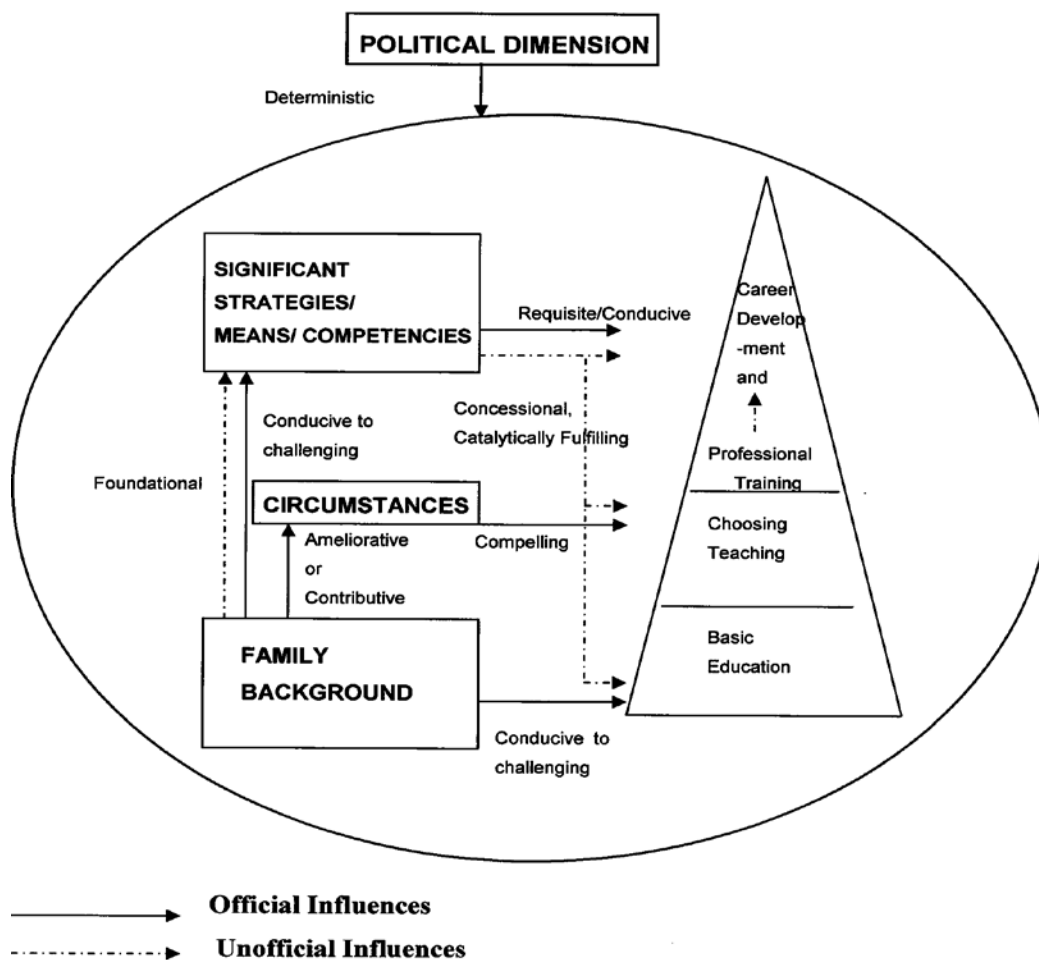
5.2 CONCEPTUALISATION OF PRC SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' CAREERS

This study's fourth objective will be met through the use of two kinds of conceptualisations that are already emergent from the presentation of earlier findings. These are the diagrammatic summary of this study's influential themes and subthemes, arrived at in section 4.1.5 on page 109. It suggests a model of the influences on the careers of PRC school. The Common Periods from the analysis of the respondents' career paths in preceding section lend themselves to the conceptualisation of PRC school principals in stages.

5.2.1 A Model of the Influences on the Careers of PRC School Principals

This model is shown in Figure 5.18 below. It is derived from distilling the key vectorial influences, their interrelationships and the nature of these key influences on the careers of PRC principals summarised in Figure 4.2 on page 111.

Figure 5.18 A Model of the Influences on the Careers of PRC School Principals



Political Dimension is the parametric influence deterministic of the weights of the different means in *Significant Strategies/Means/Competencies*; the kind of *Circumstances* that compel an individual to choose teaching, and how *Family Background* come to bear on the latter two influences. The official form of these influences is examined first.

Under the political, economic and social forces generated by a political context, *Family Background* is the individual's first and central influence on his/her careers. In the context of the CR, the individual's familial socio-economic standing, past and present, decided if he/she could study beyond primary school education. Before and after the CR, *Family Background* was conducive or challenging for the individual's attainment of Qualifications – Academic and Professional of *Significant Strategies/Mean/Competencies*. The academic qualifications attained during the stage of basic education influence the professional qualifications later attainable. These became the requisite and primary criteria for career advancement.

Family Background influences *Circumstances* intrinsically because of its influence on the individual's acquisition of education during, before or after the CR. The CR led those, who were already educated, to become *Minban* teachers, which later made continuing the vocation a natural or convenient choice, especially when, post-CR, the experience as *Minban* teacher was a criterion for the acquisition of teaching qualifications. Before and after the CR, the circumstances that compelled entry into teaching include that of institutionally designated timing for entry into teacher's school, college or university, depending on which of these stages *Family Background*, specifically its financial background, allowed for the decision to be made. Challenging financial situations were contributory to *Circumstances* in compelling the decision to be made early - with reference to teachers' schools - because of the fact that the individual would receive food, lodgings and be paid a monthly stipend. A strong familial socio-economic standing was ameliorative of *Circumstances* in allowing the decision to be made after the individual's completion of senior-middle school – and thus with reference to teachers' college or university.

While the *Political Dimension* and *Family Background* were not influences an individual concerned had control over, he/she had some control over that of *Circumstances*. Oftentimes, parents, especially fathers made the decision concerning the options opened to the individual.

The individual had the most control over the influence of *Significant Strategies/Mean/Competencies* on his/her career in terms of how well he/she fared academically and professionally, the cultivation and maintenance of harmonious relationships with his/her colleagues, and that of his/her *guanxi* network – to add to that of his/her family's that is at his/her disposal. Diligence on the part of the individual, his/her attitude towards his/her work, colleagues and superiors were also contributory towards his/her *Nengli*.

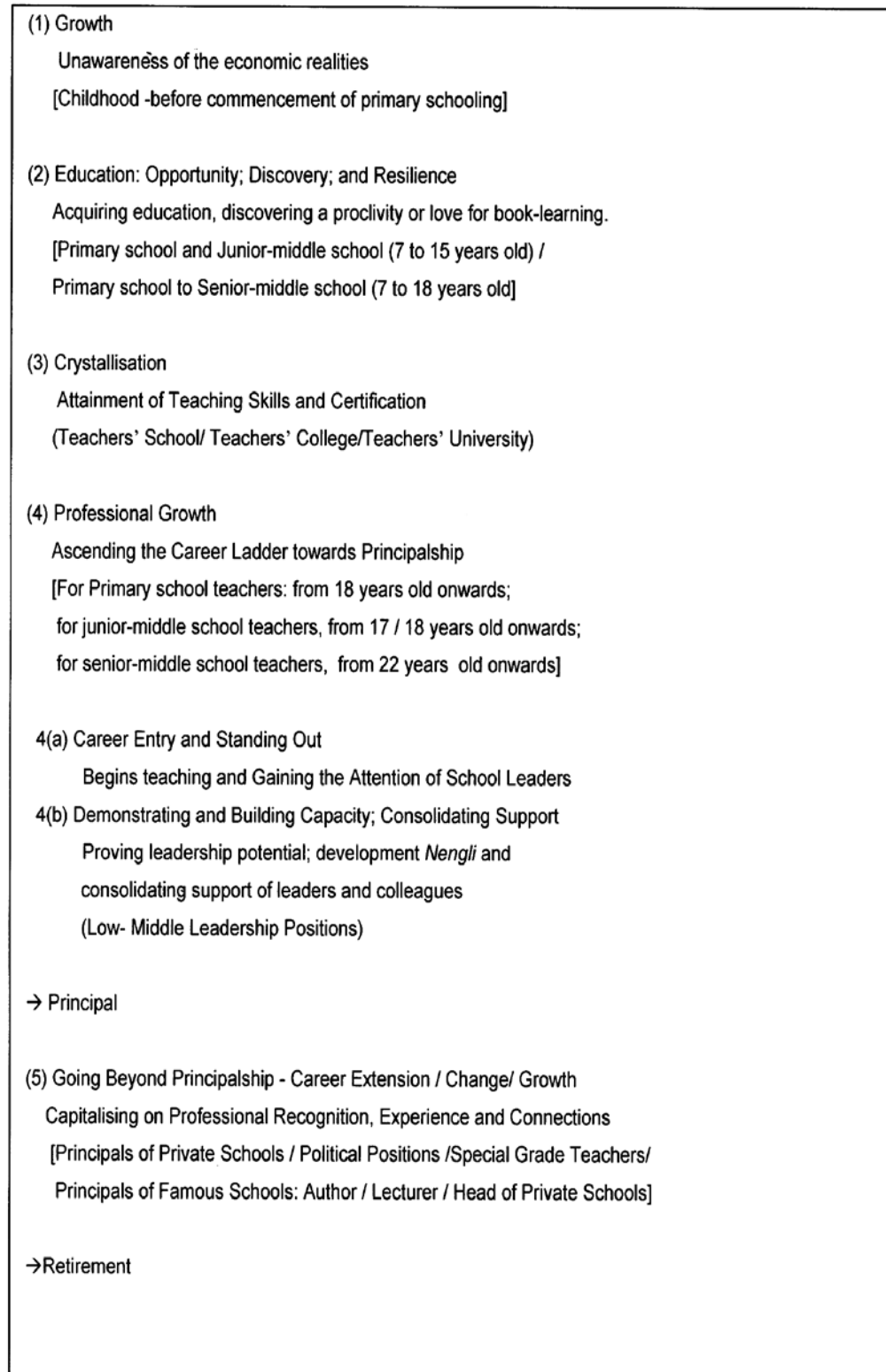
Family Background was also the primary unofficial influence on an individual's career because it was the family's *guanxi* network that was called upon when the need arose, whether this was for a place in a better educational institution, otherwise unattainable or unqualified for. As the individual developed his/her own social and/or political connections, this in effect expanded not just his/her own, but the family's *guanxi* network. As his/her career developed, political connections became potent instruments for promotions, transfers and even demotions.

5.2.1a A General Framework On The Career Stages Of PRC School Principals

The General Framework of the Careers of PRC School Principals (see Figure 5.19 on page 154), captures the different academic and professional routes leading to principalship in a primary school, junior-, and senior-middle school. The Common Periods make up its second to fifth stages. A legitimate framework in the sense that it is based on current official requisites, it reflects the formal criteria for and other steps leading to the attainment of principalship. These criteria are with regard to the present enrolment requisites of educational institutions; its system of teacher ranking introduced in different parts of the PRC in different years during the 1980s; and the official view, as described in the PRC's State Education Commission's 'Provisional Requisites for the Posts of Primary and Middle School Principals' (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, <http://www.moe.gov.cn/edoas/website18/26/info5026.htm>; Wang, 2003) which were implemented in June 1991, and which are still adhered to. Respondents in this study,

when asked about the professional requisites for principalship, cited the same requisites described in the document. This document acknowledges that in practice, there will be some variations, or deviations, from its described requisites.

Figure 5.19 A General Framework of the Careers of PRC School Principals



The explanation of stages in the General Framework of the Careers of PRC School Principals is presented below.

Stage 1: Growth

The Growth stage covers the years of childhood prior to going to school and is essentially a period of unawareness of the economic realities of life. Respondents do not have, or are not able, to understand the idea of the need to find a means of livelihood. This does not necessarily mean that it is not a time of suffering. Jiang50s, Hong50s and Su70s recalled experiencing hunger and corporeal punishments in childhood. For these, who were from rural settings, their innocence of the grim realities of their lives was lost very early in childhood because of the hardships they suffered.

For those who are from comfortable socio-economic backgrounds, typically those living in the cities, the label of ‘Innocence’ for this stage is more appropriate. Generally not in want of basic food and shelter, their childhood years are innocent of the sufferings the first group faced. They can postpone entry into the workforce until after the completion of senior-middle school. This group’s stage of Innocence extends from childhood right up to junior-middle school years. For the first group, the financial needs of the family are likely to compel them to start thinking about teaching as an expedient way to earning a steady income by the time they complete their primary education.

Financial difficulties and/or family environments non-conducive to educational pursuits, notwithstanding, some individuals from poor families may determine to pursue their education as far as possible because of their love for learning and their inclination for book-learning. Bao30s, Deng40s, Long50s and Jiang50s are examples of such. The absence of such would have prompted a respondent, especially from rural China, to drop out of school by the end of, or even before the completion of, primary school.

Stage 2: Education: Opportunity; Discovery; and Resilience

This stage of acquisition of basic education is a period of discovery of the inclination and/or love for book learning, especially for those from homes where book-learning and books are not part of the family's environment. The period is also marked by resilience, especially for those from financially weak backgrounds, who often have to struggle against adverse circumstances to continue their education.

The basic level of education required of primary school and junior-middle school teachers is the completion of junior-middle school; and for middle-school teachers, the completion of senior-middle school. Junior middle school graduates with stronger academic performances are enrolled in teachers' colleges or institutes. Weaker performing students are enrolled in teachers' schools. However, conceptualising this stage from the point of view of *Family Background*, a significant theme in this study, suggests that basic education should be divided into two stages.

Primary education can be considered the period of basic education. Junior-middle school education, for respondents such as Yang70s and Su70s, whose weak family financial backgrounds were the reason for their opting to enter teacher training straight after junior-middle school. The issue of earning a livelihood was discussed especially at home when they were in junior-middle school. For these respondents, this period should be referred to as the Stage of Increasing Awareness of Material Realities and of Teaching as a Career. This will be duly reflected in the framework for careers of primary school principals.

