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Explaining variations in the local implementation of a national policy : inclusive education in four Beijing schools.

Kai Yu
University of Massachusetts Amherst

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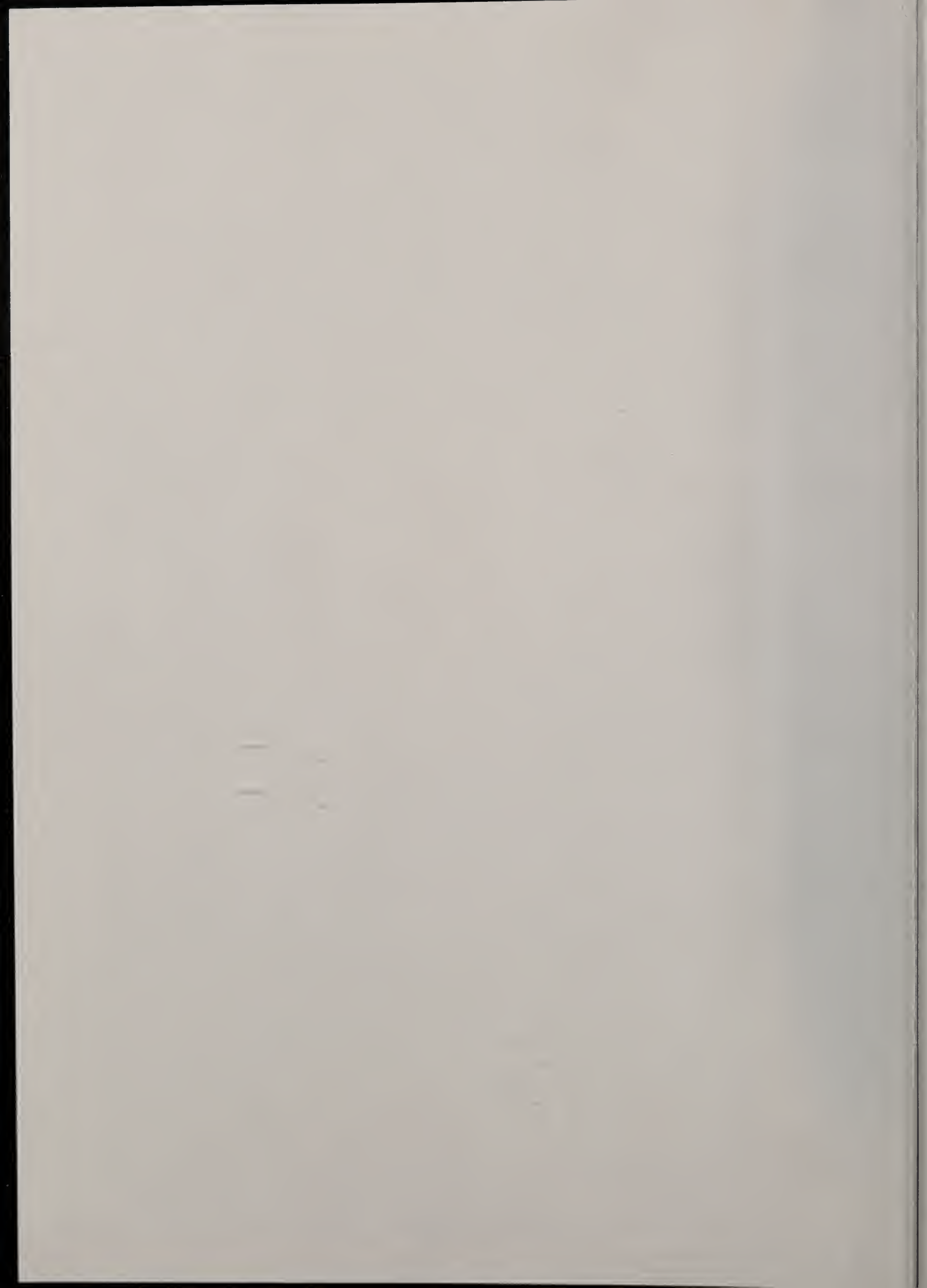
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EXPLAINING VARIATIONS IN THE LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION OF A NATIONAL POLICY: INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN FOUR BEIJING SCHOOLS

A Dissertation Presented

by

KAI YU

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

September 2008

School of Education

Education Policy and Leadership

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DEDICATION

To my daughter Feiyang and her generation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thank you to members of China Studies Club at the University of Massachusetts, particularly to Zhaochang Peng, Ningyu Li, Shuang Wu, Zhun Xu, Li Gu, Yicen Cao, and Min Zeng. Although we do not always agree with each other on each and every issue, I do believe that everyone can make a difference and united, we can make change happen and create history.
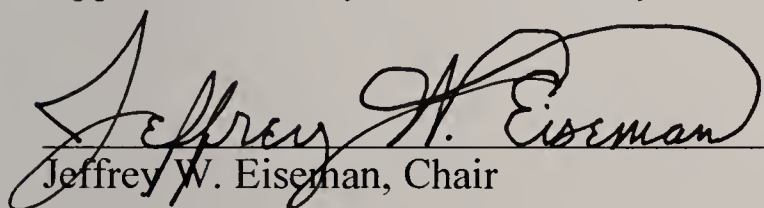
ABSTRACT

EXPLAINING VARIATIONS IN THE LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION OF A NATIONAL POLICY: INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN FOUR BEIJING SCHOOLS
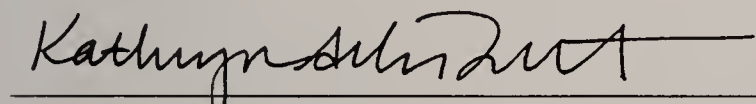
SEPTEMBER 2008

KAI YU, B.A., WUHAN UNIVERSITY

M.Ed., CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY FOR NATIONALITIES

Ph.D., BEIJING NORMAL UNIVERSITY

Ed. D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Jeffrey W. Eiseman

The problem this study addresses is the gap between tracking — grouping students by ability, a practice that stems, in part, from a prevailing meritocratic ideology — and inclusive education — grouping students heterogeneously, a practice that the central government has adopted as official policy. The goals of this study are to (1) discover attitudes, strategies, tactics, and other behavior (embraced or engaged in by school principals, teachers, and other actors) that support and inhibit the government's policy of dismantling the tracking structure, and (2) to explore their causes and consequences.

The literature review begins with a discussion of how meritocracy and a tracking system were successfully institutionalized in China and why they are in trouble today, mainly from the perspective of ideological change in China. The second section of this review summarizes the effects of tracking system on students' academic achievement and personal and social development, and explores the complex interaction between tracking, meritocracy, and social inequality. The last section discusses existing policy

implementation theories, especially the institutional perspective. Based on the policy processes in China, this dissertation proposes an analytical framework for a centralized system.

The primary data collection method is interviewing, supported by reviewing documents and observing. Data analysis is guided by procedures that have been developed to create "grounded theory."

The data analysis is divided into five main sections. The first section describes the policy settings, including the state context, an overview of basic education in Beijing, the general school context, policy mandates, and theory of action. The second section presents a panorama of the teachers' reflections on the implementation process of the detracking policy. The third section draws on data from principal interviews, observation, and reflection logs to present coherent implementation stories for the four schools. The fourth section constructs categories of cross-case analysis and reports on dimensions of attitudes and beliefs, instructional and pedagogical practices for implementing inclusive education programs. The final section provides a summary that reflects upon my research questions and general interpretations of the interviewees' responses.

Using causal links among the existing categories, the dissertation study discusses different implementation instruments and outcomes — specifically, pathfinding, selective compliance, skeptical and reluctant compliance, and resisting. In conclusion, this study provides recommendations for the improvement of policy process from the political, cultural and technical perspectives.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Since the mid 1980s, the Peoplé's Republic of China (PRC) has been transforming its K-12 education from exam-oriented track into "Quality Education." The governing Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Chinese Ministry of Education (MOE) have tried to make Quality Education a policy mandate and hold all schools accountable for its implementation. On June 29 of 2006, President Hu Jintao signed a revised version of the Compulsory Education Law (CEL). For the first time, Quality Education is written into national laws. The revised Compulsory Education Law went into effect from September 1, 2006.

The Quality Education Project (QEP) is a multidimensional and complex undertaking. Its guiding principle can be summarized in "two alls": "education for all" and "all-round development" or in other words, holistic development. This study will focus on the implementation of the part of "education for all" at the street level, although these two goals are interwoven with each other in the reality. For the convenience of writing, this study will use the term of inclusive education instead of "education for all."

Originally in North America and Western Europe, inclusive education referred to the education of children with disabilities. A series of United Nations policies affirm the basic human right of all children to equal education without discrimination within the mainstream education system. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific

and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Salamanca Statement, inclusive education means that "schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups" (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1994, p. 6). This paper will adopt this broader definition of inclusive education when studying the implementation issue of "education for all."

Literally, the principle of equal access to education was laid down in the 1986 Compulsory Education Law. Articles IV and IX prescribe that "all children of school-age with Chinese citizenship are under a legal obligation and have equal access to receive compulsory education, regardless of sex, ethnic, race, property, or religion." In spite of the dominant leftist ideology in Chinese public education, the swing of the pendulum has started to move to the rhetoric of marketization and privatization since 1990s. With the advancement of decentralization, the ideologies of individualism and efficiency are gaining momentum not only in the developed areas, but also in economically less developed areas as well.

Realizing the importance of educational equality, China tried to keep a balance between its fast growing market economy and social justice. The concept of inclusive education has been a central theme of the governing Communist Party's education policies. According to Article XXII of the revised Compulsory Education Law, "the county governments and educational authorities shall assume their responsibilities to ensure equal conditions and quality for local schools. It shall be forbidden to identify key

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schools at a local level and key classes inside a school. Under no circumstances may the county governments and educational authorities privatize public education." The acknowledgement of inclusion within a revised national law which benefits all pupils with different needs was an exciting development. However, the extent to which street-level bureaucrats will implement inclusive education in classrooms remained unclear.

Statement of the problem

Given the challenges of China's rapidly changing political and economical environment, it has become imperative to change the policies relating to meritocratic examination. China has a long record of meritocratic examination that can be traced back to the seventh century. Since then through the whole imperial history, the Imperial Examination System assured a steady stream of competent bureaucrats who were prepared to enter the state's civil service. It also produced culturally conservative intellectuals for over one thousand years. After the fall of Qing Dynasty to the newly risen republic in 1911, both Kuomintang (KMT) and communist administrations developed a similar national examination system for their new political regimes.

The most radical change happened to meritocratic examination after Mao Tse-tung began the Cultural Revolution. In the middle of the 1960s, Mao authorized the rebellion of students against educational authorities with "bourgeois tendencies," in an effort to eliminate class distinctions. According to new admission policy, access to higher education was no longer based on academic performance but exclusively on

recommendation from the working class.[1] Disadvantaged children were given better educational opportunities, whereas the offspring of the middle and upper class were purposely deprived of such opportunities. With such drastic redistribution of educational resources, Mao believed that China would achieve social equality within one generation. Such a massive turnaround allowed for the admission of a large number of unqualified students and had devastating effects on China's society and economy.

When Deng Xiaoping ascended to power in 1977, he reinstated the national admission examination and reintroduced academic standards at all schooling levels. Under his pragmatist leadership, the educational system revived meritocracy by stratifying public schooling into key schools and non-key schools. The key schools, which usually had records of past excellent accomplishment, were allowed to admit the best students, mainly on the basis of testing scores, for intensive training to compete for higher level education. Although the key schools constituted a small percentage of all schools at the same grades, they were given priority in the distribution of teachers, equipment, and funds. From late 1980s on, the legitimacy of key schools was questioned by local educational authorities and parents, since this system favored metropolitan areas and children from more educated background. In Shanghai, Beijing, and Tianjin, local governments had successively declared that the key school system ceased to function. Finally, the central government abolished it by Compulsory Education Law in 2006.

