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**Leadership Styles, School Effectiveness, Needs  
of 'Mien' (Face) Behaviour: The Interactions in  
Hong Kong Private Schools**

by CHAN Kui Pui

Doctor of Education

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2001

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# Abstract

National cultures vary and the variations challenge the conventional wisdom of the Western management theory and practice in other cultural contexts. Specifically, the national characteristic of '*face(mien)* behaviour' is immensely important at all levels in Chinese interpersonal communications. The notion of '*mien*' permeates every aspect of interpersonal relationships in Chinese culture because of the culture's overarching concern with relationships.

This study examines the nature of '*mien*' behaviour, explores how '*mien*' functions in the Hong Kong educational context, and how leadership styles of secondary school principals interact with '*mien*' as perceived by their teaching staff and how, eventually, these interactions influence the effectiveness of the schools.

Whenever Chinese behaviour is discussed, the social philosophy of Confucianism is relevant. The Confucian ethical system regulating social behaviour has three principle ideas: *ren*(仁), *yi*(義) and *li*(禮); benevolence, righteousness or justice, and propriety or courtesy. This study also examines how these three principles nurture '*mien*' and considers whether any alternate style of leadership in Hong Kong context can be formulated.

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# **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Professor David Galloway, my supervisor, for his invaluable guidance and advice throughout the study. Professor Galloway has been an excellent academic model.

Appreciation also goes to Professor Keith Morrison, my former supervisor, for his positiveness and genuine concern.

I am indebted to my family. This dream may not have materialized without the understanding of my wife, Ming Chu, and the sacrifice of my children, Eden and Vera.

# List of abbreviations

ANCOVA	Analysis of covariance
AP	Assistant Principal
BPS	Bought Place Scheme
CEMA	China Enterprise Management Association
CHSC	Committee on Home School Co-operation
DSS	Direct Subsidy Scheme
ECR7	Education Commission Report Number 7
ED	Education Department
ECA	extra-curricular activities
HKCEE	Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination
HKAT	Hong Kong Attainment Tests
ISS	Information Systems Strategy
IT	Information Technology
LBDQ	Leader Behaviour Description Questionnaire
LMS	local management of schools
MBO	Management by Objectives
MLQ	Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire
NET	Native English speaking Teachers
SMC	School Management Committee
SMI	School Management Initiative
SAMS	School Administration and Management System
SSPA	Secondary School Places Allocation
SAR	Special Administrative Region
TOC	Target Oriented Curriculum

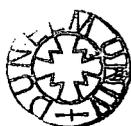
# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

**M**ore than 100 years ago, the Ching Dynasty reformer Chang Chin-tung, advocated '*Western learning for technology, Chinese learning for the essentials*'. This pursuit of management knowledge is also found in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore, where business is a popular subject of study and Western management texts enjoy vigorous sales. Take China as an example, the China Enterprise Management Association (CEMA) was founded in 1979. It invited a great number of foreign scholars to give lectures to Chinese managers and future teachers and consultants in management (Laaksonen 1988). In 1997, a nationwide on-the-job formal MBA programme was initiated by the State Economics and Trade Commission in Cupertino with the Ministry of Education. Since then, about 5,000 managers each year have passed national MBA entrance examinations and entered into the on-the-job MBA programmes with a target of 200,000 managers to go through MBA training (Wang, 1999).

There are two serious problems with this undertaking. Firstly, many areas, like quality control, accounting systems, commercial law, and taxation, are sufficiently mechanical and standardized to be taught in a didactic, routine fashion. In the '*softer*' areas, like planning, leadership, communication, conflict resolution, delegation, and performance evaluation, the formulas are fewer, more contingent on a variety of factors, and often dependent on sophisticated judgments about personal interaction and needs. In these areas the knowledge base of Western management science is much shakier (Ali et al., 1995; Bond, 1991; Hofstede, 1991). This can also be revealed in Peters and Waterman's (1982) attempt in identifying the nature of organizational culture based on the statements of CEOs and senior executives of large multinationals; these interesting, but largely second-hand executive stories are probably truly the myths of culture. It seems that many of these cultural statements are most likely the products of the corporate PR machines. As identified by Mickelthwait and Wooldridge, (1997:365) '*In few other academic disciplines do personal peccadilloes play such a large part. In writing about management, many of the gurus are simply writing about themselves*'.

The second problem is that management knowledge in the organizational and interpersonal areas is derived from studies conducted and theories constructed in the



West. Hofstede (1980:373) writes:

*For about 60 years, the United States has been the world's largest producer and exporter of management theories covering such key areas as motivation, leadership, and organization.... and American theories reflect the culture of the United States of its day. Since most present-day theorists are middle-class intellectuals, their theories reflect a national, intellectual, middle-class cultural background.*

National cultures do vary and it is a fruitful area for research. Hofstede (1983) showed that people do vary a great deal, and in so doing challenged the conventional wisdom of the Western management theory and practice launched in the UK and abroad to non-Western students. In his survey of comparable populations of company employees in more than 53 units, three were Chinese: Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan. Hofstede extracted four dimensions of cultural variation. Two of these dimensions are of critical importance. The first is collectivism-individualism. As described by Hofstede (1983:83):

*Individualism stands for a preference for a loosely knit social framework in society wherein individuals are supposed to take care of themselves and their immediate families only. Its opposite, Collectivism, stands for a preference for a tightly knit social framework in which individuals can expect their relatives, clan, or other in-group to look after them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. The fundamental issue addressed by this dimension is the degree of interdependence a society maintains among individuals.*

The second dimension of cultural variability is large versus small power distance. Again, as described by Hofstede (1983:83):

*Power distance is the extent to which the members of a society accept that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally. This affects the behaviour of the less powerful as well as of the more powerful members of society. People in large power distance societies accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place which needs no further justification. People in small power distance societies strive for power equalization and demand justification for power inequalities. The fundamental issue addressed by this dimension is how a society handles inequalities among*

*people when they occur. This has obvious consequences for the way people build their institutions and organizations.*

These two dimensions are important because all three Chinese samples occupy similar positions on these scales in Hofstede's results (highly collective and moderately high in power distance). The similarity of positions can generalize results relevant to these dimensions across Chinese cultures in different places.

Another point of critical importance is the fact that the three places are all industrialized and prosperous in comparison with the rest of Southeast Asia and China. It appears that certain fundamental Chinese values have remained intact throughout this modernization process.

Hofstede's findings can also signify that Chinese people are inhibited in a society of high sensitivity to hierarchical order and of high power distance. McGregor's (1960) Theory X will then be comparatively more applicable since Theory X has implicitly conveyed the message of the existence of hierarchical ranks among people's interactions and it suggests that

- people **must be forced** or induced to make an effort;
- people would **rather be directed** than accept responsibility; and
- people will seek to **avoid accepting responsibility**.

In contrast to Theory X, Theory Y's assumptions may come into conflict with the cultural depositions of Chinese which states that

- people will **seek and accept responsibility** under the right conditions;
- self-discipline is more effective than **imposed discipline**; and
- people are motivated to realize **their own potential**.

The model starts with the distinctive and polarized characteristics of peoples. In one extreme, Theory X hypothesizes that people would rather be directed; and would avoid responsibility. In the other, Theory Y assumes that people can direct themselves. Nevertheless, without giving consideration to the peculiar Chinese characteristic of *guanxi*, literally meaning interpersonal relationship, and the rigid categorization among all interpersonal networks, McGregor's deliberate preference for the empowering, benign, 'Y' model cannot unfold why directive measures still dominate various fields like education, commerce as well as political entities where Chinese

people live.

Peter Drucker (1946) stresses the basic assumption of Management by Objectives (MBO) that it requires the boss and his reporting subordinate to negotiate a performance contract and assessment at certain times of the year. Hofstede (1980:382) extends this thinking and he writes:

*It (MBO) has been perhaps the single most popular management technique 'made in U.S.A'. Therefore, it can be accepted as fitting U.S. culture. MBO presupposes:*

- *That subordinates are sufficiently independent to negotiate meaningfully with the boss.*
- *That both are willing to take risks.*
- *That performance is seen as important by both.*

However, these preconditions are contradictory to Hsu's (1971:23) argument concerning the Chinese characteristics that *'the concept of self is only recent to Chinese societies. In a traditional Chinese society, individuals are but part of the community'* be it the family or state, or whatever the system is in context.

It is widely accepted that culture shapes behaviour and it is clear that if a receiving culture does not share the core assumptions of Western management theories, MBO or any other Western theories are likely to fail. More specific practices in such areas as appraisal, leadership style, decision making, and so forth cannot responsibly be presented to Chinese persons as sound management techniques until their cultural compatibility and behavioural characteristics have been assessed.

Whenever there is the discussion of Chinese behaviour, the social philosophy of Confucianism is relevant. The Confucian ethical system regulating social behaviour has three principle ideas: *ren*(仁), *yi*(義) and *li*(禮); benevolence, righteousness or justice, and propriety or courtesy. In Chinese agrarian society of isolated villages, where relationships are collectivist, involuntary, and permanent, rules regulating social interaction are crucial, as there is essentially no escape from troublesome interpersonal relations (Moghaddam, Taylor, and Wright, 1993). Redding (1990) maintains that the key to understanding Chinese social behaviour is an appreciation of the extent to which Chinese have experienced insecurity in a bitter sea of tragically endless environmental, political, and economic chaos. Through most of Chinese

history, individuals have been afforded little security by the traditional Chinese state, which was ruled by a distant and thinly scattered political elite unwilling or unable to maintain order through the rule of law. Instead, order was maintained by forcing people to learn their prescribed roles through Confucian education and family socialization, and by enforcing proper role behaviour by threat of punishment.

The kin in-group provided the *'first, last, and only'* source of security in traditional China (Chiao, 1989). Gannon (1994:325) also asserts that *'From Chinese perspective, the individual exists or is someone only when he or she is a member of a group'*. This fundamental principle nurtures *'relational personalism'* (Redding, 1990). *'Relational personalism'* begins with a distinction between in-group members or insiders and out-group members or outsiders. Hwang (1987) identifies three categories of relationships: expressive ties, including those with close family members; mixed ties, such as those with friends and other kin; and instrumental ties, those with strangers or out-group members with whom there is no lasting relationship. Social interaction expectations, norms, and behaviours differ for these three kinds of ties. The differences between the three ties constitute the complex networks of *guanxi* (relationships) which expand throughout life (Chang & Holt, 1991). In contrast to the pattern in Western societies, these relationships persist long after the groups are dissolved or no longer have face-to-face interaction, forming lifelong, rich networks of *guanxi* (Hwang 1987).

The permanence of such social networks contributes to the importance and enforceability of the Chinese conception of *mien* and *lien* since *mien* and *lien* are the skills and means of regulating relationships with different ties. According to Kim (1987), *mien* referred to people with higher social status, political power as well as moral and academic accomplishment, and *lien* was the reflective recognition of oneself. Through offering *mien* and *lien*, protecting *mien* and *lien*, fear of losing *mien* and *lien*, Chinese people establish different relationships. In order to understand the effect of *mien* and *lien* upon the Chinese interpersonal relationships, a complete review of *mien* and *lien* will be carried out in the next chapter.

Redding and Wong (1992:285) concluded that *'many Western managerial techniques in the human area of management carry with them unstated assumptions which may not transfer to the Chinese context... All of these ideals clash with many of the perceptions and feelings about relationships'*. Maintaining proper relationships among different ties is strictly confined by the concept of *li*. Confucius' ideology of *li* (禮), a term which may be interpreted as *'rites'*, *'propriety'*, or *'manners'* was *'a*

*body of norms, conventions, and mores which influenced all secular and sacred aspects of social living in traditional China*' (Young, 1994:7). *Li* unites harmony and diversity. However, it presents '*individual expression, individual recognition and individual fulfillment to be of secondary importance*' (1994:10) and promotes collectivistic conduct. The character for *li* originally symbolized sacrifice.

*"It also categorizes all kinds of interpersonal contact. All individuals have to behave with reference to the categorized limit. Li is actually the root and the ritual side of mien"* (Chu, 1983:239). Liang (1974) claims that Chinese society is neither individualistic nor collectivist as are other family-based ethnic groups, but is based on relations as quoted by Gannon (1994). Offering and delivering the appropriate *mien* and *lien* to different ties means the performance of propriety or courtesy. In contrast, not offering *mien* may lead to a serious outcome for the recipient, socially and morally. The distinguishing features of *mien* have to be taken into consideration in constructing theories and applying models to Chinese cultures. These distinguishing features will be discussed in the next chapter.

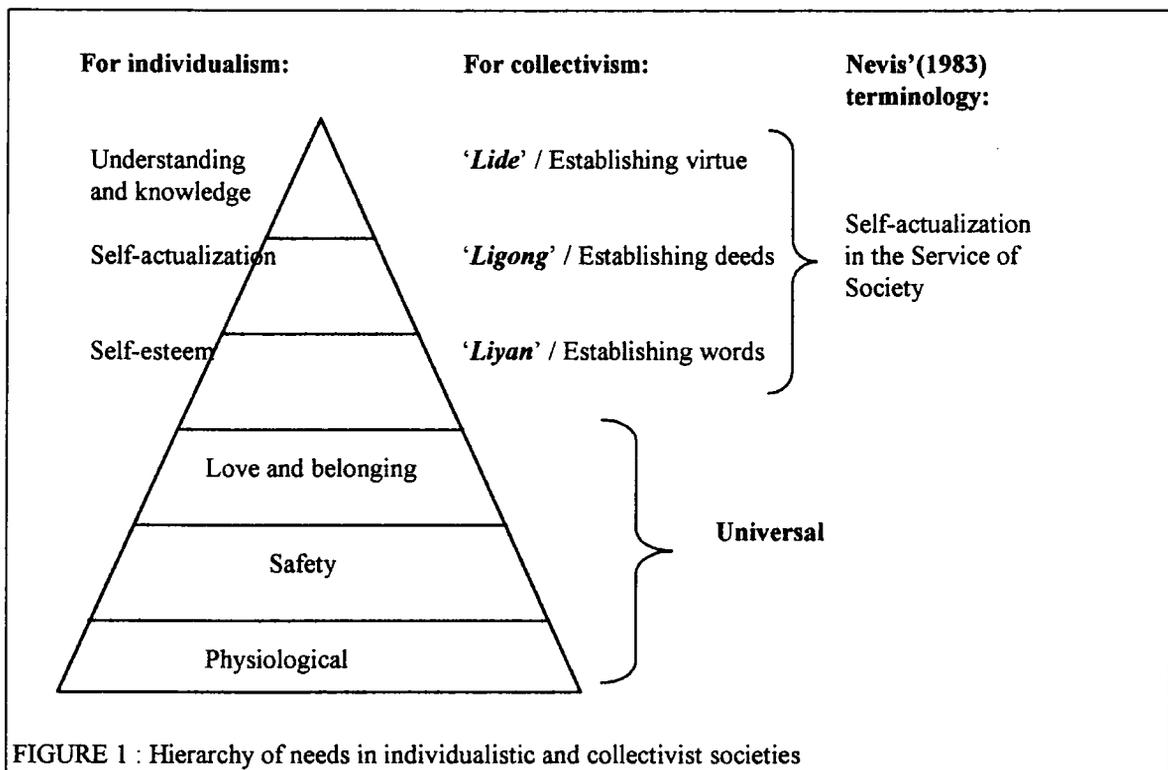
Another important area of management theory revolves around motivation. In the USA, again from where a great deal of this theory emanates, the strongest form of motivation is regarded as an internal need to gain self-respect. '*Self-actualization*', Maslow's (1943) highest form in the hierarchy of needs, may not be applied to the people who feel obligations to the groups to which they belong such as their family, and they seek status within groups rather than to gain self-realization.

Scholars like McClelland (1961, 1963) have argued that achievement motivation is culturally universal and varies across cultures or societies in degree only. He suggests that achievement motivation is a stable personality factor, constant in different contexts and at different times. However, his argument has been criticized. As pointed out by Yang and Yu (1988:2-6):

*The most frequently levelled criticisms are that McClelland's framework neglects the importance of social and/or interpersonal factors as contextual conditions in defining the concept of achievement motivation, and that it does not do justice to achievement in culturally distinctive, non-Western societies, especially those with a collectivist orientation.... Previous research using people from the collectively oriented Chinese and Japanese societies has repeatedly attested to the fact that their achievement motivation patterns are strikingly different from those of*

*Western peoples and cannot be adequately understood in terms of McClelland's highly individualistic concept of achievement motivation.*

Nevis (1983) found that in the Chinese culture, the needs hierarchy is different from Maslow's one, with social needs coming first and also self-actualization conceived not in an individualistic way but in sense of serving a larger society. In order to build up an indigenous model in line with Nevis' model, Confucianism's ultimate life concerns have to be recalled. Confucianism prescribed that an ideal, highly ordered, and harmonious Confucian society relies on a virtuous ruler to establish ritual order, plus individuals to cultivate themselves in a lifelong effort to reach the highest possible spiritual plane, and therefore become a sage or a perfectly realized man (Hwang, 1992; Liou, 1992).



As indicated in Figure 1, the highest concern of Confucianism is attaining virtue (*lide*, establishing virtue), the highest form of achievement. Attaining virtue means 'to create and bequeath to posterity a model of behaviour' or 'to leave benevolence and grace for eternity'. Feng (1934:9) wrote, 'The highest ideal was to possess the virtue of a sage and the accomplishment of a king – to be the so-called sage-ruler, which is parallel to Plato's philosopher-king'. 'Rendering meritorious service' (*ligong*, establishing deeds) is the next in the Confucian achievement hierarchy. It involves saving those in distress, ridding the world of evil, and benefiting the world by good

works. Scholarship (*liyan*, establishing words) comes third, meaning writing great works or contributing to traditional fields of knowledge. Joining them together is known as the 'three permanencies' (*sanbuxiu lun*).

In Confucian thought, the role of the self is not to express and manifest itself as in Western models, but to develop the internal moral self. Self-realization, as a process of internal self-development, is considered a gradual, regimented process (Tu, 1992). In contrast, Western ideals emphasize an understanding of what the self is and how to control and master it. Confucianism stresses the remaking and reforming of the moral self in the hope of realizing the ethical ideal of 'ultimate goodness' (Liu, 1987). Attaining these family- and clan-oriented achievement goals was the true measure of self-realization and the fulfillment of one's familial self. Ordinary Chinese people have pursued these social values with societal, clan, or familial characteristics, and these values have been a great motivating force behind individual self-development. The formation, development, and completion of the moral and familial selves are the ultimate life concerns and life goals of Chinese. Chinese individuals are motivated to achieve not through a desire to externalize the kind of Western self upon which Maslow's model and McClelland's argument are based, but through a desire to realize and merge their familial and moral selves.

It has been revealed that in a society of high sensitivity to hierarchical order and of high power distance, the Chinese distinguishing features such as *mien* and *lien* have to be taken into consideration in constructing theories applicable to Chinese cultures. This research is an intention to bridge the theoretical gap caused by the cultural features *mien* and *lien* by establishing the problem for research in Chapter 2; and by looking into the recent studies of *mien* and *lien* behaviour in Chapter 3. In Chapter 3, the recent studies in leadership and school effectiveness will also be examined. The methodology to be adopted in this research will be presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 will present data about two schools and aspects of their effectiveness. Chapter 6 will report qualitative data on *mien* behaviour and Chapter 7 will conclude the thesis with a discussion of the findings.

# CHAPTER 2

## THE PROBLEM

### Introduction

Despite a certain lack of academic credibility, leadership theories are still widely taught. So they are considered appropriate by leading people belonging to a culture that is high in individualism. Is implementing those theories to cultures that are collectivist in nature likely to be effective? As Hofstede (1998) states, management practices that work in one country do not necessarily work in another, because they are culturally dependent. Effectiveness of managerial practices in foreign companies depends largely on the extent to which they fit values and beliefs of Chinese employees. Value and belief are heavily influenced by a nation's culture, which cannot be changed overnight. Therefore, it is advisable to choose those practices that are likely to have a good chance of success. Reilly (1984) sought to furnish the answer. He states that Western criteria can be meaningful if used with an awareness of cultural differences. Nevertheless, Reilly's answer seems to elicit some other problems. What specifically are the cultural differences? How can we be aware of these differences? To what extent will the differences affect innovations? Without thorough understanding of the cultural distinctiveness, *'reforms may have unintended consequences that contradict or outweigh their intended outcomes'* (Fullan, 1991:9).

Relationships between an organization's culture and context on the one hand, and leadership on the other, have been widely acknowledged recently (Bolman & Deal, 1992; Duke, 1996). The underlying problem of most cross-national studies of educational leadership is ignorance of the analytical properties of culture. Such neglect has been challenged by researchers such as Cheng (1995:99), who asserts that, *'the cultural element is not only necessary, but essential in the study of educational administration'*.

Walker and Dimmock (1999:324-5) go further and comment that, *'Existing comparative education frameworks are too often concentrated at a single level only and tend to be grounded in structural-functionalist traditions. Single-level frameworks and studies risk ignoring the cultural relationships and interplay between*

*different levels of culture, from school to national, thereby failing to account sufficiently for context'.*

The variables of this study as stated are '*leadership*', '*effectiveness*', and '*face(mien) behaviour*'. The importance of leadership to effectiveness has widely been testified in almost all contexts, East and West. The current development locally and globally will be examined in the next chapter. In this study, it is argued that a multi-level cultural perspective needs to be taken in aiding analysis and understanding of individual schools and their leaders. If researchers were to strive to study the dynamic, informal processes of schools and the leadership practices embedded within them, theoretical tools which stretch beyond structural-functionalist models would be useful for dividing education systems into their constituent elements. However, they do little to explain how processes, or why various elements, interact. As a result, their analytic power is diminished through adopting static rather than dynamic views of schools. Moreover, to examine '*face(mien) behaviour*' and its reactivity with the above variables is based on the immense effect of this national characteristic in all levels of Chinese interpersonal communications. The notion of *mien* permeates every aspect of interpersonal relationships in Chinese culture because of the culture's overarching relational orientation. *Mien* concerns the projection and the claiming of public image (Ting-Toomey, 1988). Given the relational nature of self in Chinese interpersonal relationships, how *mien* is negotiated, managed, and maintained informs virtually all personal interactions. *Mien* management is essential to maintaining the existing role relationships and preserving interpersonal harmony. Thus, concern for *mien* has significant consequences in many aspects of Chinese communication processes (Gao, 1994). In a school context, the consequences, then, will determine the effectiveness of the leaders' performance and eventually the effectiveness of the school as a whole.

It is widely accepted that effective leadership is a critical element for organizational growth and effectiveness. Some scholars have queried the possibility of transforming Western leadership and management knowledge into different cultural settings (Gonzalez & McMillan, 1961). Nevertheless, if the cultural discrepancies within the organization can be empirically diagnosed, the consequence will be the successful transfer of Western management and leadership concepts to the developing countries and the implantation of the whole corpus of managerial and leadership innovations (Harbison & Myers, 1959; Reilly, 1984; Yang, 1985).

Despite the fact that cultural disposition like *mien* behaviour exists in almost all local contexts, the depth, the width and the breadth of the national inclination will vary and

be influenced by a number of elements. The possible variation in the Hong Kong context is even more important since Hong Kong is a place notable for its cultural diversity and cultural pluralism.

Two diverging secondary schools, in terms of the *mien* behaviour observed in each of them will be studied in this research. These two schools have come to the researcher's knowledge, and have led to his interest in this investigation. The leaders in these two schools and the researcher have worked in the same education organization. At the same time, the two schools under study share a number of similarities including their historic background, their development and student intake. However, the observed performance of these two schools seems to differ in important respects. These two schools and their leaders provide a good opportunity for the researcher to explore how different leadership styles sway the schools in the 'intended' as well as 'unintended' directions in an almost identical cultural context. On the other hand, the divergent *mien* behaviours observed in each of these two schools help reveal the impact of this national attachment to *mien* on the effectiveness of the school, and on the applicability of management philosophy being developed in other cultural settings.

### Purpose of the Study

This study has three primary purposes. The first one is to compare and contrast differences in *mien* behaviour, a culturally distinctive characteristic, in two private secondary schools in Hong Kong, and to explore in depth how *mien* behaviour functions in a Chinese educational context.

The second primary purpose is to examine the leadership styles (transforming, transactional and laissez-faire) of the secondary school principals as perceived by their teaching staff and by themselves. It is also the intention of this section of the study to compare the discrepancy in leadership styles as perceived by the two principals and their teachers.

The third primary purpose is to see how the differences in *mien* behaviour interact with leadership styles; and how, eventually, these interactions influence the effectiveness of the schools.

## Significance of the Study

Educators consider the principal one of the key persons at any level in any school system. He is one with authority to make decisions and is accountable for the entire operation of the school (Kimbrough & Burkett, 1990). Rossow (1990) states that today's school principal must be a leader of people not a manager of things. According to Drake and Roe (1994), a competent principal possesses strong technical skills, instructional skills, cognitive skills, human skills and conceptual skills. If principals are to set the stage for the above scenarios of human dynamics and organizational cultures, this study should:

1. provide both principals and teachers with greater insight into and understanding of leadership styles;
2. provide a basis for cultural leadership skills and thus improve the performance of educational administrators;
3. provide a source of information designed to encourage further study of the leadership role in different cultural settings;
4. identify leadership theories and practices that are relevant and adaptable to the Hong Kong educational system.

# CHAPTER 3

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### on face (*mien*) behaviour

It is widely agreed that school effectiveness is highly related to school leadership, East and West (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992; Cheng, 1995). Effectiveness and leadership are the two main concerns in this study. Throughout the discussion in the first chapter, several perspectives bringing about the cultural discrepancies have been discussed. It is argued that *mien* and *lien* have an immense effect on observed differences between schools. In this chapter, the previous research in this area is to be reviewed and analyzed. The western perception and understanding of *mien* and *lien* will then be compared with the indigenous findings. And most important of all, the working definitions of *mien* and *lien* are to be constructed for this study.

#### The research on face (*mien*) behaviour

Hu's doctoral research 'The Chinese Concept of Face' was published in 1944. This was the first attempt at interpreting Chinese Face (*mien*) behaviour from an anthropological viewpoint. Hu's study looked into the history, linguistic terms, intrinsic implications, possible environment of the behaviour, and the discrepancies between *lien*(臉) and *mien*(面). This is the 'classic' of scientific research on the topic and it has become a standard reference source in the area. Before Hu's research, work in this area was mostly based on Chinese national characteristics, or the interpretations from subjective philological and observational insight. This created intrinsic limitations to the understanding of the behaviour. The limitations can be revealed from the depth of the interpretations as well as the methodologies being adopted. Hu could cross the boundary of culture and 'think herself away' (Giddens, 1989:20) since she went beyond the influence of subjective emotional judgement, literature rhetoric and nationalistic partiality, and this is still the methodology advocated by anthropologists.

In the 1950s, American social psychologists showed their interests in the above domain. The innovator of 'Dramaturgical Theory', Goffman (1955), published his studies 'On face-work'. He suggested that an individual had to formulate his/her image through the internalization of a set of codes of conduct. Such an argument implied that people had to obey a set of proprieties so as to adapt to society. However, *mien* in Chinese society goes beyond the limitation of adherence to a set of conduct codes. It covers the behaviour exceeding the limitation of the code. Even though Goffman had not remarked on the definition of Chinese *mien* behaviour, his work did provide an important reference of value in the area and did set up one of the notions underpinning social psychologists' understanding of the issue of Chinese characteristics. Goffman listed the various methods of image embellishment as well as the strategies for protecting self-image. His framework explained how self-consciousness about social role acts on the practicality of self-image. The individual has to protect his image so as to perform his role. Explicitly, every individual has to undertake the process of interpretation and identification of the value of his/her role before he/she can successfully play the role prescribed in the social script.

In the 1960s, Taiwanese scholars tried to distinguish the difference between *mien* and the Western concept of prestige and self-image so that the characteristics of *mien* could be exposed. Kim (1987:343) remarked:

*There will be requisition of prestige and power in all culture and the requisition desire for the Chinese is more intense. The skin layer of the requisition of prestige and power is mien. This desire is even more intense for the intellectuals. Mien is the life of the intellectual. For them, mien is the zealous and concrete behaviour they pursue. Those who ignore mien will be contemptuous of their ignorance. Intellectuals commit themselves to sacrifice actual cost so as to save mien. They even sacrifice the requisition of truth to preserve mien. The aftermath of the rupture of mien will be the breakdown of emotional tie and relationship.*

Another Taiwanese scholar, Chu (1961), distinguished the Chinese behaviour of endurance and obedience. He characterized these national behaviours as an essential part of the fulfillment of *mien* behaviour. He explained that *mien* was the practicality of Chinese endurance and obedience, a way to harmonize and compromise with the external reality, and the gist of Chinese social skill.

During this period, inquiries into *mien* behaviour were conducted with reference to

scientific approaches sociologically, psychologically and ethnologically. The studies were developed to a greater depth. The inclination to empirical findings was obvious. Nevertheless, the focus on studying *mien* was still limited.