For the group of respondents from comfortable family backgrounds, in the words of Mu60s, "Junior-middle school was still a time of enjoyment without any real pressures." For this group, the Stage of Innocence should therefore extend from primary to junior-middle school. Senior-middle school education should be viewed differently. The eleven middle school principals in this study elected to go on to middle school primarily because they wanted a university degree. A love for learning

and the fact that a degree held out greater career prospects, motivated them. Wang70F said of her senior-middle school years, “I started to think about my future then. Before that, I had never really put in much effort where my studies were concerned.” She spoke for Bao30s, Liu60s, Mu60s, Qing60s, PanF60s, Wang70sF whose senior-middle school education had not been disrupted by major historical events (GLF and CR). Mu60s’s remarks are further elaborative, “Even at the start of senior-middle school, teachers started to urge us to work hard because of the university entrance examination at the end of three years. It was naturally what we would discuss amongst ourselves...”. So, for this second group of respondents, senior-middle school years should be reflected as a stage labelled ‘Stage of Boosting Career Prospects’. Those in senior-middle schools are investing in a career with the promise of not only higher salaries, but also brighter career prospects than that of teaching or heading primary or junior-middle schools. At this stage, Party-membership, a career-boosting element, can also be pursued if the individual wishes. Being in senior-middle school also means more time for the individual to acquire Party-membership before the launch of his/her teaching career, and more time to build up credibility or connections within the Party. Senior-middle school students also have the advantages of developing greater networks amongst potential leaders in other sectors of the country’s workforce other than the one the individual enters into. After the launch of Deng’s Reforms, high-ranking leaders are more likely to be at least degree-holders. This stage will be duly reflected in the framework for careers of middle school principal.

Stage 3: Crystallisation

This is a stage of the acquisition of teaching skills and professional certification and therefore, a crystallisation of the individual’s career direction. It is the second period in the Common Periods.

At this stage, primary school teachers will be in teachers’ training schools; junior- and senior-middle school teachers in institutions and/or universities pursuing three- and four- year courses respectively.

An individual may, therefore, with the aim of bettering his/her career prospects, may pursue Party-membership within this stage.

Stage 4: Professional Growth

At this stage, the individual ascends the career ladder towards principalship. It comprises two phases. The arguments for the phases have been presented under section. 4.1.3c on page 100. The following are the criteria for each phase based on the feedback of the respondents. These phases of this stage are as follows:

4(a) Career Entry - Standing Out

Begin teaching and Gaining the Attention of School Leaders
(Beginning of Teaching Career)

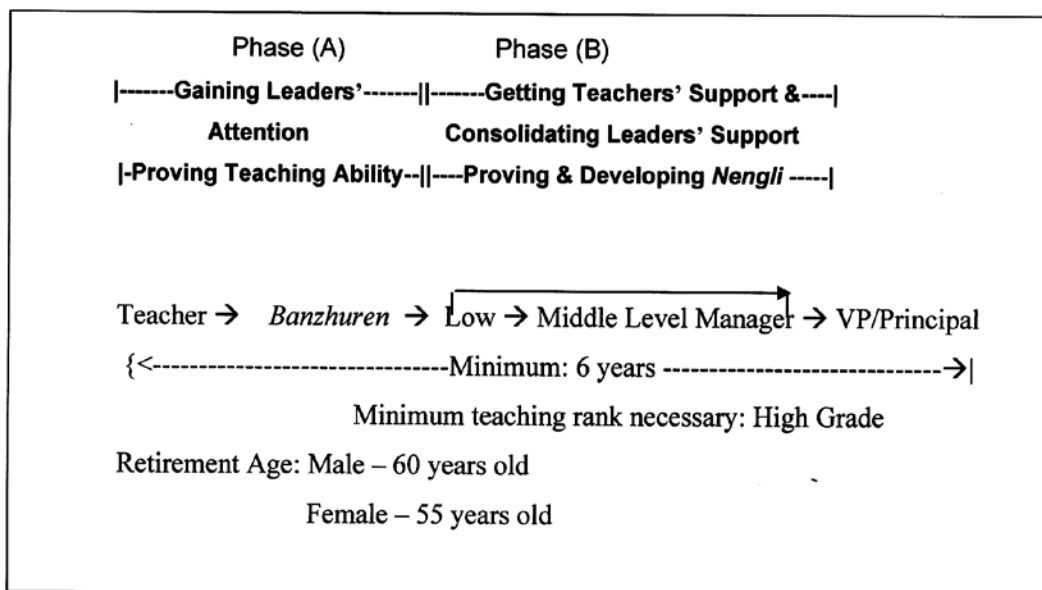
4(b) Demonstrating and Building Capacity; Consolidating Support

Proving leadership potential; development *Nengli* and consolidating support of leaders and colleagues
(Low- Middle Leadership Positions)

→ Principal

Figure 5.20 below depicts the criteria of each phase.

Figure 5.20 Phases in the Stage of Career Development



Phase A: Career Entry - Standing Out

Only when school leaders recognise a teacher to be good at teaching (a general requisite to being a school leader), will the teacher be given a low- or middle-level leadership position. A tacit pre-requisite of this is that the teacher is a *banzhuren* (class or homeroom teacher) because only very incompetent teachers, teachers deemed unable to even control a class, are not made *banzhuren*. They remain subject teachers. Leadership positions vary from school to school because they are dependent on the size of the school and each school's particular organisational structure. Once a teacher has been given a leadership position, he/she has already a foothold on the career ladder. The second phase ensues.

Holding a leadership position is also very helpful towards a teacher obtaining his/her Grade One (for middle school teachers) or High Grade (as it is called for primary school teachers). Attaining a higher rank translates into an increase in income. So, teachers are very focused on achieving the next higher rank possible, which is on a competitive basis. If a teacher fails in his/her application (which is made in July annually) in a certain year, he/she can apply for the same again the following year. Annually, quotas for teachers being conferred a certain teaching rank are allocated by the local education authorities. In a middle school, the first year of teaching is a probationary year following which, barring any major misconduct by the new teacher, he/she is conferred the Grade Two rank. Five years later, the teacher can vie with other teachers for the Grade One teaching rank. For those holding higher credentials than required for the level of the school concerned, this is four years instead. A teacher's published articles in professional journals, his/her contributions towards the school are also considered in his/her competition for the attainment of a teaching rank. Therefore, being a leader will be helpful towards achieving a higher rank. In a primary school, the two ranks are referred to as Grade One (for middle school teachers) and High Grade (for primary school teachers), the highest rank a primary school teacher can attain. The 'Special Grade Teacher' is a special rank of recognition that individual primary or middle teachers with exceptional pedagogical skills might choose to compete for after having achieved the highest rank attainable

for the level concerned. In short, being appointed a leader is helpful towards a new teacher's attainment of the Grade One (for middle school teachers) or the High Grade (for primary school teachers) teaching ranks, and to principalship, as rapidly as possible.

4(b) Demonstrating and Building Capacity; Consolidating Support

At this stage, an individual, in an assigned leadership position/s, demonstrates his/her leadership abilities, and through subsequently higher leadership positions, further develops and displays these abilities.

This is also the stage where a principal-aspirant consolidates his/her position for principalship. Strong working relationships with both leaders of the school and the higher education authorities outside school, and with their fellow colleagues, need to be firmly established. The first is the most important because a promotion ultimately depends upon it. Having one's fellow teachers as allies helps when there is competition for a leadership position since fellow teachers participate in deciding on the suitable candidate through a casting of votes. Specific pre-requisites that a principal-aspirant should acquire within this phase are as follows:

1. Achieve at least the Grade One teaching rank (for middle school teachers), or the High Grade teaching rank (for a primary school teachers).

This takes a minimum of six years for teachers who hold the minimum requisite teacher training certification for the level of school that they are teaching at. Those with certification higher than the minimum required for the level of school that he/she is teaching at, the minimum number of years to become a principal is five.

2. Acquire Party-membership.

This may or may not in fact be an indispensable requisite to principalship as there are principals who are non Party-members.

Table 5.1 reflects the approximate ages by which principalship can be attained. The specific criteria with regard to timeframe discussed above were not applicable before, during or immediately after, the CR. The number of years of schooling, during these times, were, for each level of education from junior-middle school onwards, a year less than reflected above. Even after the post-CR implementation of teaching ranks, the great shortage of teachers did not allow for the full operation of the system described above.

Stage 5: Stage of Ascending Beyond Principalship

The careers of some respondents developed beyond that of school principalship. This can be an extension of a retired principal's career in schools; a growth even if in fundamentally the same capacity of school principal; or a move on to a new career.

Table 5.1 Earliest Approximate Ages by which Principalship Might Be Attained

Level	Qualification	Age upon Completion of Teaching Certification	Number of Years to apply for Grade 1	Earliest age by which principalship can be attained
Primary School Principal	Teachers School	19	1 (probationary) + 5 = 6	25
Primary School Principal	Teachers College	20 / 21	1 (probationary) + 4 = 5	24 / 25
Junior-Middle School Principal	Teachers College	21	1 (probationary) + 5 = 6	26 / 27
Senior Middle School Principal	Teachers Institute / Teachers Normal University	21 / 22	1 (probationary) + 5 = 6	27 or 28

Bao30s's and Deng40s's career paths have been unusual for their much higher positions of leadership before that of school principalship. They took place prior to Deng's Reforms and are instances of career advancements beyond principalship that take place before retirement. Following Deng's Reforms, the instances of career advancement beyond principalship stemmed from the experiences, the professional recognition of, and/or the connections of the respondents.

Fang50sF was asked to head the private middle school her friend had set up after she retired. Pan60sF, noteworthy in the education circle for dramatic turnaround of school she had headed, was approached by investors of a new private school, when she was still in her early forties (see Figure 5.12 on page 140). Heading private schools, according to both Fang50sF and Pan60sF, is prestigious not only because they are paid substantially more than when they were heading public schools, but also because the principal is truly able to make his/her own decisions, and not governed by directives from the state.

Besides heading private schools in the PRC, other possible career advancements include heading schools in other developed countries. Zhang70s was made the offer after he had been discovered by headhunters in a broadcasted radio interview about the Chinese education system and his experiences as a school principal, when he was pursuing professional training in a foreign country. Had he accepted, the change in his career would parallel that of Pan60sF and Fang60sF which is one of professional growth, even if this is in the same capacity previously held, that of school principal.

Special Grade Teachers enjoy public recognition as experts in their fields and are highly respected. For retiring principals whose careers up to this point have not included writing books on their subject of specialty for publishing companies, or being paid by schools to conduct training seminars, but retire to do this full time, they are essentially building a new career. For those who, as school principals, have already been doing so, it is an extension of a part of their old career.

Bao30s's and Deng40s's high political positions, and certainly those attained by some respondents in Zhang's (2004) study were attained through political connections or background. Those who move to the political arena from principalship are beginning new careers altogether.

Insufficient feedback does not allow for any phases within this stage *Stage of Ascending Beyond Principalship* to be conceptualised. Nevertheless, this possible stage in the careers of PRC school principals needs to be recognised.

The General Framework for Careers of PRC School Principals has thus been presented. Encompassed within its presentation are the derivation of two other frameworks, one for the careers of primary school principals and the other for the careers of middle school principals. These frameworks, of which the explanations for their derivation have been furnished above, will now be presented.

5.2.1b A Framework On The Careers Of PRC Primary School and Junior-Middle School Principals

Figure 5.21 on page 161 essentially reflects a 'typical' career trajectory for primary school and junior-middle school participant-principals. It is particularly applicable to individuals who are compelled by weak socio-economic family backgrounds to seek expedient financial independence by opting to enter teachers' training schools as soon as possible.

5.2.1c A Framework On The Careers Of PRC Senior-Middle School Principals

Figure 5.22 on page 165 essentially reflects a typical career trajectory for participant senior-middle school teachers and principals. This framework has an additional stage (Stage 3) over the framework for the careers of primary school principals. It is particularly applicable to individuals from strong socio-economic family

backgrounds or of individuals whose families or who themselves place strong value on education regardless of the family's financial background.

Three frameworks on the careers of Chinese PRC school principals have thus been presented.

Figure 5.21 General Framework on the Careers of PRC Primary School and Junior –Middle School Principals