---

[1] Chen (1974) noted:
> There are four steps to the application for admission: (1) application by the worker, peasant, or soldier concerned, (2) recommendation by the 'masses,' which means essentially the workers-peasants-soldiers of the production unit, (3) approval of the 'leadership,' which means the revolutionary committee and the Party branch, and (4) final acceptance by the school. Of those who apply, a small number are selected for recommendation on the basis of production and ideological-political record. Physical fitness is also an important criterion. (p. 140)

However, a specter is haunting China — the specter of meritocracy. Key schools and classes still survive, but take more undetectable forms in most parts of China. Many educators have serious reservations about supporting the widespread placement of academically disadvantaged students with gifted students in the same educational environment. The belief that a modern economy should be created and supported by meritocracy can be best summarized in Torsten Husen's statement:

> We have on the one hand the trend toward cognitive competence becoming the "power basis," and on the other the quest for greater equality of life chances, coping power and participation. . . . Evidently, the resolution of this dilemma is a matter of value priorities. The goal of economic growth is inextricably linked to the creation of competencies conducive to meritocracy. The goal of redemptive quality can be achieved only by playing down the rewards, status and authority connected with superior competence. (T. Husen, 1974, p. 143)

The meritocratic ideology has been embedded into Chinese society, so much so that people believe they should and can be rewarded for their effort and ability. Chinese society maintained its integration through meritocracy for over a thousand years. The Imperial Examination and later national admission examination system provided the channel for upward social mobility to children from different family backgrounds. Although the system did not guarantee complete equality, it attempted to promote achieved status and to minimize the effect of ascribed status, thus reducing corruption and increasing morale in upward social mobility. Among popular beliefs is that "before the system of grades, everyone is equal."

Is the meritocratic system an impartial one or just illusion? In early 1980s, Julia Kwong concluded after her intensive study that "the examination system in China, is, in

itself, fair," but "it is selecting a biased sample of the population" and "reinforces and extends the initial advantages parents give their children." She further explained:

> Given the close family units and differences in social stratifications in China, social background influences educational achievements in ways similar and yet different from the west. It is not so much the economic advantage but the encouragement and coaching of the educated parents that give these children the edge. These children do better in the examination than those from the peasant/worker families and, in turn, the examination system gives them further privileges and opportunities, widening the gap between them and others. (J. Kwong, 1983)

The problem of educational opportunities is only one part of the meritocracy story in China. The public also raised concerns about the educational differentiation behind the meritocratic examination system. Such a system focuses exclusively on academic performance. A large number of students are labeled as academically disadvantaged. They will either attend vocational schools to become workers or stay in unfavorable classrooms with a slim hope of excelling in high stakes testing. Either may cause them to suffer psychologically or economically. A direct aftermath is that a lot of people, when grown up, are excluded from meaningful participation in the economic, social, political, and cultural life of their communities.

Educational equality efforts deteriorated after introduction of the market economy and decentralization. The dominant egalitarian philosophy of the CCP began to withdraw, wither, and collapse in the middle 1990s, when privatization and marketization roared into the field of public services. The current Chinese society may be the most affluent one in its history. In the past decade, the values of meritocracy, marketization, decentralization, and equality have come into conflict. For the first time in its history, the

CCP gave up its free high education and job assignment system. Clark Kerr (1978) commented "it is not possible to be both for modernization and against meritocracy [in China]," but he also expressed his concern:

> It is possible to avoid development of a "new class" with special privileges for its members and their children. The real issue is not whether a meritocracy is being developed — it is, but whether or not this meritocracy will evolve into a privileged "new class." (p. 2)

Since the middle 1990s, the new rich people began to advocate school choice and tried to privatize key schools (traditionally public schools) in metropolitan China. Although the central government repeatedly declared school choice illegal, the neighborhood school policy has not been enhanced at the street level. The children from new rich families can get into good public schools by donation, although they may not appear on the school roster. On the other side, the children from disadvantaged backgrounds are further discouraged from realizing their dream of upward mobility: even though they can get on top of a meritocratic system, they may be stopped by the increasing cost of higher education.

Today's China is at a crossroad. The human rights and social justice agenda demand the adoption of inclusive education. Its implementation becomes critical to end a long undecided ideological debate between China's new conservative and new leftist politicians and intellectuals.

The problem this study addresses is defined as a perceived gap between the prevailing meritocractic ideology at the street level and the central government's policy

effort to dismantle the tracking structure. This study explores the ways to bridge this gap in order to promote a more inclusive education in China's K-12 system.

<div align="center">Purpose of the study</div>

This study provides fundamental data for deciding on the feasibility and effectiveness of implementing a new inclusive education policy in Beijing, mainly from observations, interviews, and examination of documents. Specifically, this study presents a panorama of the teachers' reflections on the change process and coherent implementation stories for inclusive education. This study also reports on dimensions of attitudes and beliefs, instructional and pedagogical practices for implementing inclusive education program.

More than case studies, this dissertation study also seeks to develop implementation instruments that are grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed. Based on the cross-study analysis, these instruments become my theoretical account of the general features of implementation process in China, its issues and problems. Therefore, the goals of this study are also to discover the factors that support or inhibit the central government's national policy and to offer policy recommendations, as the main title of this dissertation suggests. I expect some transferable understanding and knowledge that may be useful in other education policy implementation studies.

The five objectives below outline the purpose of the study:

1. To examine the perceptions of key players involved in the implementation process at the street level: their needs for change, their attitude toward it, and their feeling of the extent to which the inclusive education program is already implemented;

<div align="center">8</div>

2. To discuss how street-level bureaucrats implement the central government's proposed inclusive education reform plan;

3. To identify the areas for street-level bureaucrats for improvement in order to implement inclusive education;

4. To develop a substantive theory interrelating categories of implementing inclusive education and propose hypotheses;

5. To provide information and data for policy-makers to reconsider the possibility of redesigning the educational system, and policy recommendations at the end of this dissertation.

The first three objectives will be addressed in Chapter Four, especially in the section of "Research Questions Revisited." Chapter Five will discuss more general and inductive implementation issues.

Significance of the study

I was brought up in a peasant's family. It is difficult for me to convey the pain I felt as I watched most Chinese peasants assume demeaning roles, exacerbated by their poor education and ignorance of their rights. Their experience has made a deep impression on me and sensitized me to the injustices that so many suffer. I was lucky that I grew up in a time when the CCP still promoted its social egalitarian ideology. I received free higher education until I got my first doctoral degree. Today my daughter can live in Beijing and enjoy all kinds of modern amenities that I never dreamed of when I was a country boy. However, I never think it is just because my hard work has paid off. I cannot stop thinking of my parents, my brothers, my sisters, and my fellow people who still make a living in the rural areas.

After coming to the United States, I got a chance to know this country that I have been admiring since I was very young. During my stay, the New Right ideology of the Republican administration dominated its domestic policies, from tax reduction and social security reform to the No Child Left Behind Act, from immigrant debate to emergency management in New Orleans, so much so that I have had to reflect on my experience and refresh my understanding about social equality and equity. I realized that what happened at the local and national level was also global. The problems America is facing today may be the ones China will be dealing with tomorrow. It reminds me that freedom, democracy, social justice, equality, and equity are not just philosophical issues to be explored and debated. Instead, they are practical tasks that demand commitment and achievement in the present global society.

A study of implementing inclusive education program is important for several reasons. First, inquiry into the ways in which street-level bureaucrats understand meritocracy and social inequality can help to reveal the underlying logic of organizations' activities, and thus adds to academic research and literature in this field. Second, the street-level bureaucrats, who directly interact with citizens and deliver public services, hold positions that require a great amount of knowledge, commitment, capacity, and a sense of social justice. I expect this study to help improve street-level bureaucrats' implementation practice and debug the policy process; Third, I expect to conclude by describing some implications for policy makers.

Assumptions

This study is based upon the following assumptions:

1. Modernization of a society not only means competence in science and technology, economic wealth, but also includes democracy, equality, and equity;

2. The need for change in education should not be exclusively cast in economic terms and particularly in relation to the preparation of a workforce. It also involves a country's responsibility to cultivating civil society, and particularly citizenship education;

3. A sustainable democracy and economy is possible only when all its citizens meaningfully participate in the economic, social, political, and cultural life of their communities;

4. Inclusion is economically and politically affordable for the mass both in developed countries and in developing countries.

Definitions

The following terms are endorsed throughout this paper and require specific definitions:

Meritocracy: A social system that gives political power, economic returns, or social position to individuals who show their effort and ability according to a set of standards generally accepted by the mainstream society.

Tracking: A practice in which students are classified into categories, most probably according to their academic competency, so that students will be kept on different tracks of future careers and lives.

Inclusive Education: An educational system that is open to all students, that exposes all students to the same educational environment with the least difference, and that ensures all students learn and participate effectively within supportive cultures, curricula, and communities.

Implementation: A policy process in which public service providers obtain certain core components of desired change by using technical, administrative, and bargaining capabilities to overcome resistance to and deflection of policy.

Overview

Chapter One provides the background that the audience will need in order to understand the history and present situation of tracking system in China. It also presents an argument for the necessity of implementing inclusive education program at the street level. I describe the tension between the prevailing meritocractic ideology and policy efforts to dismantle the tracking system, and explain why this study may help the policy makers to be informed of implementation drama at the other end of policy process and why this study may help central government to meet the challenge of "education for all."

Chapter Two begins with a discussion of how meritocracy and a tracking system were successfully institutionalized in China and why they are in trouble today, mainly from the perspective of ideological change in China. The second section of this review summarizes the effects of the tracking system on students' academic achievement, personal, and social development, and explores the complex interaction between tracking, meritocracy, and social inequality. The last section discusses existing policy

implementation theories, especially the institutional perspective. Based on the policy

processes in China, this dissertation proposes an analytical framework for a centralized

system.

Chapter Three introduces the research methods used for data collection and

analysis. This chapter presents overall approach and rationale for the study and details its

major procedures. I describe my role in this study and anticipated ethical issues followed

by strategies for validating findings. Methodological delimitations and limitations of this

study are also considered in this chapter.

Chapter four describes the study results. The chapter is divided into five main

sections. The first section describes the policy settings, including the state context, an

overview of basic education in Beijing, the general school context, policy mandates, and

theory of action. The second section presents a panorama of the teachers' reflections on

the implementation process of the detracking policy. The third section draws on data

from principal interviews, observation, and reflection logs to present coherent

implementation stories for the four schools. The fourth section constructs categories of

cross-case analysis and reports on dimensions of attitudes and beliefs, instructional and

pedagogical practices for implementing inclusive education program. The final section

provides a summary that reflects upon my research questions and general interpretations

of the interviewees' responses.

Chapter five uses causal links among the existing categories to discuss different

implementation instruments and outcomes — specifically, pathfinding, selective

compliance, skeptical and reluctant compliance, and resisting. It will furthermore provide

recommendations for the improvement of policy process from the political, cultural and

technical perspectives.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF KEY ISSUES AND LITERATURE

Overview

Education plays an important role in economic growth and social progress. Equal access to education is among the basic human rights to which everyone is entitled. As one of the world's most egalitarian societies in the 1970s, China in the 1990s ran into a retreat from equality that has been unusually rapid. Although the Chinese government has made efforts to reform its educational institutions, the unequal distribution of educational resources has increased in the past twenty years. Educational inequality has resulted in an economical gap between urban and rural areas at the national level, which caught the attention of sociologists and economists since the late 1990s (Rong & Shi, 2001). Furthermore, there is another form of educational inequality — tracking, which has been deeply embedded in Chinese educational system — which cannot be overlooked in the generally rose-colored background of growth.