Moving into the 1970s, Ho (1974), a Hong Kong psychologist, achieved another breakthrough after Hu. He attempted to differentiate the behaviour in pursuit of *mien* from a microcosmic viewpoint, emphasizing the individual's status, dignity, glory, reputation and the tensions they caused for behavioural standards. On the other hand, he also analyzed how *mien* interacted with social relationships, social control, and the social norm macroscopically. He argued that '*Chinese people believe that they should act in accordance with their roles and their status. Such that people perform the roles prescribed in the hierarchical status they intend to pursue. The return is the prestige and power under this hierarchical status. This is also the process of gaining mien. The status can be intrinsic (e.g. sex, age, birth order), inherited (e.g. wealth, ancestor's status), or earned (e.g. education level, occupation)*' (p.870). Kim (1974) launched his study on *mien* in almost the same period. Based on the findings of Hu and Ho, he allied with Myers and explored *mien* behaviour from linguistic and social perspectives. They concluded that *mien* was the outcome of a social interactive process. It bore the evaluative quality on people's behaviour. In a society of hierarchical ranks and of emphasis on social harmony, '*offering favour*' '*pulling on a relationship*', '*to struggle for mien*' became the social norm.

Research looking into *mien* started to bloom in this period. The first empirical study of *mien* behaviour was conducted by Bond and Lee in 1978. They concluded that there was a cultural difference on '*mien saving*' behaviour with reference to social distance. They found that Chinese university students were inclined to discuss sensitive topics like '*intimate partner*' and '*sexual preference*' with the people inside the social circle with the same hierarchical status or less social distance, whereas the American subjects went to their family members especially mothers. Besides, the extent of anonymity would be lowered if their social distance were closer. This tendency could also be applied to '*mien saving*' behaviour, so that it varied in accordance with people's perception of social distance.

Under the initiation of the movement of localization<sup>1</sup>, Chan (1982) looked at the concept from two different perspectives. He started his investigation from his model

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<sup>1</sup> The movement was initiated in the 1980s in which Chinese scholars were asked to adopt western scientific approaches to explore sociological, psychological and philosophical issues with special attention to cultural characteristics and distinctiveness. (see Yang, 1982, p.160)

and constructed his meticulous description of *mien* behaviour. In his model, he claimed to look into *mien* from sociological perspectives which stressed situational processes during social exchanges as well as psychological perspectives which analyzed how individuals perceived the gain and loss of *mien*. He also established a quantitative measurement of the behaviour in his study of Taiwan University students. He also collected and analyzed the related adages and bywords in the area. He then connoted the meanings with his model. In his study, he laid particular stress on the establishment of a psychological model.

Chu (1983) tried to understand *mien* behaviour by means of empirical studies. Her emphasis on the function instead of the form of *mien* behaviour helped reveal the content of emotional feeling of *mien* behaviour, the content of the interactions in Chinese society and the incorporation of *mien* into Chinese social life. Chu intended to establish a structural framework to understand the situational and emotional causes underlying *mien* behaviour. At the core of her framework was the 'consciousness of *mien*'. It refers to how individuals perceive the threatening emotional consciousness of losing *mien* and the reaction to this consciousness. On one hand, the consciousness drives people to gain *mien* and the prestige attached to *mien*. On the other, it alerts people to protect *mien* so as to avoid the negative emotional outcome such as being publicized, and shameful.

Hwang (1987) probed into the relationship of two interrelated concepts of favour and *mien* by utilizing Social Exchange Theory. He went further to construct a behavioural model to explain the Chinese characteristics of 'giving favour', *mien* and 'repayment'. In his model, he identified 'power' as an important component in the exchange process. 'Power' had to be imposed on the recipients so that they changed attitudes, or behaviours in exchange for resources and rewards to fulfil their needs, or to avoid punishment from those with 'power'. Hwang also stressed the importance of *mien* in the Chinese cultural context in which hierarchical ranks and well-defined relationships were obvious. His model was the most enlightening during the period since he not only rectified the bias in studying *mien* in psychological terms, but also demonstrated an integrated approach consisting of sociological and psychological assumptions in this area.

There have been various studies interpreting *mien* by means of linguistic, social and moral depositions in Chinese society. Kim (1987) related the logical relations between *mien* and 'shame'. He differentiated the 'moral *mien*' and 'social *mien*' and suggested that *lien* was a northern dialect for 'moral *mien*'. He went further to

explain the English term 'face' which only bore the meaning of '*social mien*'. More importantly, he also pointed out the limitation of previous research on *mien* - of its negative influence on the society. Seldom did researchers look at the positive impact of *mien* on society since the '*moral mien*' could drive people to become '*perfect beings*' and the '*social mien*' could drive people to personal and in-group achievements.

### A definition of *mien*

There are three objectives in the examination of the definition of *mien*. First, the definition proposed by the scholars relating to *mien* will be presented and compared. Next, the intertwining meanings of *lien* and *mien* will be examined. The last gives a working definition of *mien* for this study.

From the 1940s onwards, scholars began to show their interests in investigating *mien*. They mainly explored the vitality of the concept in Chinese social life but they could hardly give a definition to this behavioural concept. The basic cause may be the copious connotations of the concept as well as the fact that it implies intricate psychological and social relationships. Without a complete grasp of the characteristics derived from this concept, they could only promulgate the flank of the concept.

Smith (1894) was the first who tried to define *mien* in his book 'Chinese Characteristics'. He warned not to lump together 'face' and *mien*. He metaphored *mien* to be a taboo in South Pacific islands. The most exquisite part of his definition was his formulation of '*dramaturgical performance*'. He argued that the Chinese had a strong innate feeling of performing since the Chinese classical dramaturgical performance was the only recreational activity for most Chinese people. This resembled British soccer and Spanish corrida. Faced with crisis, Chinese people would plunge into role and play a part as required by the social script. Chinese behaviour, ludicrous act to Westerners, was actually a self-defence mechanism when they shouted at a group of strangers. The underlying motive might be the intention of rescuing oneself from siege so as to get off stage in public.

Smith's definition might be irrelevant in classifying this behavioural concept as part of Chinese nature, which was innate and intrinsic, but he did identify the abstract and deceptive ingredient of this characteristic concept.

The Chinese 'official literate' in the 1930s to 40s, Lu Xun (1930), adopted Smith's idea of 'dramaturgical performance' and he described the existence of an invisible principle governing behaviour. In his description he wrote:

*What is **lien** actually? Whoever wants to figure it out will feel obscure. In whatever role we play, there is a specific **lien** or **mien**. It is just like a demarcation line. If you fall behind the line, you lose **mien**. If you ignore it, you are immoral. If you go beyond it, you gain **mien** (p.43).*

A Western social psychologist, Goffman (1955) extracted and transformed his findings and compared the behavioural concept with Indian, African as well as British people from a universal perspective. Goffman concluded that **lien** is a behavioural concept which bears the meaning of 'role, reputation, prestige, and poise'.

Lin (1935), a cultural insider, made an attempt to describe **mien** in his doctoral dissertation 'My country and my people':

*Here we arrive at the most curious point of Chinese social psychology. Abstract and intangible, it is yet the most delicate standard by which Chinese social intercourse is regulated. ... Not to give a person face is the utmost height of rudeness and is like throwing down a gauntlet to him in the West. (p.201)*

This can hardly be classified as a definition for **mien** but it is pregnant with meaning and we can explicitly generalize the following:

1. The expression is in almost full agreement with Smith's (1894) interpretations;
2. **mien** bears the value of adding or reducing people's self concept, so that they are bound both to compete for it and to respect it; and
3. This is the standard of social association and it adheres to some 'delicate rules'.

Hu (1944) was the first who scientifically differentiated **lien** and **mien** with literal and logical integrity. She wrote:

*Verbally the two sets of criteria are distinguished by two words which on the physical level both mean 'face'. One of these, **mien-tzu** (or **mien**) stands for the kind of prestige that is emphasized in this country: a reputation achieved through getting on in life, through success and*

*ostentation. This is prestige that is accumulated by means of personal effort or clever manoeuvring. For this kind of recognition ego is dependent at all times on his external environment. The other kind of 'face,' lien is also known to Americans without being accorded formal recognition. It is the respect of the group for a man with a good moral reputation: the man who will fulfil his obligations regardless of the hardships involved, who under all circumstances shows himself a decent human being. It represents the confidence of society in the integrity of ego's moral character, the loss of which makes it impossible for him to function properly within the community. Lien is both a social sanction for enforcing moral standards and an internalized sanction. (p.45)*

Hu's argument can be summarised as follows:-

1. **Mien** and **lien** are to be achieved with the invisible consent of the social circle.
2. People can gain **mien** by different means such as status, wealth, authority or achievement. **Lien** on the other hand is the basic moral quality. People can keep it and avoid losing it.

Hu's definition attracted much attention and discussion. Ho (1974) argued the existence of moral connotation in **mien** and the interchangeability of the idea of **mien** and **lien** in various part of China. Kim (1987) went further and pointed out the inapplicability of Hu's definition in Southern provinces since the region has changed the meaning of **lien** such that the moral value of **lien** transformed into the '*moral side of mien*' which came together with the '*social side of mien*' in the region.

Ho (1974) clarified the meaning of **mien** and set it off by contrast. He indicated the misconception of interpreting the meaning of **mien** as a behavioural norm such as position, respect and prestige since the directional value of **mien** could be changed with reference to time, space as well as culture. **Mien** was not the quantitative change in personality, or self-evaluation since it relied on judgement from society. **Mien** did not equal position but it did attach to people in position. Neither was it morality because morality was the internal quality and **mien** was something on the surface. Nor was it fame because fame belonged to the people who were prestigious and the people from the upper class. According to Ho, the implication of **mien** was even more extensive and it concerned all walks of life. Ho's definition of **mien** was,

*an individual's expectation of others' respect and obedience. The expectation is derived from the judgement of one's social network upon*

*the evaluation on the individual. The extent of offering mien is based upon a set of consistent evaluations. (p.880)*

Ho's definition deliberated over the contrast between *lien* and *mien*, and disregarded the view that the purpose of *lien* was to 'get off stage' occasionally but not necessarily to acquire others' respect and obedience. To a certain extent, respect and obedience connote a degree of authoritativeness but *lien* exists beyond this social boundary.

Kim (1987) defined *mien* from another perspective. He argued that *mien* referred to people with higher social status, political power as well as moral and academic accomplishment. *Lien*, on the other hand, was the reflective recognition of oneself. A person with *mien* might have no *lien* or vice versa. He even extended the conception to include the Eastern sense of shame and Western guilt.

In comparison, Chan's (1982) definition seemed to be more mature. He wrote:

*Mien is the reflective conception of self-relating to the social circle. It is the conscious awareness of self-image upon the social circle. (p.92)*

Chow and Ho (1992) commented that the definitions of *mien* were either derived from psychological constructs or sociological constructs. They claimed that the definition of *mien* should be formulated interactively. They claimed:

*Mien is the self-esteem and public image an individual purports and is ratified by his/her social circle. (p.34)*

The emphasis of Chow's and Ho's definition on interactive characteristics is enlightening. However, the neglect of the behavioural norm among different statuses of the social ladder is a fatal oversight in the definition; people are expected to behave according to a set of behavioural and social norms consistent with the individual's ranking in the social ladder.

The context in this study is two schools and *mien* will be examined together with the leadership styles in each setting as well as how they relate to the performance of the schools. The basic notion is that *mien* will constitute a set of norms and the norm will standardize the behavioural interaction between leaders and followers. Leadership style, hence, should be incorporated within this set of norms so that people behave accordingly. Under this norm, people carry out duties, associate with others, interact

with others and consolidate their respective positions. The performance of the people within different sets of norms will then be affected.

It should be pointed out that *mien* behaviour is not a culture-specific but a universal phenomenon. As clarified by Bond (1986:249):

*What constitutes a desirable face, however, is culturally more specific. This review of Chinese considerations and the data surrounding face underline the importance of societal collectivism and power distance in understanding the dynamics of impression management. One's face is more interconnected with that of others, and its protection and enhancement more disciplined by concerns about hierarchical order in Chinese culture than in more individualistic egalitarian cultures.*

This implies that the hierarchical structure of Chinese society with its permanency of statuses should be taken into consideration in the construction of definition of *mien*. On the other hand, *mien* in Chinese society standardizes people's behaviour so that one has to speak in the language suited to one's station and display appropriate behaviour and status symbol.

After the examination of the former definitions in the field, the working definition of *mien* in this research to be adopted is:

*the concept of self-esteem and self-image socially and morally which an individual claims and which is ratified by his/her social circles in accordance with his/her hierarchical statuses in the social circles he/she interacts with through getting on in life. This concept is linked to a behavioural norm and is consolidated by offering and accepting status-appropriate interactions.*

Lin's 'delicate standard' guides the behavioural norm in different structural and sociological settings. People have to act in accordance with the norm. The setting in this specific study is school. People then, including leaders and followers, will act within this norm accordingly.

'Status-appropriate interactions' in the definition refers to all interactions between the individual and his/her social circle. It may be a favour, a sigh, a smile, ... . These will then react with the whole concept. The results of the reaction can be *losing*

*mien*', 'casting face away', 'having *mien*', ... . In the end the concept of *mien* will be built up and further consolidated. The quality of the service being provided in schools will be affected during any stage of this process.

The term *lien* is found in numerous researches as most researches in this field of study are conducted in various parts of China where Putonghua is the common dialect as well as the official language in China including Taiwan. As a result, *lien* has become the term best known to the West. Nevertheless, in Hong Kong, where this research will be conducted and Cantonese is the common dialect, *lien* connotes a much narrower concept as compared to Putonghua. This has been pointed out by Kim (1974) and differentiated by Ho (1974). The term *lien*, as known to most people, should be defined as 'moral side of *mien*'. *Mien* in this research comprises both 'moral value' as well as 'social value' as differentiated by researchers in this area.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## on leadership

This section is written to achieve the following objectives:

- To look at the development of leadership theories;
- To distinguish Effective and Successful Leadership and then to see how they are applied to the school setting;
- To present the ideas of Transactional and Transforming Leadership; and
- To review the related findings in the East and how these findings feed back to the leadership conceptions.

### The development of leadership theories

The understanding of leadership originated from sociological and commercial fields. The importance of leadership in the effectiveness of an organization has been widely accepted. Weiner and Mahoney (1981) found that 44 percent of the profitability of the firms studied was accounted for by a change in leadership. Allen's (1981) study in schools also indicated that the principal is the most important factor in the climate of a school and in the success of students.

A school principal is regarded as the most important and influential individual in any school. *'The principal should be the keystone of the school system'* (School Management Initiative Manual, 1991). Sergiovanni (1995) states that the school principal is so important that no other school positions can be compared. Recent research findings support that there is a close link between school effectiveness and the effectiveness of school leaders (Johnson, 1993; Federicks et al., 1993; Hoy et al., 1992). It is no wonder that the present day literature of school reform, indeed, the literature of education itself, is filled with calls for better leadership, stronger leadership, and more responsible leadership (Holzman, 1992).

## Conception and Theories of Leadership Effectiveness

Much of the late nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century were dominated by the belief that leaders were born. The major assumption about leadership traits was that if there were certain traits that distinguished leaders and followers, then existing leaders should possess them (Bass, 1990). After years of study, there is very little evidence to justify the assertion that leaders are born. Although more recent studies showed that factors such as intelligence (Bray et al., 1966) or assertiveness (Rychlak, 1982) had some relationship to leadership, they alone could not account for much of a leader's effectiveness.

After World War II, researchers turned to behaviours as the source of leader effectiveness. The early behaviour study by Lewin and Lippit (1938) identified democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire leadership. More recent studies on style theories (Hemphill et al., 1950; Halpin et al., 1952; Blake et al., 1964) suggested that the most effective leaders are those both high in measures of initiating structure (ability relating to concern for the task) and consideration (ability relating to concern for individuals and interpersonal relations). The studies on style theories conducted by the Ohio State University impressively developed the Leader Behaviour Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) which continues to be used today, though they could not identify consistent relationships between patterns of leadership behaviour and successful performance.

Contingency leadership theories basically maintain that leadership performance is situational. The primary assumption of the contingency view is that the personality, style, or behaviour of the leader that is effective will depend upon the requirements of the situation in which the leader finds him/herself. Contingency theories include Fiedler's contingency theory (Fiedler, 1967, 1971), House's path-goal theory (House et al., 1974), and Hersey-Blanchard situational leadership theory (Hersey et al., 1982).

In Fiedler's contingency theory, leadership effectiveness refers to a simple and straightforward criterion, that is, the extent to which the group accomplishes its primary task. In House's path-goal theory, leadership effectiveness is defined in terms of psychological states of subordinates. The leader is effective to the extent that he/she is able to improve subordinate job satisfaction, increase the acceptance of the leader him/herself, and promote subordinate motivation.

In Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory, effectiveness is a complex and subtle concept that involves not only objective performance but also human costs and psychological conditions. Thus, leadership effectiveness includes how well the group achieves its task and the psychological state of individuals and groups. The leader is effective in a sense that he/she is able to select the right leadership style that is contingent on the level of the followers' maturity. In addition to the situational leadership theory, similar formulations such as Blake's and Mouton's study (Blake et al., 1982), leader match (Fiedler et al., 1984) and 3-D theory (Reddin, 1970) have evolved from the theory to help leaders improve their effectiveness.

Evidently, the aforementioned researchers evaluate leadership effectiveness in terms of the following measures: the extent to which the leader's organizational unit performs its task successfully and attains its goals; the attitude of followers towards the leader; and the leader's contribution to the quality of group processes such as group cohesiveness.

However, Hoy et al. (1991) point out that to measure the effectiveness of a leader should not be limited to the technical and interpersonal aspects of efficient management. *'Leadership also has a symbolic side. It rests upon meanings as well as actions. Leaders make meaning'*. Selznick (1957:17), moreover, argues that the leader as educator is important to *'infuse the organization with value beyond the technical requirements at hand, to build upon people's need for meaning and to create institutional purpose'*. Sergiovanni further explains *'When principals are expressing symbolic aspects of leadership, they are typically working beneath the surface of events and activities; they are seeking to tap deeper meanings, deeper values'* (Sergiovanni, 1995:89).

## **Transactional Leadership and Transforming Leadership**

It is interesting to note that Sergiovanni's (1995) five forces of leadership largely correspond to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs and Burns' (1978) *'transactional'* and *'transforming'* leadership. The technical, human and interpersonal forces correspond to Maslow's low-order levels of needs: physiological, safety, and love needs of human beings. The symbolic and cultural forces correspond to the higher levels of needs: the needs of esteem and self-actualization. In other words, the

symbolic and cultural forces appeal to the higher level of aspirations. By the same token, the three foundational forces of Sergiovanni resemble Burns' transactional leader whereas the 'stretch' forces are similar to the transforming leader.

Transactional leadership is based on the concept of exchange between leaders and followers. The leader provides followers with resources and rewards in exchange for motivation, productivity, and effective task accomplishment. This exchange and the concept of providing contingent reward is at the heart of much of motivation, leadership, and management theory and practice (Caldwell et al., 1992; Hargreaves et al., 1991). The relation of the leader and followers seems to be within, and can only be within, and can be advanced by maintaining this *'transactional'* process. Unfortunately, beyond this the relationship does not go (Burns, 1978). As they do not have an enduring, mutual and continuing pursuit of a higher purpose, they cannot hold themselves together. It is very likely that the leaders and followers finally go their separate ways.

Essentially, the basic assumption of the transactional leadership is that human beings are *'means'* and *'tasks'*. In the process of transaction, people are not respected as humans. They are *'respected'* only when they are *'useful'*. The leader has the presumption that his followers can be fully satisfied with the lower-order of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The underlying notion of this assumption is that the leader and followers do not have faith in each other; there is no trust among them.

By contrast, the transforming leadership tends to put much emphasis on the *'people'* aspect. The present leadership must be attuned to the human variables and human organization with the complexity and sophistication of the present community. Fung (1995:72) states that *'if the basic premise is accepted that success depends on the capacity for change, and change is a learning process of the affected people, then proper attention to the human side of the organization is the crux of effective management'*. The people-focused leadership focuses on the unique relationship between the leader and followers. The leader tends to develop *'respect and concern for his or her followers, and the ability to see them as powerful sources of knowledge, creativity, and energy for improving the organization'* (Owens, 1991). In this way, friendship, mutual trust, respect, and warmth in relationships between himself and his followers can be developed (Halpin, 1966).

The concept of people-focused leadership resembles the charismatic leadership. It suggests that the relationship between the leaders and followers creates an intense

emotional bond. The result is loyalty and trust in the leader and emulation of the leader. Followers are inspired to implement the leader's vision. The strong loyalty and respect of a charismatic relationship pave the way for undertaking major change. The charismatic bond provides support and encouragement in this endeavour and prevents followers from feeling isolated. Intellectual stimulation has a strong empowering component, which assures followers of their abilities and capabilities and enables them to search out new solutions (Bass and Avolio, 1993).

Burns (1978) puts forward the view that transforming leadership enables followers to raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Bass (1985) adds that transforming leaders are able to motivate followers by making them more aware of the importance of task outcomes, to transcend their self-interest for the sake of the organization, and to activate their higher-order needs. These intrinsic needs, in fact, motivate the followers to identify the common goal and in turn support the common good of the school. The followers will be elevated to the level that their purposes become fused with the school's common purpose, though their purposes might have started out as separate but related. In this atmosphere, the leader is able to enhance school cohesiveness, teachers' co-operation, teachers' motivation, problem solving, decision making and resolution of conflict among teachers.

The highest level of transforming leadership is to develop 'centres' in the school. *'Centres are repositories of values, sentiments, and beliefs that provide the needed cement for uniting people in a common cause. Centres govern the school values and provide norms that guide behaviour and give meaning to school community'* (Sergiovanni, 1992). It is hoped that the principal and teachers in the school will have a shared mission, a sense of mutual purposes, shared values and a shared culture. Finally, the result of transforming leadership can be a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents (Burns, 1978). By encouraging the followers to look at problems in new ways and requiring new solutions, the leader pushes followers to perform beyond what they considered to be possible.

Many writers (Peters, 1987; Bennis, 1976; Zaleznik, 1990) refer to leadership as distinct from management. They write that from the highly effective leaders who form the basis for their reflections, they have learned of 'passion, care, intensity, consistency, attention, drama, of the implicit and explicit use of symbols - in short, of leadership' (Peters and Austin, 1985:265). The kind of leadership that they claim to be talking about is in fact what the above mentioned writers called transforming

leadership. By implication, transactional leadership comes to be associated with management, with each aspect of it being regarded as a set of activities involving short-term problem-solving and decision-making. In other words, transforming leadership equals leadership; transactional leadership equals management.

## Hong Kong Leadership: East meets West

Early in the 1980s, Hofstede conducted a series of research projects concerning the 'leadership-relevant values' among different societies. The results from two particularly large-scale surveys are shown in the table below. It is apparent from the results that the overseas Chinese organization members who provided these responses had a good deal in common. Their values were distinctively high on collectivism and power distance and low to moderate on uncertainty avoidance. Cragin (1986) administered the Hofstede questionnaire to a wide range of Mainland managers. The scores are entered in brackets. Cragin finds a similar pattern of relatively high scores on measures of collectivism and power distance.

Rankings in the table can range from 1 to 54. Rank 1 refers to the country scoring highest on the dimension named at the left and rank 54 to the country scoring lowest.

	Mainland China	Hong Kong	Singapore	Taiwan	United States
Power Distance	(20)	15	13	29	38
Uncertainty Avoidance	(1)	49	53	26	43
Individualism	(23)	37	40	43	1
Masculinity	(54)	18	28	32	15

TABLE 1: Rankings of Chinese Societies on Leadership-relevant Values (Hofstede, 1980). Cragin's (1986) scores are entered in brackets

Throughout these years of intensive development, Hong Kong and other Chinese inhabited areas have undergone drastic change. Nevertheless, the culturally embedded elements like high on power distance and low on individualism are still distinctive in these areas.

More recent research by Trompenaars (1997) compares different countries in terms of the scales indicated in Table 2. In his findings, employees from Mainland China and

Hong Kong both perceive status to be more often ascribed than achieved (ranking 32 and 20 for 'Achievement' respectively). Besides, they are ranked 39 and 38 in 'Universalism' which implies they are guided by loyalty to their particular group rather than by universal principles. Further, ranking 41 and 38 in 'Affectivity' means they express less overt affect.

	Mainland China	Hong Kong	Singapore	United States
Achievement	32	20	6	2
Universalism	39	38	5	7
Internal Control	19	8	14	7
Specificity	34	16	19	17
Affectivity	41	38	25	20

TABLE 2 : Rankings on Trompenaars' (1997) data. (Rankings range from 1 to 46. Rank 1 refers to the country scoring highest and 46 the lowest.)

The cultural distinction can also be revealed in Zhang's (1994) study. By utilizing Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Zhang finds that the U.S. managers are significantly higher in 'individualism' than Hong Kong managers ( $F=7.74, p=0.0006$ ). Besides, he also claims that *'the Hong Kong managers were higher in 'Confucian work dynamism', which means that they were more oriented toward hierarchy than the Americans ( $F=12.65, p=0.0005$ ).'* (pp.158)

More specifically, Ralston, Gustafson, Cheung, and Terpstra (1993) investigated whether the values of Hong Kong managers were becoming more like those of Western managers, American in particular, and less like those of Mainland managers. They found many more differences between mean scores for managers in Hong Kong and the United States than they did between Hong Kong and Mainland managers. The Mainland Chinese managers scored highest on Machiavellianism, belief in an external locus of control, intolerance of ambiguity, and support for Confucian work dynamism. Hong Kong and Mainland managers scored significantly higher on dogmatism than the American managers on this measure ( $F=2.51, p=.01$ ). These findings suggest that despite the political divergences of the past century between Hong Kong and the Mainland, their cultural contexts still retain substantial common elements when compared to Western samples.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## on school effectiveness

**S**chool effectiveness is one of the main variables in this study, and current developments globally and locally will be the next issue to be examined. This part of the literature review will:

- Review the development of school effectiveness research;
- Distinguish the features of effective schools if any;
- Discuss the weaknesses of effective school studies;
- Present a dynamic framework to conceptualize school effectiveness; and
- Develop strategies for this study.

### School Effectiveness Research

**S**ince the beginning of schooling, there has been a general faith in the relationship between quality of schools and quality of learning for students. However, with the publication of James Coleman's report (1966), this faith was challenged. Coleman suggested that '*schools bring little influence to bear upon a child's achievement that is independent of his background and general social context*'. (1966:325) More specifically, Walberg (1984) pointed out that only a small proportion of variance can be explained by variables at the school and instructional levels.

### Characteristics of Effective Schools

**I**n contrast to Coleman's conclusions, many researchers have argued that there are indeed good schools and effective teachers, and that these account for some of the differences in student achievement. This body of research is generally known as '*The school effectiveness research*'.

The first major empirical study conducted in the UK was by Rutter et al. (1979) published in *Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and Their Effects on Pupils*. In it the effectiveness of ten secondary schools in Inner London was compared. This research, together with the ensuing programme of research on school effectiveness to

which it gave rise, has arguably contributed to the shift of focus of concern about the UK's education system away from national monitoring of aggregate statistics towards a scrutiny of the performance of individual schools (McPherson, 1997).

School effectiveness research tried to identify the factors within schools and classrooms which made schools effective or non-effective, such as the studies by Brookover et al. (1979) and Edmonds (1979). They proved that schools differed in the results achieved by comparable groups of students. In these so-called outlier studies, evidence was found that a small number of factors contributed to effectiveness. Most famous was the five-factor model of Edmonds (1979) in which he identified that *strong instructional leadership, high expectations, emphasis on basic skills, orderly atmosphere conducive to learning, and frequent evaluations of students' progress* were the factors of effectiveness.

Weber (1971) studied four inner-city schools in the United States that showed effectiveness characteristics including instructional leadership, high expectation, academic emphasis, encouragement to students, frequent monitoring of student progress, and concern for students.

As for Purkey and Smith (1983), nine organizational and structural variables as well as four process variables were identified to have contributed to school effectiveness. The nine organizational variables were: *autonomy in school site management, strong leadership, staff stability, planned and purposeful curriculum program, schoolwide staff development, parental involvement and support, schoolwide recognition of academic success, maximized learning time, and district support*. The four process variables were: *collaborative planning and collegial relationships, sense of community, clear goals and high expectations, and good order and discipline*.

In the early days of school effectiveness and school improvement the five-factor model and other models with slightly more factors drew a great deal of attention from educational practice and policymaking. With these factors in hand, it seemed that it should be quite easy to change schools from non-effective to effective by just introducing programmes for the improvement of some factors, such as a programme for the evaluation of student progress in schools or in-service training for the improvement of the educational leadership of principals (Lezotte, 1989).

Later it became clear that it is not easy to improve schools. Effective and non-effective schools differ on more than just a small number of factors. This conclusion led to more research to distinguish between effective and non-effective schools. The

earlier studies were mostly outlier studies but after criticism of the methodology of the outlier studies, more survey studies were carried out, enlarging the list of characteristics of effective education.

The review of research provided by Levine and Lezotte in 1990 is of special interest. They produced a list of effective school correlates, based on 400 studies of school effectiveness in the United States:

- *productive school climate and culture;*
- *focus on student acquisition of central learning skills;*
- *appropriate monitoring of student progress;*
- *practice-oriented staff development at the school site;*
- *outstanding leadership;*
- *salient parent involvement;*
- *effective instructional arrangements and implementation;*
- *high operationalized expectations and requirements for students;*
- *other possible correlates.*

This general list, which contains almost everything that can be found in schools and is enlarged with '*other possible correlates*', is broken down into other factors. In total, hundreds of correlates of effectiveness are presented. In the correlational studies, large numbers of schools and variables are involved, so in this way even small correlations can be significant. In the outlier studies, a few schools or classes but many factors are usually studied. There are always some, or even many, variables that seem to distinguish between these small numbers of schools. That is probably why in replication studies a number of factors do not reappear. The correlates gathered by Levine and Lezotte (1990) are more a result of research methods and techniques than a collection of genuine, clear and relevant concepts in a theory about effectiveness.