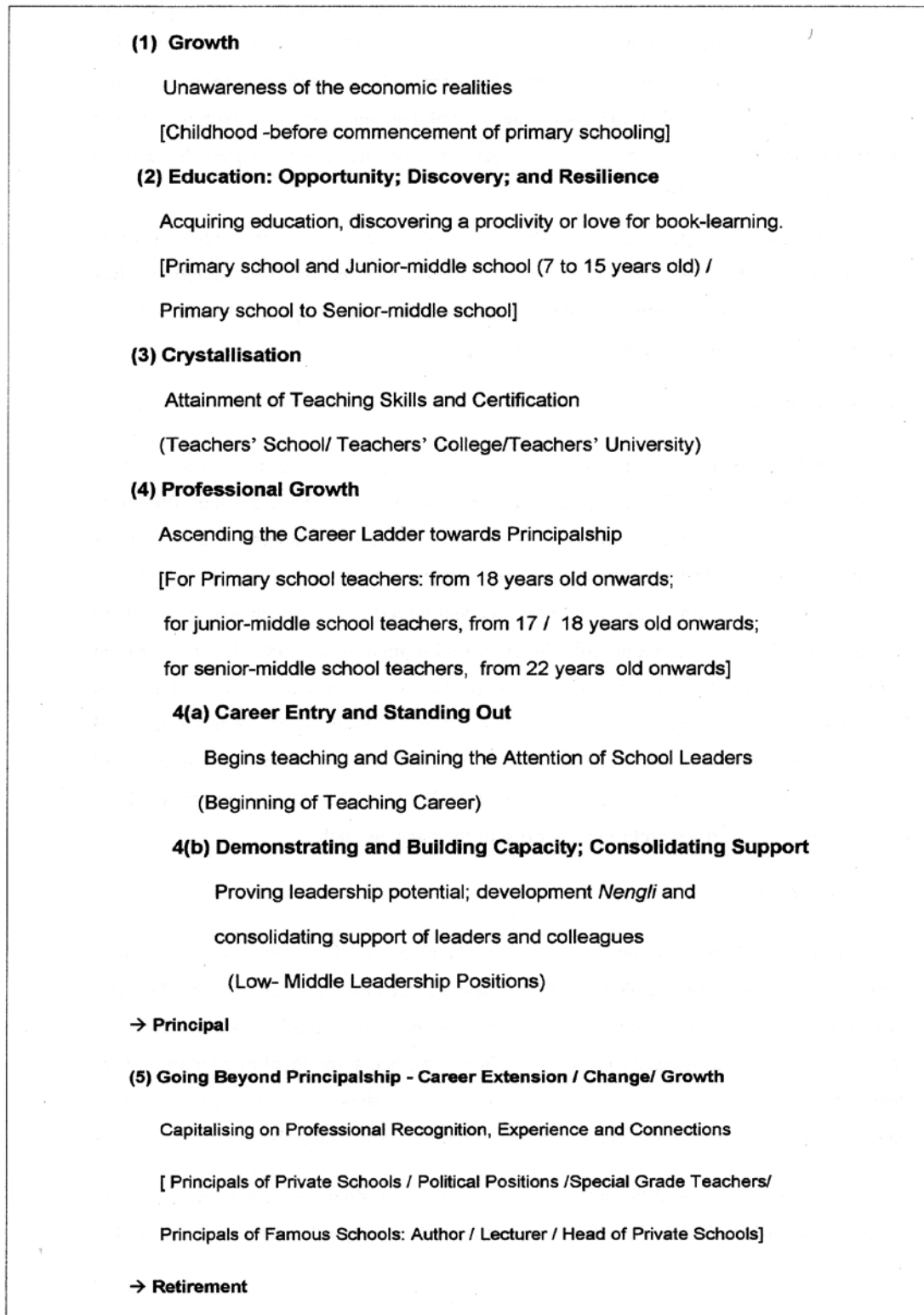
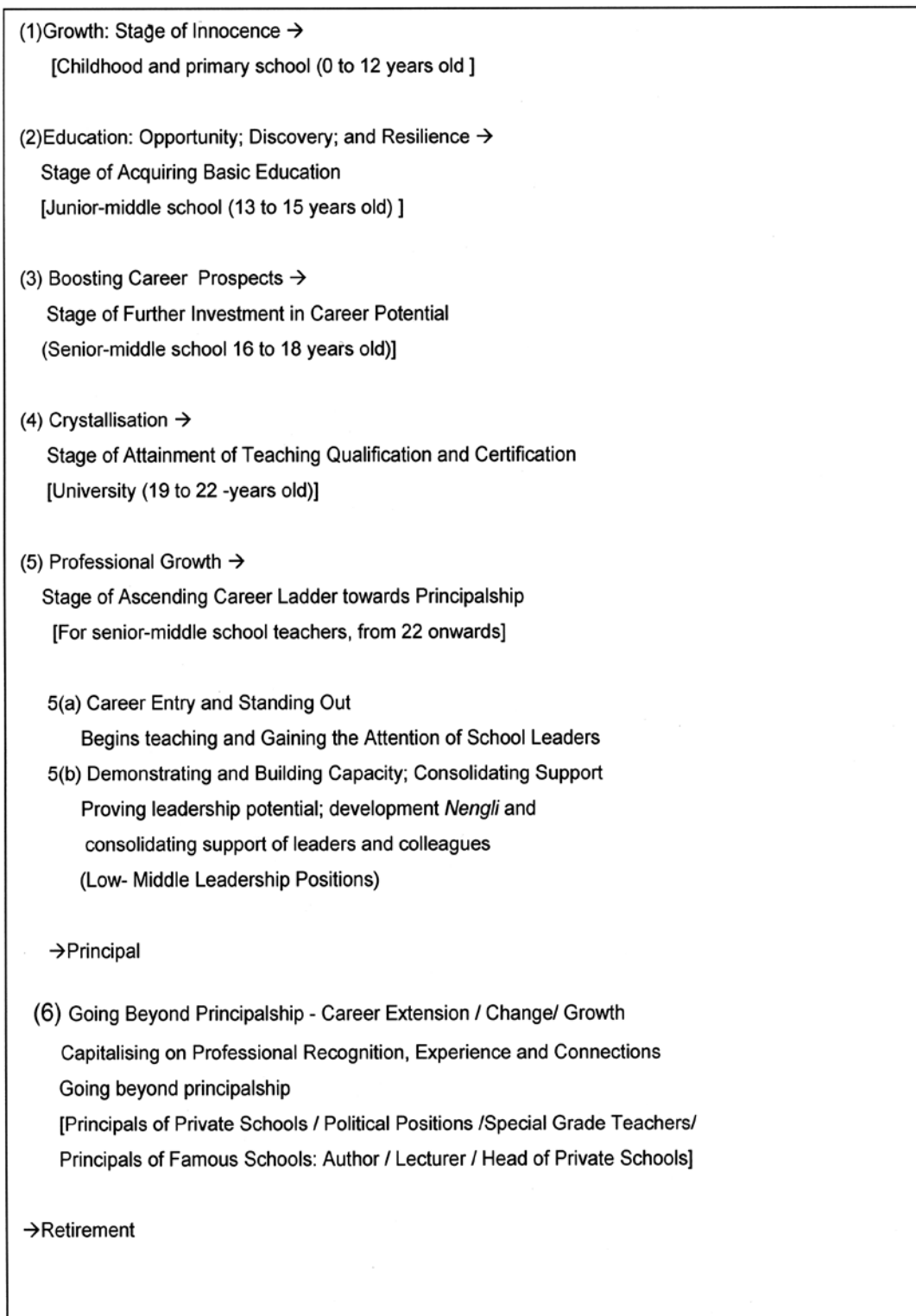


Figure 5.22 A Framework of the Careers of PRC Middle School Principals



Conclusion

This study's final research question has been addressed in his chapter. The career trajectories of the study's respondents have been presented. A model on the general influences of their careers, and three frameworks of their careers have also been derived.

At this stage of the thesis, the study's first, third, fourth and fifth objectives have been completely achieved. Its second objective has been partially fulfilled. It is completion of the fulfillment of this objective, the its sixth final objective that is left to be achieved in the Chapter Six.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, this study's findings are compared with those of existing studies on the careers of school principals to produce outcomes that will achieve its sixth objective, and complete the fulfillment of its second objective.

This chapter comprises three major sections. The first two sections relate to the two facets of this study's first research question which is as follows:

(A) What are the major factors influencing the careers of mainland Chinese primary and secondary school principals?

In the first section, this study's findings are compared with those of Zhang's (2004) findings on the influences on the careers of the respondents. This is a step towards achieving the study's sixth objective. In the second section, comparisons are made between findings of this study and those of other studies (reviewed in Chapter Two), on the second facet, the influence of the PRC culture on the careers of its respondents. This will be toward the purpose of completely achieving this study's second objective. This chapter's final and third section is a kind of critical review of the relevant stages in the Gronn-Ribbin's (1999) framework, for the purpose of achieving the sixth objective which is built on all the outcomes relating to the first five objectives.

6.1 INFLUENCES ON THE CAREERS OF PRC SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

The aim of this section is to highlight the similarities and differences in findings of this study and Zhang's (2004) study. It will be in relation to achieving the study's sixth objective. At the same time, it serves the field of this study's origin in basically organising the findings from the only two known studies - about the PRC and on the topic concerned - to date in Western literature. First, some key background differences

between the first two studies merit highlighting.

This study's sixteen respondents from five different provinces of the PRC (see Appendix One). Five are primary school principals and the rest junior-middle, senior-middle or middle school principals. At the time of their interviews, fourteen were heading schools in cities and two were heading schools in rural parts of the PRC. Zhang's (2004) twenty-five middle school principals, also accessed through convenience sampling, were middle schools heads in a single rural prefecture, Chuxiong, in the province of Yunnan in the PRC. Zhang was, prior to his doctoral studies, a middle-school teacher of the community that he investigated (Zhang, 2004).

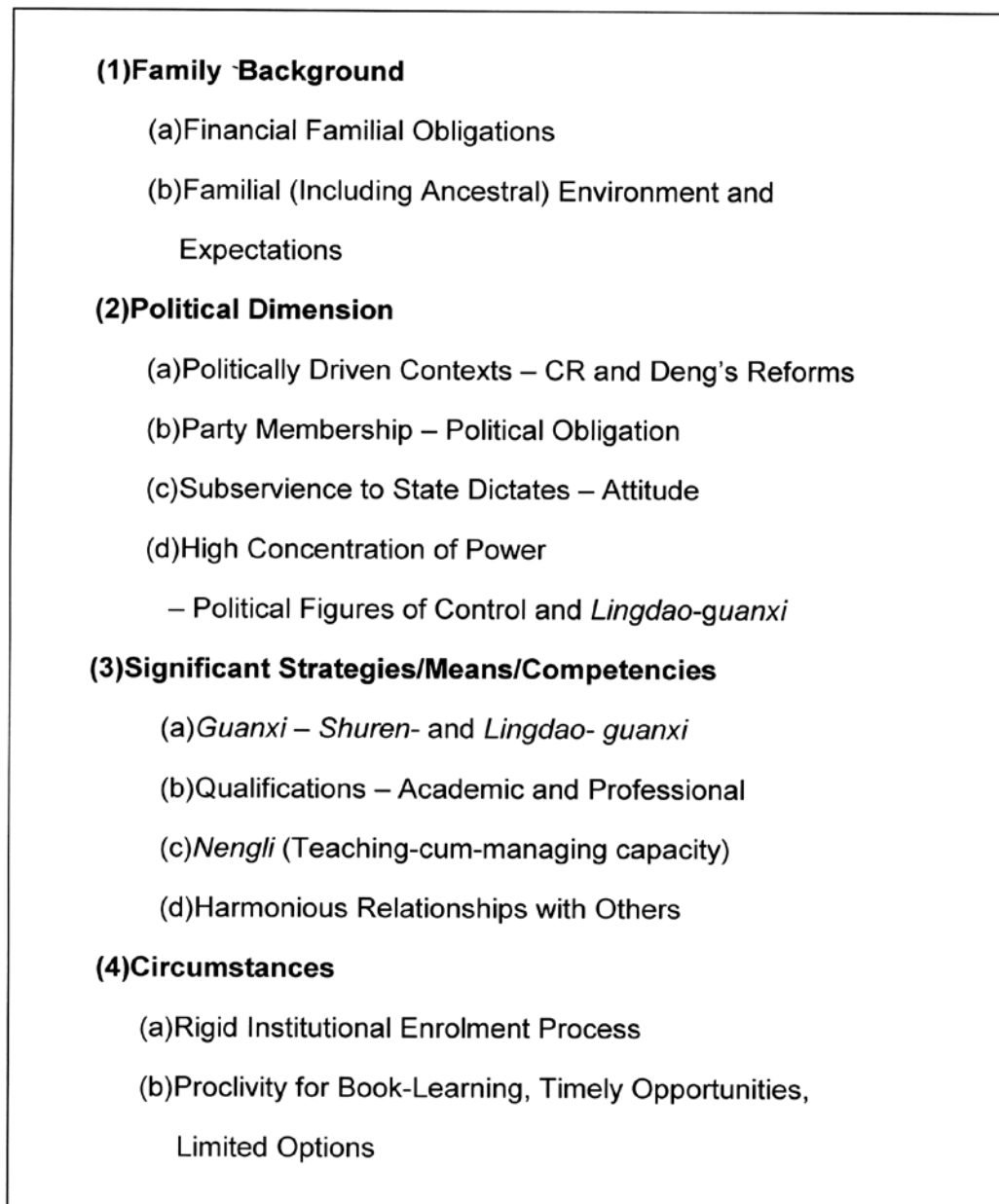
The comparison of the two studies will be made under this study's emergent themes, as reflected in Figure 6.1 on page 170.

6.1.1 Family Background

Both studies report an individual's family background to be influential. This study further highlights the following:

1. The influence of familial socio-economic background, familial value emphasis on education, the welfare of a respondent's family members, and the general family environment are influential.
2. Ancestors (through the family traditions they establish) and extended family members are also influential. Extended family members cited in this study include an auntie, an uncle, and a grandfather.
3. Educated mothers took part in the decision-making relating to their children's vocation. If they had been educated and had successful careers, they were role-models for their children. In Zhang's (2004) study, mothers seem to have generally played a nurturing role but remained in the background where decisions relating to their offspring's vocation were concerned.

Figure 6.1 Career-Influencing Themes and Sub-themes



6.1.2 Political Dimension

Both studies highlight the dominance of the political domination through the elements of political figures, contexts and the allegiance to the CCP manifested as

Party-membership. The following summarises empirical findings and details in this study which are not found in Zhang's (2004) study:

- 1 Promotions to leadership positions below those of VP or principal are done within the school. They are decided by the school leaders, namely, the principal, the VP and the Party-secretary.
- 2 Generally, a territorial Party-secretary is not involved in the appointments of school principals. Rather it is the school Party-secretary who is involved in promotions within a school.
- 3 However, a territorial Party-Secretary could become involved in the appointment of school principals through his/her *guanxi* with any of the candidates for the principalship.
- 4 Promotion to positions of VP, principal and party-secretary involves the territorial education authority, namely the Education Bureau/Hall.
- 5 Other figures, such as principals, teachers, Chiefs or representative of Education Bureaus/Halls, and in rural areas, Village Chiefs may also be influential in a candidate's appointment to principalship.
- 6 Younger respondents are more candid in expressing personal ambitions in the development of their careers.

6.1.3 Significant Strategies/Mean/Competencies

Both studies report academic and professional qualifications, pedagogical competency and managerial experiences as basic criteria for principalship, and *lingdao-guanxi* as the strong suit for achieving career goals. This study further highlights the following:

- 1 Attaining the minimum of the Grade One (for middle school) or High Grade (for primary school) teaching rank, which takes at least six years from the time of the commencement of a teaching career, and having a certain number of years as a form teacher, is an official criterion for being principal.
- 2 *Shuren-guanxi* or an individual's social network is relied on at any and

every stage of its respondents' lives, from childhood through schooling, for a desired outcome or situation.

- 3 An individual is punished, typically by being sent to a poorly performing school, for conflicts or expression of personal desire (of for example, a transfer).

6.1.4 Circumstances

While situations generally reflective of the sub-themes of *Circumstances* are discerned in Zhang's (2004) study, this study offers different or other perspectives from those cited by Zhang.

Zhang (2004) reports "many" of his twenty-five respondents, as opposed to only two in this study, as having cited the state to have been behind their assignment to teaching colleges. Zhang (1999) points out that it is owing to their not having qualified for prestigious universities. This study takes a different perspective: the interplay of several factors accounts for whether an individual will get his/her choice of institution to move on to after junior-middle school or after senior- middle school. These factors include the individuals' accuracies in assessing their own final performances in a national examination; the competition involved for their own first few choices of institutions for entry; and the line-up of their options in registering preferences. Officially, the allocation of places in any institution is to be decided on the basis of examination performance. Unofficially, this notion of competition includes *guanxi* as well. An individual who has the right *guanxi* could secure an undeserved place in an institution for himself/herself, and thus further contribute to the competition for a place. If competition is such that an individual is not assigned his/her preference, then he/she is considered for his/her next option and so on.