This chapter begins with a discussion of how meritocracy and a tracking system were successfully institutionalized in China and why they are in trouble today, mainly from the perspective of ideological change in China. The second section of this chapter summarizes the effects of tracking systems on students' academic achievement, personal and social development, and explores the complex interaction between tracking, meritocracy and social inequality. The last section of this chapter discusses existing

policy implementation theories, especially the institutional perspective. Based on the policy processes in China, I propose an analytical framework for a centralized system.

<p style="text-align:center;">Research on China's Meritocracy</p>

The Imperial Examination and Rising of Meritocracy in the Pre-Liberation Era

The ethic of Confucius (551 — 479 B.C.) was the moral basis to which both individuals and the government looked for guidance for their conduct in imperial China. As an educator, Confucius believed that a human being was by nature good and could be correctly molded by education. As a political philosopher, Confucius held that the rulers of a country should be chosen based on merit, not on parentage. While the belief in this malleability had its egalitarian implications, the emphasis on merit in practice led to a nationwide civil service examination system (imperial examination, 605 — 1905). Theoretically, any male adult in China, regardless of his wealth or social status, could become a civil servant by passing the tests. Although the validity of this examination is questioned today (Suen & Yu, 2006), it once aroused widespread admiration in the western world (Kracke, 1947; Teng, 1943). The channel through which governmental officials were recruited from different social and economic backgrounds kept China from being a closed aristocracy or theocracy for centuries, as Max Weber commented,

> Social rank in China has been determined more by qualification for office than by wealth. This qualification, in turn, has been determined by education, and especially by examinations. . . . Literati have been the bearers of progress toward a rational administration and of all

> "intelligence." . . . For more than two thousand years the literati have definitely been the ruling stratum in China and they still are. . . . If a plebeian succeeded (in imperial examination), he shared the prestige of any other scholar. Even in the feudal period, the stratum of literati was not hereditary or exclusive. (Weber, trans. 1958, pp. 416-417)

The imperial examination is the forerunner of today's National Admission Exam for Colleges and Universities (NAE) on which the tracking system was based. Some of the weaknesses of NAE and other high stakes testing can also find their roots in the imperial examination system.

First, the imperial examination system produced a culturally and politically conservative elite indoctrinated in Confucian learning, literati, as Weber called it. Kracke (1953) found:

> The Confucian classics became a fundamental part of the state constitution. . . . This function of the classics was not formally stated in the legal codes; it was accepted as an assumption so basic that it required no statement. The state undertook the responsibility of establishing the correct version of the classical texts; their teachings tempered the clauses of the laws and the way in which they were applied. (p. 21)

Especially after Neo-Confucian interpretation of Confucian classics was adopted as state dogma in the twelfth century, there had been almost no opportunities for the development of original ideas. All interpretations had to comply with orthodox Neo-Confucian theory, which had moral quality and personal performance as top priorities. Confucian ideology, the examination system, and imperial power were thus interwoven together in a mutually sustaining relationship that would dominate Chinese intellectual life and promote the meritocracy.

Second, these examinations involved abstract knowledge of the Confucian classics and most related to ethical and political philosophy as well as literary education. Very few people could afford the time needed to gain such knowledge and many fewer applied such knowledge to social production. Franke (1960) summarized criticisms of this system,

> Nearly all of the criticisms of the system … focused on the same points: that the examinations were too stereotyped and formalistic, that they prevented or restricted the development of talents, and finally that the most able and talented men were not obtained for government service by the examination system. These were also the main points stressed by the leaders of the reform movement that eventually led to the abolition of the examination system. (pp. 25-26)

There were some intellectuals who tried to seek practical knowledge from outside of the ivory tower, but the majority of Chinese intellectuals were confined to orthodox moral and social philosophy. As a result, this examination system supplied narrowed-minded literati who were ignorant of the real world at different levels of the hierarchical bureaucracy. They also had a bias against practical knowledge and created difficulties for the advancement of modern science and technology. Educational institutions were oriented not toward teaching and learning but to inculcating the skills necessary to pass the imperial examinations. This trend became the first fully documented occurrence of "diploma disease" (Dore, 1976).

Finally, the lack of a national general education system and emphasis on the imperial examination conspired to consolidate the meritocracy. Literate education was provided almost entirely by private tutors, private academies, charitable schools, or community efforts through the whole of the imperial era. Although there were a few

official schools and academies where scholars could study higher learning, the government was content to leave most education in the hands of local communities. In his 1058 political reform, then Premier Wang Anshi tried to replace the examination system with a nationwide school system from which the candidates for civil service would be recruited, but he failed after the conservative politicians regained power (Kracke, 1953). Only after China's last imperial dynasty, the Ch'ing, lost the war against Western invasion, were professional schools for the study of foreign languages and modern science introduced to China in the demise of imperial examination in the late nineteenth century. At the end of this imperial era, the literacy rates were low. Evelyn Rawski has determined "80 percent illiteracy" ratio for the population as a whole with 90-98 percent for women and 60-70 percent for men during this period (Rawski, 1979, p. 23). The right to education had become a privilege for a small number of literati throughout most of imperial era. It was not until 1904 that a national education system – including primary schools, middle schools, and higher education institutions – appeared for the first time in Chinese history.

The Cultural Revolution and Failure of Radical Reform against Meritocracy

The nationalist government after the 1911 revolution, facing Japanese invasions and Communist competition, failed to develop a strong public education system. When the CCP took over power in 1949, there were 207 institutes of higher learning with 155,306 students, 5,892 secondary schools with 1,878,528 students, and 290,617 elementary schools with 23,813,705 students. It means that less than 20 percent of the

population of school age was enrolled in school (Tsang, 1968, p. 192). The CCP worked hard on the popularization of public education. The educational record of the first decade was impressive. According to government statistics, enrolment in primary schools increased nearly three times, secondary schools five times, and higher education four times between 1950 and 1958. It was an overall increase of 300 percent in enrolment between 1950 and 1957. By the end of 1957, about 40 percent of the school-age population (about 189 million) was receiving an education (J. Kwong, 1979, p. 69). Nevertheless, the CCP had a vision going beyond those goals. In the field of public education, the CCP under Mao's leadership tried to extend educational opportunities especially to the working class who had traditionally been deprived of education. This mission was fairly well accomplished. See Table 2-1 to see proportion of students of worker and peasant origin to total number of students.

Table 2-1: Proportion of Students of Worker and Peasant Origin to Total Number of Students (1951-1957) (percentage of total in each category)

	Higher Education	Vocational Middle Schools	Middle Schools
1951	19.1	56.6	51.3
1952	20.5	57.1	56.1
1953	21.9	55.9	57.7
1954	--	58.8	60.7
1955	29.0	62.0	62.2
1956	34.1	64.1	66.0
1957	36.3	66.6	69.1
1958	49.0	77.0	75.2

Note: Data for students in higher education include graduate students (J. Kwong, 1979, p. 105; Taylor, 1981, p. 106).

As a radical leftist political power, the CCP sought to remold the policy environment including ideology, thereby promoting social change and economic

development under its supervision. The CCP's education policy, as Mao formulated it, is that "our educational policy must enable everyone who receives an education to develop morally, intellectually, and physically and become a well educated worker imbued with socialist consciousness." Therefore, education has to serve the proletariat and be integrated with productive labor. It was called the "open-door" policy of running the schools. Chen (1974) summarized,

> Students learn not only in school but also outside. The school should cooperate closely with outside agencies — the factories, the communes and brigades, the revolutionary committees of various units, and families — and coordinate all activities so they may become parts of a planned program working for common objectives. The "open-door" also means that students and teachers should learn from the workers and peasants and in turn help to solve the problems of the masses. (p. 46)

The aim of the "open-door" policy is to completely destroy the meritocracy that has characterized Chinese society for centuries. Mao insisted it was only through practical experience that students could become real intellectuals: "the intellectuals will accomplish nothing if they fail to integrate themselves with the workers and peasants" (Mao, 1961, p. 238). As early as 1964, Mao criticized the examination and grading system. "Our present method of conducting examinations is a method for dealing with the enemy, not a method for dealing with the people. It is a method of surprise attack, asking oblique or strange questions. . . . I do not approve of this" (Schram, 1976, pp. 204-205).

Both the extension of educational opportunities to the working class and the "open-door" policy indicated that the new republic had no intent to take remedial measures to fix its educational problem. Instead, it was asking for radical change. The educational opportunities in the reform are different from the Affirmative Action reforms

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in the United States in that China's reform extended educational opportunities to the children from the working class and excluded or at least blocked some chances for the children that came from advantaged backgrounds. It is exactly how Samuel P. Huntington (1968) defined revolution: "a rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change in the dominant values and myths of a society, in its political institutions, social structure, leadership, and government activity and policies," to "control economic and political institutions of a society by, and/or in the interests of, the majority of the population, starting from the bottom-up" (p. 264). The "open-door" policy also went further than Dewey's belief that "school is society." Mao believed that the whole society is a big school where the next generation would work with the working class and be infused with proletarian ideology. At this point, the CCP leaders preferred radical systemic change to the remedial measures that they dismissed as "patchwork." Pepper (1996) noted:

> The essential features of the Chinese system (in this stage) were a curriculum designed to meet the needs of a mass clientele; the widely promoted goal of 10-year universal schooling; decentralized local administration; and tertiary-level selection aimed at minimizing discrimination against the poor. (p. 1)

Mao's grand design provoked a mighty backlash. It became apparent that educational transformation had been far more difficult than Mao and the CCP expected in the 1960s and 1970s. While formerly underrepresented children from the working class flooded into high schools and colleges, they found they could not hold their own places, especially in key schools where academic standards were enforced. According to Julia Kwong (1979).

In spite of this increase, these students are under-represented when conservative estimates would put their percentage in the population at large at over 80 percent. It seems that higher education, at least, remained the fairly exclusive preserve of intellectuals, professionals, cadres, and rich peasants. (p. 70)

Underlying these conflicts was a dilemma that had plagued the Chinese government since its establishment in 1949. Should priority be given to "popularization" of public education to the working class or to "improvement" in educational quality for China's advance toward modernization? Mao blamed bureaucratic and bourgeois ideology for the failure of the new educational system to meet his expectation. His solution was the Cultural Revolution by which he expected to keep up the ideological fervor of proletarian revolution and safeguard new political and economic institutions and systems. Confucian tradition and meritocratic ideology became the first targets of the Cultural Revolution. Mao showed his determination to place "proletarian politics" in full command, even at risk of lowering academic standards and, in the short run, slowing the pace of modernization. On June 13, 1966, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the State Council decreed that all university enrolment should be suspended until alternative admission standards, curriculum, and teaching methods could be invented. The new methods of enrolment were created based on a system of recommendation and selection with the final decisions resting on local communities and working class people.[2]

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[2] The new methods of enrolment were based on a system of recommendation and selection. Students were to be chosen from among those recommended by the masses for their outstanding moral, intellectual, and physical qualities. The same criteria were to be used to enroll students for higher middle schools. According to Taylor (1981),

By 1970 four categories of eligible applicant were being laid down with greater clarity and the Guangming Daily gave the main enrolment targets for scientific and engineering institutions: (1) the best elements among workers and peasants, who had come to prominence in the three great

However, "the de-emphasis on academic evaluation, together with the lowly status of academics and the inordinate amount of time students spent in production work, undermined the academic climate and quality of the schools"(J. Kwong, 1988, p. 156). Mao's radical policies had the working class (peasants and workers) majority as the target group rather than wealthy landowners, capitalists and bourgeois minority "to make intellectuals of the laboring people and laborers of intellectuals" and "to reduce the 'three great distinctions' — between town and country, industry and agriculture, mental and manual labor" (Pepper, 1996, pp. 384-385). The policy outcomes were mixed. The educational infrastructure was decimated as a tool of class struggle, and students suffered from ideology-intensive instruction, almost non-existent curricula and low academic standards. "The most serious negative consequences of the Cultural Revolution reforms were a decline in the quality of education and disruption of scientific research" (Shirk, 1979). The utopian social experiment failed, as his successor had dismissed as a mere "10-year disaster," but his attempts to institute a rural-based educational system that would be integrated into the production process and promote social equality should not be overlooked.