In a study in the United Kingdom by Mortimore et al (1988), only twelve factors could be found:

- *purposeful leadership of the staff by the headteacher;*
- *the involvement of the deputy head;*
- *the involvement of teachers;*
- *consistency among teachers;*
- *structured sessions;*
- *intellectually challenging teaching;*
- *a work-centred environment;*
- *limited focus within sessions;*
- *maximum communication between teachers and pupils;*
- *record keeping;*
- *parental involvement;*

- *a positive climate.*

All these factors are comparable with the factors mentioned by Levine and Lezotre, but Mortimore *et al.* found fewer factors. Quite a few of the American factors did not prove to be related to effectiveness. In twelve Dutch studies even fewer factors could be found to distinguish between effective and non-effective schools, some of which provided evidence for the five factors originally distinguished by Edmonds (Scheerens 1992). Scheerens and Creemers (1989) conclude that *an orderly climate, frequent evaluation, achievement orientation, high expectations and direct instruction* seem to contribute to effectiveness in the Netherlands.

Many correlates for effectiveness are available, more or less supported by empirical research, but for the interpretation and understanding of educational effectiveness we need an overarching idea, a conceptual framework.

### Criticisms of Effective School Studies

Though the studies provide useful information to the understanding of effective schools, most research results are descriptions of what good schools are like, but by no means do they suggest a cause-and-effect relationship between the variables.

There are some weaknesses common to most school effectiveness studies. Research on school effectiveness has been criticized for its criteria of effectiveness. Research has generally taken educational outcomes in the academic field as the only criterion. In addition, the measurement of this criterion has often been simplistic, involving the proportion of students going from primary to secondary education, or marks in school exams. The methodology employed was too general to be adequate (Purkey & Smith 1983, Ralph & Fennessy 1983). There was the general failure to use adequate control variables for ability and socio-economic status characteristics. The sample size covered in each study was generally small. The magnitude of differences between effective and ineffective schools was not adequately indicated. Research methodologies have left much to be desired (Cuban 1984).

Most studies were carried out in elementary schools using standardized test scores in reading and mathematics as the main criteria of achievement. Academic achievement outweighed other factors in measuring school effectiveness. The concept of effectiveness was too simple and narrow. Cuban (1983:695) gave his warning:

*The current question that drives many schools today - What can we do to improve student performance on achievement tests? - is short-sighted and narrow. The dangers of confusing test score gains (the means) with broader aims of education (the ends) are real.*

Hargreaves et al. (1991:110) expressed dissatisfaction that little discussion was found in effectiveness research studies regarding the process variables that lead to the effective outcomes:

*Although there was clarity and consensus in the cases about the effective school correlates, there was little discussion about the nature of the process that leads to effectiveness. Nowhere in the cases was the process of translating the correlates into a programme of action sufficiently articulated.*

Furthermore, there was also the problem of context-sensitivity as most schools are so different from one another. There was scepticism about the generalizability of the effective school formulae to other school settings. Other criticisms included the lack of discussion on how schools might be improved to become more effective, masking differential effects for specific subgroups of students as a result of aggregating achievement data at the school level, and inappropriate comparisons in contrasting high and low schools rather than average schools. After all, as commented by Purkey and Smith (1983:435), *'there is no single combination of variables that will produce an effective school'*.

In sum, Cheng (1995:1) pointed out that

*'conceptualization and measurement of school effectiveness remains a rather problematic area. School effectiveness is still a very vague concept even though it is often used in the literature of school management and improvement. To different people, the definition of school effectiveness may be very different. Also, it is often confused with 'school efficiency'. The critical elements of effectiveness conceptualization such as 'what criteria', 'whose criteria', 'effective for whom', 'who to define', 'how to evaluate', 'when to evaluate', and 'under what environmental constraints' are often problematic because there seems no standard elements accepted by all concerned constituencies for evaluation'.*

## Concluding Note for School Effectiveness Research

After examining the development of school effectiveness research, it is clear that there is no definite and fixed combination of variables leading to school effectiveness, and by no means can the examination of various variables reveal the whole picture of school effectiveness. We may somehow conclude at this stage that several concepts have to be considered in the process of the examination of effectiveness.

First, absolute growth is of no consequence unless there is relative growth. In school improvement, however, the important question is whether the school's performance is in some sense 'better' than its own previous performance, and performance can refer to any kinds of goals, whether general across schools or idiosyncratic to the institution.

Although some arguments are formulated against the use of all kinds of criteria, it is important to use more criteria than before in future research to determine effectiveness, especially in the areas of academic outcomes such as higher-order skills and meta-cognitive knowledge and skills.

Effectiveness levels themselves are not stable. For the purpose of school improvement, but also for the development of a theory on the question of what induces effective education, we need studies about schools in transition (Chrispeels 1992; Teddlie & Stringfield 1993). As stated by McPherson (1997:186) '*any pupil can have a bad day, any school a bad year. Sensible judgements will therefore be based, not on snapshots, but on repeated measures of pupils and schools*'.

The method of studying effectiveness in school is seen to rest in a pragmatic challenge to researchers to integrate aspects of methodology, qualitative and quantitative, in order (Reynolds et al. 1993:156)

*'to define attainment, ... find ways of measuring it, ... provide estimates of improved school effectiveness with school-based activities studies, ... make clear the processes within schools which flow from the selected activities, and demonstrate how these processes impinge on the wider school community'*.

This study is to adopt the multi-level and multi-dimensional approach in examining effectiveness of schools. It is not intended to establish a model of school effectiveness examination since schools differ from one another. The information available here does not imply that information of the same sort can be accessible in different settings. The data to be collected as well as the methodologies of collecting data will be contextualized in accordance with Cheng's (1995) terminology. On the other hand, the data are also easily accessed so that the idea of the study can be put into practice. The details will then be presented in the next chapter.

## **School Effectiveness Movement in Hong Kong**

In the local context, the policy makers of Hong Kong have been aware of the importance of education to the development of the society. The Education Commission, an advisory body on education policy, issued seven policy reports in a period from 1984 to 1998.

In Hong Kong, compulsory education has lasted for 30 years, but after rapid expansion of the school systems, people have shifted their attention and effort on the provision of school education from quantity to quality. Those policies presented in the Education Commission Reports as related to school effectiveness and school improvement can be summarized as follows:-

**1. Language teaching**

Improvement of quality of language teaching by providing more refresher training to language teachers and extra teachers in secondary schools for remedial language teaching (Cheng, 1995:165);

**2. Teacher quality**

Upgrading the quality of teachers by providing more training for teachers and school heads (Cheng, 1995:165-6);

**3. Private sector schools improvement**

Improving the private sector schools through enhancement of the physical and administrative standards of private schools in the 'Bought Place Scheme' (i.e., in this scheme, the Government buys a number of places for compulsory education from the private school sector each year; this will be discussed in Chapter 3) and participation in the 'Direct Subsidy Scheme' (Cheng, 1995:166);

**4. Curriculum development**

Improvement of curriculum development by the establishment of the Curriculum Development Institute; improvement of assessment in schools by introducing a framework of attainment targets and related assessments;

**5. Teaching and learning conditions**

Improvement of teaching conditions including the teacher-class ratio, promotion ratio, reduction of class size, etc.;

**6. Special education**

Improvement of special educational provision including support services in school and education enhancement measures;

**7. School Management Initiative (SMI)**

This was initiated in a pilot scheme in Sept. 1991 for strengthening school control in finance and administration in Hong Kong (Hsu, 1995:51). The aim of the School Management Initiative Scheme *'is to assist public-sector schools in providing quality education through making systematic changes in the process of school management. It provides a management framework which gives schools more decision-making power and more flexibility in the use of resources, in return for more formal procedures for planning, implementing and evaluating their activities'*(HKED, 1998:19);

**8. School Administration and Management System (SAMS)**

The SAMS started since 1993 (Tsang & Lee, 1997) for a five-year implementation of Information Systems Strategy (ISS) plan by the Education Department after a consultancy study in 1991 (Hsu, 1995) with a financial expenditure of HK\$ 570 million (about US\$ 73 million) in which forty percent was allocated into the SAMS development.

After the political transition in 1997, the Seventh Education Commission Report and the Chief Executive's Report were issued. The following policies relating to school improvement can also be found :

**9. Teaching Medium**

Only 110 secondary schools are allowed to use English as their medium of instruction starting from 1998.

**10. Quality Education Fund**

To encourage innovation and self-motivated reform initiated by individual schools, a HK\$5 billion (or US\$641 million) Quality Education Fund was set up in 1998 to finance worthwhile educational initiatives in schools. More than 1,100 such projects, amounting to HK\$585 million (US\$75 million) and involving 1,200 schools and 500,000 students have been

funded in the past two years (Wong, 2000:11-12).

**11. Information Technology**

There has been strong advocacy for, and a vast investment in education for 'Information Technology'. The government started to implement a five-year strategy on IT in education in 1999. The four key components of the strategy are to enhance students' access to IT and the Internet, to provide training and support for all teachers, to use IT to support teaching in the school curriculum, and to foster a community-wide culture which helps promote IT in education (Wong, 2000:5).

**12. Native English Speaking Teachers**

The employment of Native English teachers in English Language teaching has been encouraged. Over 400 additional native-speaking teachers have been recruited from all over the world in 1999 to teach English in our secondary schools (Wong, 2000:7).

**13. School monitoring**

The Inspectorate of the Education Department will carry out 'The Quality Education Inspection' in primary and secondary schools and the reports will then be publicized.

The above initiatives bear close similarity to those of other systems, notably England and Wales, Australia and the USA. SMI, for example, is largely derived from an exported model of school restructuring from Australia. A key aspect of the SMI document is the third chapter, which is devoted to Australian and US ideas on school effectiveness. The American research findings of Wilson and Corcoran (1988) are cited and a comprehensive account is given of the collaborative decision-making model advocated by Caldwell and Spinks (1988) in Australia, the model strongly advocated for Hong Kong schools to follow.

In the international context of school restructuring, Hong Kong's SMI is the equivalent of the "local management of schools" (LMS) in England and Wales, "school-based management" in the USA and the "self-managing school" concept in Australia.

In line with similar curriculum developments in the UK, Australia, and North America, the Target Oriented Curriculum (TOC) attempts to shift radically the way in which curricula are planned, taught and learned. It owes its emergence in 1994-1994 to various policy initiatives starting in 1989 (Morris et al., 1996).

On the whole, *'The strong thrust of Education Commission Report Number 7 (ECR7) is to develop schools with quality school cultures, and to introduce a framework by which to monitor and assure quality. The marked change in nomenclature from "effective schools" to "quality schools" is in line with shifts in English-speaking Western countries, and with recent developments in relevant academic literature.'* (Dimmock et al., 1998:487)

These reforms not only target school restructuring, curriculum modification, and developing quality in education, some of them touch on the cultural stasis in school. Dimmock and Walker (1998:489), in their overview of the educational reforms carried out in Hong Kong during the political transition period, summarize the cause of the deficiencies of these reforms, *'The introduction of school reforms (in Hong Kong) which directly challenge long-established and deeply ingrained cultural norms raise serious doubts about the feasibility of their successful implementation.'*

They discovered that principals accepted the rhetoric more than the reality of teacher involvement in decision making. Teachers still tended to see the principal as director and final decision maker. The overwhelming conclusion was that a strong sense of hierarchical deference still prevails in schools. Principals wittingly or unwittingly promoted this by virtue of who they sought to involve in decisions and how they approached the decision making process. Principals in many schools tended to monopolize authority and preserve hierarchical structures.

Dimmock and Walker (1998:488) go further and conclude that *'Hong Kong serves to remind us of an important paradox: that the more policy reform becomes internationalized, the more important it is for cognisance to be taken of the indigenous culture by fine tuning at the point of policy implementation at school level, for it is here that societal and organizational cultures meet.'*

Given the "internationalization" of school restructuring, greater consideration needs to be given to indigenous societal cultures. This is particularly pertinent at the school level, where lies the responsibility for implementation. The significance of this study actually echoes to the advocacy of the current scholars in the field who express the urgent needs to study cultural elements which enhance or hinder these global trend of school restructuring.

## CHAPTER 4

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The three notions to be examined in this research are *mien* behaviour, leadership style and school effectiveness. The setting is two Hong Kong private secondary schools which share a number of similarities. This chapter intends to lay out the framework for study of these three conceptions in the setting.

Traditionally a gulf is seen to exist between qualitative and quantitative research, with each belonging to distinctively different paradigms (Layder, 1998). However, Burgess (1989) argues that researchers ought to be flexible and therefore ought to select a range of methods that are appropriate to the research problem under investigation. He puts forward the term '*multiple research strategies*' to describe the use of diverse methods in tackling research problems. Some researchers (Denzin, 1970) have talked in terms of the complementarity of the two approaches so that triangulation can be arrived at in analyzing the research.

The research strategy to be adopted in this study is termed by Brannen (1992:27) as '*The pre-eminence of the qualitative over the quantitative*' since the study of the quantifiable data '*provides quantified background data*' of leadership styles and effectiveness in the two settings so that the researcher can then '*contextualize small scale intensive studies*' of *mien* behaviour in schools. As suggested by Morse (1991), a project must be theoretically driven by the qualitative methods incorporating a complementary quantitative component or vice versa.

### Quantitative Measurement

Based on the discussion of leadership and school effectiveness in the previous chapter, Table 3 is formulated to summarize the strategies to be adopted to look into these characteristics in the setting of two secondary schools in Hong Kong so that we can build up a quantifiable picture for the further studies in the coming section.

The horizontal categories in the table lay out the different levels to be examined in schools such as community, school itself, classroom activities, interpersonal activities as well as the personal activities and beliefs. The vertical categories are the different dimensions (including *contextual factors* in Cheng's (1995) terminology) in respect of the different levels as stated above. They compose the achievement and attitude of all elements in different levels, the process, the covariate if there is any, and the documentation at different levels.

Level Dimension	Community	School	Classroom	Individual			
				Principal	Teacher	Parent	Student
Achievement / Attitude		Physical environment			total time in meetings	Participation	HK Attainment Tests / attendance rate / dropout rate / number in ECA
				Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire			
Process	Alterable classroom variables / Alterable school management variables / monitoring / evaluation / using information						
Covariates						SES	Originality / gender
Documentation		Records / Value-addedness Analysis	Planning of works				HKCEE results

TABLE 3: Quantitative research strategies

Taking Fitz-Gibbon's advice on data acquisition that *'the costs of data acquisition are considerably reduced if the data are already available and do not need to be specially generated'* (1996:172), the information to be collected is mostly easily accessible. At community level, involvement of other institutions in the community is assessed quantitatively as well as qualitatively. All cooperative activities with other institutions will be taken into account. The schools' physical environment such as its size and facilities is also examined. The frequency of teacher-student interactions will be computed. Parents' participation in school activities will be compared and students' achievements in Hong Kong Attainment Tests are also dissected.

Among these quantitative measures, Hong Kong Attainment Tests, the periodic and progressive testing instruments provided by the government, are still widely used in Hong Kong. The primary objective of the test is to examine students' progress longitudinally in three main areas including English Language, Chinese Language, and Mathematics across the territory. This instrument is readily available since the schools keep the records of their students' performances. However, the tests range from S.1 (aged 12) level to S.3 (aged 14) level only. The other instruments beyond this range will be the public examination results after the completion of S.5 (aged 17) called Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination, and the one Analysis of Value-addedness published by the Committee on Home School Co-operation based on

the aforementioned public examinations.

Besides the above information which is largely available inside each setting, the researcher will also utilize Kingman's (1996) version of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) originally developed by Bass and Avolio (1990). MLQ was developed in order to provide measures of the components of transactional and transforming leadership typified as charismatic leadership; individualized consideration; intellectual stimulation; inspirational leadership; contingent reward; management-by-exception; and laissez-faire. It can also evaluate subordinates' motivation to work hard, satisfaction with the leader, and the effectiveness of the leader and his/her work unit. The MLQ is now widely used and has achieved great prominence. Nevertheless, relatively few studies have been conducted in education settings.

Kingman's version was developed for use in a local secondary school context with reference to the early version, and the later version of the MLQ. A 6-point scale was used, ranging from '0%' of the time (Never) to '100%' of the time (Always), to create a situation in which respondents had to make a decision on which side of the scale the principal's behaviour fell. The questionnaire is attached in Appendix B.

A questionnaire to provide information on the students' characteristics such as their SES, ethnicity, prior achievement etc. was also conducted.

## Qualitative Measurement

The quantitative measurements listed in the previous sections, to a certain extent, reveal and compare the settings in respect to their leadership styles as well as their students' achievement. It is suggested in numerous Western research studies as well as the local one (see Kingman, 1996) that Transforming Leaders outperform Transactional Leaders in **almost** all contexts. The quantitative portion of this study investigates the applicability of the above suggestion in the context under study. The qualitative portion of this study will then probe into the area of interests concerning leadership style and students' sense of achievement. It also provides evidence for triangulation of the quantitative findings in leadership style and achievement; and

most of all the extent to which the culturally distinguished characteristic of *mien* behaviour exaggerates or minimizes the influence of leadership styles on the effectiveness of schools.

*Mien*, is both an overt and a covert action which pervades human interactions. Symbolic interactionists have thrown light on the study of these interactions. They claim, like other qualitative methodologists, to investigate people through observing them in the field rather than in artificial conditions. There are certain principles of investigation as suggested which can be applied to this study.

An individual acts, lives in and knows his/her world. It is imperative to understand what the actors know, see what they see, understand what they understand. We must understand their vocabulary, their ways of looking, and their sense of what is important. The researcher must interact with the subjects, observe their activities, and try to reconstruct their reality (Blumer, 1969).

Hence, research on people should describe people in real settings. Nevertheless, research of this nature bears with it a fatal difficulty - the permission for entry to the setting. According to Marshall et.al. (1995:51) an ideal site for research should include the followings:

1. *entry is possible;*
2. *there is high probability that a rich mix of processes, people, programs, interactions, and structures of interest will be present;*
3. *the researcher is likely to be able to build trusting relations with the participants in the study; and*
4. *data quality and credibility are reasonably assured.*

Most fortunately, these preconditions could be easily fulfilled since the researcher had known the two principals and had built up trusting relations with them for years. Their permissions were sought verbally through direct access to them in their schools.

The researcher also took up an advisory role in both schools with the consent of the principals. Therefore, participant observation and interview became additional data collection techniques. Schwartz and Jacobs (1979) describe *participant observation* and *interviewing* actors as two techniques used to understand the perspectives of groups of actors. *Personal accounts* and *life histories* are two attempts to capture the perspectives of individual actors. In addition, *non-reactive techniques* can also be

utilized. In Schwartz's and Jacobs' (1979) terminology *non-reactive techniques* such as *analyzing nonverbal communication* and *content analysis* aim at understanding perspectives and action without direct involvement with the actors themselves. In short, the researcher will be working as a participant on this site. With this advantage, immersion can also be achieved. *'Immersion in the setting allows the researcher to hear, see, and begin to experience reality as the participants do'* (Marshall, 1989:79). Importantly, it goes along with Blumer's (1969:48) guideline on discovery of the nature of the empirical social world that *'it is to be discovered, to be dug out by a direct, careful, and probing examination of that world'*.

The researcher started collecting data in the schools from November 1997 for approximately two years and he spent at least half a day each week in each school. Within these two years, the researcher has witnessed the growth and the achievements of each school.

Besides observation, in-depth interviewing was arranged. The researcher arrived to probe into the areas of concern and extract the most meaningful data about the school. In-depth interviewing is often described as a *'conversation with a purpose'* (Kahn & Cannell, 1957:149). The researcher intended to explore those areas of concern and to help uncover the participants' perspective on the school's performance.

The interviews were mainly conducted in Chinese with students and parents, and partially in English with teachers with sound English background. As for the two principals, the major informants of this research, the interviews were mostly conducted in English since they both finished undergraduate courses in the United Kingdom. For those interviews conducted in Chinese, they were all translated and transcribed by the researcher and cross-checked by another researcher who would translate back to Chinese to see if the meaning of the translated version complied with original transcription. Meetings and discussions were organized if variations were found until the proper transcriptions were agreed.

Wolcott (1988) distinguishes between three different participant-observer styles: the active participant, the privileged observer, and the limited observer. The privileged observer can nicely describe the researcher's role in both schools since he was someone who was known and trusted and given easy access to information about the context. On the other hand, he was also a limited observer since he was restricted to access to some documents in schools and he was not known to some people in two schools.

Since the researcher was known as 'the principal's friend' in both schools, this might contribute to the formation of 'authority boundaries' between the researcher and the subjects. Knapp and Knapp (1976) suggest that the researcher can transcend authority boundaries by the development of trust. The friend's role is conducive to the development of trust. Fine et al. (1988:17) adds, *'The key to the role of friend is the explicit expression of positive affect combined with both a relative lack of authority and a lack of sanctioning of the behaviour of those being studied. In turn, adopting the friend role suggests that the participant observer treats his or her informants with respect and that he or she desires to acquire competency in their social worlds.'* In other words, the researcher strives to establish rapport with informants throughout the process of the research. Taylor et al. (1998:48) summarize the concept of rapport as :-

- Communicating a feeling of empathy for informants and having them accept it as sincere
- Penetrating people's "defenses against the outsider"
- Having people "open up" about their feelings about the setting and others
- Being seen as an "okay" person
- Breaking through the "fronts" people impose in everyday life
- Sharing in informants' symbolic world, their language, and their perspectives.

Besides this friend role being assumed throughout the interactions with the informants, another strategy was adopted in the first place when the researcher approached the 'gatekeepers' as well as the informants in each setting. The researcher was cautious about explaining research procedures and research questions to gatekeepers and informants since it is a difficult and sensitive task. Most essentially, if the informants are aware of the study of *mien*, the cost will be the deterioration of validity in the responses and interactions. The researcher took the advice of Taylor et al. (1998:33) *'to be truthful, but vague and imprecise'* in explaining the details of the research. Furthermore, *'It is generally unwise to give details concerning your research and the precision with which notes will be taken. If they knew how closely they were going to be watched, most people would feel self-conscious in your presence.'*

Symbolic interactionists claim that the way we study humans, as anything else in the nature, *'must be determined first and foremost by the nature of the empirical world under study'* (Charon, 1995:207). This can only be achieved by careful observation of

actions, descriptions of the important elements involved, and a careful description and redefinition of these elements. These two schools provide a perfect setting to see the conceptions of *mien* at work in a number of situations, comparing and contrasting instances of the conceptions, clarifying them, describing their role and, where appropriate, their absence.

Undoubtedly, various qualitative research traditions and methodologies can be found. Jacob (1988) has categorized six of them. Symbolic interactionism is one of the six domains with the others including human ethology, holistic ethnography, ethnography of communication, etc. Symbolic interactionism is appropriate for this study, which is to understand how individuals take, make, and even manipulate meaning in interaction with others. This study emphasizes the pressures of meaning making in social organization through various 'critical incidents'.

## Critical Incidents

Within the school environment teachers and pupils come together and attempt to coexist. During this coexistence a plethora of episodes occur, some of which are insignificant and unimportant, whilst others are major episodes which have significant influence on both teachers and pupils. Such episodes, significant or insignificant, are sometimes called 'critical incidents' (Tripp, 1993).

In the literature, the term critical incident has acquired a number of slightly different definitions as researchers have approached the issue from a variety of angles. In general, the term '*comes from history where it refers to some event or situation which marked a significant turning-point or change in the life of a person or an institution ... or in some social phenomenon*' (Tripp, 1993:24). These events '*provoke the individual into selecting particular kinds of actions, they in turn lead them in particular directions, and they end up having implications for identity*' (Sikes et al., 1985:61). Now, within schools and from the literature dealing with teachers' careers, critical incidents are seen as '*highly charged moments and episodes that have enormous consequences for personal change and development*' (Sikes et al., 1985:230). Furthermore, '*They are unplanned, unanticipated and uncontrolled. They are flash-points that illuminate in an electrifying instant some key problematic aspect of the teacher's role and which contain, in the same instant, the solution.*' (Woods,

1993:357).

Such major events occur very rarely in most teachers' lifetimes and become critical only afterwards. Indeed, it is worth remembering that the criticality of an incident can be identified only after the consequences of such an incident are known. Consequently, we can examine those major incidents only later by interviewing the participants and those who were involved in them.

An alternative formulation is provided by Tripp's (1993) extension to the definition of critical incidents in order to include the common-place events that occur in the everyday life of the classroom. He argues *'The vast majority of critical incidents ... are not all dramatic or obvious: they are mostly straightforward accounts of very commonplace events that occur in routine professional practice which are critical in the rather different sense that they are indicative of underlying trends, motives and structures (pp. 24-25).*

From this perspective, critical incidents *'are not things' which exist independently of an observer and are waiting discovery ... but like all data, critical incidents are created. Incidents happen, but critical incidents are produced by the way we look at a situation: a critical incident is an interpretation of the significance of an event'* (ibid., p. 8).

Critical incidents, therefore, are not necessarily sensational events involving noticeable tensions. Rather they can be relatively minor incidents, everyday events that happen in every school and in every classroom. Their criticality is based on the justification, the significance, and the meaning given to them. What we propose in this study, in relation to the argument we have already developed, is that it is possible to scrutinize these incidents in a way that can be illustrative of the nature of norms and cultures within a school. Thus, everything that happens in classrooms is a potential critical incident, but criticality depends on interpretation, which is in itself a complex process. Linking this proposal with the ideas of Edgar Schein (1985) and Donald Schon et al. (1995), however, things become a little clearer. Both have used the word *'surprise'*, which is the stimulus for reflection and for the creation of a critical incident. An observer enters the school as an *'interested outsider'* (Schein, 1985), beginning *'to experience the culture, both actively through systematic observation and passively through encountering "surprises"- things that are different from what the outsider expects'* (ibid., p.114). Thus, the outsider is engaged *'in systematic observation to calibrate the surprising experiences as best he [or she] can*

*and to verify that the "surprising" events are indeed repeatable experiences and thus likely to be a reflection of the culture, not merely random or idiosyncratic events'* (ibid., p. 114).

The methodological preference of interpretation of 'critical incidents' does not imply its superiority, but it does give the researcher a sense of an array of methods subsumed under the qualitative traditions. Moreover, like any other qualitative methodologies, the study is to be carried out '*which entails immersion in the everyday life of the setting chosen for study, that values participants' perspectives on their worlds and seeks to discover those perspectives, that views inquiry as an interactive process between the researcher and the participants, and that is primarily descriptive and relies on people's words as the primary data*'. (Charon, 1995:206-7)

Methodologically, this study is not a symbolic interactionist study. It is, in fact, a combination of a variety of data collection strategies of direct observation, participant observation, in-depth interviewing as well as other quantitative techniques mentioned in the previous section. The researcher adopted the most practical, economical, efficient, and feasible techniques for collecting data as the research progressed. Throughout the whole process of this study, the researcher actually started with participant observation as he sought to identify questions, patterns, and domains. The strategy does change so that the study became more focused and progressed towards more specific questions and clearer concepts that suggest the use of representative samples. Hence, the findings are descriptions and numbers - whichever is appropriate.

This research can then be categorized as a holistic research, an approach composed of a variety of methods and techniques so as to ensure validity and reliability of the research.

**Trustworthiness** in this study is enhanced through the multiple perspectives of principals and teachers, the provision of details concerning the analysis processes, interview transcripts, thematic analysis, and the researcher's prior understandings in contemporary theories (Gurr, 1996). **Internal validity, external validity or construct validity** are prerequisites to trustworthiness, reliability or credibility. Internal validity is achieved through triangulation and the rechecking with participants of the transcripts (e.g. Burns, 1997; Gurr, 1996). In order to enhance validity of interpretation, researcher's interpretations are checked with various participants or people involved in settings – a procedure called '*respondent validation*' (Mason, 1996:151). Occasionally, in the interpretations of behaviour, the researcher utilizes

the data from different sources so that the behaviour can be corroborated, elaborated or illuminated (Rossman & Wilson, 1994). This method concerning data interpretation can also be supported by Brannen since she urged researcher to have the data collected and interpreted *'from a range of members rather than one individual member reporting upon the actions and activities of others'* (1992:12). The researcher applies multiple data-gathering method so that the interpretations can be 'holistic' as well as 'reflexive'.

Moreover, the researcher has been working closely with the key informants in this study. Knowing the key informants well and as a friend, the researcher possesses the 'standpoint'(Mason, 1996) which grants him epistemological privilege so that the notion of reflexivity is built on recognition of the salience of such experiences through the process of turning his analytical lens on the participants.

**Transferability** or **generalizability** means the conclusions of an inquiry being *'applicable to more than the particular context of the inquiry'* (Kaplan, 1994:505-6). It is not to be judged by the researcher, but by those who use the findings from this study. The responsibility of the researcher is to ensure that there is sufficient data available for others to make this judgement. Various records of transcripts, meaning units, analysis processes, summaries of interviews are used, and they are made to be available for examination, thus establishing the **dependability and confirmability** of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:327). That is what disciplined inquiry should be: *'data, arguments, and reasonings ... capable of withstanding careful scrutiny by another member of the scientific community'* (Shulman, 1988:5). The researcher's action is trying *'to facilitate the reader's own analysis more than deliver statements of generalization'* (Burns, 1997:381). In presenting sensitive cultural characteristic such as *mien* behaviour, the researcher has made changes concerning some essential identifying characteristics so that the informants' **anonymity and confidentiality** can be preserved as long as these changes do not undermine the argument of this research.