Zhang's (2004) study emphasises that for seven of his respondents, choosing teaching as a career was in avoidance of its much less attractive and usually only alternative: farming. In addition to this pragmatic reason, this study highlights other reasons that account for their choice. Firstly, the respondents' fundamental affinity for

book-learning underpins their leaning towards an intellectual form of vocation. Secondly, teaching opportunities, plentiful at the time of the country's embarkation on reconstruction after the CR, were timely solutions as a means of livelihood. Thirdly, teaching, for some respondents, was favoured as the less political livelihood option over other politically-related alternatives. Respondents in this study were not negative about teaching as those in Zhang's (2004), although only four wanted to be a teacher to begin with.

Summary

While there are findings common to both this study and Zhang's (2004), more findings, highlighted in point form in the comparison above, have emerged from this study. The reasons for this include this study's research approach, and that its respondents are not from a single locality, as is the case in Zhang's (2004) study. These will be discussed in the last section of this thesis, in relation to achieving its sixth and final objective. The ensuing section relates to completely realising this study's second objective.

6.2 THE ROLE OF THE PRC CULTURE IN THE CAREERS OF CHINESE PRC SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

This section relates to its study's second objective. In section 2.2.2 (page 38) of its Literature Review, a comparative study was made between Zhang's (1999) study and a host of comparative studies (Huberman, 1993; Bayer and Brinkkjaer, 2005; Steensen, 2007; Fessler and Christensen study, 1992; Chew et al, 2003; Wong and Ng, 2003; Ribbins and Pashiardis, 2003) , including some carried out in the U.K. (Day et al; 2006; Rayner and Ribbins, 1999; Pascal and Ribbins, 1998; Sikes et al, 1985),. The cultural specificities of the PRC identified from section 2.2.2 are its employment of political ties as a career strategy; political factors; and dominating familial influence (that of state being included in political factors). Here, it is the findings from this study that are contrasted with the same host of studies used in section 2.2.2.

In contrast with the individual's freedom in making career decisions in the comparative countries concerned, stands this study's theme of *Family Background*, and its sub-themes of Subservience to Party Dictates. Against professionalism as the basis for career decisions stands this study's theme of *Political Dimension*, and its sub-theme of Guanxi (both *shuren-* and *lingdao guanxi*). This study's theme of *Circumstances*, in contrast, again, the individual's choice based on passion and interest, reflect more on the relative economic health of the PRC than on its cultural traits.

Summary

The same basic conclusions are arrived at concerning the PRC's cultural specificities as those reached at in section 2.2.2 where Zhang's (1999) findings were used for seeking out the PRC's cultural specificities. However, those identified using this study's findings are better defined owing to the study's systematic method of data analysis. Specifically, the PRC's cultural specificities are defined by this study's themes of *Family Background* and *Political Dimension* – both of which are encompassing of their respective sub-themes - and its sub-theme of Guanxi. Compared to those highlighted in section 2.2.2, additional aspects of the PRC's cultural specificities are evident. These are the sub-themes of Financial Family Obligations; Familial Environment and Expectations (including ancestral); High Power Concentration; and *shuren-guanxi* or relational ties with others. Their effects follow. Career decisions are made with reference to family members, needs - and even tradition – and state, or is compelled coerced by any in his career behaviour. Strong and wide *Guanxi* conduce to achieving career objectives, relational ties with leaders being the most efficacious.

6.3 FRAMEWORKS ON THE CAREERS OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

From the beginning of the thesis, it has been claimed the Gronn-Ribbin's (1999) framework' assumptions are presuppositions. Validation of this claim is now timely, given the achievement of all the study's previous outcomes.

In this section, the two relevant stages of the Gronn-Ribbins's (1999) framework will be critically reviewed for the purpose achieving this study's sixth objective. The review will involve comparison of the framework with this study's model, the conclusions drawn based on the comparison of this study's findings with those of Zhang's (see section 6.1, page 168), amongst others.

The Gronn-Ribbin's framework has been presented in section 2.1.2 (page 26) in the Literature Review. This study's model of the influences shaping the careers of PRC school principals is presented in section 5.2.1 (page 150). The following critical review makes the points that in its having been derived from another cultural context, the framework is incongruent with the PRC's cultural context, resulting in the pre-emption of findings. Further, the frameworks' assumptions are presuppositions of the context that it is applied to. Pre-emption defeats a study's aim of capturing cultural traits and forces characterising its context of study.

Pre-emptions Arising from the Poor Fit Between a Cultural Context and a Foreign-Derived Framework

The Gronn-Ribbins's (1999) framework is derived from literature appertaining to the U.K. and not the PRC. An examination of its assumptions appertaining to the relevant stages of Formation and Accession, will show why its having being derived from a cultural context vastly different from that of the PRC's makes it inappropriate for application to the PRC's cultural context.

The Gronn-Ribbins (1999) framework holds that the "self" or the character of a leader accounts for his/her eventually becoming a leader: "It is in the formative period, from infancy to early adulthood, that the scaffolding of a character structure – "the essential [moral, social, and psycho-physiological] properties of people who hold and want institutional responsibility' (Kaplan, 1990a, p419) – is erected." (Gronn, 1999:34). Gronn emphasises of the stage of Accession: "First, their assessors need guarantees that anyone marked out from the pool of aspirants or potential candidates is sound.

Soundness signifies that the individual in question is reputable; i.e., that their career reputation to this point in time is unsullied and unblemished.” (1999:36).

It is naive to assume that leadership is attained because of possession of leadership qualities or even a proclivity for leadership. It is even more so to assume this of a context well-known for the embeddedness of *guanxi* in its social fabric, and in every sphere of its society. In both Zhang’s (2004) study and this study are respondents whose *lingdao-guanxi* trumped official rules to put them in positions they were unqualified for. Even in the appointment to teaching ranks and certification, *guanxi* may well be influential.

As for the stage of Formation, at which Gronn suggests, family, schools and reference groups (peers, mentors, and friends) to be formative influences on the “self”, it is general enough to be applicable to any individual and not just to “would-be lead. Hence, it needs to be established, in the studies adopting the framework, how influences from these agents actually had a bearing on the individual’s career. Again, a person’s character or personality, even if imbued with leadership qualities, does not necessarily account for his/her rise to leadership. The applicability of Gronn-Ribbin’s (1999) stage of Formation to the PRC is further questionable in that for the respondents who had suffered greatly during the CR, the psychological trauma of their sufferings is likely to have caused an undoing of their previous selves, that is, of very fundamental changes in their persons, and their attitudes towards their careers and lives in general. For these reasons, Formation, in the context of the PRC, is not a stage confined to the period of childhood and schooling. The assumptions of the framework do not reflect the cultural context concerned. This incongruence leads to the pre-emption of findings. Its suggested agents of influence seem to have stymied investigations in that attention is focused only on these. Family tradition, the socio-economic background of a respondent’s family and related to this, the past experiences of the respondents in relation to their political contexts, it is found in this study, are very significant factors in the PRC. Some of these may be discerned in Zhang’s (2004) portraiture, but they are not highlighted to be significant influences on

the selves of his individual respondents in relation to their careers. Precedence is given to furnishing evidence that his framework's prescribed agents and agency did indeed feature in his respondents' responses. That they did sufficed to prove that they were indeed influential – on their careers.

In contrast to the Gronn-Ribbins's (1999), this study's model and frameworks make no references whatsoever to "self" or morality. They are derived from empirical data, the factors that have shaped the careers of respondents and on the pattern of development of their career trajectories. In that they have been empirically derived, and that the requisites and ages in the frameworks are based on current official ones in the PRC, they are culturally-contextualised and therefore PRC-specific. Emblematic of its cultural context are the domination of the political sphere or *Political Dimensions*, the Confucian ethos represented by the centrality of *Family Background*, and the infamous and ubiquitous currency of *guanxi* in society, which are captured in this study's model (see Figure 5.18 on page 150). The hallmarks - in essence cultural specificities – of the PRC culture are reflected in this study's model. The Gronn-Ribbins's framework (1999) does not reflect any particular context. It cannot claim that because it does not, it is a neutral or impartial, and therefore an effective tool. The review thus far furnishes evidences to the contrary.

Other underlying assumptions of the Gronn-Ribbin's (1999) framework contradict the findings of this and Zhang's (2004) study. One is that principalship is pursued by the individual, and that it is pursued as an end in itself. Both Zhang's (2004) study and this study cite respondents who did not wish to become principals, but who were basically coerced into it, or at least, had restricted choice as to how they might avoid it. In Zhang's (2004) case, heading schools in impoverished rural areas was unattractive to some of his respondents, who nonetheless had to fulfil this role. In this study, some (Gao50s, Liu60s and Wang70s) preferred to remain teachers because they preferred to relate more to students than to colleagues and superiors, which leadership positions entail. Then there were others (Bao30s, Chu40s) who were able to become school principals from positions of higher authority, without loss of prestige. Bao30s and

Chu40s retained their political ranking - as chiefs of bureaux. Similarly, in choosing to become a School Inspector, a perfunctory position, Bao30s essentially opted for early retirement with sacrifice of authority (which he was glad to relinquish), but without sacrifices to rank or pay. Pan60sF was, however, willing to sacrifice all three in seeking to be an ordinary teacher from being the perfunctory VP of a middle-school, after her re-designation from Dy mayor of a town. Therefore, not all principals are covetous of the role. Further, Zhang's (2004) own study shows that achieving high political offices, even those unrelated to the field of education, are attainable through teaching. This study has similarly shown that school principals can become chiefs of bureaux. Political *guanxi* accounts for attainment of high political positions in Zhang's (2004) study. Neither Zhang's (2004) nor this study captured in detail the process of the cultivation of political ties or the process of attaining Party-membership. Capturing this aspect might depict a rather unique portraiture of preparing for principalship that would warrant a more appropriate label than that of 'Accession'.

Clearly, the PRC has its own unique, complex, and somewhat non-explicit, occupational career structure pertaining to principalship. Its system of conferring objective career recognition and rewards is closely tied to politics, which is less objective and less transparently meritorious. A system that is so devoutly political is bound to produce reasons for why principalship is attractive or unattractive to its teachers and principals that are different from those underpinning the attractiveness and unattractiveness of the principalship in other countries. In the U.K. studies (Pascal and Ribbins's 1998; Ribbins, 1997; Ribbins and Marland, 1994) for example, the individual has, relatively speaking, a very high degree of freedom to choose even where (and this extends to outside of the U.K. itself) he /she would like to work and how much salary he/she would be willing to work for.

In short, in adopting the Gronn-Ribbin's framework, a fundamental tool that is meant to highlight the cultural specificities of his context, Zhang (2004) was using a tool inappropriate to his context to begin with. The framework actually works against his aim of capturing the context's cultural influences. The dominant cultural forces of the

PRC have been overlooked, or not given their due emphasis.

A Biased Mindset Arising from the Framework's Design

The discussion in the preceding section shows how using a framework of poor fit is consequently pre-empted a study's findings. It is further argued here that the framework induces a non-critical state of mind in the researcher. The researchers who used the framework only deemed it necessary to seek evidences of its prescribed elements and thus validate that the framework applies to their contexts concerned. Consequent of the framework's portraiture stance, there was no attempt made in the studies concerned to even show how the experiences of their respondents that are relating to the framework's prescribed elements, actually influence or even relate to the careers of their respondents, let alone explicate their effects (see Bezzina, 2007; Zhang, 2004; Wong and Ng, 2003, Pashiardis and Ribbins, 2003; Chew, Stott and Boon, 2003) This study's data analysis processes of coding and categorisation compelled contemplation of the source and nature of an influence, and the relationships between influences. Specificities of practices and behaviour were sought out against the generalities through comparisons. An even more robust method of analysing cultural influences, has been carried out with the help of a very robust tool, namely that of GLOBE's (House et al, 2004) cultural dimensions.

Altogether, one is inclined to conclude that Zhang's (2004) adopted framework has stymied his investigations. The yield of his study in terms of number of findings is smaller than that of this study (see section 6.1 on page 168). One is inclined to conclude that the Gronn-Ribbins's (1999) framework has compromised the research position of Zhang, an ex-member of the very community he was investigating, and who was therefore very well-poised to capture authentic, hard-to-find, culturally-contextualised data of the PRC, much of which is accessible, even readily so, only to such an insider.

The case is thus made against adopting a framework that has been derived in a different cultural context, and/or an *a priori* approach to conducting research in a little

researched cultural context. The case is made for the adoption of an empirically inductive approach instead. This study's sixth and final objective is thus accomplished.

Conclusion

Cultural specificities of the PRC vis-à-vis those of primarily the U.K., but also those of Hong Kong and Singapore, were identified to those of strong familial influence; obtrusive political dominance; and the employment of *Guanxi* as a career strategy. The effects of these are encompassed in an earlier exercise of employing GLOBE's dimensions (House et al, 2004) as a tool.

The relevant stages of the Gronn-Ribbins's (1999) framework has been critically reviewed to make the case against using a foreign-derived and/or preemptive framework for research of a cultural context.

This chapter sees the accomplishment of all the objectives of this study. The next chapter will bring together these objectives, their outcomes, as well as significance and implications.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter comprises five sections. The first summarises the findings of the study in relation to the research guiding questions. The second reflects on the findings of this study in relation to literature reviewed in Chapter Two; their contributions to the field; and suggestions they have for future studies. The third section acknowledges the weaknesses and transferability (generalisability) of these findings; the fourth discusses the general implications and significance of the study; and the fifth makes recommendations for future studies.

The fairly substantive discussion in section 1.1 (see page 2) provides the background to the identification of this study's six objectives. They are basically six current needs of the relatively incipient focus on the careers of school principals and their lives, from within the field of cross-cultural educational leadership and management. How these objectives are expressed in the study's research questions are covered in section 1.2 (see page 17) and also reflected in Appendix One (see pages 221-225x).

7.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

7.1.1 Summary of Findings to Research Guiding Questions

The sixteen respondents in this study hail from the provinces of Gansu, Guangdong, Hubei, Ningxia and from Beijing. Five were heading primary schools and the rest were heading middle schools when they were interviewed. Their life-history data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The data were then analysed

through open coding, followed by the categorisation of the generated codes into themes and sub-themes.