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revolutionary movements, possessed three years or more of practical experience, were twenty years of age, and had reached a cultural level equivalent to that of lower of higher middle school; (2) intellectual youth who had taken part in productive labor in the countryside or had returned to their native places; (3) members of the People's liberation Army, and (4) young cadres. Old workers and poor and lower middle peasants were not subject to the entrance restriction of age and cultural level. (p. 149)

Market Forces and the Comeback of Meritocracy

The course Mao had charted for the Chinese educational system ended together with the official abolishment of the Cultural Revolution by the new CCP leader who promised to "end the turbulence and get the country back to the right track." The irony is that at the same time the World Bank decided to learn from Chinese experience in the Cultural Revolution. Since the 1980s, Chinese education reform has moved away from a focus on equity to a focus on competition and market mechanism to improve schools. This policy shift favors efficiency and individual responsibilities over equity and public responsibilities. Mao's concern finally became the reality. The Maoist legacy of class struggle and mass movements had gone with the ending of the Cultural Revolution. Gone as well was the positive discrimination in favor of the disadvantaged children from the working class. Not only were the revolutionary forerunners with a strong ideology of equity and social justice disappointed, but also the government's intention to create a new generation faithful to communist ideals had failed.

The thousand-year-old national examination system, which provided the chief motivation for schooling, together with a nationwide hierarchy of key schools, was the first to be restored. Individualism, personal ambition, desire for material gain and comfort, and other old enemies targeted by the proletarian ideology regained their momentum. The inequalities rising from market economy and the revised distribution mechanisms were justified in the transition from class struggle to economic construction. Key schools were introduced; the nationally unified examinations were made the criterion for university

enrolment; a labor market was created with the relaxation of the old job allocation system, which encouraged stratification and specialization.

With the restoration of national college entrance examination, Chinese teachers, parents, and students became obsessed with testing scores. Basically, a Chinese student has gone through over 100 screenings based on testing scores before arriving to take the national college entrance examination. Good academic performance in earlier educational stages foreshadows success on the college entrance examination and might help secure a promising career, which had led to exactly what R. P. Dore called the "diploma disease" in the later developed nations (Dore, 1976): "(1) the more school certificates and degrees were likely to be used as the main criteria for occupational selection, (2) the faster the rate of educational inflation, and (3) as a consequence of the foregoing, the more examination-ridden schooling would become" (Pepper, 1996, p. 19). Unger further (1980) explained:

> In these Third World countries, students are anxious for paper credentials in education sufficiently good to give them a chance for a job in the modern economic sector. Schooling becomes primarily a competition to climb high enough on the school ladder to secure such credentials, and the students' efforts from primary school through junior and senior high school become glued to "prepping" for a succession of entrance examinations. (Unger, 1980)

The rehabilitation of key schools right after the Cultural Revolution also contributed to the tension. These key schools had an unstated aim of bringing up a small contingent of top scientists and enjoyed a number of privileges that included recruiting and providing support to some of the most brilliant students and teachers. It also marked the shift from a proletariat education to an elite education. In the national college

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entrance examinations, most key school students were admitted into key universities. Therefore, the path to attend college now consists of a whole series of screening tests accompanied with the competition for key schools. The tracking taking place after middle schools is likely to be more important than the college entrance examination for screening out students. In identifying cadres (government and party functionaries) as advantaged groups in Chinese context, Robert Arnove (1984) observed:

> In China, where schools are public, the elite institutions consist of the keypoint schools, which are located in urban areas and serve those who did best on rigorous examinations. Families who are able to tutor their children for these examinations obviously enjoy an advantage in the academic obstacle course, and, not surprisingly, a disproportionate number of these families are comprised of cadres and party officials. (Arnove, 1984)

Besides cadres, Stig Thøgersen (1990) also added intellectuals as one of advantaged groups in China, but he also said, "The occupational status of parents . . . did exert a certain influence on school performance, but not in the sense that children from high-status homes got better marks than others" (p. 145). He explained that while children from disadvantaged background had difficulties getting in key schools and colleges, their academic performance would overcome whatever obstacles their background offered once they got accepted. Thøgersen noted that not only did the authorities think social bias in recruitment would throw the official egalitarian belief into doubt, but also the Chinese intellectuals and cadres refrained from talking about it. He reported that when he brought this issue up in talks with Chinese intellectuals, either "they feel that their children really are better suited for academic studies than children

from other classes," or they "hold the opinion that unbalanced recruitment really is a problem, but . . . there is no better alternative to the present selection procedure" (p. 135).

The above popular perception in Chinese intellectuals and cadres about the so-called impartiality of unified national college entrance system could not justify the underlying social bias toward children of the working class. Kwong (1983) stated:

> This is because the examination system is not instituted in a vacuum but in a stratified society. As in the west, there is social stratification in Chinese society and life chances differ according to the person's location in the social hierarchy. The advantages accrue to particular groups whose positions profoundly influence the academic achievements of their children. (J. Kwong, 1983)

Price (1997) explained:

> A major inequality of the school system that is seldom seen in those terms is the way in which it functions, as it does in all countries, to produce a small elite to fill the major positions of influence and power. In the process, many of us would argue, the great majority are trained to see themselves as failures and their subordinate and powerless position in society as a consequence of differences in natural ability. (p. 174)

The education policies that favor elite families are a better fit and are best formulated to legalize a meritocracy by creating the illusion that "examinations" are fair. In *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*, Paul Willis (1981) noted that no working class children believe that their failure is preordained. The failure is accepted as a direct consequence of an individual's ability to play the examination game rather than a result of social inequality (Willis, 1981). At the individual level, it is a meritocratic ideology that acculturates individuals into a system

that legitimates dominant culture, privileges the dominant social class groups, perpetuates the existing social order, and makes victims feel as comfortable as possible.

At the state level, market forces conspire with social selection systems thus making the elimination of educational inequality an elusive goal. Marketization is a natural extension of a meritocratic ideology embedded with economic and social issues. Competition, decentralization, and efficiency have been the keywords used in describing ongoing Chinese educational reform and they have encouraged stratification in education. Ka-Ho Mok (1997), a well-informed comparative education scholar from the City University of Hong Kong, studied the impact of marketization and decentralization on Chinese education in the Pearl River Delta. He noted:

> Under Mao, state intervention in social life was total, aiming to uphold the ideal of egalitarianism, safeguard basic needs, and maintain social stability. Under an authoritarian social policy, Chinese citizens came to rely heavily on the government. Economic reforms starting in 1978 changed the perception of social planning. . . . New values stressed personal interests, material incentives, differential rewards, economic efficiency, market distribution, and competition. In short, efficiency replaced the traditional goal of equality, and the government relaxed its control over the public domain and abandoned its role as the provider of comprehensive services. (Mok, 1997)

Efficiency as a goal is sometimes inconsistent with educational equity. Efficiency can overlook individual and societal needs when it is relegated to economic terms that are inconsistent with principles of social justice and equity. After studying the efficiency movements in the US, UK, and Australia, Anthony R. Welch (1998) concluded:

> The theme of efficiency in education has an ugly, but often hidden side. Appeals to efficiency can license attacks upon the very education system which it is supposed to enhance. In fact, as the historical and comparative case studies of both schools and universities reveal, the cult of efficiency often masks an economic, technicist conception of education which resists any incursions by criteria of equity or social or individual development. In

doing so, efficiency reveals its own value system very clearly and gives
the lie to its own claims regarding its value-free nature. (Welch, 1998)

The exclusion of disadvantaged groups from educational participation in China

provides another case for Welch's argument. The hard reality is that in the context of

increasing advocacy for efficiency, the rural poor, ethnic minorities, girls, and migrants

are left behind. These subgroups have lower enrolment and higher dropout rates at the

various levels of public education, especially in the high schools that go beyond the nine-

year compulsory education. Even though more and more disadvantaged groups make it to

post-compulsory education, they still find themselves falling short in being able to afford

tuition fees and keep up with their educational counterparts on campus with more social

capital. As Figure 2-1 and 2-2 indicate, "the disparity between the incomes of China's

urban and rural residents is continuing to widen. According to forecasts, the 1999 figure

of [Gini coefficient] 0.457 will increase to 0.458 in the year 2000. According to

international standards, absolute inequality is indicated when the Gini coefficient exceeds

0.4. It shows here that China has already entered the area of absolute inequality, and the

difference is tending to increase every year" (Hong, 2004).

China Gini Index 1981-1995
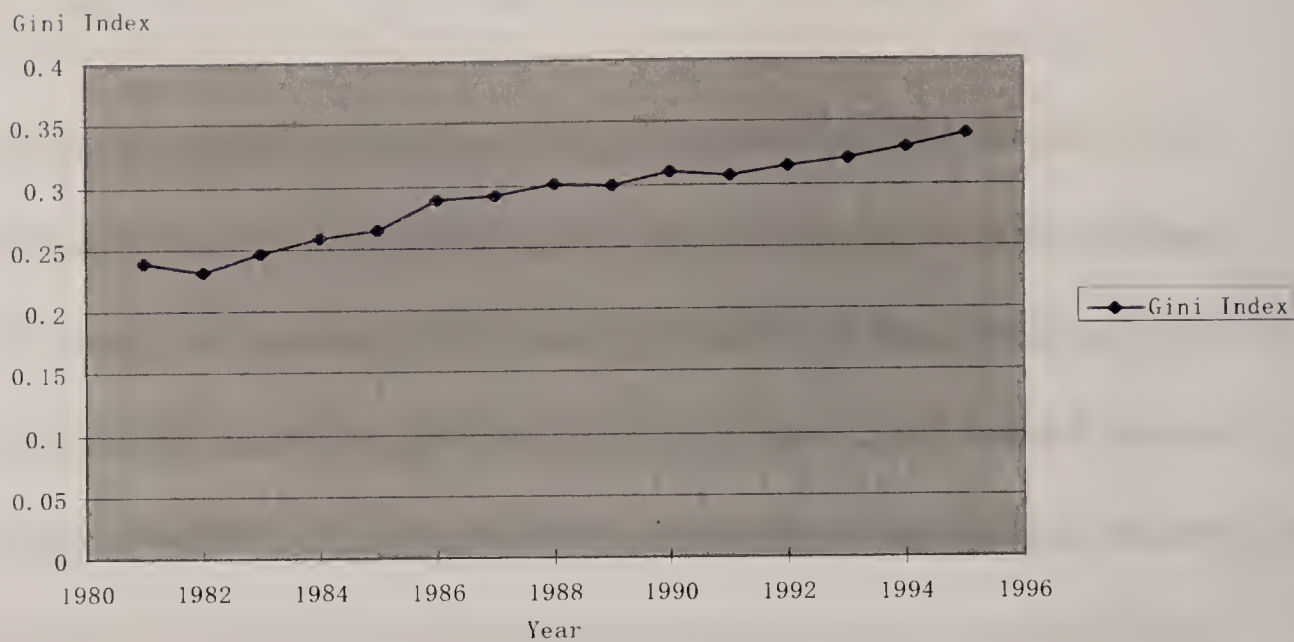
Gini Index

Figure 2-1: China Gini Index 1981-1995
Source: China Statistical Yearbook, 1981-1995