## CHAPTER 5

### RESEARCH FINDINGS: 1

#### The Schools and Aspects of their Effectiveness

To begin the analysis of the research findings, this chapter is an end product of a method of discovering in terms of quantitative data, from records and accounts, what happened in the past.

The quantitative measurements in this study aim to describe and compare the two settings in respect to their leadership styles as well as their students' achievement. The qualitative portion will then examine how people interact in schools. Most of all, the quantitative finding will provide a quantifiable picture so that the way *mien* behaviour asserts its influence in the school context can be elucidated. More importantly, the extent to which *mien* behaviour exaggerates or understates the impact of leadership styles on the effectiveness of the schools can be understood.

The first section is to establish a baseline prior to the forthcoming analysis - a historic account of the setting.

#### PS - A historic account

PG and WH are two branch schools in the same private education institute in Hong Kong called PS. The development of PS reflects the evolution of government policy on private secondary education. In the 1960s and 1970s, the private sector played an important role in the development of education in Hong Kong. At that period, government could not provide enough education places to accommodate the second generation of the new immigrants from Mainland China derived from its political instability, in specific, the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution in the 1950s and 1960s. Seeing this opportunity, many commercial bodies invested in education just for profit as they saw the demand for education and they accommodated around 40% of primary and secondary students in Hong Kong (Wong, 1990). Bray (1995:186) commented, '*in quantitative terms, the heyday of the private sector was in the mid 1970s. Enrolments peaked in 1977, then declined markedly*'. This is illustrated in the following figure.

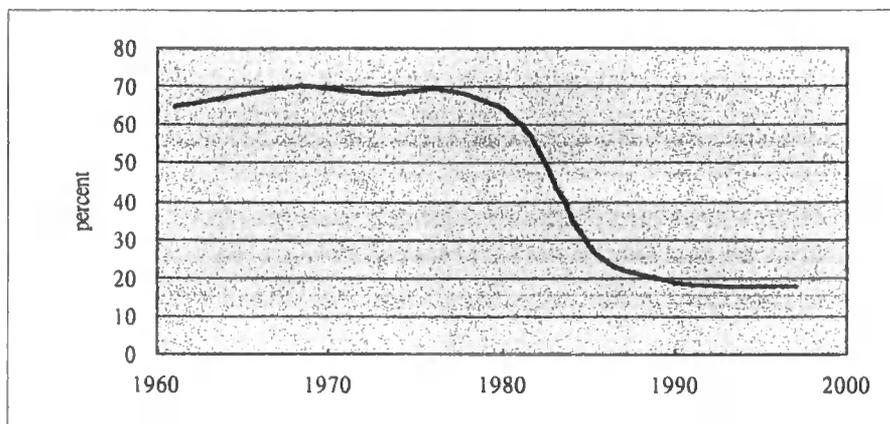


FIGURE 2 :  
Enrolment in  
Private Day  
Secondary  
Schools

In the 1980s, with the introduction of 9-year compulsory and free education, the Hong Kong government brought the development of education into a new stage by aiming to provide adequate school places for all students. The government intended to achieve its target by

1. increasing aided school places through the secondary aided school building programme,
2. inviting high standard non-profit making private schools to turn into aided schools, and
3. buying places from the private schools.

In imposing the 5 years Bought Place Scheme (BPS) in 1987, in which only places in structurally well-established private schools were to be bought, the government applied the 'average cost' for each student calculated from all aided schools in the territory. As a result, only a few private schools were left and many private schools had to close down as they could not find students. Even though the Inspectorate of Education Department had conducted inspections before deciding on buying places from these private schools, many schools could not match the subsidized and government schools in the territory in terms of school buildings, facilities, as well as teachers' qualifications. The private schools in Hong Kong were still '*substandard*' when compared with other subsidized and government schools.

The remaining private schools could not recruit their students as the places of Secondary 1 and 4 were allocated with reference to the Junior Secondary Education Assessment System and Secondary School Places Allocation System. S1 and S4 places were allotted in accordance with students' academic achievement as well as their preference of school. In view of the historic development of the private sector, private schools were equivalent to '*substandard*' schools for the general public.

To accommodate excess demand of education, the government expanded the aided sector (Tam, 1993). A comparable long-term private school policy was not laid out until 1988 in Education Commission Report Number 3. The five principles governing the private school policy are (p.52):

1. the room for privately operated schools in Hong Kong's pluralistic society is affirmed,
2. private schools should no longer be considered as buffers between students searching for places in schools and the subsidized vacancies in schools,
3. private schools should operate free of Government controls,
4. private schools which are able to **attain sufficiently high standards** should be regarded as part of the long-term supply of school places, and
5. there should be only one standard of educational provision (in monetary term) within the public sector.

Specifically, the recommendations (p.54) being put forward included the abolition of BPS and the introduction of a new direct subsidy scheme (DSS) for private schools with sufficiently high educational standards.

This external development eventually had a great impact on private schools. *'To attain sufficiently high standards'* implied the prerequisite for private schools' future survival before they could *'operate free of government controls'*.

### **Physical characteristics of the settings**

**T**he setting of this research is two private schools. They were eligible to join DSS in 1999. The physical characteristics of these two schools are presented in the following table.

	WH	PG
School Nature	Non-profit making private school	Non-profit making private school
Religion	No	No
Year Founded	1966	1969
Area	35,000 square feet approximately	28,000 square feet approximately
Classrooms	38	28
Special Rooms	12	9
Grade	F.1 - F.7 (for aged 12-19)	F.1 - F.7 (for aged 12-19)
Number on roll	1524	934
Teaching Medium	Chinese and English medium	Chinese medium

TABLE 4 : Physical particulars of the setting

These two schools received a series of inspections during the year 1998 conducted by the Inspectorate of Hong Kong Education Department before they were eligible to join the DSS. One of the conditions for their eligibility was that the school premises were purposely built for education. It can be seen that the physical settings, the number of students, the years of their establishment, and the medium of instruction of these two schools are quite similar to each other except that English medium was offered in WH for mostly immigrants from non-Chinese speaking countries such as India, Nepal, and the Philippines.

## The people

**W**H and PG are two branch schools belonging to the same institution called PS. As required by the Education Ordinance, the institution maintains a School Management Committee (SMC) which is also the school governing body. It is responsible for ensuring the school is operating satisfactorily and that educational activities are promoted in a proper manner. The SMC employs, on its behalf, a school manager to manage school functions.

Owing to the fact that the SMC are businessmen who lack direct experience of school management and have to engage in their own businesses, SMC appointed a school manager to carry out the managerial duties above the principal of each branch school. The principal is knowledgeable about what is actually happening in his/her school. In other words, the SMC has delegated its authority to the school manager, who is

accountable to SMC. Nevertheless, SMC and the school manager still withhold authorities that affect the school administration to a great extent. The aspects of authority withheld from the principals are:-

1. The decision to appoint staff;
2. Promotion and demotion of staff;
3. Finance.

After the transition in 1999, the school manager even withholds the authority to decide the salary of all personnel. Amazingly enough, all principals and all other clerical staff are subject to deductions of 10% to 50% of their salaries so as to control expenses whereas all teaching staff maintain the same scale with other schools in the territory receiving subsidies from the government.

Another significant figure and one of the key informants in this study, Li, is a retired Inspector. He has been a school consultant for a number of years and only responsible to the school manager since the school manager does not only manage PS but also has his own business. Throughout these years, the school manager has delegated the managerial responsibilities to Li, the school consultant in PS. Li builds up intertwining relationships with the staff of the school; he exerts his influence on all important decisions; he can even represent the school manager in delivering speeches at school functions; and he can even terminate staff contracts in the name of the school manager.

### **The leaders: Lin of PG and Bu of WH**

Lin and Bu are the principals in two branch schools of PS. They share a number of similarities in terms of their personal backgrounds. They are both in their early 50s and have attained Masters degrees in Educational Administration. Like most senior staff in PS, they were discovered and promoted by Li.

Lin arrived at PG in 1968 when he had just graduated from secondary school. He was only 19 years of age at that time<sup>2</sup>. In 1972, he finished his three years' part-time Teacher's training and then earned his Bachelor degree. He was promoted to the post of principal in PG in 1992. Throughout his 23 years of teaching, he had taken up the

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<sup>2</sup> In the 1970s and 1980s, the educational requirement for teachers in private schools was that of completing secondary education.

duty of Discipline Master for twenty years with responsibility for student disciplinary matters. He was notable for harshness and sternness in his duties<sup>3</sup>. In his second year of principalship, he acquired his Master Degree.

Bu had been working in WH since 1970 when he finished his Bachelor studies in Taiwan. Li met him in WH and they built up a strong relationship. People even called Bu *'Li's sworn son'*(契仔)<sup>4</sup>. Being encouraged by Li, he furthered his studies in Britain<sup>5</sup> and got his Master Degree in 1992. He became the Assistant Principal in WH at first and in 1995, he became a principal. Throughout his teaching career, he has been responsible for a number of posts such as Activity Master, Discipline Master, and Subject Panel Chairman.

A remarkable similarity was apparent during the informal interviews with Lin and Bu. They each have strong motivation in pursuit of their professional success. More interestingly, they both seem to have had a somewhat distant relationship with their fathers. When Lin was asked about his family, he tried to insulate his career achievement from his family. He described his father as a *'cold old man'*. As for Bu, he even avoided talking about his father, concentrating on his strict and considerate mother who had helped develop his diligence and expressiveness.

Being a consultant in PS, Li is an influential figure in shaping its culture. Since the school manager seldom visits the school, Li actually controls most of the administrative matters and even decides on appointment of principals. The purpose of this research is to compare and contrast two different schools. His influence on these schools is significant but presumably the same. As he is not carrying out daily duties in school, he communicates mostly with the branch school principals. A PS teacher can only see him in a few joint school functions throughout the school year but everyone is aware of his weighty influence on the fate of PS.

The aforementioned external environment inevitably contributes to the stressful atmosphere in all private schools trying to live with the new system. This also

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<sup>3</sup> This is affirmed through the interviews with the alumni. They recalled that Lin was very strict and one of the alumni said, *"We would all be quiet even when we heard his footsteps"*.

<sup>4</sup> This is a Chinese practice of forming close relationships for those without consanguinity. In ancient China, a formal ceremony was carried out to cement this engagement of relationships. Going through this practice, people transform their attachment to a higher level.

<sup>5</sup> Li asked the school supervisor to grant Bu study leave and study allowance for his studies in Britain. At that time, not even the government could provide this sort of allowance for its employees.

provides the best soil for the development of transforming leadership. House (1977) notes that charismatic leadership is most likely to arise in stressful situations. Such a sense of crisis operates in conjunction with the characteristics and behaviour of the charismatic leader to enhance the probability that he/she will be deemed to be charismatic. The leadership styles constituted by Lin and Bu will be examined in a later section.

## Comparing the leadership style of PG and WH

### Leadership Style Questionnaire

**B**ass (1985) conducted systematic research into the idea of transactional and transforming leadership employing a measurement-based framework. Central to his effort is the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), which he developed in order to provide measures of the components of transactional and transforming leadership. The MLQ is now widely used and it will also be adapted in this study to look into the principals' characteristics in PG and WH. Different versions have been developed and the one to be adopted is the most commonly used version, that is the rater form of the MLQ-5, in which the respondent describes the behaviour of a leader. Respondents are given descriptions of a leader, which represent the seven aspects of leadership delineated by Bass and Avolio (1990). With reference to Kingman's (1996) version which was developed for exclusive application to Hong Kong secondary schools, a total of 42 statements reflecting **three distinct leadership styles** were listed under **six major school responsibilities**. For the three leadership styles, four statements reflecting transformational leadership factors (Charisma, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individual Attention), two statements reflecting transactional leadership factors (Reward Contingency and Management by Exception), and one statement reflecting the laissez-faire leadership factor, were provided.

The questionnaire also examined each principal's frequency of performing 'task' and 'relationship' responsibilities. The division of the 'task' and 'relationship' orientations of these six school responsibilities was as follows:

- A. Promoting academic performance (task)
- B. Cultivating harmony among staff (relationship)
- C. Promoting moral values (task)

- D. Promoting principal-student relationships (relationship)
- E. Promoting staff development (task)
- F. Promoting home-school relationships (relationship)

A 6-point scale, ranging from '0' (Never) through '20', '40', '60', '80' to '100' (Always), was used for computing principals' (i) transforming, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles, and (ii) frequency of performance of task and relationship responsibilities as perceived by teachers. They were asked to assess how frequently they would say their current principals displayed the leadership style described. A score closer to '100' means greater frequency in the display of the particular leadership style studied, and a score closer to '0' implies that the behaviour was rarely exhibited.

A total of 75 teachers completed the questionnaire. Of the 75 responses, 29 out of 36 were completed by PG teachers and 46 out of 53 by WH teachers. A series of t-tests, shown in Table 5, were conducted to compare the mean scores of all the categories. The mean scores provided by teachers revealed statistically significant differences between perceptions of Lin and Bu in transforming, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles as perceived by teachers ( $p < .05$ ). Bu was ranked significantly more transforming (mean score being 61.27) than Lin (mean score being 55.04); whereas Lin was more transactional (mean score being 61.83) than Bu (mean score being 45.29); and Bu scored higher on laissez-faire (mean score being 42.50) than Lin (mean score being 40.03).

Leadership style		PG (n=29)		WH (n=46)		Kingman's sample (n=932)	
Transforming	charismatic leadership	55.04	51.76	61.27* (t=-15.642)	63.24* (t=-13.271)	53.24	52.25
	individualized consideration		58.03		59.65		49.71
	intellectual stimulation		54.97		62.65* (t=-10.903)		56.78
	inspirational leadership		55.38		59.54 (t=-4.561)		54.25
Transactional	contingent reward	61.83	62.68	45.29* (t=19.123)	50.74* (t=9.724)	55.45	60.06
	management-by-exception		60.97		39.83* (t=19.351)		50.90
Laissez-faire	laissez-faire	40.03	42.50*(t=-2.304)		42.57		

TABLE 5: Results of Leadership style [Kingman's (1996) results on 932 teachers in Hong Kong are inserted for comparison] (\*indicates the significant differences between PG and WH with t value in bracket)

Besides studying the perceived transforming, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles of Bu and Lin, the questionnaire was also used for studying their frequency of performance of 'task' and 'relationship' school responsibilities. The results were summarized as follows:

Frequency in performing		PG (n=29)		WH (n=46)		Kingman's sample (n=938)	
Task-oriented responsibilities	Promoting academic performance	57.85	64.52	63.02* (t=-8.830)	62.50	56.47	54.39
	Promoting moral values		61.31		58.02* (t=4.482)		56.23
	Promoting staff development		47.72		68.54* (t=-21.074)		56.14
Relationship-oriented responsibilities	Cultivating harmony among staff	45.68	38.44	59.64* (t=-24.350)	59.91* (t=-22.721)	53.82	47.99
	Promoting principal-student relationship		55.21		50.26* (t=5.384)		56.76
	Promoting home-school relationship		43.38		68.74* (t=-27.068)		56.86

TABLE 6: Results of performing task-oriented and relationship-oriented responsibilities [Kingman's (1996) results on 938 teachers in Hong Kong are inserted for comparison] (\*indicates the significant differences between PG and WH with t value in bracket)

In general, all findings imply significant differences in the principals' inclination towards the task-oriented responsibilities as perceived by teachers. It is notable that Bu (mean score is 63.02) scored much higher score on task-oriented responsibilities compared with Kingman's sample (mean score is 56.47) whereas Lin's mean score from this aspect was 57.85, approximately the same as Kingman's. However, the distinctive element in Lin is his remarkably low score in 'promoting staff development' responsibility (mean score is 47.72), and Bu's contrarily high (mean score is 68.54) from this aspect.

Another interesting result can be observed is Lin's low score (mean score is 45.68) on 'Relationship-oriented responsibilities' while Bu maintains his higher score (mean score is 59.64) compared with Kingman's sample (mean score is 53.82).

## The teachers

Despite the drastic changes facing private schools, the mobility of teachers in both schools was comparatively low. The average ages in 1998 for both PG and WH were 39 and 41 respectively. However, the average ages drop to 33 and 38 for PG and WH in 1999 computed from the 32 teaching staff in PG and 48 in WH afterwards. This is mainly the outcome of the termination of servicing contracts so as to control expenses after the transition to DSS. The significant reduction of teachers' average age in PG is derived from the fact that two senior staff resigned of their own accord and two retired at the age of 60. Some elder teachers were made redundant in WH but not the senior teachers. Most of the redundant teachers were considered to be malfunctioning by the principals and the school consultant<sup>6</sup>. All 're-employed'<sup>7</sup> teachers in PG could still receive the same pay as they received before and retained their previous posts. In WH, in contrast, three senior teachers were demoted and one senior teacher asked for a salary cut voluntarily.

★ During an interview conducted in April, 1999 with one of the PG senior teachers who resigned, Wah talked about the reason for his resignation, *"There is no way out at this moment. Most of us, especially in our situation, are aware of the deadlock. It's better to do it (resign from the post) by ourselves instead of being "slaughtered" by someone (Lin) else."*

☆ In another interview with Au, the WH senior teacher who asked for a salary cut in October, 1999, explained his surprising request, *"I have my own house, and I have no dependent (He is still single in his mid-forties). I can now do whatever thing I like and I can talk to whoever I want. I can now really work, but not for money."*

The departure of these senior teachers created some vacant positions. They were filled by newly recruited members who were mostly fresh graduates. Besides, two new Native English speaking Teachers (NET)<sup>8</sup> were recruited in PG and three in WH. A big proportion of the new local teachers was underpaid. They held university degrees

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<sup>6</sup> Li visited branch schools more often than before. He noted down teachers' performances during the time he walked around the school. Nevertheless, the criterion of evaluation was not based on professional competence; he judged teachers' performances by looking at the way they acted in the lessons, specifically standing up or sitting down while teaching.

<sup>7</sup> According to PS policy during the transition, all teachers' employment contracts would be terminated after the school year in 1999, and all staff had to apply for the new posts again.

<sup>8</sup> The employment of NET was initiated by the government but Li adopts this scheme as he believes that NET is a selling point to the public.

and they were paid on the scale of non-graduate teachers<sup>9</sup>. This happened since it was difficult for university graduates to find prosperous jobs during the economic recession being experienced in Hong Kong.

In terms of teachers' qualifications, they were well above the government requirement of a DSS. Both PG and WH consist of 85% and 83% of university graduates which is higher than the minimum proportion of 70% graduate teachers to 30% of non-graduate teachers as required by the government as well as the average proportion in the territory of 82.6%.

### Headquarters staff

PS's '*headquarters is the most obscure thing on earth*', commented Bu in an interview in October 1998. It is obscure in the sense that there is no other organizational framework like this in any other secondary school in the territory. It is in fact the centre of authority and Li's '*cane of power*' because its functions include:-

- A. recruitment of staff through the Secretarial Department;
- B. control of finance through the Accounts Department and Bursar Department;
- C. handling external affairs through the Development Department;

And most of all, Li controls PS through his post called 'school consultant' through which he can decide on all the assignments of staff including promotion, demotion, and even the positioning of the principal through these Departments in the Headquarters.

The purpose of the establishment of these Departments is to save labour and to centralize power. However, the most '*obscure*' part of these Departments is the composition and the components of these Departments in the Headquarters.

The newly appointed Development Department Head, Chun, had worked in a senior post for 17 years in PS. He had to retire from his teaching post of the age of 64. Li offered him the new appointment. When being asked about this appointment,

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<sup>9</sup> Non-graduate teacher was paid less at about 85% of a graduate teacher. This is the rank for those who finished teachers' training in Education Institutes without a university degree.

- ☆ one WH teacher, Foo, said, “*He's been here for quite a long time. He deserves it since he has been so faithful.*”
- ★ Lin, who suffered a salary deduction after the transition to DSS, remarked, “*It means we have to work harder because we have to keep some valuable staff in the headquarters.*”

The ambiguity is buried within the words underlined. ‘Faithful’ should be a compliment, but it depends on whom Chun is ‘faithful’ to. ‘Faithful to his education career’ or ‘faithful to Li’ creates great ambiguity in its implications.

By the same token, ‘valuable’ is a commendation if it is referring to Chun’s contribution to education but it can also be a negative remark about his poor value for money.

### The students

The composition of students in WH and PG is quite similar except that WH consists of 388 non-Chinese students whose original nationalities are not Chinese. They are mostly immigrants from non-Chinese speaking countries such as India, Nepal, and the Philippines. These students’ ability varies significantly; stretching from 7% of band 1 students, the best 20%, to 46% of band 5 students, the lowest 20% academically, among WH’s total number of admissions in September, 1999. WH allocates these students into their ‘non-Chinese’ classes. This is why WH becomes one of the schools which uses English as teaching medium since all these non-Chinese students can only communicate in English.

For other Chinese students enrolled in WH and PG, they are all band 5 students. In order to compare like with like in this study, the target group to be analyzed in WH will be the Chinese students only. In other words, ‘WH students’ in this study refers to the students in WH whose origins are Chinese. As for PG, all students in schools will be included in this study.

Since the political transition of sovereignty in 1997, a huge number of children have migrated to Hong Kong from China. Seeing the influx of newcomers, Hong Kong government provided a ‘New Immigrant Grant’<sup>10</sup> to those schools enrolling children

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<sup>10</sup> The Education Department provides a lump sum of \$3,300 Hong Kong dollars to the school for each new immigrant the school admits. Those who have arrived in Hong Kong from Mainland China within one year and have never been enrolled in school are categorized as new immigrants. The subsidy

who had recently arrived in Hong Kong. Since then, all branch schools of PS have launched different programmes trying to attract these new immigrants because they believe they can bring them this grant. Moreover, the motivation towards their studies of these new immigrants is much higher.

- ★ Lo, a 45 years old teacher in PG, commented in an English panel meeting, *"I don't mind the bigger class size at all as long as they are all new immigrants."*

In the school year 1999-2000, WH was proven to be popular in the district since WH could admit mostly new immigrants for their Form 1 classes. Almost all Form 1 students (115 out of 123 as at September 1999) enrolled in WH in the school year of 1999-2000 were new immigrants who had been in Hong Kong for less than a year. The situation implied that WH could receive a huge amount of 'New Immigrant Grant' and at the same time they could absorb new students of high motivation.

- ☆ Bu, the principal of WH, remarked in an Administrative Staff meeting, *"In order to build up our image and brush up our standard, we have to purify the composition of our students and admit as many new immigrants as possible."*

On the other hand, PG could only find 64 students for its 3 Form 1 classes, which should accommodate 120 students normally. Of these Form 1 students, 54 were new immigrants and 10 were local students originally allocated to other schools.

### Students' socio-economic status

Before comparing the effectiveness of PG and WH, it is necessary to examine students' socio-economic status to see if we are really comparing similar students. Willms (1996) reminds us that this is essential because students' socio-economic background immensely influences their achievement in almost all aspects.

Every student in the territory can apply for financial assistance from the government at the beginning of the school year. The researcher utilized information about this financial assistance scheme to compare the financial background of students' families. The government categorizes the financial status of applicants in terms of an assistance scale; higher levels in the scale implies more assistance to be provided; the scale

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to school should be spent on organizing tutorial classes or adaptation programmes solely for these new immigrants.

provides a handy tool for comparison purpose.

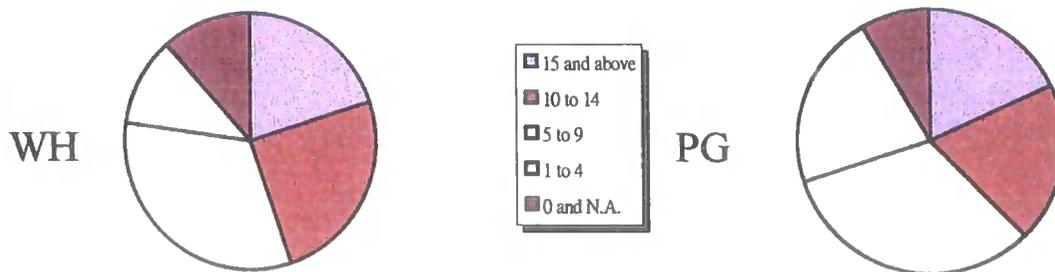


FIGURE 3: Students' Socio-economic Status

In figure 3, it is discovered that students' financial background between PG and WH are very much alike. 73% of PG students and 77% of WH students score above 4 points according to the Students' Financial Assistance Scheme. This implies that their family incomes are below the average family income in Hong Kong. Furthermore, from the pie chart, PG and WH resemble each other in the distribution patterns.

From the same application form for the assistance scheme, students' birth places can be traced to understand if they are Hong Kong residents or new immigrants from China. This information is summarized in the following figure.

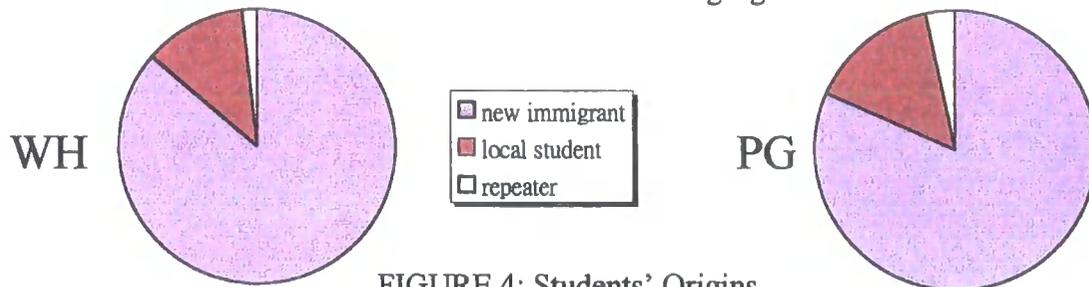


FIGURE 4: Students' Origins

The distribution between two schools looks not only similar but virtually identical with reference to the origins of their students.

## The effectiveness of PG and WH

### Students' academic achievement

Two sorts of measurement are utilized to understand the academic achievement of PG and WH students. They are picked mainly because the information is easily accessible for the researcher. They are the Hong Kong Attainment Tests and the Analysis of Value-addedness.

## Hong Kong Attainment Tests

The Hong Kong Attainment Tests (HKAT) are a series of standardized tests for primary and junior secondary levels in the three core subjects of Chinese, English and Mathematics developed by the Educational Research Section of the Education Department. These tests are administered yearly by primary and secondary schools to diagnose pupils' areas of strengths and weaknesses in these core subjects so that appropriate guidance, counselling and remedial teaching can be provided. The test results also help to monitor standards across years and levels. A computer software is also distributed to all schools for computation and comparison purposes.

The total of 352 and 396 Form 1 to Form 3 students from PG and WH respectively were involved in the two series of Hong Kong Attainment Tests.

The tests have been administered in schools every year and the researcher could compute the test results for comparison purposes. As proclaimed by the Education Department, HKAT shows academic achievements; it provides a convenient measurement for the study of academic strengths and weaknesses of students in PG and WH.

School Year 96/97	Chinese						English						Mathematics					
	S1		S2		S3		S1		S2		S3		S1		S2		S3	
Population mean	61.5		56.1		55.4		34.6		41.9		42.0		26.4		21.4		21.3	
School	PG	WH	PG	WH	PG	WH	PG	WH	PG	WH	PG	WH	PG	WH	PG	WH	PG	WH
Sept 1998	55.6	54.5	50.7	48.7	44.1	42.8	12.6	13.5	23.6	21.1	25.2	20.3	27.4	26.7	19.4	17.8	23.7	20.4
May 1999	60.8	61.7	55.4	53.7	54.3	57.1	15.7	19.8	26.8	32.7	26.7	29.6	28.3	32.1	22.7	24.7	25.9	28.6
Difference	5.2	7.2	4.7	5.0	10.2	14.3	3.1	6.3	3.2	11.6	1.5	9.3	1.3	5.4	3.3	6.9	2.2	8.2
N =	64	98	153	152	135	146	64	98	153	152	135	146	64	98	153	152	135	146
F =	1.39		1.25		6.09*		5.43*		4.67*		3.08		7.49*		7.32*		5.32*	

TABLE 7: The results of PG and WH in HKAT. ( $p < .05$ ; the ANCOVA test compared the difference between September and May scores in the schools.)

Altogether, results of 64 S1, 153 S2, 135 S3 PG students and 98 S1, 152 S2, 146 S3 WH students were analyzed. Two series of tests were administered to look into their academic performances throughout the school year 1998-1999. Two series were utilized so that 'value-added measurement' could then be administered to monitor the progress students had achieved within this period. Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) is used to compare students' performances in these two sets of test. ANCOVA is a statistical measure which combines regression analysis and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The

test also controls for the effects of an extraneous variable, called a covariate, by partitioning out the variation attributed to this additional variable. *'The two potential benefits of using ANCOVA are the availability of an adjustment for preexisting differences that may exist among the intact groups prior to the research and the increase in the precision of the research from reducing the error variance'* (Tropper, 1998:386). F values are shown in Table 7 to show whether differences are significant statistically, and the following results were obtained:

- Students in PG and WH are comparatively lower than the average results in the territory academically in English.
- Students in both schools show no inferiority in their Chinese results.
- Students in both schools make significant improvement in their Mathematics performances compared with the population means.
- WH students make better improvement in English and Mathematics compared with PG students.
- WH students can make better improvement in Chinese in S.3.