This study's research questions and guiding questions are as follows:

(A) What are the major factors influencing the careers of mainland Chinese primary and secondary school principals?

(B) Can the careers of the participant Chinese principals be conceptualised? If so, how?

(1) What childhood experiences may have influenced their choice of career in education and their accession to the principalship?

(2) What school, tertiary and higher education experiences may have shaped their careers in education and rise to the principalship?

(3) At what point in their lives did they decide to enter the teaching profession, and what factors influenced their decision?

(4) How did they accede to principalship?

(5) What influence has Chinese societal culture played, as distinct from other factors, in shaping the principals' careers?

A full presentation of the findings to these research questions is found in Chapter Four.

As regards guiding question (1), influential childhood experiences were both positive and negative. The generally positive one is that of early exposure to books which helped to develop a facility for and/or the discovery of a proclivity for book-learning, one of the fundamental factors, in concert with others, that were responsible for the respondents eventually choosing teaching. A negative experience that respondents reported is that of suffering hunger and general privations, which became a spur for

one to rise in his career, and constituted an obstacle for others to transcend in their pursuit for more education. Another such obstacle was physical and/or psychological persecutions or sufferings experienced during by three respondents during the CR. These obstacles made other career options unavailable to the respondents and teaching the most attractive career option available to them.

As to guiding question (2), at the school, tertiary and higher education stages, the significance of the individual's family background is most evident. During the CR, respondents suffered setbacks, or enjoyed privileges, in their education, depending on their parents' vocations. Five suffered setbacks because they were offspring of parents from persecuted classes, while two enjoyed privileges on account of their parents being farmers. Regardless of the prevailing political context, however, parental expectations and ancestral traditions accounted for why nine of the respondents continued to pursue their education beyond junior-middle school. Six respondents' ancestral tradition of academic achievements created for them the expectation that they too should also do well. Familial expectations relating to education are found to be associated with familial socio-economic standing, which is basically referenced to the occupations of the respondent's parents.

As regards guiding question (3), the decision to enter teaching depended largely on the family's socio-economic standing, and the prevailing political context. During the CR, the decision to enter teaching was not time- or age-related. Those with some form of education, especially when sent to rural areas for 're-education', were usually assigned to teaching by community leaders. For the pre-CR and post-CR periods, those who were from financially weak backgrounds, entered teachers' schools or colleges after junior-middle school to take advantage of the fact that these institutions provided food and lodgings; paid its trainees a monthly stipend; and granted security in guaranteeing its graduates stable teaching jobs. Family background was therefore contributory to the circumstances which ultimately compelled these respondents to enter teaching. It hastened or postponed entry into teaching. In so doing, it influenced the academic, and consequently, the professional qualifications of the respondents. The decision to enter teaching was made at this

point. Its making depended on the individuals' personal circumstances. Teaching was available as an alternative to non-attractive vocations such as farming or a politically-related one; a stepping stone to another objective; or a timely and convenient solution to the need for a means of livelihood. It was also the most easily accessible intellectual form of vocation for some; and a vocation entered into at the behest of a parent. Finally, for some respondents, teaching was a vocation state legislations defaulted them to.

As to question (4), how principalship was acceded to, besides possessing the requisite academic and professional qualifications appropriate to the level (primary, junior-, or senior- middle school) of teaching, others include *Nengli*, the capacity for leadership manifested as a combination of pedagogical and managerial competence, and the cultivation and maintenance of good working relationships with colleagues and leaders. Leaders decide on promotions for positions below those of principal and vice-principal, and have significant say on promotion to these. Fellow teachers are important in enabling an administrator to perform his/her duties well, and in their maintaining his/her position as a principal. While the above are official criteria for career development, the PRC has its own unofficial means for career development: *Lingdao-guanxi* or political connections. It is potentially the most efficacious means for achieving career goals, whether this is a lateral or a vertical move (in either direction). Generally, the higher an individual's connections ascend in the political hierarchy of the education system and outside of it, the greater will be the likelihood of the individual attaining his/her career goals. Again, the prevailing political context determines the parameters of life and career in general. After the CR, qualifications and professional competency carried more weight than political orientation did before the CR.

In addressing research guiding question (5), Table 4.2 on page 118 summarises this study's conclusions about the role of the PRC's culture, in terms of GLOBE's (House et al, 2004) dimensions, in the careers of PRC school principals. Briefly, the PRC is, in the context of the careers of school principals, very strong in both In-Group and Institutional Collectivism; and similarly so in Power Distance. The effects

of these dimensions are that the individual's career is shaped more by external forces, namely those of family and state, than by self. Confucian ethos is reflected herein. High Power Distance, it is concluded, makes relational ties with leaders a potent means of career advancement, and thus a career strategy to be cultivated by those with career ambition. With the PRC's low level of Assertiveness, qualities that are promoting of concord with an individual's co-workers, and self-effacement in relation to leaders, are conducive to career development. The study's conclusions concerning the first three dimensions are in concurrence with those of GLOBE's (House et al, 2004). Its conclusion that the PRC's Assertiveness is low against that of GLOBE's (House et al, 2004) finding is average. However, it has to be kept in mind that this study's conclusions are arrived at in the light of strength of those effects associated with a dimension, in its qualitative data. GLOBE's (House et al, 2004) conclusions, on the other hand, were arrived at based on quantitative measures, and in relation to 61 other societies.

With regard to Uncertainty Avoidance, Future Orientation, and Performance Orientation discerned after the CR, this study concludes that these are higher following the implementation of Deng's Reforms, than during CR or pre- CR periods. The cultural specificities of the PRC where influences on the careers of this study's respondents are concerned are as follows: *Family Background*; Political dimensions; and the illegitimate career strategy of *Guanxi*. Each of these themes are encompassing of their respective sub-themes, as reflected in Figure 6.1 (see page 170).

Consequent of this study's careful tracking of contextual details, amongst which is the age of the respondent, the emergence of a new cultural trait has been captured. It is manifested in the attitude of the younger set of respondents towards their careers. To this set, their career is forged for their personal fulfillment. This stands in contrast to this study's older set of respondents whose careers had been forged with the mentality of putting state needs and dictates before those of self.

7.1.2 Summary of Findings to Main Research Questions

The findings to research question (A) are four main themes of Family Background, *Political Dimension*, *Significant Means/Strategies* and *Motivating Circumstances*, and their relevant sub-themes. These are reflected in Figure 4.1 on page 79. These were derived from the data through open coding, followed by the categorisation of the generated codes into themes and sub-themes.

In addressing research question (B), a model of the influences of the careers of PRC school principals (see Figure 5.18, page 150) and three frameworks on their career stages, have been derived from data. The model was derived by identifying the key relationships between this study's themes and sub-themes (Figure 4.2 on page 111), and the nature of these relationships. The model reflects the PRC's cultural specificities of political obtrusiveness, *Guanxi*, and the very influential theme of Family Background.

This study's specific aim of generating a contextualised framework/s for its topic concerned has been achieved. From The General Framework on the Careers of PRC school principals (Figure 5.19 on page 154), two other frameworks have been derived. These are A Framework for the Careers of PRC Primary School and Junior-Middle-School Principals (Figure 5.21 on page 165) and A Framework for the Careers of Senior-Middle School Principals (see Figure 5.22 on page 166). The former captures entry into teaching after completion of junior-middle school owing to weak family finances. The latter reflects an additional stage, that of further investment in career potential from pursuing senior-middle school education. The ages and timing for each stage in the respective frameworks are based on present 'official criteria' in the PRC. Assumptions made are that schooling begins at age six, and that education is pursued without disruption.

These frameworks have been derived through an analysis of the career trajectories of its respondents in Chapter Five.

Summaries to this study's research questions have thus been completed. Reflections on this study's findings will now follow.

7.2 REFLECTIONS

The following subsections reflect on what this study's findings suggest about cultural shifts and cultural convergence in the professional advancement of school principals in the PRC. It also reflects on the state of development of the field from which it emanates; the use of the Gronn-Ribbins's (1999) framework; and the relationship of this study's outcome with the approach suggested by Stevenson (2006). Some observations relating to GLOBE's (House et al, 2004) cultural dimensions and their respective questionnaire items are also made. These reflections provide the background to the recognised weaknesses of this study, the significance it claims of its outcomes, and its recommendations for future studies, that are discussed in the sections following this section.

7.2.1 Study's Findings and Literature Reviewed

This study's findings suggest that a country's culture is not necessarily slow to change, as suggested by scholars. Economic change can rapidly bring about behaviour diametrically different from that encouraged by long indoctrinated values. The PRC appears to be experiencing a shift in its interpretation of the term career. According to Schein (1984), in a socialist country, an individual's career is shaped by motivation but in a non-socialist country, it is shaped by personal ambition. This shift, this study suggests, is taking place in the PRC. This is consequent of the PRC's change in political orientation and other changes that this change has wrought. The embrace of the market system, the increasing importance given it and the improvement of its economic health, it is conceivable, are contributory to this shift in collective programming concerning career. Hofstede opines that cultural changes are brought about by "shifts in ecological conditions – technological, economic and hygienic" (Hofstede, 2001:12). Hofstede too defines culture to be "the crystallisation

of history in the minds, and hearts of the present generation” (2001:9). Economic gains, this study’s data suggest, have rather quickly brought about behaviour diametrically different from that produced by the PRC’s history and time-honoured indoctrination of values. Communist indoctrination of service to the greater good before self began as far back as 1949, when the CCP came into power, and has continued ever since (see Wang, 1987). Only from the 1980s onwards, when the country opened up to the rest of the world, did the economic and technological forces earlier cited, amongst others, compete with the PRC’s political indoctrination. Certainly, a more in-depth analysis is called for before concluding that economic growth or gains can bring about a change in behaviour contrary to that cultural programmed. For instance, it can be argued that the CR, an intense period of political indoctrination where self-advancement was severely punished, actually brought about a diametrically opposing attitude by virtue of the sufferings that took place during the CR. Some might even argue that pursuing self-advancement is a fundamental human attribute. Still, qualifications or revisions to Hofstede’s (2001) definition of culture cited above, in relation to economic rewards, might well be called for. For scholars of culture, the PRC is an opportunity to study how new cultural values emerge and evolve. It is also an opportunity to investigate how economic changes influence the change in school cultures and the style of management.

The change in the pattern of career trajectories of this study’s respondents suggests “cultural convergence” (Dorfman, 2004:55). Following Deng’s Reforms, the career trajectories of those born in the 1970s do not reflect disruptions, political positions, or positions outside of the education context. They reflect Kelchtermans’ definition of career being “a chain of possible and acquired hierarchical positions within a particular professional occupation” (2009:29). Is this situation suggestive of professionalism (as opposed to, for instance, political allegiance) being the basis of career advancement as a cultural universal? Is the PRC’s cultural specificity of professional promotions stemming from political allegiance or political ties weakening or beginning to weaken as a basis of career advancement? One is inclined

to conclude that this is the case. PRC leaders have been compelled to recognise that professional competence rather than political communist fervour is what is required to bring about economic growth and progress in general. Still, based on this study's model, the political dimension is the driver and if the political orientation, for instance, changes, then this apparently incipient development of defining career as an expression of personal ambition, may not be sustained or further strengthened.

Cultural specificities, the different ways in which a society tackles demands common to all cultures (Brislin, 1993) are highlighted through comparison of different cultures' ways of handling such. Cultural specificities are relative differences. The cultural specificities that are brought to the fore in a comparative exercise depends on the scope, depth and richness of data collected in the study of the cultural context concerned, and its comparative studies. The PRC is an immense country. The respondents from this study are drawn from five different far-flung areas whilst Zhang's (2004) are drawn from a particular region in the PRC. However, both are small-scale studies. For this reason, future studies on the same topic and carried out in different parts of the PRC, are still encouraged, given the field's goal of deriving culturally contextualised models and frameworks.

How well comparative studies serve the task of bringing out cultural specificities of the cultural context in question depends on how well researched they are, or how comparable the areas they cover are with those of the context concerned. Four studies from the U.K. (Day et al; 2006; Rayner and Ribbins, 1999; Pascal and Ribbins, 1998; Sikes et al, 1985), one from the PRC (Zhang, 2004) and three from small islands that were previously British colonies (Chew et al, 2003; Wong and Ng, 2003; Ribbins and Pashiardis, 2003), were the key comparative studies used in study. However, four others (Huberman, 1993; Bayer and Brinkkjaer, 2005; Steensen, 2007; Fessler and Christensen, 1992) were also used. The starkness in differences between the PRC and the U.K. cultures readily brought out some culturally specific practices of the PRC. However, the just-cited comparative studies, including this study itself, are not completely uniform in their areas of coverage. Even the studies carried out

with the Gronn-Ribbins's (1999) framework differ one from the other in terms of depth and in the manner of their reportage. This state of affair basically reflects on the fact that the field is relatively undeveloped. Hence, Stevenson's (2006) exhortation for the development of a framework capable of informing future studies researching the movement towards, into and beginning principalship in diverse cultures. Such a framework would aid the field to develop more efficiently.

In Chapter Six, it has been argued that the Gronn-Ribbins's model tends to pre-empt findings. Still, the stages in the Gronn-Ribbins' (1999) framework are not refuted by this study. This study does not show that its stages are inappropriate. Generally, any leader's life, regardless of the professional context concerned, can be studied by focusing on the framework's stages of Formation, Accession, Incumbency and Divestiture. To adopt the framework is to choose to focus on these four stages in the life of the subject/s, regardless of what other areas or stages there may be that may be worthy of investigation. However, this study's findings show its assumptions to be counter-productive to the aim of highlighting cultural particularities. The "self" or character, does not account for an individual accessing to a leadership position. It is consequent of these assumptions which researchers of studies (Wong and Ng, 2003; Chew et al, 2003; Pashiardis and Ribbins, 2003; Bezzina, 2007; Zhang, 2004) which adopted this framework, had uncritically embraced in their use of the framework. Consequently, it is argued, the findings of these studies have perhaps not been altogether reflective of their respective cultural contexts. If researchers of future biographical studies on school leaders choose to confine their focus to the framework's suggested stages, then they should do so with disregard of its assumptions.

Where does this study stand in relation to Stevenson's (2006) proposed framework and the Gronn-Ribbins's (1999) framework? Stevenson proposed a framework that integrate personal career trajectories with socialisation and professional identity. The Gronn-Ribbins's (1999) framework has been oft-discussed. In terms of coverage. Its

last two stages of Incumbency and Divestiture are not relevant to the aims of the study.