Per Capita Annual Income of Urban and Rural
Household   (in yuan)

Source: China Statistical Yearbook, 1997
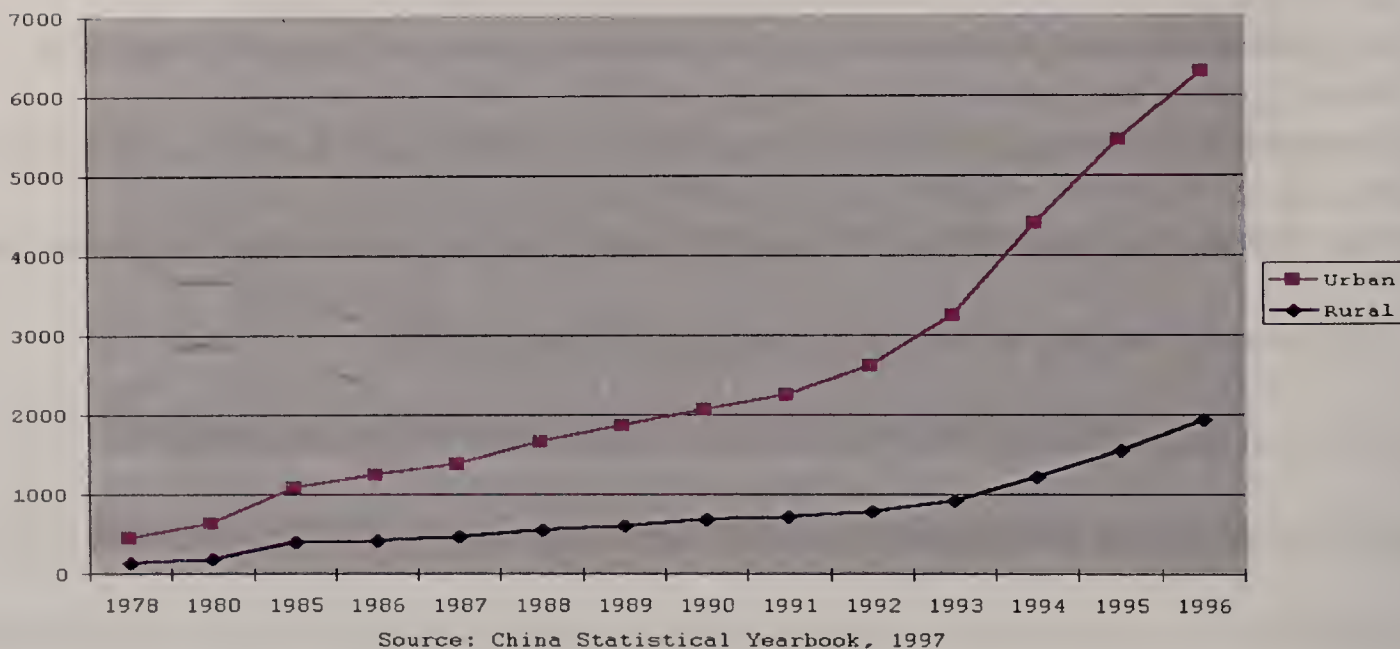
Figure 2-2: Annual Income of Chinese Urban and Rural Household 1978-1996

While China consistently increases its public expenditure for schooling, an elite

minority, usually consisting of urban, intellectual, or cadre backgrounds and new rich

businessmen, has captured a majority share and benefited more than others. Inequality of

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Education attainment produces an income gap, which will further widen the education inequality. The CCP's dominant ideology ran into a dilemma that benefits the few at the expense of the majority. The Maoist egalitarian belief that characterized the legitimacy of the CCP leadership has remained strong. Literally, the working class is "the master of this country," and China is still a socialist entity, according to the Chinese Constitution. Deng Xiaoping decided to put the ideological debate aside by embracing a philosophy exemplified by his typical slogan "a good cat is a cat that can get a mouse, no matter if it is a white cat or a black cat." This metaphor implied ending the dichotomy that exists between socialist and capitalist choices. Since the 1990s an economic, philosophical liberalism has become the predominant ideology with the withdrawal of an orthodox Marxist planned economy. Education is not the government's public responsibility any more, but is treated as a commodity (Apple, 1995). What seems to be dangerously neglected in this process is that government intervention does not necessarily have to be an obstacle to progress or lead to waste by "big government." Privatization does not necessarily produce efficient ways of dealing with complete human needs and the market forces also have a dark side. What seems to be happening is belief in a winner-take-all social Darwinist sentiment that has underlying assumptions in traditional meritocratic ideology and present market economy. The result is growing social inequality and a degraded quality of life for working-class and low-income people.

Chinese society is becoming more aware of the tracking system and less content with the outcomes being produced. In the 1990s, tracking systems ran into legal trouble in major metropolitan areas. A resistance movement appeared unexpectedly, and a change in national political climate gave rise to a serious long-term concern. Journalists

proclaimed a crisis in the field of K-12. School leaders denied it, but beneath their rhetoric of reassurance was a growing concern about the popularity of the central government's inclusive education program. In the first decade of the new millennium, MOE reluctantly took action to correct the situation, and National People's Congress (NPC) enacted CEL to abolish tracking system.

Concluding Comments

The Chinese educational experience illustrates a vacillation between a socialist egalitarian belief and a liberal cost-effective development model. The apex of China's education system has become a privileged meritocracy today. Mao's radical attempt to promote social equality has been transformed into triumph by political allies, intellectuals, bureaucrats, and a new rich class. Coupled with a market economy and decentralization, the tracking system has been tightly interwoven in the texture of the widespread meritocratic ideology as the government's policy preference.

<u>Research on Tracking</u>

China had two main sets of ability grouping systems before the 1990s: interschool grouping, i.e., students of different academic competencies are sent to different schools (regular schools and vocational schools; key schools and non key schools), and intraschool grouping, i.e., students of different achievement are separated into different classes within the same school (fast classes, regular classes, and slow classes).

The rationale for ability grouping is based on a number of "common sense" beliefs according to an experimental study examining the effects of ability grouping on the academic achievement of students conducted by Goldberg, Passow, and Justman (1966):

1. Intellectual ability, as measured by intelligence tests, is the prime factor which distinguishes between more and less "rapid" and more or less "successful" learners.
2. The average ability level of the class prompts the teacher to adjust materials and methods and to set appropriate expectations and standards. Thus, the ability of the children in large measure determines what is taught and how it is taught.
3. When the range is narrowed, the teacher can more readily adapt both content and method to the abilities of the children.
4. In the absence of ability extremes, which require special planning and instruction, each pupil can receive more teacher time and attention.
5. When the range is narrowed, the children are faced with more realistic criteria against which to measure themselves. They compete with their peers, so to speak, rather than having to compare their own achievement to that of far brighter or far duller pupils. (pp. 150-151)

Jeannie Oakes (2005) also summarized several assumptions that advocate use for tracking systems:

The first is the notion that students learn better when they are grouped with other students who are considered to be like them academically — with those who know about the same things, who learn at the same rate, or who are expected to have similar futures. This assumption is usually expressed in two ways: first, that bright students' learning is likely to be held back if they are placed in mixed groups and, second, that the deficiencies of slow students are more easily remediated if they are placed in classes together. Another assumption is that slower students develop more positive attitudes about themselves and school when they are not placed in groups with others who are far more capable. It is widely believed that daily classroom exposure to bright students has negative consequences for slower ones. A third assumption is that the placement processes used to separate students into groups both accurately and fairly reflect past achievements and native abilities. Part of this assumption too

is that these placement decisions are appropriate for future learning, either in a single class or for whole courses of study (e.g., academic or vocational). A fourth assumption is that it is easier for teachers to accommodate individual differences in homogeneous groups or that, in general, groups of similar students are easier to teach and manage. (pp. 6-7)

All these assumptions are dubious because not only have the positive effects of ability grouping on students' academic achievement not been confirmed by educational research, but there is a great deal of evidence that ability grouping affects students' personal and social development. Behind all these assumptions, Oakes (2005) stated, is social Darwinism that "had provided the 'scientific' *justification* for the schools to treat the children of various groups differently" (p. 27). She explained:

> The ethnocentric ideas of social Darwinism, the push for Americanization to socialize newcomers to their appropriate places in society, and the model of the factory as an efficient way to mass produce an educated citizenry all converged in the concept of the comprehensive high school, complete with differentiated education and with ability grouping and tracking. (p. 30)

Oakes and other researchers have been concerned both these assumptions and effects of tracking systems (Findley & Bryan, 1971; Oakes, 2005; Rosenbaum, 1976; Schafer & Olexa, 1971). The effects of tracking systems can be identified in three main areas: academic, social, and institutional (Lucas, 1999).

The Effects of Tracking on Academic Achievement

First, there is a question about the reliability in ability grouping to track achievement. Goldberg et al. (1966) studied 2200 students of 86 classes in 45 schools of

New York City in 1966. The study placed students to narrow-range grouped classes

based on their intelligence quotient (IQ) and retested them in two full years in order to

assess academic achievement and attitudes toward school, peer students, and teachers.

This study concluded that ability grouping had no consistent effects on academic

achievement at any grade level, nor does it affect students' academic interests and

attitudes toward school. In addition, educational researchers from different countries

came to the generally same conclusions in 1960s (Borg, 1968; Millman & Johnsony,

1964; Svensson, 1962). Furthermore, Eash (1961) concluded that ability grouping may

deprive low-ability students of the intellectual stimulation of their high-ability

counterpart.

Secondly, the flexibility of ability grouping is questionable. The unreliability of

ability grouping has been further exacerbated by lack of flexibility in practice. Jackson

(1964) found it is very difficult for a student to transfer between different ability groups.

According to normal shifts in IQ test scores, there should be 40 percent of students who

could transfer to another ability group, but the actual rate of transfer was only from one to

five percent. To explain this situation, John Goodlad (1984) stated:

> One of the reasons for this stability in group membership is that the work
> of upper and lower groups becomes more sharply differentiated with each
> passing day. Since those comprising each group are taught as a group most
> of the time, it is difficult for any one child to move ahead and catch up
> with children in a more advanced group, especially in mathematics. (p.
> 141)

Using a quantitative analysis, Lucas (1999) also noted, "the data do not support

the contention of greater upward than downward mobility. Instead, downward mobility

predominates. . . . It is unlikely that they will find support in the in-school stratification system for this particular legitimating myth" (p. 90).

Thirdly, the differentiated instruction, content, and pace of schools that do tracking are questionable. Using the data from *High School and Beyond national survey* of 1980 and 1982, Gamoran and Mare (1989) found "tracking reinforces initial differences among students assigned to college and noncollege curricula. Moreover, tracking widens the gap in achievement and in the probability of graduating between students of high- and low-SES background." They concluded the so-called "effects" of tracking could be explained by differences in content and speed of student learning, or in other words, "opportunities to learn" (OTL). Powell, Farrar, and Cohen (1985) confirmed that low-track classes in middle and high school receive less content and slower instruction pace. Based on a comprehensive set of data collected in 297 classrooms of 25 middle and high schools, Oakes also argued that lower-track students were exposed to less valued knowledge than high-track students, thus the practice of tracking contributed to neither excellence nor equality for most secondary students (Oakes, 1985; Oakes, Gamoran, & Page, 1992).