### **Analysis of Value-addedness**

Besides the Attainment Tests, the achievements of students in higher forms could be compared using their results in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE). In April 2000, the Committee on Home School Co-operation (CHSC), a subsidized body to promote the involvement of parents in educational processes, publicized a league table listing the value-addedness among the secondary schools in Hong Kong. For the 400 secondary schools in Hong Kong, all their inputs with reference to the students' primary 6 academic standard in the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) were compared with their achievements in HKCEE. 44 schools were identified as adding value to students' academic standard.

In spite of criticism for over-simplification, CHSC still utilized the decile rank method to evaluate the academic performance of schools. Under this method a school is considered to have positive value-added when its performance is significantly different from what would be expected on the basis of its intake. The method of calculation of value-addedness can be described in the following three steps:

- (i) Students' performance in the SSPA is averaged for each school.

Schools are then ranked by the averages into 10 deciles<sup>11</sup> – the 10<sup>th</sup> decile represents the best performing group while the 1<sup>st</sup> decile the lowest group.

- (ii) The HKCEE performance obtained by the same cohort of students 5 years later is averaged for each school. Again, the schools are ranked by their HKCEE averages into 10 deciles.
- (iii) Positive (or negative) value-addedness is accorded to schools when the HKCEE decile rank is significantly higher (or lower)<sup>12</sup> than the SSPA decile rank.

Besides, the weight was computed according to the proportion of time a student spent his/her education in a particular school. The weight of '1' was given to student who studied from S.1 to S.5 in the same school. If a student had left after S.3, a weight of 3/5 was given to the school. In the case a student was admitted in S.4, a weight of 2/5 would then be given. The details and the methodology provided by Hong Kong Education Department can be referred to Appendix C.

The results were confidential to the public except that the 'Best Six Subjects Total' (or 'Chinese, English, Mathematics & Best Three Subjects Total') category was publicized in the 'Secondary Schools Handbook' published by CHSC. 'Best Six Subjects' refers to the three core subjects Chinese, English, Mathematics and three other best subjects a candidate achieves in the same year. Because PG achieved 'Positive' value-addedness in the 'Best Six Subjects Total', it was included in a list of 'Schools with positive value-addedness' in CHSC's handbook. Interestingly, after examining the value-addedness of WH as shown in Table 8, it achieved positive value-added scores in 6 categories, but not in the 'Best Six Subjects Total'. Therefore, it was ineligible to be classified as a high value-added school under the method adopted by CHSC.

Despite the fact that WH did better than PG in the subjects English, Chinese and Mathematics in HKAT as well as the HKCEE, WH could not be classified as having value-addedness under the CHSC system. Ironically, PG was awarded the first official

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<sup>11</sup> Decile indicates the relative positions of scores with respect to all other scores and takes the value 1 to 10. The 10<sup>th</sup> decile represents the top 10% (the best) performance among all schools, 9<sup>th</sup> the next 10%, ... and 1<sup>st</sup> the bottom 10% (the worst). Decile is similar to percentile which takes the value from 1 to 100 with 10 percentiles equal to 1 decile.

<sup>12</sup> 'Significantly higher (or lower)' is defined to mean that a rank is at least one whole decile above (or below) another. In other words, a difference of at least 10 percentile points is considered as evidence for value-addedness.

label of recognition. The cause was mainly the idiosyncratic methodology adopted by CHSC. Few people in the field were aware of the method CHSC adopted, and most important of all, there was no prior consultation process.

Subject	PG		WH	
	No. of Student (Weighted)	Value-addedness	No. of Student (Weighted)	Value-addedness
Chinese	49.2	Not significant	112.2	Positive
English	49.2	Not significant	138.4	Positive
Mathematics	49.8	Not significant	149.6	Positive
Chin, Eng, Math Average	49.8	Not significant	149.6	Positive
Best Six Subjects Total	49.8	Positive	149.6	Not significant
Chin, Eng, Math & Best Three Subjects Total	49.8	Not significant	149.6	Not significant
Humanities Subject Group Average	41.0	Positive	102.8	Positive
Science Subject Group Average	7.4	N.A.	65.4	Positive
Cultural/Practical/Technical Subject Group Average	35.2	Not significant	56.8	Not significant

TABLE 8: The results of PG and WH in value-added comparison.

Since CHSC did not provide all details such as the input scores of all Form 1 students in the territory as well as the HKCEE results of different abilities, the researcher could only compare the students' attainment test results 5 years ago and their HKCEE results 5 years later in both schools.

WH achieved better results in three main subjects, English, Chinese and Mathematics, but it was ineligible to be identified as showing 'value-added' as a whole. One of the reasons was the administrative allocation of students into different streams of studies including Arts, Science, and Commerce. The best students in Hong Kong traditionally pick the Science stream. In PG, the allocation of students was controlled by a strict requirement for entering the Science stream so that only those who passed with good results in Form 3 Integrated Science and Mathematics were considered. Science places were also reserved to absorb Form 5 repeaters from other schools. Taking the school year 1999-2000 as an example, 14 Form 5 Science repeaters were enrolled in PG. This practice ensured its **satisfactory HKCEE results in Science subjects but 'N.A.'** in CHSC's 'Science Subject Group Average' value-added calculation since there was not a sufficient number (20 students) for CHSC's calculation of value-addedness.

On the other hand, the number of WH students in CHSC's calculation was almost the three times of PG (68 attended HKCEE out of 96 Form 1 students 5 years ago). In the case of PG, it was found that of the 78 students originally allocated to PG 5 years previously, only 24 students completed 5 years' schooling in PG. According to the method adopted by CHSC, the HKCEE performance obtained by the same cohort of

students 5 years later was averaged for each school. The larger size of WH students therefore disadvantaged WH in the calculation.

In the case of PG, the majority, who were not counted in CHSC's calculation, had dropped out of PG for their behavioural problems as well as their 'unsatisfactory academic results' as listed in their annual report cards. In other words, the small number of 24 PG students contributed to the 'positive value-addedness' to PG. CHSC's measurement neglected the 54 students who dropped out during the course of their studies in this 'positive value-added' school.

Above all, the 'fatal' cause for WH's ineligibility of 'positive value-addedness' is the multi-cultural composition of students. Among the 68 WH students who were measured by CHSC, 22 were non-Chinese who did not take Chinese throughout the five years in WH. They took French as their second language course but French was not counted in CHSC's method. The result is so obvious that WH can never add value in the category 'Chinese, English, Mathematics & Best Three Subjects Total' in CHSC's method because one-third of its students do not take Chinese, English and Mathematics at the same time.

Most of all, French is not taken into account in the calculations of all other CHSC's categories. WH is inevitably disadvantaged since most WH students are offered 7 subjects in school. For all non-Chinese students in WH, 6 other subjects except French will then all be considered the best in 'Best Six Subjects Total' category. In other words, 'Best Six Subjects Total' is also the 'Worst Six Subjects Total'.

### Students' discipline and behaviour

Three aspects related to students' discipline and behaviour are to be analyzed. As suggested by Willms (1996), constructs such as disciplinary climate are best measured through a variety of methods. A single category could never provide a full picture of the disciplinary climate in a school. Criteria are chosen bearing in mind the limitation of the research and also that the criteria can, to a certain extent, reflect the administrative and leadership styles in school as well as the nature of interaction between the school administrators and students.

## Students' Attendance and Punctuality

- ★ Lin, the principal of PG, proclaimed to a parent, whose child was always late to school, *"We cannot tolerate our students to be absent to school all the time. You see, we cannot measure the loss if a child can only attend part of the lesson."* He raised his voice and went further, *"We can maintain the number of lateness to school under ten everyday. You know why? Because we impose strict measure on them to prevent maladaptive behaviour like this. They have to stand in the corridor so that everyone knows being late is intolerable here."*

It is also common to see students running back to school before the ring of the school bell to avoid being late.

The researcher measured the rate of punctuality by adding the number of students attending school punctually each day and dividing by the multiple of the number of school days and the total number of students from 1 September 1999 to 1 April 2000. By the same token, the rate of attendance is the quotient of the summation of students arriving at school each day and the multiple of the number of school days and the total number of students.

Table 9 shows the superiority of PG students' performance in this aspect as a result of the strict guidance and discipline in the school.

	Number of students	Number of school days	Rate of punctuality	Rate of attendance
PG	763	134	98.52%	97.54%
WH	1283	132	94.65%	93.23%

TABLE 9: Rate of punctuality and attendance.

## Students' Dropout Rates

Dropout rate is calculated in terms of a percentage based on the number of dropouts throughout the school year from 1999-2000 from 1 September 1999 until 1 April 2000. The dropout rate includes students who withdraw voluntarily and involuntarily. As new students have been admitted throughout the year in both schools especially in Form 1, all these students are counted as part of the total number of students. The

figure is presented in the following table.

It shows that the dropout rate in PG is double that of WH. The figure in PG is believed to be generated by the Principal's policy of handling students with behavioural problems as ten students in PG withdrew voluntarily<sup>13</sup>.

	Number of students	Number of dropout	Dropout Rate
PG	763	18	2.36%
WH	1283	15	1.17%

TABLE 10: Dropout rate

### Students' rate of participation in ECA

Students' participation in extra-curricular activities (ECA) can reflect their sense of belonging and commitment in school life. Through participating in ECA, students can learn various skills outside the normal curriculum. This may then enhance their learning and their adaptation to school lives. This is significant for new immigrants from Mainland China.

The evaluation of students' participation is computed in terms of the number of activity groups and interest clubs they are involved in. In both PG and WH, all activity groups and interest clubs keep a record of participants. Those who attend regularly with 70% attendance are considered to be permanent members. These permanent members will then be summed up and divided by the total number of students in schools. The rates in PG and WH are displayed in the following table.

	Number of students	Number of permanent members in ECA groups	Participation rate
PG	763	176	23.07%
WH	1283	201	15.67%

TABLE 11: Extra-curricular activities participation rate.

It should be pointed out that participation in ECA is compulsory for all Form 1

<sup>13</sup> One of the major causes of leaving voluntarily is the avoidance of receiving demerit record after performing misbehaviour. Expulsion is prohibited in Hong Kong. PG persuades parents to withdraw so that students can avoid the demerits which may be recorded in the report cards after the school year. Parents believe that students will then have difficulty finding another school to continue their studies.

students in PG. The only choice for them is the sort of activities they join. However, the follow-up of students' attendance in ECA is not as strict as for the normal classes as shown in the previous section. In the case of WH, participation in ECA is completely voluntary. Students' may withdraw simply by notifying the teachers concerned. Occasionally, teachers will converse with students to understand the reasons for their withdrawal.

Besides the regular activity clubs, some short term activities are organized in both schools such as singing contest, essay writing competition, and excursions etc. For these irregular activities, attendance in WH is also loosely controlled and the participation is largely at students' discretion. In PG, students' participation in these activities is so strict that teachers will be interviewed by Lin if the participation rate is unsatisfactory. Explanations from the teachers were sought in the interview.

- ★ On one occasion, after being interviewed by Lin because the teacher's class did not participate in the Inter-class Basketball competition, the teacher was indignant and told her colleague sitting beside her, *"I don't understand. I really don't understand. How can I force my class to join when they are not interested in playing this silly game? You know... I have talked to them in these few days and they even begged me not to force them to join."*

At the same time, Lin spoke indignantly to the Assistant Principal, Ku, *"How can she tell me she cannot find enough players to join? You talk to her again and give me reason for her class' withdrawal."* On the next day, Lin asked the class-monitress to see him during the recess and talked to her in front of the office. Before the deadline of registration, the monitress finally submitted the entry form.

### Students' achievement in competitions

- ★ *"I don't like this. I'm angry about this."* Lin told the Assistant Principal, Ku, who was also one of the English group members. *"Why are there only two teachers of the English group participating in the Speech Festival? And all teachers of the Chinese group join the competition."*

After school, Lin talked to Chee, the Panel Chairperson of English group. Lin remarked, *"You know, some teachers are really lazy and they don't work unless you give them strict requirement. I'm so happy this year that all Chinese teachers take part in the Chinese Speech Festival. I really want English to do this too next year."*

Before participating in the Speech Festival, students are asked to perform their pieces to Lin, and to the whole school in the morning assembly. Lastly, they will then talk to Lin again after their 'rehearsals'.

Bu's reaction is an obvious contrast with Lin's to the school's participation in these external competitions. He delegates all these responsibilities to the Students' Affairs Committee. The Activities Bureau of the Committee will consult teachers before deciding on the events and the number of entries of all these external competitions.

The contrast can also be observed in terms of the rate of students' participation in external competitions. Including all individual and group events, 1 out of every 5.23 PG students have participated in these competitions. In WH, the rate of participation in these external competitions only reached as far as 4.32% of the student population in the school.

### Summary of Quantitative Data

In the above research findings, it is evident that the leadership styles of the principals differ. The leaders can steer the schools in the direction they intend, at least from their own understanding. The contrasting characteristics and personal idiosyncrasies of the leader in each school are believed to contribute to its "intentional" as well as "unintentional" achievements.

PG is found to incline towards the Transactional Leadership Style. This is evident in the high scores in its "Contingent reward" (62.68 in PG, 50.74 in WH, and 60.06 in Kingman's sample) and "Management-by-exception" (60.97 in PG, 39.83 in WH, and 50.90 in Kingman's) on the MLQ. We may expect that the interpersonal interactions in the concept of contingent reward are at the heart of much of motivation, leadership, and management theory and practice (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992; Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1991) in PG.

In WH, high scores under the "Transforming" categories exceed both PG's and Kingman's samples. Bu in WH shows his "charismatic leadership" (63.24 in WH whereas 51.76 in PG and 52.25 in Kingman's sample); and Bu also provides

“intellectual stimulation” (62.65 in WH, 54.97 in PG and 56.78 in Kingman’s), at least from the viewpoint of the respondents.

On the other hand, from the quantitative data, both PG and WH are found to add value to their students compared with the whole population in a number of aspects especially in English and Mathematics. This is evident in the Attainment Test results, which show that both schools have created positive impact on students academically. On the other hand, CHSC’s ‘value-added measurement’ provides further evidence that WH has been awarded ‘positive value-addedness’ in six categories. However, PG attained the prestigious label of one of the 44 ‘value-added schools’ in Hong Kong.

It has been pointed out that the results in these two measurements are inconsistent in the sense that WH pupils appear to make better progress (see Table 7). The “achievement” of PG results is derived, to a considerable extent, from the partial analysis adopted by CHSC.

Looking at another performance indicator, students’ punctuality and attendance, it was discovered that PG achieves promising rates of students’ attendance in normal lessons as well as in extracurricular activities. The cause of this accomplishment led to discussion of Lin’s interactions with teachers, students and parents. We can also see the first gleam of *mien* in the discussion of these interactions and how *mien* was being manipulated so as to build up a behavioural norm in a Hong Kong private school context. Apparently, Lin’s manipulation of *mien* and his policy of strict discipline created impact on students in participating in activities and competitions; as well as on teachers to work in accordance with Lin’s expectation.

On the other hand, the high dropout rate compared with WH was one of the results of Lin’s interaction and leadership style since PG students could only withdraw voluntarily if they found no place in PG’s strict disciplinary climate and Lin’s harsh requirement from them.

## CHAPTER 6

### RESEARCH FINDINGS: 2

#### Qualitative Data on “mien” behaviour”

**D**ata analysis was the most difficult part in the whole process of research. The data-base for this study was very large. Inevitably, it did not emerge in a systematic manner. Transcription and analysis of large chunks of data were time-consuming. Very often, the researcher had to rely on notes taken after the event. It was also difficult to recall everything that had been observed. However, throughout the research process, it was found more rewarding to take notes immediately after the interviews and observations without using the tape-recorder. However, this had to be done immediately to maximize reliability of records. The researcher collected all data himself. The data, especially those concerning *mien* behaviour, were firstly transcribed and organized by the researcher alone. Another expert on *mien* behaviour who was not in the field then examined the information. This was to make sure the *mien* behaviour being unmasked was correctly transcribed and fairly analyzed.

On the whole, the study was steered by the following guidelines:

1. The researcher is an important instrument, for observing and deciding what to observe, for measuring (whatever is measurable), and for making sense of whatever is seen, observed, or understood. Therefore, precautions must be exercised against personal bias.
2. True to the traditions of ethnographic research, emphasis is to be paid to the process rather than the product. In other words, it may not matter so much that no conclusive findings are obtained, if appropriate and verifiable procedures have been used for reliable purposes.

#### Interaction between principal and teachers

**T**o understand the interaction between the two principals and the teachers in their schools, both principals were observed in their daily activities interacting with teachers.

Interactions with teachers for both Lin and Bu are intensive. Nevertheless, the type of interaction is different. Lin's interactive style is usually brief and initiated by him. Besides giving instructions and answering requests, he projects himself to be the 'Emperor'<sup>14</sup> in school who knows everything and decides on everything. Delegation is minimal so that he seldom consults teachers. Once, he advised the Assistant Principal, Wang, "*You should refer all teachers' requests to me. You know, you can't be too generous to teachers.*" Occasionally, he converses with a few characters in school for a long period of time; sometimes the conversations last for over an hour. It is also identifiable that Lin keeps a physical distance when talking with these teachers. In answering requests and giving orders, he normally stays inside the office counter and talks to the teachers with the window in between. He also reacts to incidents with lots of facial and body language to help express himself. He likes to bang on the table when he is angry. During the interview with teachers, teachers expressed him as 'tough and severe'. Lin never leaves his office before 9 p.m. He even works several hours on Saturday and Sunday. All teachers know that they can find him in school all the time.

As for Bu, the intensive interaction occurs during formal meetings. His daily schedule is filled up with meetings with teachers. He even arranges teachers' timetables so that weekly meetings with different subject panels can be organized during the school hours. In these meetings, Bu projects himself as a member of the meeting. Usually, the subject panels or committee heads will act as the chairpersons of the meetings. However, he often permeates his ways of thinking into the meetings. He is an exceptional orator. Even though teachers disagree with Bu's ideas occasionally, they avoid open conflicts with Bu. He has a platitude of saying "*Ask him/her to see me so that we can have a long talk.*" when he hears some conflicting arguments. 'Hypocrite' and 'Booster'<sup>15</sup> are his nicknames.

Bu acts in a friendly way with teachers and students outside his office. He usually elevates his colleagues' status when greeting newcomers. In a meeting with some visitors to the school from China, he introduced his Assistant Principal, "*This is one of our Principals who takes care of the academic affairs, Mr. Chung.*" In contrast, Lin reacts severely to someone referring to his Assistant Principals without mentioning 'Assistant'. He once exclaimed in a phone call that there was only one Principal in school.

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<sup>14</sup> This is Lin's nickname given by teachers and the clerical staff.

<sup>15</sup> It implies that Bu always exaggerates.

Bu likes to pat on people's shoulders and always asks people to relax in their free time. He was once a speaker in a seminar and he proudly preached in public, "*To make people work effectively, we have to teach them how to relax first of all.*" He is also a Grade C amateur football player in Hong Kong Football League. He gives a sporting image to his colleagues as well as to his students. He seldom stays in the General Office or talks on school affairs with the clerical staff in the school office because he has delegated most of his administrative duties to one of his Assistant Principals, Ling. He never stays in school after 4:30 p.m. He only comes back for meetings with alumni or parents if they are held after school hours.

The relationship between Lin and the clerical staff is demonstrably poor and 3 clerical staff resigned from their posts in PG in the school year 1999-2000. He frequently 'screams'<sup>16</sup> at the clerical staff when he finds mistakes in the paper work. Since Lin always spends his 'school hour' time in the General Office, he even has his table there. Documents are piled up all over his room, the table in the General Office, and even on the floor. The clerk sitting next to his table complained to the Head Clerk once, "*I don't have any position here. You see. I don't even have my table.*" She was actually suggesting that her table was taken over by Lin's documents but no one conveyed this dismay to Lin.

### **Interaction between principal and students**

As mentioned earlier, Bu's interaction with students is infrequent. Nevertheless, he insists on standing to watch students arriving in school every morning from 7:30 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. at the school main entrance. He usually greets teachers and students with a smile and he will sometimes handle simple disciplinary matters like improper uniform and unpunctuality. This practice had lasted for some years when he took up the principalship in WH.

Lin, on the other hand, maintains an 'extreme' relationship with students. He is severe, strict and stern in almost all matters. However, it is not uncommon that he plays a caring and amiable figure to some outstanding students and some problematic boys.

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<sup>16</sup> Lin's 'scream' is well-known to all members in school and all the people in the organization.

With the outstanding students in school, Lin maintains close contact since these students are usually active in school.

He also involves himself deeply with several problematic boys (Lin did not handle a case of a girl throughout the two years of observation. These cases are not referred to Lin.). He is very sensitive to students with behavioural problems and he has become experienced in this. Some teachers expressed their feeling of incompetence when they saw boys misbehave since they were Lin's cases. Lin seldom talks to parents about children's behaviour except these problematic boys. Throughout the two years of observation, these boys all ended up being expelled involuntarily<sup>17</sup> since they were mostly 'critical' cases. It is not surprising that when students are asked about their feeling about meeting the principal, 'frightened' is the commonest answer.

### Teachers in meetings

According to Holt (1990), there are two types of interactions; namely the required interaction and the optional interaction. In either type of these interactions, individuals in groups interact with each other affectively, cognitively and behaviourally. In this way, the performance of individuals is influenced. At the group level, different groups may also exert influence in affective, cognitive and behavioural ways on each other. These inter and intra group interaction effects, if observed and handled effectively, will have positive impacts on the successful implementation of self-management in school. In contrast, detrimental effects may be on the effectiveness of self-management in school; especially when the interactions are negative and reduce teachers' autonomy.

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<sup>17</sup> One child called Fung was admitted in 1997. He studied in a class with a lot of behavioural problems. Fung violated the school rules several times such as truancy and fighting with other students. Fung's mother was interviewed several times and the relation between his mother and the school discipline master was poor. Fung's misbehaviour was believed to be caused by his parents' deteriorating relationship. After one year of study, he had to repeat Form 1 in the 1998-1999 school year. Lin stepped in after he talked to Fung one day. Lin asked Fung to talk to him every day after school. He also asked the school social worker to let Fung join a leadership training camp originally designed for the outstanding students in school. In the singing contest, Lin asked Fung to practise in front of him several times. Lin also interviewed his mother a few times and his father once. They mainly talked about Fung's family problem. In May 1999, Fung's behaviour deteriorated, perhaps because his parents finally decided on a divorce. Two weeks before the final examination, Fung's mother was asked to find a different school for Fung.

From this perspective, Lin's philosophy of management discourages self-management in PG. Lin has provided rigid guidelines to panel chairpersons in running meetings, such that the number of meetings in a year, the duration, and even the agenda are listed for panel chairpersons to follow.

To safeguard the smooth running of the meetings, middle-managers' symbolic status is fostered in the personal chats described on page 75. During these chats, meetings are evaluated, key points are stressed, participants are assessed, and most of all, middle-managers' *mien* are nourished.

Middle-managers accept special favours during the chat or 'private talk' as many others may only talk to Lin through the display window, and the middle-manager's self-image can also be strengthened. This phenomenon will be discussed further in Episode 9.

On the other hand, site-based management is advocated in WH. Middle-managers' self-image is fostered by their recognized positions like the situation when Bu introduced his assistant on page 75, and their expertise as well. Bu intentionally puts middle-managers into chairmanship positions in meetings so that their hierarchical statuses can be ratified by their social circles.

Lin's style of management has a strong culture base of *mien* behaviour with a rigid hierarchical structure. Bond (1991:85) comments, '*Because of the rigid hierarchical structure, only few Chinese have practice in making decisions and submitting them to public scrutiny*'.

The difference between PG's and WH's management is that one suppresses public scrutiny and the other encourages it.

## Teachers' planning of their work

There are two levels of meeting in PG, the one chaired by Lin and the other chaired by subject panels or committee heads. It has been pointed out that meetings in PG follow rigid, top-down agenda. The meetings at both levels bear the same characteristic that they are mostly uni-directional without many discussions. The issues brought up by the chairpersons are usually informative. In order to make them more like 'meetings', chairpersons incline to invite opinions from responsible teachers in turn on regular issues such as reporting teaching progress of individual classes. Concerning some decisive topics and new practices, 'Lin' is usually quoted

for reference. In an English panel meeting, a NET teacher, Ray, queried the idea of streaming students with reference to their abilities. The panel chairperson, Chee, responded, *"This is the school policy which has been established since Lin's arrival to the school. So I don't think we can do anything about it."*

In WH, meetings are held more frequently. Each subject level meets once every two weeks. Usually they are held after school and the duration of these meetings is not fixed. The matters discussed vary from teaching methodologies to handling disciplinary cases. Sometimes guests are invited to join these meetings<sup>18</sup>. Owing to the considerable quantities of time spent on these meetings, grumbling about them is common. Mui, a Form 2 Chinese teacher muttered about the late notice of the subject meeting to another panel, *"How can I prepare the material so soon? Fan (the subject panel chairperson) asked me to report on the remedies of the teaching material of Unit 5B in tomorrow's meeting. I have to work late tonight."*

### Teachers' expectations of children

Teachers in both schools display high expectations for children's abilities in general. Some negative comments on students exist but they are usually on students' misbehaviour. In the opening ceremony, Lin addressed the Form 5 students who were going to take the examination at the end of the school year, *"We achieved brilliant results in this year's HKCEE. Only 5 students got zero points<sup>19</sup>. And we expect you can strive towards a better result with no zero point."* Teachers also aim at helping students to pass the subjects they teach. It is common to see teachers organizing supplementary lessons for Form 5 students. Kong, the Science teacher in PG, even fixes the supplementary lessons on every Friday after school throughout the school year.

As for WH, supplementary lessons are organized in collective terms. Teachers share their workload by distributing the students in accordance with their abilities. Teachers then design different curricula for them so that more appropriate materials are provided to different abilities.

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<sup>18</sup> WH has joined various schemes with external organizations such as Curriculum Development Council, Tai Nam Secondary Schools Foundation in China etc. These organizations will pay visits to WH for exchange of views once in a while.

<sup>19</sup> In HKCEE, points are given to students according to their results with 5 for getting grade A, 4 for B, 3 for C etc. Zero implies getting all failure.

## Parents' participation

Parents' participation in school affairs is passive in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, both schools did initiate the establishment of Parent-Teacher Associations. The objective behind the establishments was not to invite parents' participation in school affairs but to join the Direct Subsidy Scheme since it was part of the requirement for joining the scheme.

Comparing PG and WH, WH's Parent-Teacher Association can function more properly in terms of the number of activities, the number of participants in these activities and the involvement of senior staff in school. Lin's attitude was conservative in developing the Parent-Teacher Association. He invited teachers to join the Parent-Teacher Association so as to control the vote in favour of the parent candidate he preferred.

## Community involvement

Fullan (1991:90) remarks '*Deeper changes in the very culture of the school and its relationship to outside agencies are at stake if we are to develop this generic capacity for improvement*'. Bu has, to a certain extent, mobilized the school to build up relationships with outside agencies. As mentioned earlier, WH has been coordinating with a number of institutions to develop the curricula as well as the people in school. Workshops, seminars, visits, and conferences are common scenes inside WH. Among the coordinating projects, one is called 'Curriculum Tailoring Scheme'. Bu always praises his school's coordinator of the scheme, describing him as the 'Curriculum Expert', and his school 'Focus of Curriculum Change', in front of the visitors. The cause of his nickname 'Booster' can be seen here, implying that he often exaggerates but, on the other hand, that he grasps every chance to motivate as well as to recognize his followers at the same time.

## Mien in PS

The examination of *mien* behaviour is based on the research techniques advocated by symbolic interactionists discussed in Chapter 4. 'Critical Incidents' will be described and analyzed. The choice of these 'Critical Incidents' is based on the nature of criticality to the research problem. As discussed earlier, they can be relatively minor incidents. Since this is to unmask *mien* behaviour in each setting and to examine how this cultural characteristic relates to school effectiveness, their criticality is based on the justification, the significance, and the meaning given to them which relates to *mien* behaviour. Everything that happens in schools is a potential critical incident.

### Episode 1: How is *mien* maintained?

Kim (1987:343) suggests that *'Intellectuals commit themselves to sacrifice actual cost so as to save mien. They even sacrifice the requisition of truth to preserve mien.'* This episode illustrates how Li, the school consultant, *sacrifices actual cost*, a deduction of his salary, to preserve *mien* and the projection of his self-image.

On 22 February 1999, in view of the expected cutback of students' enrolment after the transition to DSS, Li, the school consultant, intended to economize on school expenditure. In a special staff meeting in PG he announced, *"I guarantee to everyone that there will be a difficult year, no matter whether we can join the DSS or not. The salary, yours and mine, Mm..., will be deducted. I guarantee to you that mine will be (deducted) more than yours. ... Those who have higher salary will deduct more. ... I am so regretful that I am too generous in the past. I can observe that several staff in this school should have been fired out some years ago."*

On 2 June 1999, in a casual chat after a school function, several principals were talking to the school consultant. Here is the extract of the conversations between Li and Lin.

Lin exclaimed, *"Mr. Tam (the school manager of a competitive school which has successfully joined the DSS) is surprised to know that we are going to have a salary cut."*

Li responded, *"When did I tell you that there would be a salary deduction?"*

On 1 July 1999, before the distribution of the employment contracts for the following year, the school consultant informed the branch principals on the phone that the salary of the principals and clerical staff would all be deducted by 10% to 40%. All other teaching staff would be paid the same as teachers at all other schools in Hong Kong.

On 10 July 1999, in a gathering where a number of branch principals were attending, Lin asked Li jokingly, "*The one who suffers most during the transition is the principal as his salary was cut most.*" Li answered Lin and pointed at the Assistant Principal, "*You can ask for a switch (of position) with your AP (Assistant Principal)!*" A big laugh followed from the others.