This study's model and frameworks are more specific and defined than the two comparable first stages of the Gronn-Ribbins's (1999) of Formation and Accession. They apply specifically to PRC school principals, mapping out their route towards headship. They are however, far less encompassing than the areas suggested in the Stevensons' (2006) proposed framework. They constitute only a part of it, that of individual career trajectories. The areas of socialisation, identity and sources of pressures are not covered in this study. Such a scope would be difficult to cover without compromising the descriptive thickness of, for instance, the contextual details in the narrative accounts entailed by a biographical approach. Future studies on PRC school principalship can be built upon this study by investigating the other three areas of principal socialisation, professional identity and larger contextual issues of principalship, suggested by Stevenson (2006). Based on this study's findings, investigation into these areas for those born in the 1970s will be more relevant to the current global context. An investigation that encompasses groups of respondents born before and after the 1970s will yield changing or emerging cultural values. The processes behind the emergence of new cultural values or disappearances of old cultural mores will be of interest to scholars of cultures in general.

The usefulness of this study is enhanced in the insights it can offer in the way that the cultural attributes of the PRC, as described by the widely referenced GLOBE (House et al, 2004) cultural dimensions, exert their influence in the particular sphere of the careers of school leaders. Insights into how it does this in a society's different spheres contribute to the overall understanding of culture. Still, GLOBE's (House et al, 2004) framework and cultural dimensions are also evolving. In referring to them, this study has some questions which will hopefully constitute useful feedback for researchers of future studies.

For Uncertainty Avoidance, this study resorted to the dimension's questionnaire item to identify the dimension in its data. Its definition made it difficult for this purpose. Consider its definition: "The extent to which society, organisations or groups rely on social norms, rules and procedures to alleviate the unpredictability of future events." (House and Dorfman, 2004: 30). *Guanxi* is a social norm pervasive throughout every layer and sphere of the PRC. GLOBE's (House et al, 2004) definition anticipates social norms to be stabilising to society as a whole. The greater the extent of reliance on "social norms, rules and procedures to alleviate the unpredictability of future events" (GLOBE, 2004:30), the higher a society is ranked in Uncertainty Avoidance. *Guanxi*, it has been argued in Chapter Five, is destabilising because of the lack of transparency. The outcome of any situation in which it is employed is unknown because the figures involved in the situation are unknown, and thus the extent of backing or clout of the competitors pitted one against the other. The situations of Gao50s (see page 130) Hong50s (see page 132) are illustrative of this. The questionnaire used to obtain feedback for Uncertainty Avoidance, though, better communicates the essence of the dimension, at least where the PRC is concerned. This is the questionnaire item: "Most people live highly structured lives with few unexpected events." (House and Dorfman, 2004:30) As such, for the PRC, the analysis of the data gathered for this dimension of GLOBE (House et al, 2004) are questionable, relative to that for other countries that do not face the same situation.

The observations with regard to GLOBE (House et al, 2004)'s specific questionnaire items for its cultural dimensions may be useful to researchers who, in future studies relating to this study's topic or other topics, may wish to use these questionnaire items. Five questionnaire items in particular could do with revisions.

With reference to Table 7.1 below, for In-Group Collectivism, an individual responding to the questionnaire item, "Employees feel great loyalty toward this organisation," may not "feel" loyal towards its organisation, but is nevertheless loyal by virtue of being compelled (as in the case of the PRC), or socially programmed to behave thus. Similarly, in the item for Institutional Collectivism, compulsion or

coercion is not catered for in the choice of words used in the question. The words, “or demand” should be added to the word “encourage”. As for the questionnaire item for Performance Orientation, it is curious as to why “students” or “students” alone should be focused upon.

Table 7.1 GLOBE’s Cultural Dimensions and Questionnaire Items

	Cultural Dimension	Specific Questionnaire Item
1.	Power Distance The degree to which members of a collective expect power to be distributed equally.	Followers are expected to obey their leaders without question.
2.	In-Group Collectivism The degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations and family.	Employees feel great loyalty toward this organisation.
3.	Institutional Collectivism The degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward distribution of resources and collective action	Leaders encourage group loyalty even if individual goals suffer.
4.	Assertiveness The degree to which individuals in organisations or societies are assertive, confrontational and aggressive in social relationships	People are generally dominant in their relationships with each other.
5.	Uncertainty Avoidance The extent to which a society, organisation or group relies on social norms, rules and procedures to alleviate unpredictability of future events.	Most people lead highly structured lives with few unexpected events.
6	Future Orientation The extent to which individuals engage in future-orientated behaviours such as delaying individual or collective gratification, planning, and investing in the future.	More people live for the present rather than for the future.
7.	Performance Orientation The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence.	Students are encouraged to strive for continuously improved performance.
8.	Gender Egalitarianism The degree to which a collective minimises gender inequality.	Boys are encouraged more than girls to attain a higher education.
9.	Humane Orientation The degree to which a collective encourages and reward individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and kind to others.	People are generally very tolerant of mistakes.

(House and Dorfman, 2004:30)

GLOBE's (House et al, 2004) questionnaire was administered to organisational middle managers. Even if by "students" is meant learners, then the question suggests that the question does not apply to anyone who has already acquired some level of competency. The word "dominant" in the questionnaire item for Assertion, even in the English language, leaves something to be desired in terms of clarity of what the question is seeking. GLOBE's (House et al, 2004) questionnaire items should not be employed as they stand. Revisions should be made to them. Questionnaire items are vital to obtaining accurate data upon which GLOBE's (House et al, 2004) statistical rankings and qualitative analysis are based. Would it be possible, for GLOBE's (House et al, 2004) next step forward, to elicit feedback based on scenarios?

The use of only one questionnaire item to gauge the strength of a particular cultural dimension is simplistic and reductionist in approach. Surely, this is owing to constraints and aims. A likely constraint is that responses to open-ended questions in the form of qualitative data can be overwhelmingly voluminous and too difficult to measure for the aim of achieving statistical scores and rankings. For each cultural dimension, the provision of a few scenarios, and for each scenario, the provision of options of responses may put the respondent in a better position to give feedback. These scenarios and options could be drawn up based on GLOBE's (2004) existing studies. Undoubtedly, there are challenges and issues in adopting such an approach. Still, this might be the next step forward for GLOBE (2004). The scenarios and options could be drawn based on what it has discovered for each cluster of countries for a cultural dimension.

7.2.2 Study's Contributions to Existing Knowledge

What contributions in terms of new knowledge can this study claim to make to the field of educational leadership and management? What value are its frameworks and model? This has to be considered against the state of development of the field from which it emanates.

The cross-cultural focus on the lives of school principals is a small field. It is incipient, promising of further growth if globalisation remains unabated and indeed, if globalisation intensifies. The paucity of studies on the topic has been highlighted. In being incipient, the field is basically undeveloped.

As highlighted in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, a standard definition for culture remains elusive. Some scholars recognise only traditional values and others are embracing of emerging ones. Stevenson's (2006) proposed approach is recent. While there may exist a framework for the impact of culture on school organisation and management (Dimmock and Walker, 1998), it has not been operationalised. Indeed, it has not even been critically examined, especially in the light of the existence of GLOBE (2004), the most contemporary authoritative study following Hofstede's (1991) study. For the international cross-cultural field of study to be truly cognisant of the global context and not insular, it also needs to relate to other relevant fields of study. This is presently not the case. For instance, none of the studies (Wong and Ng, 2003; Chew et al, 2003; Pashiardis and Ribbins, 2003; Bezzina, 2007; Zhang, 2004) in this study's comparative host of studies that have as their focus, principals' professional commitment and effectiveness, referred or related itself to studies appertaining to the professional commitment and effectiveness of teachers (for example, Huberman, 1993; Bayer and Brinkkjaer, 2005; Steensen, 2007; Fessler and Christensen, 1992). Many of the latter studies, as highlighted in Chapter Two of this thesis, are noteworthy ones. This was discovered in the review of these studies.

The outcomes of this study have been cited above. The elements in these outcomes are not surprising. *Guanxi*, Confucianism as well as the obtrusiveness and oppressiveness of the PRC's political dimension are all well-known elements of the PRC. Yet, no other model exists that relates these elements together. This study's fundamental aim derives from Walker's and Dimmock's advocacy that frameworks and models should not be formulaic but derived from and therefore characterising of a particular cultural context. The commitment to developing culturally-contextualised framework/s or model/s is not a commitment to developing unusual or

unexpected ones. It is a commitment to allowing what is in the data to emerge, and in doing so, to avoid embellishment or pre-emption. The commitment to undertake a qualitative approach and an emergent design to theory-building, especially in an exploratory study, is the commitment to seek out data truly reflective of its context. It is the acceptance that the outcome, at the outset of the research, is unbeknownst to the researcher "because it is inconceivable that enough could be known ahead of time about the many multiple realities to devise the design adequately" and because the different perspectives and values systems of researcher and participant "interact in unpredictable ways to influence the outcome" of the study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:41). The elements of this study's model and frameworks are familiar and expected because they are indeed cultural elements of the PRC and have therefore emerged from the data. Previously unknown or surprising elements in a framework or model would perhaps be exciting. However, this is not tantamount thus not being contributory in terms of new knowledge. The study, given its objectives derived from the state of development of its field of origin, is contributory to its field in the manner in which the model and frameworks have been derived. Its model and frameworks are a form of knowledge. They were constructed from data. Processing of data was involved. From the perspective of being useful in the sense of problem-solving, they are useful only to Chinese school administrators, principal-aspirants or teachers, as explained in the section 7.4 below. Their theoretical, given the inchoate state of its field of origin, it is fundamentally significant. It is the first study that has been carried out with an inductive approach. It makes a statement that has implications for future research. If the host studies preceding it are the only studies in the field, the application of the Gronn-Ribbins's (1999) framework, a framework that at first sight appears logical, would remain unchallenged and unexamined, and thus the field less developed than it is now. Debates contribute towards the development of a field. From future studies that will have benefited from this study's approach and its theoretical contribution to the field just discussed, the comparisons it affords with currently existing *a priori* studies, higher order practical knowledge should be forthcoming. More frameworks on the same topic as this study, especially of other

cultural contexts, would be contributive towards the development of a framework such as that proposed by Stevenson (2006).

The study's reference to GLOBE (House et al, 2004) is exemplary of studying culture in a systematic way. Its observations on GLOBE's (2004) are hopefully helpful to future studies.

7.2.3 Study's Findings and Future Studies

An argument advanced for the pursuit of cross-cultural studies on school administration and management is for increasing the understanding of different cultures given increasing globalisation and thus multi-ethnic schools. Two areas that this study suggests to be worthy of pursuit towards this end is that of ethics and the dilemmas. Generally, outside of the PRC, the use of *guanxi* is looked upon as unprofessional and even unethical. In the PRC, this study shows that it is an almost indispensable strategy. It is resorted to not just for self-aggrandisement, but for THE upholding of one's code of ethics. It is resorted to by individuals to avoid ethical dilemmas. The case of Bao30s (see page 124) and Pan60s (see page 140) are illustrative. Cultural interpretations of ethics should therefore contribute towards understanding between cultures. In fact it should be a part of the popular study on the effect of culture on leadership styles. It currently is not (see for instance, GLOBE (House et al, 2004)). Culture influences the perception and practice of ethics and therefore leadership and management styles.

Related to the topic of ethics is that of challenges and dilemmas. A focus on the challenges and dilemmas faced by school principals in the forging of their careers or in school management would focus more closely on their thoughts and feelings about their challenges and dilemmas, and the manner in which these were or were not resolved. Focusing on these will highlight patterns of thinking and behaviour in relation to solving or not being able to meet or solve challenges and dilemmas. Cross-cultural comparisons will highlight cultural particularities in thinking and

behavioural patterns. Studies exist in the West on challenges and dilemmas faced by principals in school management, but not in relation to the forging of their careers.

The socio-economic and socio-cultural factors in the lives of respondents who grew up in rural areas vis-à-vis the influences of the same of respondents who grew up in urban areas are apparent in this study. Data collected in this study also suggest that the provinciality of rural - as opposed to urban - PRC contexts creates environments more conducive to the use of *guanxi*. In his study, Steensen (2007) in Denmark focused on the disposition of teachers and their habitus, namely rural and urban Denmark. Future studies on school principals in the PRC and elsewhere might focus on comparing the two environments and their cultural contexts for principalship and principal careers. The PRC remains a largely agricultural country. To what end will such studies serve? Practical benefits will accrue to the PRC itself. Such studies could contribute towards improving the professional effectiveness of the groups of principals concerned. On the theoretical level for the field concerned, such studies will serve as comparative tools. It is only following such comparisons that ever higher-order of knowledge can be constructed.

The weaknesses and generalisability of this study are now looked at.

7.3 WEAKNESSES AND TRANSFERABILITY (GENERALISABILITY) OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

There are several limitations of this study which impact the generalisability of its findings.

The first and fundamental of these is its use of convenience sampling, which means sampling conveniently, owing to the great difficulty in accessing participants. With purposeful maximum variation and theoretical sampling, there would have been an even higher degree of reliability of the findings. Goodson and Sikes (2001), however, highlight that convenience sampling is, nevertheless, one of the more

“frequently” used sampling techniques in life-histories, and argue that all human verbal accounts are essentially biased.

Difficulty of access to respondents also meant that principals were not drawn from one region. Zhang's (2004) findings are readily generalisable to other school principals in the prefecture of Chuxiong. He had also resorted to convenience sampling. This study's findings are not generalisable to any particular area in the vast PRC. However, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the transferability of findings in qualitative studies, is strictly “impossible”. Rather, it will be left to the reader, based on the contextual descriptive richness of the data furnished within the study. Many features were adopted by this study to achieve contextual richness. They include capturing the educational and vocational attainments of the siblings and parents of its respondents (see Appendix Five on pages 232-234); capturing and presenting each respondent's career trajectories and his/her relevant educational and professional attainments, with an accompanying descriptive narrative; and providing the relevant historical and institutional background of the PRC. Additionally, this study also adopted a unique way of associating each respondent's decade of birth and gender with his/her name so that, in the presentation of the findings of this study, a reader can readily reference these details to the political context concerned, and thus immediately have an idea of where the individual stood in relation to the political context concerned. These just-cited features aside, it must also be highlighted that in fact, convenience sampling appears has been advantageous to the study. That the data is drawn from respondents of different and far-flung places of the PRC (see Appendix Two on page 226), means that the cultural traits identified from this study are thus more likely to be common to the national culture and not idiosyncratic of a particular community or area. A longitudinal dimension was also given to the data as whole with the careful tracking and focus on respondents' decades of birth in data analysis and the presentation of this study's findings. Modern cultural practices or attitudes versus traditional ones become apparent. The change in attitude towards career has been discussed. Having both primary school principal- and middle school principal-respondents, instead of only either one of these groups, has brought forth

the reasons behind chosen career routes, that is, primary school career versus middle school career, and given rise to the two career-stages frameworks of these career routes. This study's sampling strategy has in fact, fortuitously, served an exploratory study well.