Fourth, the common misconceptions about heterogeneous classes, as Ann Turnbaugh Lockwood (1996) pointed out, are "that low-achieving students will be left adrift without any attention to their needs and that high-achieving students will be unchallenged" (p. 7). Teachers may prefer to teach homogeneous class to students with similar levels of academic preparation, and parents may fear their children will be slowed down by less-prepared classmates in heterogeneous classes. However, educational researchers tend to agree that there are no substantial positive effects of ability grouping

on academic achievement except that the gifted programs are effective (Gamoran, 1987;

Gamoran, 1989; Gamoran, 1992; Gamoran, 1993; C. L. C. Kulik & Kulik, 1982; J. A.

Kulik & Kulik, 1984; Oakes et al., 1992; Oakes, 2005). As Cohen and Lotan (1997)

stated:

> [In heterogeneous classrooms] the achievement of students does not vary
> widely between the academically stronger and weaker students. While the
> more successful students continue to do well, the less successful students
> are much more closely clustered around the mean achievement of the
> classroom rather than trailing far out on the failing end of the distribution.
> (p. 4)

The Effects of Tracking on Personal and Social Development

Ability grouping may have undesirable effects on students' self-attitudes and

attitudes towards others. The placement of students in different tracks contributed to lack

of self-confidence, motivation, and positive expectations for achievement. Chief Justice

Earl Warren (1954) noted in *Brown V. The Board of Education*:

> (Exclusion can) generate a feeling of inferiority as to (children's) status in
> the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely
> ever to be undone. This sense of inferiority . . . affects the motivation of a
> child to learn . . . (and) has a tendency to retard . . . education and mental
> development.

Borg (1968) stated that students in randomly grouped classes had more favorable

self-attitudes and higher self-acceptance than those in ability-grouped classes. Goldberg

et al. (1966) also found that the low-track students showed greater gains in ideal self-

image when the high-track students were absent. Eash (1961) warned that the practice of ability grouping may prevent students from being exposed to a learning environment of ethnic and cultural differences, thus depriving them of chance to develop general attitude of acceptance toward differences needed in a democracy. Both Coleman et al. (1966) and Singer (1967) suggested that heterogeneous schools allowed students to develop greater acceptance and appreciation for differences and greater realism in racial attitudes.

The literature on ability grouping also suggests that ability grouping has often functioned as a self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1957), i.e., "persons with low status are indeed less active and less influential in their interactions with high-status members" (Rich, 1993, p. 6). Douglas (1964) found students of same potential placed in the low-track classes tended to lose while less able students placed in high-track class gained. He concluded that this self-fulfilling prophecy was closely related to teacher expectations. Goldberg et al. (1966) also suggested that low ability students can achieve successfully in classes where teacher expectations were high. Yates (1966) stated that the expectations of teachers and the morale of students were greatly affected by ability grouping, which could be further justified by the results. McDermott (1977) investigated this case from a perspective of "trusting relations" in which teachers and students worked together to achieve instruction goals. He suggested the interaction and relationship between teachers and students affected the availability of instruction time and classroom climate. Therefore, students' perception of teacher support and concern, together with their relationship with one another, was important to the success of instruction. From a teachers' perspective, Wilson (1963) explained that ability grouping may create a rigid stereotype of students'

ability in the teachers' mind, and teachers in predominately working-class schools had generally lower expectations toward students' academic performance.

Heterogeneous classes have obviously positive effects on students' personal and social development, as Oakes (2005) indicated:

> In at least 83 percent of the classes where slower students were mixed with others they had markedly more positive relationships with their teachers; in at least 56 percent of the classes they had substantially more positive relationships with their peers. This leads us to consider how classroom-climate differences might play a part in students' self perceptions and school-related behaviors. It certainly helps explain why heterogeneity has a positive rather than a negative effect on students who would otherwise be in low-track classes. (p. 197)

Tracking, Meritocracy and Social Inequality

Throughout the 1960s, the predominantly progressive scholarship found that there is a very strong positive correlation between testing-based placement and socioeconomic status of students (Goldberg et al., 1966; T. Husen & Svensson, 1960; Yates, 1966). The children from higher socio-economic families, or in some cases, those with better behavioral patterns, appearance, language, and dress, get a greater chance of being put in the upper tracks, and are more likely to succeed in the following years. The practice of ability grouping seems to hold a socioeconomic bias against the lower class so that they are most often placed in lower tracks, no matter what their true ability is. Despite the rhetoric of equal opportunity and merit, the harsh reality is that schools still favor children from privileged families.

When investigating unequal educational opportunities and devising remedial measures for the U.S. federal government, James Coleman et al. (1966) found the achievement gap between black and white students could not be attributed to the distribution of material resources that was surprisingly equal in the 1960s. In his benchmark report, Coleman concluded that family background was more important than schools in explaining educational inequality. Jencks and his associates (1972) reassessed Coleman's data and came to a similar conclusion: the quality of public schools and "native ability" of students had little effect on student educational achievement or subsequent economic success. Instead, student motivation-related factors, which were difficult to measure, seemed to influence student achievement at a significant level. These factors included family income, parental occupation, and education, etc. Children from privileged families were more likely to go to college and receive more education than children from disadvantage background with the same intelligence quotient. In other words, schools were powerless to reduce economic and social inequality. The Coleman report and Jencks' research refocused educational equality issue from equality of opportunity to equality of outcome.

The practice of ability grouping is related to stratification beliefs. In 1958, Michael Young published his brilliant satire, *The Rise of the Meritocracy*. He described a society in which placement is based on talent and performance rather than the prerogatives of birth or any "native intelligence" (Young, 1958). The stratification beliefs or meritocratic values place the responsibility of personal success on the talent and effort of the individuals, therefore the outcomes of inequality can be explained as fair to an

open society and necessary to keeping society efficient. However, as Nicholas Lemann

(1999) observed:

> Our meritocracy was devised so as to nationalize education for the few of
> great gifts, identifying the best test scorers and whisking them away to
> good colleges and universities all over the country, while leaving
> education local for everyone else. Localism works reasonably well for
> most people, but it works very badly for students in those worst schools,
> most of which are poor, all-minority neighborhoods. (p. 348)

In the early 1970s, John Rawls and other American social philosophers went far

from the doctrines of Locke and Smith of the 19th century and established the concept of

equality as equity or the just and fair distribution of social advantages. Some theories saw

pedagogic discourse as the reflection of class, gender, and race issues that penetrate

social relations. In 1976, two political economists at the University of Massachusetts at

Amherst, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, published their controversial work,

Schooling in Capitalist America. In this milestone book they attacked the traditional

belief that IQ, cognitive development, and learned skills contributed to labor market

success. Bowles and Gintis (1976) stated,

> Education should be viewed as reproducing inequality by legitimating the
> allocation of individuals to economic positions on the basis of ostensibly
> objective merit. Moreover, the basis for assessing merit — competitive
> academic performance — is only weakly associated with the personal
> attributes indicative of individual success in economic life. Thus the
> legitimation process in education assumes a largely symbolic form. (p. 123)

They asserted that the primary function of schooling is to provide children with a

model for later life in stratified societies, and that students' experience in tracked schools

led to the reproduction and survival of the economic, social, and political inequality. Bowles and Gintis were criticized for having an overly passive view of students in schools. When they wrote this book, the statistical relationship between parents' and children' adult economic status was weak. However, Bowles and Gintis' 2002 statistical study and two recent published books confirmed the intergenerational inequality gap had widened in past 30 years in America (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Bowles & Gintis, 2002; Golden, 2006; Karabel, 2005). According to 1988 National Educational Longitudinal Survey, "African-American, Latino, Native American, and low-income eighth graders are twice as likely as white or upper-income eighth graders to be in remedial math courses. Not only do students in remedial settings receive a less demanding curriculum; their teachers are also more likely to be less experienced in the classroom" (Wheelock, 1992, p. 9). Today most researchers tend to accept Bowles and Gintis' argument that schools legitimate the social order through differential socialization.

Tracking systems are so deeply interwoven with social inequality that they cannot be fixed or mended only within the educational system. As Oakes (2005) asserted,

> Tracking is far more a neutral curriculum structure that can be adjusted to eliminate the inequalities it creates. I am not suggesting that educators are engaged in a conscious conspiracy to make poor, minority students ignorant or to keep them at the bottom of the social and economic structure. However, I do remain persuaded that the results of tracked schooling — widening inequalities in achievement and aspirations — make for a compelling logic in a society marked by huge inequalities by race in economic and social power. (p. 248)

All the aforementioned literature criticized the meritocratic values through which schools became a powerful mechanism to legitimize the class structure of capitalism and

justify the predetermined fate of students from disadvantaged background. The working-class students accept the life at the bottom of the socioeconomic hierarchy and attribute this arrangement to their academic "failure." By inhibiting the growth of conflicts over the unequal distribution of wealth, power, and prestige, education conspires to help perpetuate the existing social order. In the light of the fallacies of the tracking system, the guiding principle regarding schooling needs to be redefined. "The chief aim of school should be not to sort out but to teach as many as possible as well as possible, equipping them for both work and citizenship. . . . The purpose of schools should be to expand opportunity, not to determine results" (Lemann, 1999, p. 348).

Concluding Comments

In the end we have to keep in mind Goldberg's warning: ability grouping is neutral in nature and its result depends upon the way people practice it (Goldberg et al., 1966). Detracking does not mean that all students will necessarily have to achieve the same educational level and receive the same educational methods to learn. What matters here is that students must feel welcome and secure, have their needs taken care of, receive respect, flexible, and adaptive support in order to fulfill their potential, and develop positive relationships with each other. Finally, students need to become responsible citizens in an integrated democracy.

Policy Implementation Theories

Despite frequent good intentions and the rhetoric of public policies (even when supported by abundant resources), bureaucratic systems have rarely implemented these programs loyally and effectively. After the 1960s, policy implementation became a hot issue in the United States,[3] partly because of the political shock from the failure of a series of federal government efforts to eliminate poverty: "misuse of governmental funds, services provided to the wrong clients, and in some cases, outright local resistance to these new governmental initiatives" (Odden, 1991, p. 1). The tension between systematic, long-term policy intent and practice aroused a lot of intellectual curiosity in the public policy arena.

Due to the perceived failure of the Great Society programs, the early policy implementation studies came to very pessimistic conclusions about the ability of public institutions to get target policies implemented. Most of the literature consisted of single-case empirical studies containing descriptions of "exemplary" projects (Bardach, 1977; Derthick, 1972; Ham & Hill, 1984; J. A. Murphy, 1973; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973). Mazmanian and Sabatier (1980) observed:

> Each (study) is usually focused on particular portions of specific programs, or a narrow slice of the implementation process (e.g., the general problem

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[3] When Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky (1973) reviewed policy implementation literature, they noted "there is (or there must be) a large literature in the social sciences — or so we have been told by numerous people. . . . It must be there; it should be there; but in fact it is not. . . . Except for the few pieces mentioned in the body of this book, we have been unable to find any significant analytical work dealing with implementation" (p. 166).

of bureaucratic resistance to change), with few attempts to develop the kinds of broad generalizations that could be forthcoming from more comparative studies within or across policy arenas and from a concerted effort to develop a broader conceptual framework. (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1980)

As a result, the early implementation literature remains scattered and diffuse.

The inability of bureaucratic organizations to deliver satisfactory public services

was the focus of early policy implementation studies. Among them is Eugene Bardach's

effort to produce generalizations and hypotheses related to the "implementation game."