In this episode, Lin was challenging Li's social and moral self-image. When Lin mentioned Tam's practice of maintaining teachers' and administrators' salaries, he implied that Li was violating the behavioural norm of a superior or what Gordon (1990) labels 'paternalism'. Gordon refers to the Chinese style of management as 'paternalism'. It means '*the theme of hierarchy, responsibility, mutual obligation, family atmosphere, personalism, and protection of the employees*'. This style suits workers' desire for a more familial context at work and is in line with traditional deference to paternal authority. However, Li damaged the atmosphere and neglected his responsibility to protect his subordinates when he intended to cut his subordinates' salaries.

Li reacted mildly at first by not giving a definite response to Lin's remark so that open conflict could be avoided and mutual *mien* could be saved. On 1 July 1999, when everything had been decided on salary, Lin queried the school policy the second time in public and Li reacted more severely by using his superior position to suppress Lin's offence. Bond's (1991:53) statement nicely describes this situation, '*In a culture marked by strong differences in power and status, it is the superior's prerogative to command and a junior could be seriously compromised by making too forthright or precise an utterance*'.

Yang (1974) maintains that Chinese have a 'social orientation'. In deciding upon their behaviour, they attach a great weight to the anticipated reactions of others to that behaviour. This is why Li felt his social and moral self-image was being challenged. Yang (1974:161) writes, '*Basically, it represents a tendency for a person to act in accordance with external expectations or social norms, rather than with internal wishes or personal integrity, so that he would be able to protect his social self and*

*function as an integral part of the social network.'*

In this episode, it is clear that Li's decision of cutting the salary of principals violated the social norm of a parental figure. The remedy he took was cutting not only others' salaries but also his own so as to maintain his personal integrity. This is part of his impression management. However, the effort was challenged by Lin again so that he could only suppress him by Chu's (1992:13) 'Black Heart'<sup>20</sup> strategy. He put Lin down by showing off his power to get rid of him from a managerial position.

Yang (1974:162) advises that some consequences of the traditional Chinese concern for the reactions of others are their '*submission to social expectations, social conformity, worry about external opinions, and non-offensive strategy in an attempt to achieve one or more of the purposes of reward attainment, harmony maintenance, impression management, face protection, social acceptance, and avoidance of punishment, embarrassment, conflict, rejection, ridicule, and retaliation in a social situation.*'

Li's provocative remark in the staff meeting in this episode conveys another aspect of *mien* behaviour. Since he had to protect his social and moral *mien* and at the same time he had to fire some teaching staff, he laid the blame on those underachieving staff and also drew attention to his generosity in having until then kept these redundant members in school.

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<sup>20</sup> Chu (1992:14-15) explains 'Black Heart as the ability to take action without regard to how the consequences will affect others...When one possesses the strength of Thick Face, one can ignore the criticism and disapproval of the masses. This same strength is also the source of the Black Heart; it allows one to effectively use the spear to cut through the ignorant and preconceived ideas of the masses'.

## Episode 2: Expressive ties

**M***ien* can cost much to those who intend to defend it since it represents their concept of self-esteem and self-image, especially for those who possess high hierarchical status. In the above episode, Li paid his price so as to defend his *mien*. This practice agitated other managerial personnel since Li asked them to cut their salaries and Li classified them as part of administrative body.

On the other hand, the effect of *mien* can legitimize unreasonable administrative practices and appointments because the practitioners of *mien* can enjoy the privilege linked with their hierarchical status. This episode illustrates this irrational but real-life situation.

In a minute of the September 1985 Senior Administrative Staff Meeting<sup>21</sup>, under the title 'Lineal Relative', was written, "*In order to prevent conflict of interest, Mr. Shun, the School Manager, remarked that personnel with lineal relations should not work in the same branch school especially when one of them works in a senior post.*" Lineal relations refer to the relations of husband and wife, father and son etc.

In 1995, Wai, who is Li's second son, started working in a branch school of PS as a supply teacher on a temporary contract.

In September 1996, Wai worked permanently in the primary branch as an 'Assistant to Principal<sup>22</sup>'.

In September 1998, Wai worked as an Assistant Principal in KT<sup>23</sup> branch.

In September 1999, Wai was promoted as the Deputy Principal in KT branch and the member of the School Management Committee.

Even though Wai's career progression in PS had been so steady and extra-ordinarily forward-moving, Wai's advancements did not create any identifiable resentment. It was noticeable that Wai's appointment in PS was contradictory to the School Manager's proclamation in 1985. Everyone in the institution seemed to tacitly

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<sup>21</sup> The meeting was originated in 1985 when Li came to work in PS. The meeting is composed of School Manager, the School Consultant, the Headquarters staff and all branch principals.

<sup>22</sup> This post was firstly invented by Li in 1991. The first 'Assistant to Principal' was offered to Bu. There is no written 'Job Description' for the post. He is to report directly to the School Consultant.

<sup>23</sup> KT is a private secondary school which receives no subsidies from the government. The school is totally independent administratively and financially.

approve of Wai's appointments and steady advancement.

The acquiescence could also be found within Bu and Lin when they were asked about Wai's deviant administrative measure in 1998. When Wai was still an Assistant Principal in KT, he laid off 18 of KT's 23 staff. Bu responded, "*The decision is apparently a commercial one instead of an educational one. Even though I won't do the same thing, I imagine Li knows all about this before everything is put into practice ... I suppose.*"

Lin replied when he was asked about the administrative measures, "*Wai is doing the thing Li disapproved of in the old times. It's a good thing to certain extent as Wai is putting in some exciting idea. Personally, I presume there are some better ways of doing this.*"

'Blood is thicker than water'. This old Chinese saying means one's family is the only constant in a shifting, indifferent world, so this relationship is constantly emphasized and nourished throughout the lifespan. Yu (1987:187) states that '*Resources are shared on the basis of the donor's sense of responsibility and the need of the recipient. One gives what and when one can without expecting any repayment. A sense of filial piety and parental responsibility fuels this pattern of open-handed exchange.*'

Bu's remark on Wai's case legitimized Wai's practice in terms of Li's awareness of it. This is part of 'offering *mien*' to Li and also part of an '*open-handed exchange without repayment*'.

In Lin's reply, 'offering *mien*' is even more perceptible. Disregarding the objectiveness of Wai's measures itself, the '*disapproved*' old times practice could become an '*exciting idea*' as long as Li has expressed his consent. Even though Lin could think of a better way, Lin would surely reserve his opinion on Wai's deviant measure so as to save Li's *mien*.

Hwang (1987) identifies three categories of relationships: expressive ties, including those with close family members; mixed ties, such as those with friends and other kin; and instrumental ties, those with strangers or out-group members with whom there is no lasting relationship. Looking into the relationships between Li and his son, his 'sworn child' Bu, and Lin, it is apparent that members within different ties can be subdivided into smaller units. Social interaction expectations, norms, and behaviours differ for these three kinds of ties and even for the sub-units within the ties. The

differences constitute the complex networks of *guanxi* (relationships) which expand throughout lives (Chang & Holt, 1991). People try to climb up the 'tie-ladder' and strengthen their networks of *guanxi*. Expressive ties may even include non-family members if they are sufficiently close. Such closeness will often make people call one another 'brother' and 'sister' as well as 'father' and 'son'. These labels can also indicate one's rank in the organization hierarchy.

To go further, Bu has acted in accordance with the social expectations and norms so as to preserve Li's *mien* as well as to preserve his own *mien*. In Episode 1, Lin's ruthless inquiry to Li is an offense to this norm and a challenge to Li's *mien*. Li reacted by warning Lin of his discourtesy and by imposing strict discipline. This is a move of 'Black Heart'; *'it allows one to effectively use the spear to cut through the ignorant and preconceived ideas of the masses'* (Chu, 1992:15).

Bond (1991:83) claims *'The basic rule for the junior in interaction with the superior is "Honour the hierarchy first, your vision of truth second". The superior must always be accorded face, so one first agrees with whatever he/she has said. Only then is difference voiced, if possible through a third party, and in private. If a face-to-face confrontation is unavoidable, the subordinate will use mild ambiguous language in the hope that the superior gets the message without getting offended'*. Bu and Lin apparently follow this norm in this episode.

Furthermore, Li's hierarchical position helps legitimize his son's extra-ordinary advancement and Li can pass on the privilege attached with his superior position to anyone at his own wish.

### Episode 3 : Li's 'virtue' and 'sin'

When Bu and Lin were asked about the things that they appreciated most in Li, they recalled their experiences with him. Bu recollected an incident which happened in 1996. Bu's baby-sitter, who is a Filipino, has worked for him for some years. The baby-sitter's brother was employed in Hong Kong on a temporary contract and it was about to expire. Her brother had to leave Hong Kong if he could not find another employer. During a personal chat with Li, Bu told Li about his baby sitter's brother's predicament. Li's reaction impressed Bu and Bu explained to the interviewer, *"I was surprised Li was so enthusiastic that he immediately called someone working in the New Tunnel Company and ... then a lawyer for some legal issues. After a few calls in front of me, he gave me a phone number and asked me to give the number to my baby sitter. You know ... It is really generous of him that he could give aid to a total stranger whom he'd never met before. What can I say?"*

Lin remarked when he was asked about Li's virtue, *"I can say that he knows how to identify those who are really talented and can work for him. You know, I can take up the workload of more than two men. You know how long it took me before I was chosen for promotion? It's been 15 years before I'd got the first promotion. Li always tells me that I have been given all back. But I reply that I deserve all these."*

With reference to Hwang's (1987) categorization, Bu obviously falls above Li's instrumental tie since Li has offered Bu favour and a special kind of status-appropriate interaction which out-group members can seldom enjoy even though the target of Li's status-appropriate interaction is not Bu personally. Bond (1991:86) suggests *'Granting favour is an important component of mien behaviour as it builds a network of people tied to someone in authority out of indebtedness and obligation'*. Given the Confucian tradition of harmony and hierarchy, relationship within the Chinese workplace will tend to be familial and supportive (Chew and Lim, 1995). Li's favour to Bu acts as an obvious example of this familial and supportive atmosphere.

Lin, on the contrary, did not comment on Li's virtue not even on Li's recognition of his worth but he accentuated his own career success as the result of personal effort; nothing to do with any sort of emotional tie with Li. However, when he was asked on Li's misdeed, he remarked, *"No one is perfect but it is apparent that Li is absolutely partial and unfair. If my school cannot submit neat document, like the others always*

*did, I'm sure I will be gone very soon. Ha<sup>24</sup> can get the person she wants from me but I'd never got what I want in return. Remembering the time when I was appointed as principal, Li has given me the fullest support."*

It looked as if Lin could be emancipated from Li's emotional ties when he displayed great self-confidence and self-assurance upon his own career achievement. However, when traces were found that resources were being distributed unevenly, he could not escape from expressing grievous and envious resentment. In short, he was still trapped within an emotional ambiguity towards Li. He recalled the time Li fully supported him when he was appointed to be principal years ago. At the same time, he was asserting that Li had not ranked him to the higher levels of *guanxi*.

Solomon's (1971) study of child socialization provides further evidence of this practice of handling relations between a superior and subordinates. He interviewed Chinese refugees from Mainland China. He asserts that the pattern of child-rearing practice of early indulgence followed by the imposition of strict discipline once the child comes 'of age' provides the character structure necessary for the smooth functioning of the hierarchical relationship. He concludes that this abrupt reversal develops a strong dependency orientation in the children - a desire to be cared for by the authoritarian providers, their parents, coupled with fear and anxiety about contravening their demands. This ambiguity in emotional feelings can also be identified above in Lin's comment on Ha. The relations between Li and Lin also demonstrate this switch of superior-inferior practice of indulgence to the imposition of strict discipline in exchange for Lin's obedience.

Owing to the limited time available for Li to visit all branch schools, he can only control his subordinates through the manipulation of these emotional bonds.

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<sup>24</sup> Ha is one of the principals in PS. She is mainly responsible for the primary section and she is also the member of the School Management Committee.

## Episode 4 : Li and Yin

It can be seen from the previous episodes that *mien* generates privilege, different emotional ties, and distinctive inter-personal relationships. It is also conceivable that it may also generate corrupt administrative measures because *mien* simply brings about an imbalance of power distribution. The concentration of power can be disastrous and numerous historic events of the same kind can be listed without cultural boundary, in the East and the West.

CM<sup>25</sup> was the only school in PS which could not join the DSS in 1999. Yin<sup>26</sup> had been the principal in CM since 1995. After receiving the Education Department's formal notification, Li informed CM staff in a meeting in April, *"It is a very disappointing news that we cannot join the scheme (DSS). Our school has to face the challenge ahead courageously. I like to point out to you that Yin is a very intelligent administrator. He is an expert in dealing with ED (Education Department) staff... ."*

On the contrary, Yin was renowned for his inertia. A CM teacher talked about Yin with a smile on his face, *"You know our Boss (Yin), we couldn't find him in school easily. I was embarrassed one day when a student pointed at Yin and asked me who he was. I didn't answer him. The student went further and asked me if he worked in the school canteen."*

In January 2000, CM was admitted to join DSS on its second application.

On 20 February 2000, Li praised Yin in the Annual Dinner<sup>27</sup> to all PS staff, *"I am so grateful to a staff member and I would like to thank him here. Last year I asked him if he would work in some other schools when the school had failed to join DSS and he told me that the message to the staff would be the abandonment of the school if he left the school during this critical moment. He decided to stay and I think this noble thought deserves our salutes. He is the principal of CM, Yin."*

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<sup>25</sup> CM is one of the branch schools of PS. It was disqualified to join DSS in 1999 since it was found to be 'administrative malfunctioning' in the Education Department Private Schools Review Section's report.

<sup>26</sup> Yin was a Computer teacher in WH from 1981 and he was discovered by Li when Li arrived at PS as the School Consultant. Yin was then appointed to be in charge of the Accounts Department and was responsible to Li directly.

<sup>27</sup> Annual Dinners have lasted for 28 years. The School Director gives the party to all the staff. Li occasionally announced important decisions in the dinner.

Even though Yin *"was only present in the school less than an hour a day"* according to Mei, a CM teacher, Yin always flaunts his own inertness jokingly, *"I am licensed to be absent from my work. You know, I'll be fired otherwise."*

Yin's position in PS is unusual. The reason for this aberration is also concealed. It seems like a taboo in PS as no one discusses it openly. Bond (1991:55) explains *'The Western tradition of straight talk, open debate, friendly disagreement, and loyal opposition has no place in an interpersonal system focused on relationship rather than 'truth', given that relationships are mostly hierarchical and involve wide discrepancies in usable power. Indeed, it is precisely this hierarchy that constitutes 'truth', not some Platonic form discoverable by logical or scientific inquiry'*.

Yin's distinctive position in PS may serve to protect Li. Li leaves Hong Kong for 3 to 5 months every year<sup>28</sup>. He once rationalized this practice in the Senior Administrative Staff Meeting in February, 1996 to all branch principals, *"Before I was employed, I told the School Director that I would be leaving Hong Kong for several months a year. Mr. Shun, our School Director, agreed with my request and this became our mutual agreement ever since."* During Li's departure, Yin handles the financial and external matters. Yin is actually a private advisor of Li but he is paid as a branch principal.

Li has never explained Yin's eccentric position in PS but always exhibits Yin's personal characteristics such as his intelligence and loyalty. It is believed that Yin's inertia provides a buffer against criticism of Li's nonattendance and a sign of his being a notch above other people. Li's eulogy upon Yin is an effort to protect this buffer in order to prevent criticism of himself.

Yin's peculiar position is Li's effort to maintain this harmony as well as his hierarchical status.

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<sup>28</sup> Li is an American citizen. He has his own business and property in America therefore he has to go back there 4 to 5 times a year to handle his personal businesses.

## Episode 5 : It's all Nan's fault

The application of *mien* in school management can well be explained by Chu's (1983) 'consciousness of *mien*'. It refers to the characteristic of how individuals perceive the threatening emotional consciousness of losing *mien* and of how individuals react to this consciousness. It also drives people to gain *mien* and the prestige attached to *mien*. On the other hand, it alerts people to protect *mien* so as to avoid the negative emotional outcome such as being challenged, and shameful.

Owing to the privilege enjoyed as a superior, the school leader can manipulate the relations between leaders and followers. According to Hwang's (1987) model, 'power' is an important component in the exchange process of 'giving favour' and 'repayment'. The 'gain' and 'loss' of *mien* largely depend on these favours and criticisms being offered by the leaders. These favours and criticisms can be simply categorized as 'giving *mien*' and 'seizing *mien*'.

Lin's leadership style inclines to transactional as identified earlier. In this episode, Lin's leadership can further be exposed in terms of his *mien* behaviour and his status-appropriate interaction of his subordinates by 'giving *mien*' to them and 'seizing *mien*' from them.

In the morning at 10:15 of 21 May 1998, the clerical staff of PG were busy working in the General Office. Dai was the Head Clerk who was looking for a document for Lin in his piles packed with documents. Lai had worked in PG for seven years and she was calling the absentees' homes to prepare the "Summary of Absence". This summary stated the reasons for students' absence and Lin would look at it everyday. Nan was another clerical staff who had been transferred from WH to PG two years ago and she was preparing a document for the Education Department. Wang, one of the Assistant Principals in school mainly responsible for academic affairs, was preparing a schedule of visiting teachers' lessons. Lin, the principal, was talking on the phone.

At 11:00 a.m. Nan's document was faxed to the Education Department after two trials of proof-reading by Lin.

At 11:30 a.m. Lin received a phone call from the Education Department inquiring about the details in the form they had just received. After the phone call, Lin shouted at Dai, "Do you know what's wrong with this form? I don't understand how you

*people can be alive in this world. It's really crazy. All the figures are mixed up. How can I check all the time? I check it once, the figures are wrong. After I correct it, the numbers are switched upside down. I want an explanation.*" Lin then threw the faxed form to Dai and talked to Wang beside him. *"I just can't imagine how long I can stand working with all these people. They are crazy. I've been checking this form for her several times before she faxed it and she faxed the draft I corrected the first time. Should I fax everything by myself?"* He banged on the table and went on, *"Crazy! All the people here are crazy."* He went on shouting abuse in public but not talking to Nan directly because Nan was the one who had sent the wrong document.

At 12:30 p.m. Lin talked to Chee, the English panel chairman, through the display window of the General Office in a hushed voice for about 20 minutes. They were talking about Nan's mistake.

At 2:20 p.m. Lin talked to Han, the Discipline Mistress in school, *"You people have to be careful in preparing documents. How will the people react to a lousy mistake like this? Tell them go to hell if anyone do the same thing like this."*

At 4:40 p.m., Lin used the telephone in the General Office and phoned Tang, the Chief Accountant of the Group, *"..... it is really an insult to the school. How can we stand this kind of person in school? They are ruining all our efforts. You know it's not easy to build up our image."*

Nan was due to go off duty at 5:30 p.m. but Lin still had not talked to her at 5:50 p.m. about her mistake. Nan apparently was waiting for Lin.

Nan packed her belongings at 5:55 p.m. and Lin yelled at her, *"Do you know what you are doing? Are you trying to leave the school like this? Even not giving any explanation!"*

Nan implored Lin, *"My son is having a fever and I have to leave now and I've been waiting ...."*

Lin interrupted her and cried even louder, *"Who do think you are? I'm talking about the mistake you've made. Do you still want to work here?"*

Nan was aroused and answered with a shaking voice, *"I don't give a damn. Crazy!"* She then grasped her bag and ran out of the General Office.

In a series of comments on Nan, Lin's intonation was harsh and the words were bitter. Those on the sidelines remained composed and pretended to go on with their work without facial changes. They appeared to agree with Lin's reactions because no one would ever discuss this incident openly.

Zhang (1994) suggests that Hong Kong managers' compulsive behaviours towards their subordinates might be legitimated by their positions in an organizational hierarchy. Zhang (1994:144) goes further and concludes that '*In Chinese society, superiors are often viewed as superior figures. The use of strictness and coerciveness in disciplining subordinates by superiors (such as a father, a boss, and elders) is considered legitimate and necessary.*'

Throughout the whole process of the public censure, there was not a modicum of confrontation. Lin did all the denouncing and all others were observing. This can be an expressive phenomenon under the framework of collectivism. Chinese managers and employees rarely have an openly adversarial relationship. Generally speaking, confrontation between or within work units is not acceptable. This is consistent with the opinion of Tse et al. (1994) about the principle of collectivism that direct confrontation has to be avoided for the sake of the group.

This explains another aspect of Lin's reaction that Lin condemned Nan several times but not directly. The purpose of Lin's accusation was to punish Nan in the severest form. He was destroying Nan's *mien* without even talking to her. Lin tried to isolate Nan by exposing Nan's fault in front of Nan. Nobody talked to Nan for the whole day since she had lost her social *mien* and moral *mien* in front of her social circle.

Nan's fatal mistake during the interaction was her last remark "Crazy". "Crazy" may be an exclamation or a spontaneous response. However the cause of this remark, the end product was an offence to Lin's superior position. This is intolerable in a collective society because it violates the hierarchical relationship between superior and subordinate.

The next morning, Nan took the initiative and tendered her resignation to Lin with one-month notice. During the last month of Nan's service in PG, not only did Lin never mention Nan's mistakes, but everyone seemed to have forgotten this incident all of a sudden. Nan had spared no expense to assert herself against the loss of *mien*. She resigned and at the same time stopped Lin's further attempt to seize her *mien*.

## Episode 6 : Kin was on the radio

Seizing *mien*' from those malfunctioning (at least in the eyes of Lin) facilitates Lin's execution of transactional leadership. Transactional leadership style is based on the concept of exchange between leaders and followers and the concept of providing contingent reward. The leader provides followers with resources and rewards in exchange for motivation, productivity, and effective task accomplishment. Therefore, the practice of 'seizing *mien*' does not only provide an administrative alternative for Lin, it also helps Lin to eliminate the 'dead wood' in his school at minimal cost.

This episode presents a similar situation as the previous one whereas the effect of 'seizing *mien*' is so strong that the shameful feeling towards the '*mien*-less individual' can be infectious.

Kin was one of the senior teachers in PG who had been a Panel Chairman of Principles of Accounts since 1991. He was also responsible for the school accounts after his promotion. During the critical year of 1999 when PG transformed from a BPS to DSS, he resigned voluntarily. When he was asked the cause, he explained, "*Resignation is better than being fired. Isn't it? You know... We won't be offered a contract after the transition. Right?*"

This statement has much in common with Wah's explanation of his resignation on page 59. The similarity is not only in their reaction to the transition but they shared a similar career background in PG. Both of them had been promoted before Lin came to PG and their responsibilities were lessened as the time went by. Wah was once the Panel Chairman of English Language, a big subject panel in school composed of a third of all teachers, but he was the Careers Master with no concrete authority in terms of managing and directing staff before he left.

Unlike Nan, Kin and Wah had never been admonished by Lin in public. Nevertheless, they were the frequent targets of Lin's "private talk" with other staff in school.

On 8 January 1999, when Kin submitted the mark sheet of the Form 4 first term examination, Lin found that the marks were misplaced. He slammed the mark sheets on the table and exclaimed angrily, "*I feel really suffocated working with these people. Tell them to go to hell. How can they accept their high pay without feeling shameful?*"

All clerical staff and 2 administrative staff were working in the General Office at the moment and they could hear Lin's exclamation but none of them responded.

Obviously, Lin was manipulating Wilson's (1974) "group shaming" technique to handle the problem of poor performance in school. Wilson studied the style and pattern of Chinese child rearing and he concluded that it is characterized by the withdrawal of maternal love and the use of "group shaming" as punishments for misbehaviour. The consequences for the Chinese child are a high degree of anxiety and fear about losing love and being abandoned. The return is the strict obedience and loyalty to the one in authority.

On the other hand, a standardized norm of acceptable behaviour in school can be established. People who act against this norm will be criticized openly and others will tend to avoid direct contact with these people. This feeling of isolation was nicely revealed in a radio programme at 4:45p.m. on 3 February, 2000. An audience called in when the radio programme discussed the standard of teaching in schools, *"I was once a secondary school teacher. One big thing influencing teaching is the uncooperative atmosphere in school among teachers. If teachers are acting against the ones who are classified to be in some other class, then the atmosphere can ruin the teaching spirit."*

Interestingly enough, the one who called in was Kin and this was verified by Kin himself to the researcher. In this statement, Kin's feeling of isolation was so strong that he rationalized his malfunction because of the uncooperative atmosphere. This sense of isolation was the result of Lin's "group shaming" throughout these years. Kin's social *mien* would be damaged if he continued to accept a high salary in a senior post by Lin's seizure of his *mien*. This was Lin's strategy to isolate Kin by exaggerating the immorality of Kin receiving high pay. The only way for Kin, Nan, as well as Wah to recapture their *mien* and their personal dignity was to gloriously proclaim their recklessness and resign from their posts without apparent concern. The situation coincides with Chu's (1992:10) observation. She suggests '*Consider the Asian concept of face. It refers to how other people think about you. Most Asians are tremendously concerned that others think well of them and especially that others display respect for their personal dignity*'.

## Episode 7 : Ching : a “thick-faced” menial staff member

Teaching has a higher requirement of moral behaviour. Lin’s strategy of ‘seizing *mien*’ from ‘malfunctioning’ staff still could work well most of the time since the loss of *mien* to teachers jeopardizes their dignity and ability to face people inside their social circle. However, in a school context, this strategy does not always work since there are students, minor staff, clerical staff, and even parents in school.

On 24 March 1999, during a normal school day at 3:10 p.m. just when the school ended, students were walking through the corridor. Suddenly, someone wailed bitterly in the corridor and it was so loud that the people in the stairway could hear this, “Please, I beg you to forgive me. Wooh.... I don't mean to do this. Wooh.... I can make it as clean... Wooh... as you'd just bought it. I beg you. Wooh... Don't fire me!”

When the researcher walked to the Staff Lavatory, Ching, a menial staff member who had worked half a year in PG, knelt down on the floor and begged for Lin’s forgiveness. 5 minutes previously when Ching was cleaning the toilet bowl with some erosive cleansing, Lin walked passed and Ching accidentally spilt some cleansing on Lin’s trousers.

Ching’s reaction falls in Chu’s (1992:10) terminology of a “thick-faced” person. She explains ‘*A person adept at Thick Face creates his own positive self-image despite the criticism of others*’.

Two days before this incident, Ching had been blamed for her carelessness when she wet the floor without putting up the “Slippery Floor” sign.

Faced with Ching’s intense emotional expression, Lin finally decided to discharge Ching but on the very generous terms of one month salary as the compensation for an immediate termination of Ching’s employment contract.

Chu (1992:9) explains ‘*Thick Face, Black Heart is simply about action and its effectiveness*’. Ching was treated generously since Ching surrendered all her dignity, self-respect, and social position. Ching was a person with nothing to lose and Lin could only release Ching as soon as possible at all costs.

‘Face’, which is an integral part of collectivist society, is a particular mode of

behaviour reinforced by cultural values in the Chinese workplace (Hofstede, 1991). 'Face' refers to a combination of dignity, self-respect, social position and status, as perceived and dealt with by others (Chen, 1995). Chinese people are highly sensitive to give, take, gain or protect 'face' in social settings, because it describes the proper relationship between themselves and the community. The emphasis of 'face' is on the reciprocity of obligations, dependence and the protection of the esteem of the person involved (Brunner & Wang, 1988).

At the other extreme when one is totally reckless about losing *mien*, he/she may achieve things that would be impossible in a customary situation. Ching has only the lowest hierarchical position in the school. She simply has nothing to lose but her *mien*. If Ching surrenders all her *mien* voluntarily, Lin finds no other alternative to deal with her but to get rid of her at all costs.

It has to be pointed out that incidents similar to this episode are rare in PG because the school is composed of many social circles and people have to find their space in these social circles. To surrender one's *mien* can place oneself in a very critical situation and the cost can be too high. Lin's practice of 'seizing *mien*' is effective most of the time in dealing with students' unpunctuality, inattention in class, absence in activities, since students are in an absolute inferior position. All these 'misbehaviours' labelled in school can cause serious consequences to students. Lin will 'educate' the students in public for a long time until everyone is aware of the things prohibited in school. Lin may talk to their parents personally and ask their parents to cooperate with school for their children's sake. They may even be asked to withdraw their children so that they can start their new lives. All these possibilities can effectively socialize students to behave in accordance with the norm set by Lin. And *mien* is hidden beneath all these practices of maintaining an orderly atmosphere in PG.

## Episode 8 : Wang : Lin's right-hand man

A Chinese folk adage goes like this, "See into the owner's *mien* before beating the dog." This implies any offence to an individual may damage the *mien* of those attached to the individual's social circle.

Offering *mien* is like delegation of power in applying this sort of *mien* behaviour to the school administration. The people of Lin's social circle are appointed without formal notice. Whenever others believe an individual is inside Lin's social circle, they need to respect the individual in respect of Lin's *mien*. In this episode, Lin tried to protect his own *mien* by defending the offences against Wang, who has been part of Lin's social circle.

*"He's only a clerk in school. Whenever I get into the school, what I can see is... that Wang is doing some sort of paper work."* commented by Li when he talked to the researcher in June 2000.

*"I can't ask him to do more. He has devoted all his effort to the school. He's an all-rounded administrator. Can you see his hair? It's turning gray in these few years.... You know something? ... Whenever I give him a task, he does just as what I want."* Lin gave a complete opposite remark on Wang.