The second limitation concerns the number of participants, especially in relation to the decade of birth. For example, there is only one participant-principal born in the 1930s, two in the 1940s, four in the 1950s and 1970s respectively, and then five in the 1960s. If access to respondents had allowed, having an equal number of participants and perhaps a greater number of participants too, in each group might possibly add reliability and rigour to the study.

The third limitation is that the cultural specificities of the PRC highlighted in this study are relative only to those of its comparative studies, and is further limited by the scope and depth of these studies. As earlier discussed, this limitation is owing to the fairly undeveloped state of the field.

The fourth limitation is that this study's data on how Party-membership is acquired is not rich. More successful investigation in this area would perhaps allow for a richer portrayal of how principalship is prepared for, and thus greater contextual comprehensiveness in this regard. The dominance of the political dimension in the careers of PRC school principals perhaps merits this.

The fifth limitation is the lack of rich data on the development of careers beyond principalship. The difficulty of access to school principals did not allow for enough respondents whose careers extended beyond principalship for sufficient data to be collected. Consequently, no formulation of possible sub-phases within the career stage of Beyond Principalship has been provided. Generalisability of the findings in relation to this stage is thus limited. However, most principals retire after their principalship.

7.4 IMPLICATIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE

There are five significant outcomes of this study, culminating in a sixth, which would be of interest to different groups of people. Each outcome, its significance and implication/s are looked at here. Appendix One (see pages 221-225) would also be a useful reference for the ensuing discussion.

The first important outcome of this study is its capture of the key influences on the careers of its sample of PRC school principals. This meets this study's first objective of capturing data of a cultural context of long-standing interest to cross-cultural scholars, and one of increasing importance in the international political and economic spheres. The fact that this is the first empirically-driven study on the topic of influences on the career trajectories of PRC school principals, perhaps makes it especially significant.

A second significant outcome of this study is its analysis of the role of the PRC culture, with reference to GLOBE's (House et al, 2004) cultural dimensions in the careers of school principals. This has been summarised above under the findings to research question (B), as well as in Table 4.2 (see page 118). The analysis, its approach and conclusions should be of interest to scholars who advocate that there should be a systematic approach to studying the impact of culture on education.

A third important outcome of this study is its capture of hard-to-obtain and rare empirical data: the career trajectories of its respondents in Chapter Five. Such empirical data is what the embryonic field of focus, in which the study is located, currently needs. The data will be of interest to researchers of school principals or leadership in general, in the PRC and in other cultures, as well as to aspirant-principals in the PRC.

The fourth significant outcome of this study is its inductively derived model and frameworks of career-stages. They would be of interest to especially scholars who subscribe to the advocacy that a framework should be contextually derived, and to scholars of the field who are propose the development of frameworks informing

future studies of principalship. There was, prior to this study, no known culturally contextualised model and framework on the lives and careers of school principals in the PRC.

For researchers in the field concerned, this study's model and frameworks will serve for comparison with those from other cultural contexts for drawing theoretical conclusions, amongst others. On the practical level, these offer ideas for PRC teachers for career-counselling; inform principal-aspirants as to how they might achieve their goal of principalship; and are perhaps helpful to policy-makers for which the careers of school educators can be shaped for the purpose of, for instance, attaining certain educational goals. School administrators may find this a framework useful in considering the career structures of potential candidates for leadership positions in their schools; helpful in their planning of the development of these candidates in terms of training and the overall development of the school and in supporting notions of sustainable leadership. The derived model and frameworks may also afford those contemplating teaching as a career some foresight into their possible career tracks.

The fifth important outcome of this study lies in the contexts and backgrounds of the principal-respondents. They serve as evidence that the lives of Chinese PRC school principals, certainly do not mirror those of their counterparts in the U.K.. By extension, the lives and experiences of school leaders in other cultural contexts are unlikely to as well. They also serve as a comparative tool for other cultural contexts in other studies. Comparison is the basic tool in the study of cultures, as highlighted in the study's literature review.

The above outcomes culminate in the sixth and very vital outcome. This is the paradigmatic implication for the research approach and stance in conducting studies in the field of cross-cultural research. A case has been made for adopting an inductive approach in deriving models and frameworks as opposed to adopting an existing framework originating from a different cultural context, when researching little researched cultural contexts.

The study has thus achieved all its aims and objectives.

7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following six recommendations are made by this study:

It is suggested that empirically-driven and inductively-derived approaches are best adopted for any future studies – that are culturally related – ones, at least where the topic of school principalship in the PRC is concerned. This is a recommendation directly accruing from this study itself. Such an approach is more likely to yield richer, more sensitive data that are grounded in the cultural contexts of the society, and thus to yield theories, frameworks and models that are authentic.

More studies on principalship in the PRC are needed to strengthen, expand or revise this study's model and frameworks. The PRC is, after all, an immense country. Future studies on the topic may choose to focus on PRC principals from a particular city, or a particular rural area, or again from both rural areas and cities in the PRC. They should encompass both primary school and middle school principals.

To build on and expand on scope of the present study, studies focusing on principals' socialisation, professional identity and greater contextual issues, as suggested by Stevenson (2006), should also be carried out. Covering these areas with principals born in the 1970s and 1980s will immediately yield practical benefits of research into little-researched cultural contexts. They will be comparable to existing studies on these aspects in existing Western studies. More importantly perhaps, is that they will be contributory to the examination of Stevenson's (2006) seemingly practical proposed approach of studying school principalship in a manner that will serve the global context. For culturalists interested in how new cultural values evolve, the PRC affords the opportunity to do so. For such studies, data for groups of respondents born in and after the 1970s, should be compared with those born in the decades prior to the 1970s.

In relation to the career trajectories of school principals, the dilemmas that principals face in their professional lives either in relation to their personal career development, or in school management is an area worthy of pursuit. In relation to this aspect is that of ethics. Comparative investigations of these two aspects should reveal only cultural specificities that would increase understanding of different cultures. At the same time, a practical benefit would be in the understanding of the strategies adopted in the resolution of these dilemmas, which would be encompassing of conflicts.

Future research studies should continue to similarly measure culture through the use of the cultural dimensions of GLOBE (House et al, 2004) and its rankings, as is the case in this study. This would give the field of study on the topic of the careers of school principals greater rigour in being systematic, and at the same time, facilitate comparisons between them and even other cross-cultural studies of different disciplines that similarly refer to GLOBE (House et al, 2004). If the questionnaire items of the GLOBE (House et al, 2004) should be adopted, considerations should be given to improving the wording of the questions for them to better communicate the essence of the cultural dimension that they are used for drawing responses for.

Research investigating how political *guanxi* is cultivated and forged, would be contributive towards the field. It is an area not captured in both this study and Zhang's (2004) study. The dynamics in the exercise of *guanxi* – both political and social, but especially political – could be featured in greater detail. This may prove easier for someone from the PRC itself, especially if the researcher should in fact be from the same community that he/she is researching.

Research focusing on gender bias is also an area worthy of research. There is a hint of bias against the female gender in that in rural areas, their education is given little importance. Western studies on the careers of female school administrators abound. Studies of the careers of women principals in the same PRC context would enable cross-cultural comparisons and thus further understanding of the influence of societal culture in general. The same may be said of cross-cultural studies on principals' careers with reference to ethnicity.

Data collected in this study also suggest that the provinciality of rural as opposed to urban PRC contexts creates environments more conducive to the use of *guanxi*. Future studies might focus on comparing the two environments and their cultural contexts for principalship and principal careers.

For future studies, it is desirable that respondents be enlisted on the basis of more robust purposeful sampling procedures. Where robust sampling procedures are not possible, as was the case in this study, then perhaps the next best alternative is to seek respondents based on their decade of birth. The decade of birth concerned would depend on the aim/s of the study. Studies with respondents born before the 1960s will include contexts before and including the CR, whereas studies with respondents born within and after the 1960s will focus on those whose careers unfolded after the CR. Studies that include respondents with careers that developed across the pre-CR, CR and post-CR, like this study, will be able to capture a huge variety of different contexts and thus traditional and emerging cultural values. Fundamentally, the CR is in itself a unique context in the development of the careers of the PRC school principals. It marks the time of dramatic changes in the country's development. Basically, any study on the careers of PRC school principals will, in one way or another, be referenced to it. Given the paucity of studies on the topic in the PRC context, studies with reference to any of the contexts will contribute to understanding of the topic.

Conclusion

This study has investigated how the careers of PRC school principals are forged in a cultural landscape previously little researched. It has focused on the forging of the careers of a small sample of PRC school principals. It highlights their major career-shaping themes, with descriptive empirical evidence that includes the portrayals of the objective career path each respondent's career. It further offers a model of the influences on the careers of primary and middle school PRC principals, as well as frameworks on their career stages. Eschewing pre-existing models of principalship stages and careers, the frameworks and models in this study have been inductively

derived and grounded in the societal culture of the PRC. Having been empirically-derived, these are culturally contextualised. They are primarily of theoretical significance, but also practical usefulness to principal-aspirants and policy-makers in the PRC, although in the field of its origin which is from within the larger field of cross-cultural leadership and management, the theoretical significances are greater. Academically, this study claims significance, despite its small scale, through its original data-emergent culturally contextualised model and frameworks, as well as its capture of rare empirical data from the PRC. It claims to have made an original contribution to the cross-cultural field of educational management and administration.

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APPENDIX ONE

The Objectives and Research Questions of This Study

Research Questions

(A) What are the major factors influencing the careers of mainland Chinese primary and secondary school principals?

(B) Can the careers of the participant Chinese principals be conceptualised? If so, how?

(1) What childhood experiences may have influenced their choice of career in education and their accession to the principalship?

(2) What school, tertiary and higher education experiences may have shaped their careers in education and rise to the principalship?

(3) At what point in their lives did they decide to enter the teaching profession, and what factors influenced the decision?

(4) How did they accede to principalship?

(5) What influence has the Chinese societal culture played, as distinct from other factors, in shaping principals' careers?

Cardinal Reference	Explication	Research Question Reflected in
First Objective	Capture the career-influencing factors of PRC principals.	question (A).
Second Objective	Analyse and explicate how culture influences the careers of PRC school principals.	Second facet of question (A) and research guiding question (5).
Third Objective	Provide empirical evidence of the objective careers of PRC school principals.	Entailed by the aims reflected in both questions (A) and (B)
Fourth Objective	Derive contextualised models or frameworks on the PRC's school principals	Question (B)
Fifth Objective	Detail the experiences and lives of PRC school principals.	Research Guiding Questions (1) to (4)
Sixth Objective	With reference to the Gronn-Ribbins's (1999) framework, make a case, based on evidence, against the adoption of a foreign-derived framework and/or a pre-emptive stance for conducting research that is related to culture.	Not reflected

Study's Objectives; Research Questions; Strategies for Achieving Objectives; and Their Most Relevant Parts in the Thesis

Objective	Specific Outcome/s	How Achieved	Most Relevant Parts in the Thesis
First: Capturing the career influencing factors of PRC principals	Four Major themes and their relevant sub-themes	(1)Collection of life History Data (2)Data analysis through open coding, followed by categorisation of codes into themes and subthemes (3)Presentation of Findings	Data Collection Stage Chapter Three Explanation; Samples of Coding and Categorisation Section: 3.2.7, Pages 69-70 Chapter Four, Section 4.1 Pages 77-110
Second: Analysis of how cultural influences affect the careers of PRC school principals	(1)Identification of the cultural specificities of the PRC and explication of their effects on the careers of the respondents. (2)An explication of how the careers of the respondents have been influenced by the PRC's cultures with reference to GLOBE's dimensions	Strategy 1: (1a) Compare the findings Zhang's (1999) study with those of the studies carried out in the U.K. and elsewhere in the world. (1b)Compare this study's findings with those of the studies carried out in the U.K. and elsewhere in the world. Compare outcome with that from (1a). Strategy 2:	Chapter Two Section 2.2.2, Pages 38-41 Chapter Six Section 6.2, Pages 173 -174 Summary: Page 174
Second			

Objective	Specific Outcome/s	How Achieved	Most Relevant Parts in the Thesis
(Cont'd) Analysis of how cultural influences affect the careers of PRC school principals		(2) Use GLOBE's cultural dimensions to identify the PRC's cultural dimensions and their effects from the findings presented under this study's career-influencing themes and sub-themes.	Chapter Four Section 4.2, Page 112-119 Figure of Summary: Table 4.2, pages 118-119
Third Providing empirical evidence of the career trajectories of PRC school principals	(1) Diagrammatic presentation of the career trajectories of respondents (2) Accompanying narrative account of the highlights of how the career path was forged.	(1) Capture each respondent's objective career path in data collection,	Data Collection stage Chapter Five Section 5.1, Pages 121-149
Fourth Derive contextualised model/s or frameworks on the PRC's school	(1) A Model on the Influences on the Careers of PRC School Principals	(1) Produce diagrammatic summary of the relationships between themes and subthemes (2) Distil essence of the summary (1) Analyse career	Chapter Four <u>How derived :</u> <u>Section 4.1</u> Summary for <i>Family Background</i> - Page 84 Summary for <i>Political Dimension</i> - Page 97 Summary for <i>Significant Means/Strategies/Competencies</i> - Page 103 Summary for <i>Circumstances</i> – Page 108