He viewed implementation as "(1) a process of assembling the elements required to

produce a particular programmatic outcome, and (2) the playing out of a number of

loosely interrelated games whereby these elements are withheld from or delivered to the

program assembly process on particular terms" (Bardach, 1977, pp. 57-58). To explain

policy failure, Bardach (1977) identified four general types of adverse effects of the

implementation games:

> (1) the diversion of resources, especially money, which ought properly to be used to obtain, or to create, certainly programs elements, (2) the deflection of policy goals stipulated in the original mandate, (3) resistance to explicit, and usually institutionalized, efforts to control behavior administratively, and (4) the dissipation of personal and political energies in game-playing that might otherwise be channeled into constructive programmatic action. (p. 66)

Bardach's control model of implementation that depended heavily on instruction

and command failed to recognize that "implementation shapes policy," and that

implementation should be more of an evolution than a revolution as Pressman and

Wildavsky (1973) implied in their milestone work, *Implementation*. Therefore,

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implementation "success" might not be measured by the original policy goals and design. Instead, it may be more appropriate and practical to distinguish different components, such as core components, related components, and implementation requirements, when deciding "which aspects of a change program need to be implemented faithfully," as Crandall, Eiseman and Louis (1986) suggested. "While succeeding at implementation cannot solve all of these problems, it is an integral part of solving some of them. To overlook its role will not make other reforms easier, and it may make some of them more difficult" (A. C. Lin, 2000, p. 159). In other words, "while managers cannot always get what they want, they may get what they (or their organizations) need. Although workers may not follow the specific behavior preferred by managers, those workers may find alternative and more effective ways of realizing organizational goals and objectives" (Johnson & O'Connor, 1979).

Most policy implementers do not work in a perfect Disneyland environment. Instead, they work in an environment where resources tend to be inadequate, demands for service tend to rocket up, and goal expectations tend to be ambiguous and even conflicting. According to Bowe and Ball (1992), "[implementation] is not simply a matter of implementers following a fixed policy text and 'putting the Act into practice,' . . . instead it is a constantly changing series of texts whose expression and interpretation vary according to the context in which the texts are being put into practice." This process involves a certain extent of "mutual adaptation." McLaughlin (1976) noted when reflecting on her Rand Change Agent Study:

> Where implementation was successful, and where significant change in participant attitudes, skills, and behavior occurred, implementation was

characterized by a process of mutual adaptation in which goals and methods were modified to suit the needs and interests of the local staff and in which that staff changed to meet the requirements of the project. This finding was true even for highly technological and initially well-specified projects; unless adaptations were made in the original plans or technologies, implementation tended to be superficial or symbolic, and significant change in participants did not occur. (McLaughlin, 1976)

"Mutual adaptation" blurred the boundaries between policy makers and those doing the implementing. Weatherley and Lipsky (1977) invented the concept of street level bureaucrats. Street level bureaucrats are public service workers who interact directly with citizens, exercise wide discretion in decisions related to their jobs, and have relative autonomy gained from positional authority. "Typical street-level bureaucrats are teachers, police officers and other law enforcement personnel, social workers, judges, public lawyers and other court officers, health workers, and many other public employees who grant access to government programs and provide services with them" (Lipsky, 1980, p. 3). They argued that "in a significant sense . . . street-level bureaucrats are the policymakers in their respective work arenas" (Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). Lipsky (1980) explained:

Street-level bureaucrats make policy in two related respects. They exercise wide discretion in decisions about citizens with whom they interact. Then, when taken in concert, their individual actions add up to agency behavior. . . . The policy-making roles of street-level bureaucrats are built upon two interrelated facets of their positions: relatively high degrees of discretion and relative autonomy from organizational authority. (Lipsky, 1980, p. 13)

The theory of street level bureaucrats implied that implementation process is a provisional, experimental, and self-corrective one rather than a constant march toward

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clearly set goals. Paul A. Sabatier (1986) would call this difference one between top-down and bottom-up approaches of implementation analysis. The underlying assumptions go far beyond a simple division between models or approaches and respond very actively to policy process.

The underlying assumptions behind Bardach's control model of implementation or Sabatier's top-down approach are Max Weber's work on bureaucratic organization, Woodrow Wilson's "study of administration," and Frederick W. Taylor's "principles of scientific management." This scientific method of implementation that integrates the "assembly" and the "politics" to maintain control of the process has its problems, because authority, supervision, regulation, and coercion do not always work in loosely coupled systems. As Richard F. Elmore (1983) pointed out:

> The traditional devices that legislators have relied upon to control policy implementation — more specific legislation, tighter regulations and procedures, centralized authority, and closer monitoring of compliance — probably have an effect opposite of that intended. Rather than increasing control, they increased complexity. And as complexity increases, control itself is threatened. (Elmore, 1983)

After numerous efforts to set up grand narratives about implementation failed, some policy scientists finally realized, "there is no single best implementation strategy, . . . the appropriate strategy is very much contextual in terms of what are the contingencies surrounding the policy issues and how they can best be addressed in terms of implementation" (deLeon & deLeon, 2002). Implementation is a dynamic process that also involves policy learning and redesign (See Figure 2-3).
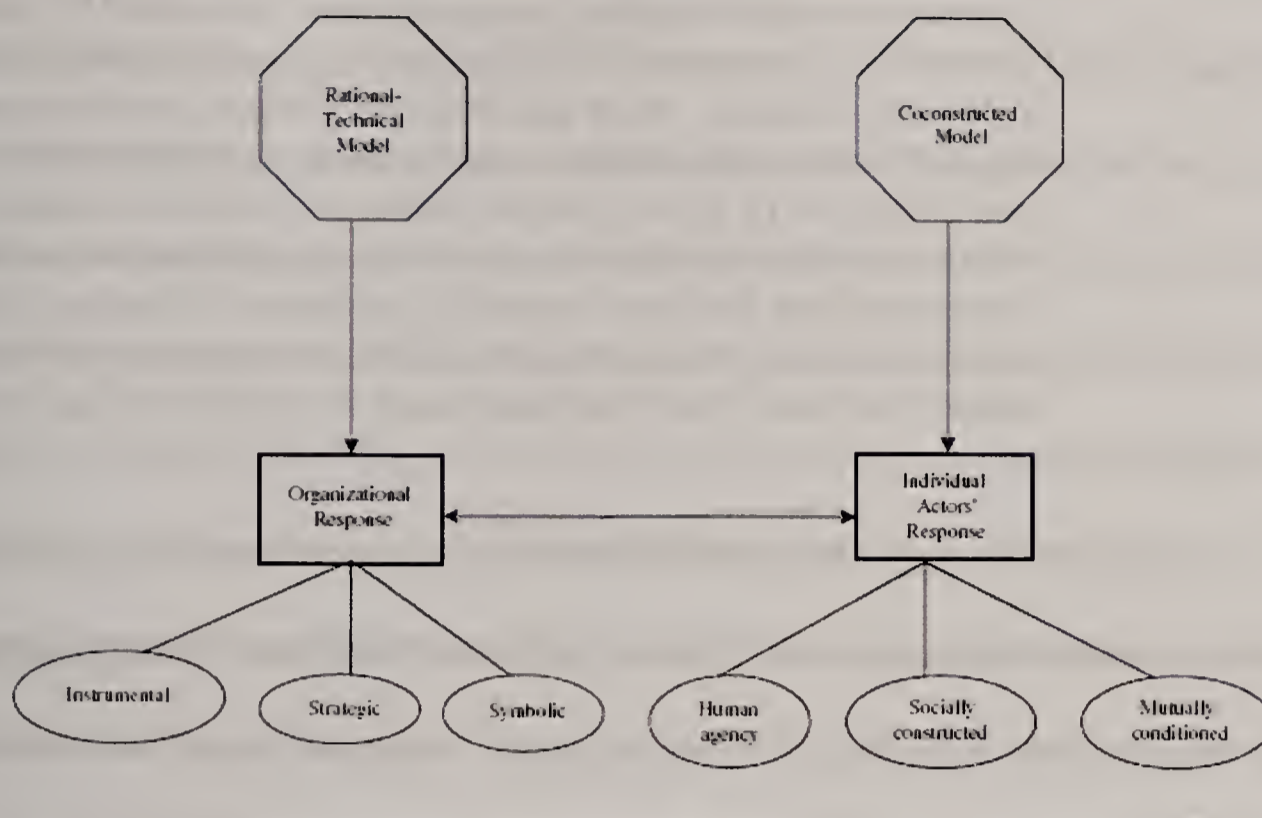
Figure 2-3: Underlying Concepts in Rational-Technical and Coconstructed
Models of Implementation (Walker, 2004)

Ann Chih Lin's work on implementation of rehabilitation policies in five prisons

provided a perfect example of this point. Lin (2000) argued that ignoring the

organizational characteristics of different prisons almost guaranteed program failure.

Actually it is institutional needs and values "that govern the choice of different

strategies" that determined the fate of programs. She noted that "policies pick up new

meaning, new concerns, and new purposes that their designers might not even have

considered, much less intended. What a policy actually is, therefore, is as much about

context as it is about original intent" (A. C. Lin, 2000, p. 39). Lin challenged our frequent

solutions to implementation by indicating their internal weaknesses. Accountability and

empowerment do not always work if institutional needs and values are overlooked. It is

critical to fit a policy to a particular context. Lin (2000) concluded:

> Implementation is not best measured by program outcomes, which say
> little about the process that produced them, but instead by program
> activities — the numerous little actions . . . — that taken together are the
> substance of policy. These activities are produced by the interaction of a
> program's rules and resources with an environment that filters, interprets,
> and makes use of those rules and resources in different ways. Evaluated
> with respect to some desired state of affairs, these activities show when
> implementation has been successful, neglected, subverted, or absent—
> conditions under which program activities are plausibly related to some
> desired outcome, and conditions under which they are not. (p. 35)

Lin's work suggested that the translation of common policy to the local level is rarely a mechanical process and that designers and students of the implementation process had been handicapped by an inadequate understanding of the micro-politics and organizational characters. Instead, her work suggested that we look at the complex interplay of values, ideologies, aspirations, and power when we examine policy implementation.

Policy Process in China

As one of most deliberate human actions, policy always finds its roots in the soil of complicated social systems. The key change in China since 1978 has been a mixture of elitist political philosophy, socialist egalitarian belief, a unitary government system,[4] a collectivist culture, and a dual economic structure,[5] which makes implementation processes very chaotic at the street level.

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[4] Although there are some signs that the central government is stepping into a process of decentralization in China, the most important features of its political infrastructure, including the power division between central and provincial governments, remain untouched. Specifically in the field of education, the central government still makes a national educational plan every five years and has hierarchy control over provincial and municipal educational administrations.

[5] By dual economic structure this paper means modern industry and pre-modern agriculture, as well as planed and market economy models coexist in today's China.

The centralized leadership and mass line are the most important characteristics of policy process in China (Harding, 1981; Schurmann, 1968; Teiwes, 1979). The principle of centralized leadership has a decisive impact on China's steering mechanism. It ensures a certain extent of ideological and organizational conformity in the bureaucratic hierarchy, which enables the governmental bodies at higher levels to prescribe and overrule the decisions of lower organs. The problem with central leadership is the miscalculation of central government may result in large-scale serious confusion and conflict in the bureaucratic system, especially when feedback and debugging mechanism are absent, as the Cultural Revolution indicated.

When policy process moves to local level, the influence of mass line and local discretion comes into play. Mass line is Mao's legacy that conceptualizes the policy process as a dynamic communication pattern between leaders and followers. According to Mao's formulation, it empowers the masses to present their ideas when implementing policies from above, which leaves room for considerable local initiatives. Policy implementers have a chance to draft their own rules or at least to interpret central directives with flexibility with reference to local policy circumstances. However, they may have a different sense of urgency or policy agenda. The policy message is sometimes weakened, distorted, or even totally lost when it is carried on by the implementers (McDermott, 1999; 2002; 2003; 2004).