Before Wang worked with Lin in PG as an Assistant Principal, he had been an administrator for two years in another branch school. Lin met Wang when they were both the team members on an Academic Committee, an advisory body responsible to Li for all academic matters of the Group. When Lin was promoted as principal in 1993, Lin suggested Wang as his assistant. Throughout these years working together, their cooperation has been satisfactory and Wang is the only person who has offended Lin in public and is still working in the school during the three years of the researcher's observation.

This happened in February 2000 when Lin asked Wang to ask the contractor to submit a more detailed description of their works under the new Information Technology Project initiated by Chief Executive of SAR<sup>29</sup>. After a few phone calls with the

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<sup>29</sup> This is a project initiated by Tung Chee Hwa, the Chief Executive of SAR, in his 1998 Annual Report. Under this project, each secondary school in the territory will be provided with a lump sum of 2 million Hong Kong dollars on average to install necessary equipment and accessories so that each classroom can access Internet.

contractor, Wang reported the progress to Lin. Hearing that the contractor refused to submit the description immediately, Lin shouted at Wang, *"I don't know how you people think. I have to remind you people to do anything. Can you make the judgment yourself that something can't wait and has to be done right away?"* When Lin finished, Wang answered mildly, *"You better tell me what I should do next. I have just done the things you asked me to do. And I'd just reported the progress to you. They'd just told me that they can't give us what you want. If you think it's my problem, then give me a warning letter."* Lin was a bit embarrassed. After a moment of astonishment, he went inside his room and slammed his door.

After this conversation, Lin never asked Wang to negotiate with the contractor and they waited until the contractor submitted the document to school.

Throughout the years of observation, Lin has never admitted making a single mistake in the face of others. There is an aphorism hanging on the wall of the principal's office. It goes *"To scowl at thousand peoples' accusations"*. Chu (1992:10) describes this philosophy of handling interpersonal relationships, especially by those in authority as "thick-faced". She explains *'The thick-faced person has the ability to put self-doubt aside. He refuses to accept the limitations that others have tried to impose on him and, more importantly, he does not accept any of the limitations that we commonly impose on ourselves. He does not question his ability or worthiness. In his own eyes, he is perfect'*. Admitting mistakes is not only a loss of face. "Thick-faced" individuals internally deny their own mistakes so as to sustain their own self-perception as perfect.

Wang's offence is excused because of this belief in perfection of a thick-faced person since Wang is the man picked by Lin personally. Picking the right person is extremely important to a manager, a ruler, as well as a principal in school who is thick-faced in nature. Lin absolved Wang so as to protect his own belief as a remarkable judge of character who can identify a man with ability.

Lin's self-confidence is also easily identifiable. In a conversation in May 2000 when he was asked to list his achievement in PG, he answered spontaneously, *"I can achieve the things in any other school like I have achieved in PG."* He went on, *"You know, the people here are crazy. You can't think of the situation here when I first came to the school. You could pick numerous mistakes anywhere in the documents being handed in to me."* Therefore, the sense of "thick-faced" reflects not only his sense of completeness, but also his positive self-image. Chu (1992:10) claims *'A person adept*

*at Thick Face creates his own positive self-image despite the criticism of others'.*

In this episode, we see the immense self-confidence possessed by Lin and this is an important element in performing 'thick-faced' behaviour to Nan, to Ching, to Kin and to all other 'malfunctioning' staff in the school. Lin's hierarchical status provides him with the privilege of offering and accepting special status-appropriate interactions. His 'thick-faced' status-appropriate interaction with his followers can consolidate Lin's self-image socially and morally. As a consequence, Lin's belief that he never makes mistakes is maintained through this circular process.

Wang's case in this episode, on the other hand, raises suspicion about this circular system since Wang is part of Lin's social circle which Lin has to protect. In school administration, the vital weakness of this style of management is evident from Lin's belief in his own ability. Perfection has no room for weakness, mistake, or conflict. Therefore, any conflict between Lin and Wang gives Lin no solution but to slam the door and not to mention the conflict again.

To link this 'thick-faced' management with school effectiveness, delegation implies the enlargement of Lin's social circle and the exposure of the hidden management weakness discussed above which endangers Lin's belief in his own perfection. In fact, delegation, such as the responsibility given to Wang, is seldom seen in PG. This also explains why all paperwork and decisions are centralized and files are piling up all over the General Office. As identified on page 76, a clerk complained that her table was covered with Lin's documents. On the other hand, Lin can deal with daily routines effectively such as checking daily late-comers' record, collecting school fees, conducting fire-drill, and even settling simple arguments. In the next episode, we can see how *mien* behaviour linked to the social circle avoids argument.

## Episode 9 : Chee : Lin's "private talk"

Lin made much of Chee since Lin nominated Chee to be the only PG candidate in the Outstanding Teachers Award<sup>30</sup>

It has been mentioned that Lin talked to Chee, the Panel Chairperson of the English group, one day after school about participation in the Speech Festival on page 71. Lin urged Chee to motivate more teachers in her panel to join the festival. On another occasion when Nan had committed a serious mistake as seen in episode 5, Lin also shared that with Chee through the display window. Looking at these interactions from the concept of *mien*, these private talks consolidate Lin's and Chee's hierarchical statuses. Chee's *mien* is being offered because Lin only chooses the 'right person' in these talks. More importantly, behavioural norms will then be consolidated since Lin expresses what he expects in these conversations. For Lin, the privilege of selecting a target and then offering him/her *mien* also demonstrates his hierarchical status in school.

As long as this invisible behavioural norm has been built up, disputes can then be settled since the challenge of an administrative measure may imply the challenge of the behavioural norm in school. This is reflected in the English panel meeting mentioned earlier on page 79 when a NET teacher, Ray, queried the idea of streaming students with reference to their abilities. This inquiry about a general practice in school was settled by Chee's warning of a possible violation of Lin's hierarchical status that, *"This is the school policy which has been established since Lin's arrival to the school. So I don't think we can do anything about it."*

Everyone seemed to be happy since Lin's hierarchical status and Chee's membership of Lin's social circle successfully avoided further argument. Unfortunately, the cost can be too high as Ray became exceptionally quiet in the meetings subsequently.

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<sup>30</sup> This is the Award initiated by Li for the first time after joining the DSS. There are reasons for the presentation of the award since there is surplus in the academic year 1999-2000. On the other hand, this award is presented to those outstanding teachers whose salaries are being cut in the transition.



## Episode 10 : Han versus Ngor

In the atmosphere discussed in the above two episodes, people express a great sense of insecurity. This is expressed through the formation of social circles among different interest groups and cliques. Hwang (1992) comments that taking excessive account of *mien* within the social circle can easily breed the formation of cliques and interest groups. This episode demonstrates how these interest groups function and interact with each other.

Han is one of the administrative staff in PG who is responsible for students' disciplinary matters in school. She was one of the teaching staff when Lin arrived at PG and she was appointed by Lin directly during Lin's principalship. Before Han was in-charge of the Discipline Committee, Lin consulted another member of the teaching staff, Yee, about taking up the post. Yee rejected Lin's offer since the post was attached to an administrative staff agreement, which requires that all administrative staff have to be present at school for not less than 47 hours a week.

Ngor is a close friend of Yee and she is in-charge of the Mathematics Panel. She has a promoted rank and she always queries Han's ability.

Han and Ngor seldom work together due to their different jobs in school, but their conflict of interest was exposed in the Graduation Ceremony in July 1999.

In the ceremony, Han was in-charge of all matters in the Auditorium and Ngor was responsible for arranging graduates to sit accordingly. After the admission of graduates according to the schedule, Ngor found that some graduates were arranged to sit far from the stage so that they could not access the stage easily. Ngor talked to Han about the arrangement but Han asked the students to sit according to the schedule. Ngor was agitated and she moved the graduates to the front when Han had left.

After the event, Han submitted a written report on this. During the review meeting, Lin blamed Ngor's re-arrangement without mentioning Ngor's name and Ngor submitted a letter explaining her action, criticizing Han's administrative misconduct, and apologizing to Lin. Lin was angry with the letter but he just talked to Han. Lin said, "*Do you think I was too harsh to Ngor in the review meeting?*" Han replied, "*I think it was too mild instead.*" Lastly Lin said, "*I just don't understand. People never grow up here in PG. That's why she cannot take up more important task.*"

In this argument, Lin sided with Han by denouncing Ngor's action in a meeting. Lin also intended to save Ngor's *mien* without mentioning her name. However, Ngor felt the loss of *mien* and struck back by issuing a letter to Lin.

In this event, Lin's showed no intention to solve the conflict between interest groups but sided with one side and condemned the other. The formation of cliques is similar to Hargreaves' (1992:223) 'Balkanization'. He suggests that *Teachers in balkanized cultures attach their loyalties and identities to particular groups of their colleagues. These are usually colleagues with whom they work most closely, spend most time, socialize most often in the staff room. ... It may generate squabbles and conflicts, even institutionalized feuds over space, time, and resources. ... This is why agreed whole-school policies are so difficult to secure in that setting.*

This can also explain why PG cannot formulate an objective appraisal system since objectivity has to be achieved by means of 'value-free' judgement. Promotion and demotion will then depend on *guanxi* or the tie of the appraisee to the one in power. The struggle for power among different cliques is common but it will not be obvious since the game of power struggle has to be played in accordance with the regulations of *mien*.

## Episode 11 : Yan : Bu's sworn son

As identified in the previous episodes, through 'giving and seizing *mien*' Lin controls all people in school within a set of behavioural norms. People cannot develop trust among one another and they just act in accordance with the norm. There is no friendship between senior colleagues. Struggles for power replace friendship. Above all, Lin delegates by means of 'power'.

In this episode, we can see the difference between Bu and Lin in the way they handle interpersonal relationships with their followers. Bu shows his concern and respect to teachers, minor staff, and even students in their interactions (see **Interaction between Principal and Students**). He never treats subordinates as 'inferior' and never misses a chance to delegate (see **Interaction between Principal and Teachers**). He delegates by applying his vision of how the school should operate.

Bu met Yan 20 years ago when Bu was still a teacher in WH and Yan was a senior form student. Bu taught Yan Chinese History and Yan entered the College of Education under the encouragement of Bu. More importantly, when Yan became a teacher in WH, Bu recommended Yan to apply for the study grant<sup>31</sup> offered by the Group so that Yan could have the opportunity to earn his Master Degree in Britain. Since finishing his education, Yan has been working for Bu in WH.

In his first few years working in WH, Yan recalled, "*I have gained a lot of experience .It is not only academic experience. I have learned much about handling inter-personal relationships. I felt pretty bad at first when people called me 'Bu's sworn son'. I know I can only prove my ability by doing my utmost for the school so that they know I deserve the praise from Bu.*"

After these years working in WH, Yan is now responsible for the curriculum development. Before this duty, Yan had launched a few initiatives in school. Ching, a Chinese Language teacher in WH, responded when she was asked of her experience working on the curriculum tailoring, one of the schemes aiming at school-based curriculum reform initiated by Yan, "*I was new in school when Yan started telling me*

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<sup>31</sup> In 1989, after PS was admitted to join the Bought Place Scheme, the Group had to upgrade the staff's academic qualification within ten years so that the Group could be eligible to meet one of the requirements concerning the staff qualifications. Since then, the Group has selected potential teachers and offered them grants to study abroad for one year so that they could still teach in the Group.

*what he wanted to do about tailoring the Chinese Language curriculum. Since I was so fresh at that time, I felt puzzled. But I promised as I did want to learn something about tailoring the curriculum. After these years, I feel the least we have achieved is that the members of our Chinese team feel confidence about teaching Chinese Language."*

When Ching was asked about Yan's work, Ching remarked, *"Yan is a talented and hard-working fellow. He gives the appropriate support we need. It's a pleasant experience working with Yan and also with the Chinese team in WH."*

Another Chinese Language teacher, Sing, who has piloted another scheme with Yan, commented on their work, *"I felt really tired at first. We did not know where we were going and even where we should start. But Yan sought external assistance from the Curriculum Development Council, we found the main threads for designing the schemes."*

When Bu was asked of his opinion on Yan, Bu remarked, *"Yan is now one of the top teachers in designing curriculum for secondary school students in the territory. Many schools from Hong Kong and from Mainland have visited our school and praised the brilliant achievement of our Chinese team."* Bu then put a heavy folder on the table of his office, *"This is the Chinese textbook of our school. This book is specially designed for the students like ours who are weak in constructing ideas and expressing themselves."*

The confidence in teaching shared by the teachers, the middle managers and the principal is so strong that observers can feel it in school. However, when visitors were asked about the quality of the pilot teaching, the responses were quite contradictory. The following were some of the remarks after observation of a class taught by Yan in January 2000.

- *"I am a bit disappointed. I was told that they have found something really new and stimulating. I find it just some pieces of colourful handouts and beautifully drawn worksheets instead."*
- *"It is interesting. I must say. But to put the whole idea into practice will be very difficult in normal class like ours. Say, the discussion part. They have only 20 or so students in the observation. It is not really realistic in actual classroom in Hong Kong. Right?"*

- *"I like the design of the worksheets. They are really useful for their students I suppose. But I don't think they can be used in our school because our school principal asks us to be more contextual so that the syllabus can be covered."*

Bu projected himself as an enlightened and liberal leader in school. In an interview with Bu, he expressed himself as a believer of McGregor's Theory Y which implied his faith in his followers. He went further and said, *"Good principals must have visions, and some bad principals do have visions. The difference between a good and a bad principal is if he is able to make the others believe what he believes instead of making others do what he believes."*

Bu has taken up much responsibility in liaison with external agents and institutions. The Curriculum Development Council was sought by Bu and he spent much effort to build up close relations with a focal school in Kwangzhou in Mainland China. Many workshops open to the public in WH were also initiated by Bu.

When Bu was asked if he wanted to build up his school image through this close cooperation with external agents, he answered *"The reason for this sort of cooperation is that we have produced something through the process. Interestingly, the outcome is not essential at all. The experience is most important because when others see what's going on in our school, they give us feedback. And the feedback helps to make a better outcome next time. Only through this trial-and-error, all participants grow. And of course, we won't refuse recognition and reward if other people find what we have done is good."*

Bu has been described as 'Hypocrite' and 'Booster' on page 75. He intends to exaggerate the success achieved by his followers. Yan is a typical case. This is also how he offers *mien* to his followers; not by himself directly but by offering opportunities for his followers unobtrusively. He strives to give 'early rewards' to those who have followed his vision. Fullan (1991:69) suggests *'Early rewards and some tangible success are critical incentives during implementation'*. Even though others may have different perceptions, as shown by responses to the class observation as shown previously, the bits of encouragement during the process help his followers believe in what Bu believes.

## Episode 12 : Value-added ?

Bu was asked about the results of value-addedness published by CHSC, in which PG achieved 'Positive' value-addedness in the 'Best Six Subjects Total', and was included in the list of 'Schools with positive value-addedness' in CHSC's handbook. WH demonstrated value-addedness in 6 categories but not in the 'Best Six Subjects Total' (See Table 7). Therefore, WH was ineligible to be classified as a positive value-added school under the method adopted by CHSC. Bu assumed a joyous mood reluctantly and answered, *"I'm happy for PG as they get positive value-addedness. But it's nothing really. I know what's wrong with the analysis conducted by CHSC and we can see it in the newspaper. Most of all, value-addedness is not our sole objective in education."*

When Bu was further asked about the cause of not getting 'Positive' value-addedness, he refused to give a definite answer but stressed that it would not be difficult for them to achieve 'Positive' in the near future.

It is not known to the researcher if Bu has figured out the underlying reasons for missing 'Positive' value-added status. It is obvious that Bu was reluctant to mention the topic. This topic was a defeat for Bu: a strike on WH's administrative measures, and most of all a loss of *mien* to Bu. To press the topic further would have resulted in the humiliation of Bu's *mien*.

PG's 'positive value-addedness' certainly displeased Bu since they were competitors in the system. It strikes Bu that the fruitful result of adding value in 6 categories in CHSC's calculation becomes a pie in the sky. Nevertheless, PG could not be considered as more effective when other information was taken into account (see **Analysis of Value-addedness**).

On the other hand, Bu initiated a series of meetings with the administrative staff after the publication of CHSC's results but the researcher could not attend these meetings. It is believed that discussion of sensitive topics which concerned the 'loss of *mien*' prohibited the researcher from observing. Obviously, these meetings were held to discuss the causes and the remedies concerning CHSC's report.

## Episode 13 : Cheung versus Ying

A lot of things can happen in WH's Administrative Committee meetings. The researcher witnessed severe argument and debate in WH's meetings but it is rare in other Chinese organizations.

In one of the meetings, the conflict between Cheung and Ying became apparent. This incident shares a number of similarities with Han and Ngor mentioned in Episode 10. Both cases represent a conflict of interest between cliques; the people involved are in administrative posts; and lastly the conflicts are still left unresolved.

In 1997, Cheung and Ying were part of the Administrative Committee in WH. Bu handed all important issues in school over to the committee and the members could open their heart to one another in the meetings. Cheung at the time was responsible for the academic development and Ying for disciplinary affairs. The discussion was sometimes fierce and occasionally they decided by majority vote if conflicts could not be resolved after exchanging views. In May, the committee discussed the candidates for the Discipline Committee members for the following year. At first, the committee arrived at a resolution without much difficulty and decided to appoint Wing to be the Head of the Committee. However, after Cheung discussed the list with his Academic Committee, Cheung brought up the issue again and raised suspicions over Wing's ability in disciplinary affairs. The discussion was so ferocious that Cheung even threatened to resign with two of his Academic Committee members. The issue was finally brought to Li since Bu asked to transfer Cheung to another branch but Bu still valued Cheung's talent in academic matters. When Bu was asked about Cheung, Bu remarked, "*Cheung is the best teacher I have ever seen in PS. Although he cannot adapt to the administrative practices in WH, he can still contribute to other schools. Most of all, I have to defend the intimate atmosphere in the school.*"

Klauss and Bass (1982:10) claim that '*There is a need for improving organizational communication in a climate of trust, openness, and through participation of subordinates in decision-making activities*'. Throughout the observations of the course of WH meetings, Bu has exerted much effort to build up a climate of trust and openness though he can be dominating and subjective as criticized by teachers.

Before the crisis between Cheung and Ying broke out, progress in communication was relatively smooth as suggested by Senge (1990:237). He claims '*The discipline of*

*team learning involves mastering the practices of dialogue and discussion, the two ways that teams converse. .... Team learning also involves learning how to deal creatively with the powerful forces opposing productive dialogue and discussion in working teams.'*

To the researcher, the crisis served to open dialogue in a high-context society. Hall's (1976) description of the high-context style of communication provides a characterization of Chinese communication. According to Hall, low-context communication emphasizes directness, explicitness, and verbal expressiveness. High-context communication, on the other hand, involves indirectness, implicitness, and nonverbal expressions. That is, '*most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message*' (Hall, 1976:79). Cheung (1996), a professor at Hong Kong Institute of Education, suggests that work groups in schools with a low level of disengagement and a high level of harmony and intimacy may perform better in terms of responsiveness, adaptability and flexibility in facing a changing environment, and produce students with high academic attainment. In order to achieve harmony and intimacy, *mien* can be re-defined and further enhanced through open discussion and participation of subordinates in decision-making activities. Bu took the option of abandoning Cheung so that the atmosphere of harmony and intimacy in WH could be maintained.

On the other hand, Cheung was promoted to be the Assistant Principal in another branch school a year later and Ying was selected as one of the outstanding Administrators in an election organized by Li in 2000.

## Episode 14 : Au

**A**u is a senior teacher in WH who voluntarily asked for a salary cut in October 1999. Au explained, *"I have my own house, and I have no dependent. I can now do whatever thing I like and I can talk to whoever I want. I can now really work, but not for money."*

He had worked in WH for 20 years and was a member of the Discipline Committee. Before Bu was promoted to be the principal in school, Au and Cheung had already built up friendship with Bu. They liked travelling and they had travelled to a number of places together. However, Au did not enjoy the *guanxi* with Bu after he was promoted. In another interview with Au, he explained his surprising request, *"People like to see me as a close friend of Bu and they even said that I got the promotion because of Bu."* After his salary cut, Au maintained a good relationship with Bu. Au visited Bu once in a while and dined at Bu's home from time to time.

This episode demonstrates the cost of *mien* in maintaining harmonious relationship and open communication in a culture of high-context. In a promoted rank, Au was alienated by other colleagues. Au could not build up *guanxi* with other colleagues. *Guanxi* can help not only to promote communication, and to resolve conflict, but also to set up cliques, and to defend against intruders. Au's closeness with Bu prevented him from building up *guanxi*.

On the other hand, this episode also reveals that *guanxi* of close friendship between Au and Bu also contributes to communication barriers which result in deteriorating inter-personal relationships. In order to reduce the side effects of *guanxi*, Au asked for the salary reduction so that no one would query his promotion, but he has clearly paid the price.

# CHAPTER 7

## CONCLUSION

### Leadership Style and Achievement

In the above research findings, both PG and WH are found to add value to their students on certain variables compared with the whole population. Although the leadership styles of the principals differed, the leaders could steer the schools into the direction they intended, at least from their own understanding. It is argued that the personal idiosyncrasies of their leaders contributed to the “intentional” as well as “unintentional” achievements of each school.

At PG, Lin is inclined to practise a Transaction Leadership Style. This is exposed in the high scores in “Contingent reward” and “Management-by-exception” of the MLQ as well as the qualitative evidence in Episode 5, 6 and 7. It is obvious that interpersonal exchanges and the concept of providing contingent reward are at the heart of much motivation, leadership, and management theory and practice (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992; Hargreaves & Hipkins, 1991). Besides, the relation between the leader and followers seems to be within this *'transactional'* process (Burns, 1978), and can only be advanced by maintaining it. Nan, Kin and Ching were ‘means’ and ‘task’ and they were all disposable when they no longer produced what was expected.

As for WH, its high scores in the “Transforming” categories of the MLQ exceed PG’s and Kingman’s samples. Bu is prone to bring the idea of Transforming Leadership into force. Bu puts much emphasis on ‘people’. Yan, Au, Ying and even Cheung in Episode 11, 13 and 14 reveal the focus on the unique relationship between leader and followers. Bu tends to develop *'respect and concern for his followers, and the ability to see them as powerful sources of knowledge, creativity, and energy for improving the organization'* (Owens, 1991). The relationship between the leaders and followers creates an intense emotional bond. The result is loyalty and trust in the leader and emulation of the leader. Followers are inspired to implement the leader’s vision.

## Leadership in PG

According to Hofstede (1991, 1998), people in Hong Kong tend to accept asymmetries of power and consequently more traditional autocratic managerial styles. This cultural characteristic facilitates authoritarian leadership style in PG. Two historical dispositions determine this tendency in managerial activities in various fields as well as educational. The first is the **colonial heritage** of its long history under British rule in which the decisions, supervision, monitoring were all under the control of a few executives. This is identical to PG's hierarchical structure as the school is led by a small number of people. The system was successful and effective when there was a lack of skilful managerial personnel. All other routines and customary activities were then handled by other subsidiary employees. Under that system, the people in a lower position did not bear many responsibilities and were only accountable to their immediate superior.

The second facilitator of this unbalanced power distribution is even more deep-rooted - the **Confucian heritage**. Under the ideology of *li*, both superior and inferior in the hierarchy are circumscribed by rules of correct behaviour. The state and the organization will prosper if the sovereign rules justly and the subjects serve loyally. Nan's impolite remark upon Lin in Episode 5 was intolerable since it violated the ideology of *li*. Failure to follow the dictates of proper role behaviour will distort the relationship and disrupt the harmony of society (Wright, 1962). The result of this conception is the rationalization of unjust practices of the superior. Under Confucian ideology of *li*, preserving a superior's *mien* is a virtue, whereas seizure of an inferior's *mien* is part of superior's privilege since '*abuse of one's superior position put the opposite party in serious jeopardy*' (Bond & Hwang, 1992:217). This explains why Li could enjoy the privilege attached to his superiority in Episode 1 and Lin could exercise extensive power without apparent challenge.

The weighty influence of *li* lies behind the Chinese focus on the group (Hickson, 1997) in contrast with the American and European cultures which tend to focus on the individual. Many American and European joint-venture managers note that it is difficult to get their Chinese managers to participate in the decision-making process. Western managerial philosophy emphasizes that individuals be responsible for all decisions by themselves. However, Chinese managers on average show less initiative and are not keen on taking personal responsibility for their actions or tasks (Ireland, 1991). This is also the case in PG. During problem-solving meetings, administrative

staff usually participated inactively and even offered no suggestions. Teachers in PG followed traditional values in their decisions, such as maintaining harmony. They were dichotomizing roles and were more likely to consult their superiors even for ordinary tasks. These identify with Cui's (1998) finding that offering one's opinion without invitation is often considered to show lack of confidence in the management or even insubordination in the Chinese enterprises.

Besides the historical factors which facilitate PG's authoritarian management style, joining the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) also assisted Lin in practising *mien* behaviour. The underlying philosophy of the establishment of DSS is the insertion of market forces into the education sector. Under the scheme, the subsidy to BPS will no longer be guaranteed unless the private schools under DSS can admit sufficient number of students. Moreover, the school administrator is similar to a manager in commercial firm. The school administrator has important powers and he can decide on almost everything including the dismissal of teachers. Throughout the episodes, Lin could use the power in the daily management of teachers, clerical staff, menial staff, and students.

Economically, the recession starting from 1998 gave rise to severe unemployment in Hong Kong. Resentful teachers were forced to confine in schools even they were dissatisfied at the way they were treated. As a result, asymmetry of power was further strengthened.

Handy's (1984:186-96) 'prescriptive style' of leadership can also nicely describe the characteristics of PG. This sort of leadership is more likely to impose order, allows for a lot of co-ordination, with little duplication of effort, and resources allocated on a rational basis. The school is likely to have an extensive staff handbook of procedures, daily bulletins of information running to several pages distributed to each member of staff, daily senior staff meetings before school and close monitoring of individual teachers' examination results and students' workbooks. All these elements could be identified easily in PG.

On the other hand, Handy (1984) adds that a 'prescriptive style' is most appropriate for dealing with matters that are routine and predictable. Such things as how to conduct fire drills and what to do about children who come late are best dealt with by clear, laid-down procedures; otherwise time is wasted and effort expended where it should not be needed. This style can also be appropriate when there is a major crisis or when the identity of the school is unclear, as in the case of transferring BPS to

DSS.

Simply put, leaders' manipulation of *mien* is like a magnifying glass of his/her legitimate power in hand. *Mien* helps the prescriptive style of Transaction Leadership and facilitates the early stage of school development in temporary situations. In PG, prescriptive style facilitates the detection of students' misbehaviour such as truancy and lateness by clear, laid-down procedures. On the other hand, *mien* assists the manipulation of students' behaviour so as to make students conform to the norm. These explain PG's outstanding achievement in students' attendance and active participation in extra curricular activities.

However, this prescription in PG led to inflexibility and a minimum contribution from staff. Ray's submissiveness in Episode 9 was the result of the school's rigidity in handling new ideas which came into conflict with current practice. As a result, the staff resented the close monitoring of their marking by senior staff and adopted a cautious and defensive approach when whole-school issues were being discussed. As for the students, the only way to express their resentment to the school's rigidity is the withdrawal from the school. The higher dropout rate being shown on page 69 is the end product of their misery. The difficulty ahead of PG is to find a way of moving to some other approach to ensure that the management of the school is flexible enough to cope with changing demands. Prescription of the right things and holding back from prescribing how people should teach is a very difficult balance to achieve. In its most benign form prescription cleans up the administrative detail and minimizes the routine frustrations of organizational life but it generates no excitement, raises no enthusiasm, and makes no contribution to creativity.

## Leadership in WH

Burns (1978) also suggests that transactional leadership is almost bound to have a limited impact because of its failure to raise the aspirations of leaders and followers. WH, being led by Bu, has formulated a contrasting style of leadership. Bu encourages change. He initiates a number of innovations in school and has offered his followers a vision during his principalship. Bu ignores order and he queries consistency. Bu only offers *mien* generously but seldom seizes other's *mien* unless something contradicts his ideology. Yan recalled Bu's interrogation in a General Staff Meeting five years ago, "*Bu asked us what we wanted our students to achieve. A teacher answered excitedly that we wanted to upgrade our school from Band 5 to 1. Most of the teachers could not agree with him more. Nevertheless, Bu disagreed with the teacher's idea and he argued he preferred to upgrade our "students" from Band 5 to 1 instead. He explained the difference was that all teachers wanted to abstain from teaching Band 5 students after they had pushed up the school standard. Why couldn't we be contented with our lot in teaching substandard students like ours? Where would all Band 5 students be if we aimed at admitting the outstanding students only? He even exclaimed that he would not accept students except that they were Band 5. People were all surprised to hear that and they even willfully trampled on Bu's idea in their daily conversations.*"

Kotter (1990:4-5) remarks that the fundamental difference between management and leadership is that the former is concerned with activities which are designed to produce '*consistency and order*', whereas the latter is concerned with '*constructive or adaptive change*'. '*Transforming leadership builds on man's need for meaning [and] creates institutional purpose*' (Peters and Waterman, 1982:82). According to Yan, Bu certainly brings new vision to the school. In a current study of school vision, Abolghasemi et al. (1999) conclude that principals who demonstrate strong visionary behaviours, receive more support from teachers towards their vision for the school.