Objective	Specific Outcome/s	How Achieved	Most Relevant Parts in the Thesis
	<p>(2) Frameworks of the career-stages of PRC school principals</p> <p>(i) General Framework on the Careers of PRC School Principals (Figure 5.19)</p> <p>(ii) Framework on the Careers of PRC Primary and Junior-Middle School Principals (Figure 5.21)</p> <p>(iii) Framework on the Careers of PRC Middle School Principals (Figure 5.22)</p>	trajectories of the respondents	<p>Diagrammatic Summary -Figure 4.2 on Page 111</p> <p>Model Derived- A Model of the Influences on the Careers of PRC school Principals. Figure 5.18 on Page 150</p> <p>Chapter Five <u>Analysis found in</u> Section 5.1.1a, Page 128 Section 5.1.2a, Page 134 Section 5.1.3a, Page 143 Section 5.1.4a, Page 149</p> <p>Frameworks: (1) Figure 5.19, Page 154 (ii) Figure 5.21, Page 165 (iii) Figure 5.22, Page 166</p>
Fifth	Detail the experiences and lives of PRC school in and the first four research guiding questions.	<p>(1) Capture experiences in the presentation of the findings to themes.</p> <p>(2) Produce accompanying</p>	<p>Chapter Four Section 4.1, Pages 77-110</p> <p>Chapter Five Sections 5.1 Pages 121-149</p>

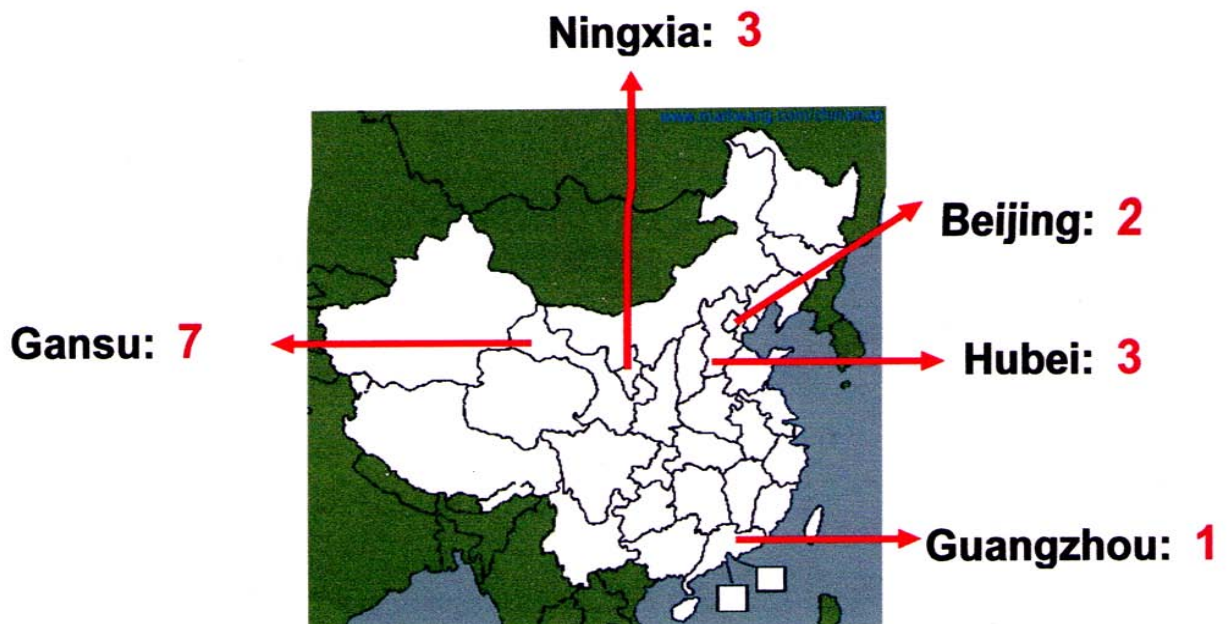
Objective	Specific Outcome/s	How Achieved	Most Relevant Parts in the Thesis
		narratives with their career trajectories.	
Sixth	Establish a case against the adoption of an a priori stance and/or adopting a framework derived in a starkly contrasting context in conducting culture-related research	<p>Critically review of the Gronn-Ribbins's (1999) framework.</p> <p>(i)Point out that in being derived from a specific context, its assumptions are not appropriate to the PRC's context</p> <p>(ii)Highlight why it is pre-empts findings</p> <p>For (i) and (ii), refer to relevant outcomes of this study and compare them against Zhang's (2004). Point out how the difference is on account of his adopted framework being inappropriate to the PRC context.</p>	<p>Chapter Six Section 6.3, Pages 174 -180</p> <p>Conclusion: Page 180</p>

APPENDIX TWO

Figure 2.1 Map of the PRC



Figure 2.2 PARTS OF CHINA THAT RESPONDENTS ARE FROM



APPENDIX THREE

Letter of Invitation to Participation in Study

Dear Sir /Madam

STUDY ON THE CAREERS OF CHINESE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

This is an invitation for you to look back upon your life and the development of your career in a systematic way.

Background of Researcher

I am a Singaporean who is currently carrying out a study in fulfillment of my Doctorate in Education with the University of Leicester, U.K. For the last four years, I managed a translation company in Macau, SAR. I am nearing the completion of my contract and am now collecting data for my course of studies. Upon collection of data, I will be returning to Singapore where my permanent home is.

Topic of Research

The topic of my study is the careers of PRC school principals. The primary aim of the study is to identify the influences on the careers of PRC school principals. From these influences identified, the role of the PRC culture in the shaping of their careers will be identified from analysis, and a general framework on their lives in relation to their careers will be drawn up.

I am thus seeking principals or retired principals to be participants in this study. By agreeing to participate in this study, a participant is agreeable to conversing with me about how he/she came to become a teacher and finally a principal. To guide this conversation so as to achieve the aim of the study, the conversation or interview will be broadly guided by the questions in the Interview Schedule (please see attached).

Anonymity of Participant and Strict Confidentiality of Participant's Data

A respondent who participates in this study does so under the following conditions:

- Anonymity of participant
- Strict confidentiality of participant's data
- Participant's right to withdraw anytime from the study
- Participant's final approval of data to be used in the study

As in all research, anonymity of a participant and strict confidentiality of a participant's data is guaranteed. This means that the participant's identity is never disclosed during or after the study. Pseudonyms are used for all participants. Also,

any other details (for example, the village, city or county that a participant is from or the names of schools that he/she has taught at or headed and is now heading, are not revealed to anyone during the interview or in the writing of the thesis. The data of a respondent is kept strictly confidential. Only the researcher and professional a transcriber (who does not live in the city of the respondent) will have access to the data.

For the sake of analysis, the interview will be taped. A transcript (in simplified Chinese) of this interview will then be given to the participant to review for accuracy and to make any changes he/she sees necessary. Even at this point, the participant can withdraw from the study.

Upon collection of the data from the interviews with different principals, only the researcher will be analysing the data in the way described above.

The researcher will write up her findings of her study in English in the form of a thesis. This thesis will be submitted to her university in U.K. for fulfillment of her course of study.

Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to call me at (mobile number) or reach me via email at (email address).

Thank you,

Kim Lee

APPENDIX FOUR

Interview Schedule

Context: People, experiences at different stages of life that might have influenced choice of vocation, becoming a principals and career development in general.

1.Childhood

1. Could you describe what your childhood was like? What people, incidents, and experiences do you recall that might have contributed to your career today.

(a)What did your parents work as? Can you describe your relationship with your parents? (c)Do you have siblings? What were your relationships with them like?

2. Could you describe the environment/s that you have lived in during your childhood?

2.Primary School Yeears

1.How would you describe your primary school years?

(a)Why did you go to school? (b)Where was school? (c)What did you like or not like about school?(d)What kind of a student were you? (e)What was/were your favourite subject/s? Why (f)Did you read? What did you read?

2. How would you describe yourself then?

(a)Any hobbies? (b)What was a typical day in your life like? (a)What was important to you then? Any aims or goals. What did you mostly think about? Where did these come from or how did they come about?

3. Were there any particular incidents, events or persons that feel are significant. Please describe them.

(a)How was it important as far as your career is concerned? (b)Details: how , when, where and why.

Junior- Middle School Years

1.What were your junior-middle years of schooling like?

(a)Why did you go to junior-middle school? What were the alternatives and why did you not pursue them? (b)How did you get into this school? (b)Where was school?

(c)What did you like or not like about school? (d)What kind of a student were you?
(e)What was/were your favourite subject/s? Why (f)Did you read? What did you read?

2. How would you describe yourself then?

(a) Any significant changes compared to when you were in primary school?
(b)What was a typical day in your life like? (c)What was important to you then? Did you have any aims or goals? How did these come about?

3. Were there any particular incidents, events or persons that feel are significant. Please describe them.

(a)How was it important as far as your career is concerned? (b)Details: how, when, where and why.

3. Senior-Middle School Years

1.What were your senior-middle years of schooling like?

(a)Why did you go to senior-middle school? What were the alternatives and why did you not pursue them? (b)How did you get into this school? (c)Where was school?
(d)What kind of a student were you?

2. How would you describe yourself then?

(a) Any significant changes compared to when you were in primary school? (b)Did you have any hobbies? (c)What was a typical day in your life like? (d)What was important to you then? Did you have any aims or goals? Where did these come from?

3. Were there any particular incidents, events or persons that feel are significant. Please describe them.

(a)How were they it important as far as your career is concerned? (b)Details: how, when, where and why.

3.Entry Into Teaching Profession

1. Why did you enter teacher's training school/college/university?

(a) What were the alternatives and why did you not pursue them? (b)How did you get into this school/college/university?

2. What were your years in teachers' school/college/university like?

(a) What did you think about mostly? What were your concerns or goals? Why did you come to have them? (b)Where was school/college/university? (c)Did you specialise in a subject? How did you come to decide on this subject.

3. Were there any particular incidents, events or persons that feel are significant. Please describe them.

(a)How were they important as far as your career is concerned? (b)Details: how, when, where and why.

4.Beginning Teaching and Career Development

1. What was your experience as a new teacher like?

2. What position did you move on to from there? How did the promotion come about?

(a)What process/es was/were involved? (b)Were there any other special requisites for this position? (c)Who were the people responsible for your promotion? Were there any other candidates for the position? How did you feel when you were given this new position? How many years were you in this position?

3. What were your concerns, goals and aims at this stage in your life? How would you describe yourself then?

5.Party-membership (not reflected in Interview Schedule given to respondent)

1.When did you become a Party-member?

2. Why did you become a Party-member?

3. What was the process like?

4. What office/s did you hold in the party?

APPENDIX FIVE

Educational Attainments of Respondents, Their Parents and Their Siblings

	Respondent, Highest academic Qualifications	Parents' Occupations	Siblings' Highest Academic Qualifications, Vocation
Respondents who grew up in rural areas (village, town, county)			
1.	Bao30s, Degree	Father – primary school teacher Mother – uneducated, homemaker	Elder Brother – not educated, general worker Younger brother - primary school education, farmer Three sisters –not educated, farmers
2.	Chu40s, Degree	Parents – uneducated, farmers	One older brother, three younger brothers, one older sister, one younger sister - not educated or did not complete primary education, all farmers
3.	Deng40s, Degree	Parents – uneducated, farmers	Elder Brother -primary school education, farmer Elder sister – uneducated, farmer
4.	Jiang50s, Degree	Parents – uneducated, farmers	Younger brother -completed primary school education, farmer
5.	Hong50s, Diploma	Father – completed senior-middle school, clerk/secretary	Two older sisters - not educated, farmers
6.	Kang60sF, Diploma	Father - completed middle school, primary school teacher Mother - not educated, farmer	One older brother and one older sister -both did not complete junior- middle school One older sister -did not complete primary school One younger sister -a teacher's school graduate Two younger sisters -completed senior-middle school

**Educational Attainments of Respondents, Their Parents and Their Siblings
(Cont'd)**

	Respondent, Highest academic Qualifications	Parents' Occupations	Siblings' Highest Academic Qualifications, Vocation
7.	Liu60s Degree	Father – not educated, soldier Mother -not educated, homemaker	One older sister, one younger sister -did not complete primary school One younger brother -completed senior-middle school One younger sister -completed primary school
8.	Mu60s Degree	Parents – not educated, farmers	Elder brother – completed senior-middle school
9.	Su70s Diploma	Parents – not educated, farmers	Younger Brother -completed primary school, farmer Two sisters – not educated, Farmers
Respondents who grew up in cities			
10.	Gao50s Degree	Mother – Pri sch principal Father – Doctor	Elder brother (drowned) – expected to go on to university
11.	Fang50sF, Degree	Mother – Doctor Father – University Lecturer	Four younger sisters -all degree-holders
12.	Qing60s Diploma	Father – University Lecturer Mother – granary inventory- keeper	Two elder brothers -degree-holders One elder sister -Diploma-holder One younger brother -degree-holder
13.	Pan60sF Degree	Father -Doctor Mother – Senior – middle school teacher	Brother – -Master's Degree holder
14.	Wang70sF Degree	Father -Doctor Mother-Teacher	Elder brother -Degree-holder Younger brother - vocation school graduate
15.	Zhang70s Masters degree	Father – Principal, Special Grade Teacher Mother – Teacher	Brother -Degree

Educational Attainments of Respondents, Their Parents and Their Siblings
(Cont'd)

	Respondent, Highest academic Qualifications	Parents' Occupations	Siblings' Highest Academic Qualifications, Vocation
16.	Yang70s, Diploma	Father – senior-middle school educated, chauffeur Mother – -completed primary school, Chauffeur	Younger sister -a teachers' school graduate

APPENDIX SIX

This Study's Audit Trail

Document (Name) Format of Label, Examples	Type	Contents - Description	Quantity
Master	Soft Copy	1)Personal Details of Respondents (pseudonym, contact numbers, special notes/requests, etc) 2)Inter-relationships of documents and materials,etc	1
OT(Respondent's Ref)(Date) Eg. OTBao30sOct12/06a OTBao30sOct 18/06b	Soft copy	Original transcripts in Chinese	35
Format of label: OT(Respondent Reference)(Date)	Hard copy	Transcripts sent to/returned by respondents	16 sets
FN(Respondent's Ref)(Date) Eg. FNBao30Oct12/06	Hard copy	Field/ Contact Notes	47 pieces
CT/Respondent Reference)(Date) Eg. CTBao30s/Oct1206/a	Soft Copy	Coded Transcripts and coding memos	35
CN	Soft Copy	Code Notes Compiled -Extracted Codes	1
CodesMaster	Soft Copy	Themes and Subthemes	1
CV/Respondent Reference Eg. CVQing60s	Hard Copy	Resumes	10
TT/Respondent's Reference/Date/part of total Eg. TTBao30s/Oct1206/1of 6	-	Taped Transcripts	32 pieces