In the local context, Chui et al. (1996) studied the impact of SMI in Hong Kong secondary schools and proposed that vision was the most important attribute of transforming leaders, and that it had a significant effect on different aspects of leadership behaviour. They suggested that vision might be an important concept for understanding transforming leadership of secondary school principals in Hong Kong. The relationship between vision and communication of values was strong, with vision accounting for 46 per cent of the variance of leadership behaviour.

Throughout the years of development especially after the transition from BPS to DSS, Bu has declared a commitment to admit as many new immigrants as possible (see page 62). When Yan was asked about the current policy of admitting mainly new immigrants and if this violated Bu's visionary statement of admitting Band 5 students only, Yan said, *"Now, we mainly accept students from Mainland China. They are mostly new immigrants. Their results are normally weak because they have to adapt to new syllabuses especially English. The problems facing these students make our colleagues' work even heavier than before. But you know, talking about education, vision and principle, ... we must not merely try to find the easy way out by enrolling the best students like the teacher said in the meeting. Instead, we should try our utmost to teach our students in hand. This principle will never be changed ... I dare to say."*

These findings explain why Au requested a salary cut voluntarily in Episode 14 and still felt content with his occupation. Bu has inspired Au and Au could sacrifice part of his salary to achieve self actualization in terms of deed establishment as stated in Figure 1 on page 7. Senge (1990:213) adds that *'If you cut a photograph in half, each part shows only part of the whole image. But if you divide a hologram, each part shows the whole image intact.... When more people come to share a common vision, the vision may not change fundamentally.'* Bu is a transforming leader since he raises his followers' motivation and sense of higher purpose. This higher purpose is one in which the aims and aspirations of leaders and followers congeal into one. The transforming leader seeks to engage the follower as a whole person, and not simply as an individual with a restricted range of basic needs. Transforming leadership addresses the higher-order needs of followers and looks to the full range of motives that move them.

Apparently, vision to a transforming leader comes before everything including the manipulation of *mien*. Lin's leadership, on the contrary, entails an exchange between leader and follower, in which the follower receives *mien* or wages for compliance with the leader's wishes. There is a kind of implicit contract beyond which the followers are not prepared to venture in meeting their formal obligations. Lin has shown his solicitude towards his students. He talks to students very often as shown in previous findings. The 'fatal' flaw of his leadership is the omission of care for his staff. Murgatroyd (1985) suggests a school that fails to care for its staff is not likely to be caring effectively for its pupils. **In the long run, Lin's leadership style with the heavy use of *mien* undermines the effectiveness of the school.**

## GUANXI – The Art of Chinese leadership

The concept of *li*, literally meaning 'rites', 'propriety', or 'manners', confines proper behaviour of people. As defined on page 6, both superior and inferior are circumscribed by rules of *li*. Bond (1991:75) refers to the '*Chinese practice of concentrating power into the hands of worthy elite and ensuring that this power is legitimate. The Chinese tradition of trusting the unfettered leader means that there is a continued resistance to, or ignoring of, regulations which bind the hands of this elite from exercising unchallenged authority*'. Hofstede (1998) also infers that these fundamental beliefs about proper management are typical of cultural systems that are high in power distance, or hierarchical.

Furthermore, such systems can encourage subjective and idiosyncratic appraisal systems without systematic criteria for promotion. Professionalism, systematisation, and quality assurance can also be neglected. These conceptions involve bench marks, procedures, and objective standards which are believed to undermine those in power who can decide matters according to their own will. This also indicates how all-inclusive guidelines may hold back the prestige of superiors by restricting their ability to act graciously and generously in order to maintain their *guanxi* with their subordinates. *Guanxi* is a continual exchange of favours, a network of obligations that keeps personal relationships active and alive (Chen, 1995). People are keen on establishing *guanxi* by gaining extensive connections through private and informal channels in order to secure favours for themselves or get things done (see the conflict between Han and Ngor in Episode 10). Those who are in the lower portion of the hierarchy have to be aware of the change of the authority and the transfer of personnel.

Over protective towards *mien* and excessive reliance on *guanxi* and trust in the work place produces a risk of corrupt practices. Bribery and appointing by favouritism become common scenes. It is not surprising that Sergeant and Frenkel (1998) find that bribery is common across Asia. Bribery and corruption in China have been sensitive issues that foreign managers are unaccustomed to addressing (Overholt, 1994). In this study, Episode 2 has portrayed how *guanxi* conduces to the phenomenon when Li facilitated his son's promotion at an exceptional speed, and when he defended the 'buffer' of his reputation, Yin, in Episode 4.

This phenomenon has provided a misleading perspective on Confucius' conception of *li*. For *li*, Confucius said, '*Respectfulness, without the rules of propriety, becomes laborious bustle; carefulness, without the rules of propriety, becomes timidity; boldness, without the rules of propriety, becomes insubordination;*

*straightforwardness, without the rules of propriety, becomes rudeness.*' (Analects: VIII, 2). Put into simple terms, *li* preaches mutual respect by confining the ways of communication among people. The distortion of the concept *li* is derived from the bewilderment and perplexity of *guanxi* because of the misinterpretation of 'propriety'. People intend to establish *guanxi* with the people in 'power' and then enjoy the privileges offered. Hwang's (1987) study has argued that 'power' was an important component in the exchange process. 'Power' had to be imposed on the recipients so that they changed attitudes, or behaviours in exchange for resources and rewards to fulfil their needs, or to avoid punishments from those with 'power'. Lin has demonstrated the full use of 'power' in hand throughout the episodes in this study. 'Power' takes the place of 'propriety' since power has its property that can be discerned and identified; whereas 'propriety' requires moral judgment and ethical prudence that are too profound for the mass of peasantry in ancient China, and are too high-toned for the materialistic folks nowadays.

As shown in this study, Lin is a transactional leader. PG's achievement and value-addedness are procured on the basis of Lin's awareness in building up different sorts of *guanxi* with different sorts of subordinates. He did his best to seize the *mien* of Nan, Kin and Ching, whereas he did all he could to protect Wang's and Han's *mien* since they had built up different kinds of *guanxi* with him. Lin built up and cemented interpersonal relationships with them. Tushman et al. (1997) assert that it may be important to solidify interpersonal relationships and communications with particular individuals and areas rather than try to establish a broad spectrum of organizational contacts. On the other hand, Lin handled and used his 'power' in hand with skill. With this power, he allied with the outstanding, he shaped attitudes, he punished wrong doing since he was the 'Emperor'<sup>15</sup>.

Most essentially, Lin would never mix up *guanxi* and he was scrupulous in separating business from private interests. He was respectful to those in superior position; he was careful in his paper work; he was critical of most people who commit mistakes; and he was straightforward in expressing his goal and strict to his students' discipline and attendance. Therefore, PG is a school making progress in terms of academic achievement as shown in the analysis of HKAT and by CHSC, students' attendance and punctuality and participation in extra-curricular activities.

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<sup>15</sup> This is Lin's nickname given by teachers and the clerical staff.

## MIEN – The Art of Guanxi

An interesting survey conducted by Jones, Rozelle, and Chang (1990) reveals another behavioural difference among different cultures. They find out that Chinese managers tend to separate themselves from junior staff so as to maintain their parental and prestigious status. ‘Watches over your shoulder while you are working’ were rated as punitive in the United States but not in China. The difference may be derived from the colloquial variance and different understanding of ‘watching over’ and ‘being watched over’. Semantically ‘watch over’ means ‘take care’ and ‘look after’ for Chinese whereas Western implies ‘monitor’ and ‘observe’ instead. Or it may be derived from the behavioural norm that any form of attentive act from the superior means identification and acceptance. The latter is at least how Lin offers *mien* to his subordinates by talking to them through the display window of the General Office.

This ‘posture’ of private talking through the display window signifies *mien* offering. On the other hand, it also conveys the message of Lin’s superiority and hierarchical status since no teaching staff is allowed to go inside the General Office and not many teachers can enjoy the ‘status-appropriate interaction’ being offered. Recall the definition of ‘status-appropriate interaction’, it refers to all measures interchanged between the individual and his/her social circle. It may be a favour, a sigh, a smile, ... . Lin’s ‘status-appropriate interaction’ is the condition of Chee as well as others ‘having *mien*’ in PG. ‘*Chinese people believe that they should act in accordance with their roles and their status. Such that people perform the roles prescribed in the hierarchical status they intend to pursue. The return is the prestige and power under this hierarchical status. This is also the process of gaining mien*’ (Ho, 1974:234). *Mien* is also magnified in contrast to Lin’s frequent practice of *mien* seizure. By offering *mien* and seizure of *mien*, Lin maintains different strata of *guanxi*. Teachers and other staff will then strive towards the goal set by Lin and hope that *mien* will be offered one day and they can climb up to the higher strata of *guanxi* or the ‘tie-ladder’ termed by Chang and Holt (1991).

However, they are aware of the boundary and limitation in this struggle of *mien* since Lin has fortified himself by building up ‘mixed tie’ relationships. Zhang (1994:145-6) explains this situation, ‘*In collectivist cultures (e.g., Hong Kong), people make fewer friends because ‘friend’ to them means a life-long intimate relationship that carries many obligations...., group membership was not in itself intimate enough for them to*

*develop friendships with their subordinates.'*

In the case of WH, *mien* offering is less symbolic than indirect compared with PG. Bu seeks opportunities to delegate and empower his subordinates. He even seeks opportunity for external cooperation and then offers *mien* to his subordinates through these cooperation and agents. Bu always praises his school's teachers of the pilot schemes 'Curriculum Experts' and 'Focus of Curriculum Change' in front of visitors. He is accustomed to elevate his staff when addressing people with these 'buzz words'.

Bu, on the other hand, can build up trusting relationships with his subordinates through delegation, idea sharing, open discussion and even open altercation since all these have to be based on mutual trust. Klauss and Bass (1982:23) claim that '*trust influences the quality, level, content, and directionality of communication... The high-trust groups exchanged relevant ideas and feelings more openly, developing greater clarity in goals and problems, searched for more alternative courses of action, and were more committed to implement solutions*'. Frank and sincere discussions were observable in WH's meetings across different levels. In their Administrative Staff Meetings, the discussions were sometimes fierce and occasionally they decided by majority vote if conflicts could not be resolved after exchanging views (see Episode 13). Bu surely understands Senge's important remark on conflict. Senge (1990:249) suggests, '*Contrary to popular myth, great teams are not characterized by an absence of conflict. On the contrary... one of the most reliable indicators of a team that is continually learning is the visible conflict of ideas.*'

**The conclusion on how *mien* interacts with leadership and how the interaction affects school effectiveness which can be drawn here is that *mien* provides a powerful contingent reward by 'giving' and 'seizing' *mien* at the discretion of the one in power. In school, it is the principal who possesses the power to decide on how *mien* is given and seized. Through 'giving *mien*', school leaders facilitate the formation of organization norms. Through 'seizing *mien*' leaders withdraw rights and privileges. Thus, *mien* can make an important contribution to effective leadership.**

**However, the uneven distribution of power associated with excessive *mien* behaviour can have a disastrous outcome. Any change in this sort of organization has to be initiated top-down. Resistance to change is inevitable. It is not possible to invite participation of subordinates. Subordinates' can never obtain a sense of ownership and satisfaction through job involvement. Under Lin's leadership, PG**

**apparently achieved stability but the cost was high: staff were reluctant to take risks and they only performed their tasks under Lin's direct supervision and strict guidance.**

*Mien* can help develop an initial relationship, though *mien* behaviour can also facilitate the uneven distribution of power since open conflict between leader and follower is not allowed. In consequence, *mien* behaviour can enhance corruption in those who possess the power. Episode 1 and 5 reveal the corruption associated with this uneven distribution of power.

From the evidence in this study, excessive stress on *mien* behaviour nurtures undesirable activity in school in which cliques and balkanized groups are the by-products. It is undesirable in the sense that cliques generate conflict and eliminate the possibility of concerted whole-school policies. The potency of *mien* should not be over-emphasized as the sole determinant of organization effectiveness. Most findings concerning desirable leadership styles and organization effectiveness in this research follow the dominant leadership ideas and guiding ideologies developed in the West. *Mien* behaviour poses itself as one of the variables which needs to be investigated in order to have a complete picture of organization effectiveness, at least in the Hong Kong cultural context.

**REN(仁) is to love all men,  
KNOWLEDGE is to know all men.  
(Analects: XII, 22)**

**I**nquiry and even interrogation of the superior are viewed more positively in the West since they may help the organization's growth. In contrast, this is a taboo in the East and numerous articles concerning remonstrance with a superior can be found related to the skills, the proper time, the manner etc. for this risky act. Lin did not follow the rule so that he ended up losing *mien* in Episode 1. Lin, on the other hand, defends his own *mien* as the school's principal, as when he reacted strongly to his 'Assistant' Principals being wrongly addressed as Principal. It is the *mien* of superiority that allows a principal to delegate responsibility and to share wholeheartedly. Yet for him, delegation was a sign of weakness and the outcome of mistrust of the inferior (see Episode 2).

Communication in Chinese organizations like PG is top-down. The channels for giving instructions are clear but not for those in the same rank. Communication among those at the same level is discouraged. Lin withholds all decisions and imposes sanction against all defects. He is in power and is not willing to delegate. The middle management then reacts in a symbolic way without whole-hearted devotion to their professional work.

*This also explains why 'Chinese place greater emphasis on good nature and less emphasis on extroversion in helping them to determine whom they will associate with and trust. This is because good nature is more useful than extroversion in a collectivist culture in which the maintenance of group strength is an important consideration' (Bond, 1991:47).*

In the situation of PG, Lin has to fortify himself against others with a wall so as to minimize the possibility of building up close relationship (see Episode 11). As a result, Lin can never build up a successful organization if he keeps himself deep inside the personal vacuum at the top of his illusionary hierarchy. Redding (1986:15) argues that the '*most successful organizations in the Chinese case have managed to develop a particularly powerful family atmosphere which releases higher levels of motivation and trust*'. In order to achieve this, a principal has to show his/her concerns and 'love' towards followers – the teachers as well as the students. This is one of the Confucian principles - *ren*.

In order to nourish trust, the cultural ego of avoiding conflict has to be diminished. It is argued that this cultural ego has long been nurtured by Chinese conception of *mien*. Yet, over emphasis upon *mien* brings forth disruptive and corrupting outcomes (see Episode 2 and 4). At most, only 'contrived collegiality' can be built up in the organization which stresses *mien*. This *'is characterized by a set of formal, specific bureaucratic procedures... It can be seen in initiatives such as peer coaching, mentor teaching, joint planning in specially provided rooms, formally scheduled meetings and clear job descriptions and training programs for those in consultative roles.'* (Hargreaves et al., 1991:19) It is collegiality in its nominal form. It is the collegiality of solitude.

This cultural ego can only be overpowered with the effort of building up 'guanxi of collegiality'. The leader has to share with and to delegate to his followers in the process of building up the *guanxi*. This is a long-term process since trust can only be built through prolonged communication. Bond (1991:54) remarks further, *'For Chinese, the slower revelation of intimate information is necessary in order to establish trust before one makes oneself vulnerable to possible danger through public exposure'*.

'*Guanxi* of collegiality' places stress on *yi*(義) , righteousness or justice. Bu abandoning Cheung in Episode 13 despite his brilliant ability in teaching is an act to maintain '*guanxi* of collegiality'. He even seized the *mien* of those who made critical remarks about the school's vision in the staff meeting. It led to short-term unrest in WH but it helped Bu lead justly and impartially towards the goal with dispassionate fairness in the long run. '*Guanxi* of collegiality' emphasizes openness about conflict. It assists followers to get over conflict because people treat conflict as a learning opportunity when they build up '*guanxi* of collegiality'. Conflict can only be reconciled if people are encouraged to face it. Overcoming the conflict together can then consolidate '*guanxi* of collegiality' in return. Without knowing the conflicting views held by his/her followers, a leader can never 'know' them. In short, an appropriate grasp of *mien* is the prerequisite for building up trustful relationships; and trustful relationships are the prerequisite for building up '*guanxi* of collegiality'. Proper denouncing of *mien* can help the establishment of organization goal; and organization goal is one of the essences of a school of quality.

In order to spark off motivation, vision has to be powerfully enacted and all teachers' views have to be represented in the process of drafting the vision so that people can

share it and work for it. The process itself provides the opportunity to build up trustful relations. The leader provides vision and without it people perish. Senge et al. (1994) describe vision as a picture of the organizational future. Therefore, leaders must have a vision to set the directions of their school but that vision cannot be imposed on others without seeking their participation and consensus. In order to promote vision-based leadership at the school level, a leader should have a vision of the future of their school for formulating effective school policies and plans.

Another Confucian philosophical word *dao*(道) can nicely offer the last thought for this study. Explicitly, *dao* means the path, the way which guides people to a place they want to go. Implicitly, it means the goal of what we plan to achieve; the mission and the vision of our lives. People longing for perfection attach the idea *dao* to what they attempt to pursue. We have 'tea *dao*' in making a perfect cup of tea. We have 'wu *dao* (Kung Fu)' in looking for the best way to beat the foe.

Throughout the history of the development of Confucianism and the application of the idea in practical situations, Chinese people are seeking a balance between promoting the best interest of their groups and remaining true to underlying philosophical ideas. At this moment, Western theories provide a useful fertilizer for those who are bred in Confucius soil.

# APPENDIX A

15<sup>th</sup> September, 1997

The Principal,

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

## Request for permission of conducting research

In order to conduct a research on leadership style and organization effectiveness, I would like to ask for your permission to conduct interviews with different personnel and to issue questionnaires in your prestigious school.

The duration of the research will last for approximately two years. The researcher will not disturb the daily routines of the school. All related activities of the research will only be carried out during the free time without affecting the normal lessons and all information gathered will only be used for academic purpose.

I would like to provide information which interests you concerning the research at any time convenient to you.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Yours sincerely,

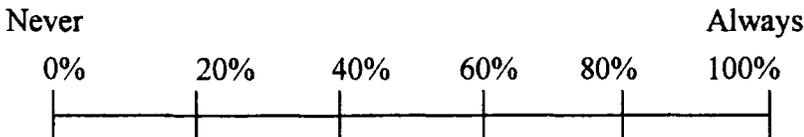
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CHAN Kui Pui

# APPENDIX B

## Principal's Leadership Questionnaire

Listed below are statements about school responsibilities and the way your principal performs them. For each of the statements provided below, please assess how frequently you would say your current principal displays the behavior described by circling the appropriate percentage ranging from "0%" of the time (Never) to "100%" of the time (Always).



### A. In promoting academic performance ...

places emphasis on recognizing the differences in academic abilities between individual students	0	20	40	60	80	100
gives awards to students who perform well academically	0	20	40	60	80	100
meets with panel heads to discuss educational goals of the school	0	20	40	60	80	100
discourages change if students' academic performance is acceptable	0	20	40	60	80	100
help teachers believe they can achieve academic excellence	0	20	40	60	80	100
doesn't give guidance on improving academic performance	0	20	40	60	80	100
encourages suggestions for heightening students' learning	0	20	40	60	80	100

### B. In cultivating harmony among staff ...

addresses conflicts among staff with strength and confidence	0	20	40	60	80	100
explains to teachers the strength of teamwork and team-spirit	0	20	40	60	80	100
reprimands staff members for showing disrespect to others	0	20	40	60	80	100
gives equal recognition for each staff's good performance	0	20	40	60	80	100
provides channels for individual teachers to voice their grievance	0	20	40	60	80	100
encourages acceptance of other staff members' points of view	0	20	40	60	80	100
waits for conflicts among staff to resolve themselves	0	20	40	60	80	100

### C. In promoting moral values ...

adopts a fair firm disciplinary procedure	0	20	40	60	80	100
promotes a two-way exchange of views on moral issues	0	20	40	60	80	100
works hand in hand with teachers to impart moral values to students	0	20	40	60	80	100
helps students develop a sense of self respect and responsibility	0	20	40	60	80	100
doesn't tell teachers where he/she stands on moral issues	0	20	40	60	80	100
praises students for good conduct	0	20	40	60	80	100
makes use of real-life examples to teach moral values	0	20	40	60	80	100

## APPENDIX B

### D. In promoting principal-student relationship ...

listens to ideas put forth by students]	0	20	40	60	80	100
clarifies challenges to raise the expectations of students	0	20	40	60	80	100
shows concern for the individual needs of students	0	20	40	60	80	100
gives corrective criticisms to students only when called for	0	20	40	60	80	100
shows genuine dedication to help students learn and grow	0	20	40	60	80	100
takes no initiative to relate with students	0	20	40	60	80	100
gives clear instructions to students on how to do well in school	0	20	40	60	80	100

### E. In promoting staff development ...

makes no attempts to motivate the staff to improve	0	20	40	60	80	100
is content to let staff do their job in the same way as always	0	20	40	60	80	100
encourages teachers to take courses for self-actualization	0	20	40	60	80	100
encourages staff members to set their own targets and plans	0	20	40	60	80	100
provides honest feedback on how the staff are performing	0	20	40	60	80	100
expresses need for the staff's support in achieving a common mission	0	20	40	60	80	100
sets a good example by demonstrating knowledge in various areas	0	20	40	60	80	100

### F. In promoting home-school relationship ...

gives recognition to parents for their contribution to the school	0	20	40	60	80	100
enlist the help of parents in organizing school functions	0	20	40	60	80	100
asks teachers to meet with parents only when there is a specific need	0	20	40	60	80	100
convinces parents that they too have the ability to help the students	0	20	40	60	80	100
makes no attempt to reach out to parents	0	20	40	60	80	100
listens to ideas put forth by parents	0	20	40	60	80	100
organizes seminars for parents to learn about parenthood	0	20	40	60	80	100

End of Questionnaire

# APPENDIX C

## **Methodology for the Analysis of Academic Value-addedness of Secondary Schools**

by Hong Kong Education Department

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to explain the methodology for analysing schools' academic performance. The analysis result would provide schools and school sponsoring bodies with an indication of value-addedness in the academic domain.

### **Background**

Students' achievements in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) have normally been used by secondary schools to evaluate how well their students perform academically. However, it would be unfair to judge the effectiveness of a school's academic performance based on the HKCEE results alone, for a lot of research shows that students' prior attainment plays a very important role in students' future academic success. Therefore, to evaluate school's effect on students' performance, comparison should be made between schools with similar intake.

In assessing the value-addedness of a school, which means how much more (or less) progress students have made at a given school in comparison with similar students in other schools, we would evaluate school's performance in the HKCEE in relation to the prior attainment of student intake in the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA). Before going into details of the methodology, let us first look at the student cohort and variables to be considered in the analysis.

### **Student Cohort**

It refers to a group of students who have participated in the SSPA in a particular year and have sat for the HKCEE five years later. To ensure fair comparison, students who have repeated during their secondary education are excluded from the analysis. Moreover, student mobility occurring in the transition from S3 to S4 will be adjusted in the calculation of value-addedness.

In this analysis, the dataset for the student cohort is obtained by matching students'

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performance in the 1999 HKCEE with their corresponding performance in 1994 SSPA.

### Variables

#### (1) Prior Attainment

The SSPA standard score is taken as the measure for prior attainment. It is a score obtained by adjusting the internal assessment of students at the 2<sup>nd</sup> term of Primary 5 and the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> term of Primary 6 with the performance in the Academic Aptitude Test (AAT).

#### (2) Outcome Variables

The HKCEE performance obtained by students in the following subjects, subject groups, and composite indicators are used for assessing schools' output performance:

- Core subjects: Chinese (C), English (E), and Mathematics (M);
- Subject groups: Humanities<sup>1</sup>, Science<sup>2</sup>, and Cultural/Practical/Technical<sup>3</sup>; and
- Composite indicators: CEM average, the best 6 subjects aggregate, and CEM & best 3 subjects' aggregate.

The HKCEE fine grade<sup>4</sup> obtained by students in each subject is converted into point: A1 as 12, A2 as 11, B3 as 10, B4 as 9, .... E9 as 4, E10 as 3, F11 as 2, F12 as 1 and U as 0.

The performance in the HKCEE best 6 subjects aggregate is taken as an overall outcome measure.

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<sup>1</sup> *Humanities group*: Chinese Literature, English Literature, Chinese History, Geography, History, Economics, Economics & Public Affairs, Social Studies, Government & Public Affairs, Religious Studies, Buddhist Studies, and Travel & Tourism.

<sup>2</sup> *Science group*: Biology, Human Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Engineering Science, and Additional Mathematics

<sup>3</sup> *Cultural/Practical/Technical group*: Computer Studies, Commerce, Principles of Accounts, Art, Music, Physical Education, Ceramics, Shorthand, Typewriting, Home Economics, Accommodation & Catering Services, Fashion & Clothing, Technical Drawing, Electronics & Electricity, Metalwork, Design & Technology, and Textiles.

<sup>4</sup> HKCEE fine grade: the subdivision of each grade in HKCEE results from Grade A, B, C, D, E, F, and U.

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## Methodology

### Decile Rank Method

The principle of the decile rank method is very simple and straightforward: we expect that schools with similar ability intake would achieve similar level of performance in the HKCEE. A school is considered to have value-addedness when its performance is significantly different from what would be expected on the basis of its intake. The method of calculation of value-addedness can be described in the following three steps:

- (i) Students' performance in the SSPA is averaged for each school. Schools are then ranked by the averages into 10 deciles<sup>1</sup> – the 10<sup>th</sup> decile represents the best performing group while the 1<sup>st</sup> decile the lowest group.
- (ii) The HKCEE performance obtained by the same cohort of students 5 years later is averaged for each school. Again, the schools are ranked by their HKCEE averages into 10 deciles.



- (iii) Positive (or negative) value-addedness is accorded to schools when the HKCEE decile rank is significantly higher (or lower)<sup>2</sup> than the SSPA decile rank.

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<sup>1</sup> Decile indicates the relative positions of scores with respect to all other scores and takes the value 1 to 10. The 10<sup>th</sup> decile represents the top 10% (the best) performance among all schools, 9<sup>th</sup> the next 10%, ... and 1<sup>st</sup> the bottom 10% (the worst). Decile is similar to percentile which takes the value from 1 to 100 with 10 percentiles equal to 1 decile.

<sup>2</sup> "Significantly higher (or lower)" is defined here to mean that a rank is at least *one whole decile* above (or below) another. In other words, we consider a difference of at least 10 percentiles as evidence for value-addedness.

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For example, in the figure above, School A is in the 7<sup>th</sup> SSPA decile and the 8<sup>th</sup> HKCEE decile. It cannot be classified as having positive value-addedness since the rise in rank is less than *one whole decile*. On the other hand, School B is in the 4<sup>th</sup> SSPA decile and 5<sup>th</sup> HKCEE decile. It is accorded with positive value-addedness because the rise in rank is greater than *one whole decile*.

It must be pointed out that value-addedness analysis does not emphasize fine distinctions between individual schools, such as those used to rank schools into league tables. Rather, value-addedness analysis highlights whether some schools are performing markedly better or worse than other schools serving similar intakes. In fact, due to variation in statistical measurement, it is misleading to accord importance to fine ranking. Hence, in the analysis of schools' value-addedness, the decile rank is deliberately used to provide a broad classification of school performance.

This method, however, has a limitation: it is not able to show the *positive* value-addedness of the top schools (i.e. those schools with SSPA at the 10<sup>th</sup> decile) and the *negative* value-addedness of the bottom schools (i.e. those schools with SSPA at the 1<sup>st</sup> decile). Since for the top schools, the best performance achievable in HKCEE is the 10<sup>th</sup> decile which is the same as their SSPA decile, thus making it impossible to detect any significant rise in rank. Likewise, for the bottom schools, the lowest performance in HKCEE is the 1<sup>st</sup> decile which is also equal to their SSPA decile, thus preventing any further drop in rank to be detected.

To get around this limitation, we use the method of regression to analyse the positive value-addedness of the top schools and the negative value-addedness of bottom schools.

### **Adjustment for Student Mobility**

Student mobility refers to the phenomenon of students changing schools during the 5-year secondary school education. Some schools have rather high student mobility, especially in the transition from S3 to S4. To ensure fair comparison, a school should be held accountable, albeit partially, for the value-addedness of those students who spend only part of their 5-year secondary education in the school.

A simple and effective way to tackle this problem is through assigning appropriate weight to the contribution of each student to the value-addedness of a school. The weight is determined by the proportion of time a student spent his/her education in a particular school:

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Period of education in a school	Weight
S1 to S5	1
S1 to S3	3/5
S4 to S5	2/5

If a student studies from S1 to S3 in school A, his/her value-addedness will be given a weight of 3/5 in the computation of the value-addedness of school A. Similarly, if this student also studies from S4 to S5 in school B, 2/5 of his/her value-addedness will contribute to the value-addedness of school B. Of course, if the student spends all 5 years of secondary education in one school, all his/her value-addedness will go into the calculation of the value-addedness of the school. However, due to the limitation of the existing database system and the complexity in tracing the schooling history of students, we would not adjust other cases of student mobility. More precisely, if a student changes school within the junior secondary education (i.e. between S1 and S3), his/her value-addedness will not be counted in the value-addedness of his/her junior secondary school, and likewise for school change within the senior years (i.e. S4 and S5).

When the student mobility adjustment is made in the decile rank method, schools will be ranked according to the *weighted* mean of the SSPA standard scores and the *weighted* mean of the HKCEE best 6 subject aggregates. Similarly, the *weighted* mean of residuals will be used to calculate the confidence intervals when regression method is used.

The methodology described above may be rather technical to some readers. Schools can contact Mr CHUNG Chi-hung, Research Officer of the Decision Support Unit, Education Department at 2892 6463, for queries or more information regarding the methodology. Schools may also approach the District Education Offices for general enquiries on value-addedness.

Education Department  
March 2000

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