Although not inherently in conflict with each other, the centralized leadership and mass line approaches tend to produce contradictory impulses and thus are at least partly responsible for the complexity and instability in policy practice, as Viviene Shue (1989) pointed out, which "delayed, distorted, deflected and destroyed central intentions as often

as it faithfully implemented them. . . . Chinese social life was by no means fully penetrated or effectively dominated by the revolutionary communist values of the party" (p. 17). Therefore, policy implementation does not follow a precise timetable or lend itself to a set of detailed guidelines.

To address the public's policy concerns, the central government usually replaces clear-cut policy mandates with ambiguous slogans, because it needs implementers to understand that it is working hard to fix social issues. When a serious social problem goes beyond the alarming point and becomes part of the policy agenda, the central government tends to introduce new policy ideas and provide political support (usually in the form of a policy statement) even if it actually can not afford enough public goods (e.g., fiscal support). This reliance on indirect initiatives and the symbolic nature of policies creates more gray areas although it serves the politics of blame avoidance very well (Weaver, 1987). Therefore, many policy initiatives designed to change practice have been more rhetorical than substantive in their impact on the targeted groups and organizations. The implementation process has a highly fluid and open-ended quality that seems to conflict with its centralized system.

This trend for tokenism usually reduces the extent to which the central government's goal is achieved. According to Eugene Bardach (1977), "Tokenism involves an attempt to appear to be contributing a program element publicly while privately conceding only a small ('token') contribution" (p. 98). Due to the strong feature of tokenism in policy implementation, policy initiatives are usually cast in the form of general statements and requests for compliance rather than specified exact procedures, timetables, and relationships. When some of policy mandates cannot be exempted,

implementers try to achieve the policy's bottom line, or minimal requirement. At the

same time, they also try to avoid the substantial tension and conflict that a new policy

brings to their mindset and routine practice.

Experimentalism is also intended to reconcile centralized policy process. The

central policies are cast in general statements without exact procedures and forms. After

local implementers carry out their preliminary work, higher government bodies will

review and investigate the early result, then decide to approve, accelerate, or cancel the

process. Well-tested practices will be publicized, advertised, and identified for larger-

scale emulation and application where conditions promise success. Experimentalism

contributes to policy ambiguity and incoherence that sometimes account for deviation

from initial policy wishes (Baier, March, & Saetren, 1988). As Murphy (1980) observed:

> Another example is "implementation," a term that implies that a policy is a "blueprint" that ought to be executed. In some cases, this notion makes sense. But in others, a policy is less a blueprint than a set of vague hopes or dispositions, a statement of ideology, or really a license to explore solutions within certain bounds. Rather than the implementation process, it makes more sense to talk about the "evolution," "improvisation," or "maturation" process, all of which capture the notion of a "policy" developing over time and subject to a wide variety of forces. (J. T. Murphy, 1980)

The rewritten policy text redefines central mandates, brings in local inputs and

participation in terms of resource allocation and execution, and works to buffet the

dominant norms of centralization. It also allows a process of organizational learning that

entails reflections on the local implementation environment. The People's Republic of

China had been characterized, or misunderstood, by such concepts as "totalitarian

regime," "mass mobilization," and "cult of charisma" in predominant anti-communism

sentiments, that have close similarities to McCarthy's "red scare" rhetoric. Highly underestimated in Chinese policy processes is the importance of the horizontal relationship that "acts as a countertactic to the vertical relations imposed by the state and its bureaucracy" (Delany & Paine, 1991), which have been embodied in street level bureaucrats' response to national policies. Fueled by a suspicion that new policies are just another "fad" in the course of reform, implementers usually do not associate themselves too closely with potentially controversial policies, but instead offer the minimal compliance with policy mandates and develop a "wait and see" attitude, in order to check the credibility and durability of new policies. This is a tendency that Timur Kuran (1995) called "preference falsification." According to Kuran:

> Preference falsification is a complementary, yet more elementary, reason for the persistence of unwanted social choices. . . . Preference falsification is often cheaper than escape, and it avoids the risks inherent in public protests. Frequently, therefore, it is the initial response of people who become disenchanted with the status quo. (p. 106)

When central policies appear to be firmly highlighted, the implementers will swiftly popularize the policy preference quickly. Mixed with suspicion, confusion, and fragmentation, implementers' complex responses to new policies sometimes also include apathy and psychological withdrawal. However, school is a place where integration and inclusion should become necessities to the institutionalization of any change. It is difficult in a centralized system where coercion and hierarchical control prevail.

In conclusion, tokenism, experimentalism, and implementers' psychological mechanism of preference falsification are interwoven in China's policy implementation problems in a very complicated way. These concepts remind us of the importance of

breaking through institutional bottlenecks that affect the complex interactions between policy makers and implementers. I am led into using institutional theory in order to explore community values and organizational cultures and develop a more transactional approach to deciphering the enigma of implementation processes.

Education Policy Implementation: the Institutional Perspective

Social scientists have increasingly incorporated institutional analysis into their discussions since the renaissance of neo-institutional theory in the 1970s. Institutional theory holds the core idea that individual and collective activities in a certain situation are penetrated by cultural constructions and local organizational norms. John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan (1977), the founding theorists of neo-institutional theory, argued that "the formal structures of many organizations in postindustrial society dramatically reflect the myths of their institutional environments instead of the demands of their work activities." Although there is very little consensus on the definitions of key concepts and methods, Scott and Meyer (1994) summarized four main elements of the orthodoxy of neo-institutionalism:

> First, the visible structures and routines that make up organizations are direct reflections and effects of rules and structures built into (or institutionalized within) wider environments. . . . Second, the dependence of organizations on the patterning built up in wider environments — rather than on a purely internal technical and functional logic — produces organizational forms that are often rather loosely integrated (or decoupled) structures. . . . Third, the environmental patterns that drive organizing work through linkages and effects that go beyond simple direct control. They have a constitutive, or phenomenological, aspect; and they are made up of meaning systems as well as hard-wired controls. . . . Fourth, the

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Institutional theory highlighted the significance of the wider social and cultural environment grounded in the policy process. As "a turn toward cognition and cultural explanation" (P. DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, p. 8), neo-institutionalism reconceptualized organizational environments emphasizing institutional beliefs, values, rituals, ceremonies, sense-making, and collective identity. According to Scott (1995), "institutions consist of cognitive, normative, and regulative structures and activities that provide stability and meaning to social behavior. Institutions are transported by various carriers — cultures, structures, and routines — and they operate at multiple levels of jurisdiction" (p. 33). Regulative systems, normative systems, and cultural-cognitive systems form a continuum including different facets of organizations in a mutually reinforcing way. See Table 2-2.

Table 2-2: Institutional Pillars & Carriers

	Regulative	Normative	Cultural-Cognitive
Basis of compliance	Expedience	Social obligation	Taken-for-grantedness Shared understanding
Basis of order	Regulative rules	Binding expectations	Constitutive schema
Mechanism	Coercive	Normative	Mimetic
Logic	Instrumentality	Appropriateness	Orthodoxy
Indicators	Rules Laws Sanctions	Certification Accreditation	Common beliefs Shared logics of action
Basis of legitimacy	Legally sanctioned	Morally governed	Comprehensible Recognizable Culturally supported
Symbolic systems	Rules	Values	Categories

	Laws	Expectations	Typifications Schema
Relational systems	Governance systems Power systems	Regimes Authority systems	Structural isomorphism Identities
Routines	Protocols Standard operating procedures	Jobs Roles Obedience to duty	Scripts
Artifacts	Objects complying with mandated specifications	Objects meeting conventions, standards	Objects possessing symbolic value

Pillars

Note: Compiled from *Institutions and Organizations* (Scott, 2001, pp. 52-77).

This theory is more applicable to organizations that do not possess clear

technologies but strong institutional rules such as schools and other public service

agencies (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). An important idea inspired by institutional theory and

well accepted by education scholars is that schools as loosely coupled systems rarely

promote technical efficiency but maintain institutional conformity (Burch, 2007; Elmore,

1978; Weick, 1976). Wiseman and Baker (2006) summarized a number of conceptual

advantages of institutionalism to studies of educational organizations:

> There are three main advantages. First, institutional theory has brought
> back culture as a dynamic causal force in determining educational
> development, explicitly in the form of world culture and its influence on
> formal education. . . . Second, institutional theory provides a rationale for
> unique empirical descriptions of factors in education that often went
> unobserved and untheorized before the application of institutional theory
> to comparative research on education. . . . Third, institutional theory
> enables links between the study of large-scale historical social phenomena,
> such as the worldwide education revolution, and nation-specific as well as
> more microaspects of schooling. (pp. 5-6)

Almost at the same time when institutional theory thrived in sociological, economical, and political research, Richard F. Elmore (1978) developed "four organizational models representing the major schools of thought that can be brought to bear on the implementation problem" in education and other public service fields. Elmore concluded:

> The system management model treats organizations as value-maximizing units and views implementation as an ordered, goal-directed activity. The bureaucratic process model emphasizes the roles of discretion and routine in organizational behavior and views implementation as a process of continually controlling discretion and changing routine. The organizational development model treats the needs of individuals for participation and commitment as paramount and views implementation as a process in which implementers shape policies and claim them as their own. The conflict and bargaining model treats organizations as arenas of conflict and views implementation as a bargaining process in which the participants converge on temporary solutions but no stable result is ever reached. (Elmore, 1978)

Elmore emphasized that each model could be used to explain why some programs failed and described different features of the implementation process. His organizational models summarize structural, regulative, normative, and political perspective to explore policy implementation issue, which embraced the tenets of institutional theory, but the models overlooked the application of symbolic perspective in implementation research.

An advocate for institutional theory in the field of education policy, Patricia Burch also featured structural and cultural contexts in her conceptual framework. However, Burch (2007) noted that policies shaped and changed implementers' feeling and ideas during the implementation process: "although policy designs and behavior are connected to larger social and cultural beliefs, these frames can change as people go

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about their work and as they implement policies and plans" (Burch, 2007). Adapted from

Scott's Layered Model of institutional dynamics, Burch developed an institutional

framework for studying education policy and practice. See Figure 2-4.

Macrolevel MEANING
SYSTEMS AND BEHAVIOR
PATTERNS

Infusion   *Imposition*

New categories of policy actors (e.g., literacy coaches)

Problem recognition (e.g., increased public awareness)

Institutional models (e.g., service delivery)

ORGANIZATIONAL
FIELDS

Theories of teaching and learning (e.g., what represents a good math teacher)

Organizational roles and identities (e.g., role of school principal in instructional reform)

Theories of change and school management (e.g., data-based decision making)

Ignore   *Reframe*

Respond in expected ways   *Reinterpret*

ACTORS
(e.g., schools, test publishers)

Figure 2-4: Institutional Perspectives on Education Policy and Practice (Burch, 2007).

Although central education policy influences implementers' daily practice, there

are always hidden ideological differences, micro-politics, and power dynamics in local

contexts, which all play into the school change process but have been ignored. Education

policy infuses implementers' values, beliefs, and assumptions. When the proposed

education policy conflicts with implementers' preexisting knowledge, attitudes, and

instruction pattern, implementers may reject, resist, or pick up their favorite parts of the

proposed policy. This common implementation problem can be partly explained by the

concept of isomorphism elaborated by institutional theory. Organizations tend to mimic

each other and come into isomorphism with prevailing values and norms where they face

uncertainty, especially unclear information and technical uncertainty about performance

assessment. As a result, new change in such environment can hardly become

institutionalized (P. J. DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

For this paper, I defined five main elements of the institutional perspective. They

constitute the theoretical frame for the analysis of policy implementation in a centralized

system like China. See Figure 2-5.

(1) **Characteristics of policy mandates.** Both system management and control

models of implementation indicate there are coercive forces from the central government

such as compulsory education law and inclusive education policy, which can impose new

regulations and standards on schools. The institutional theorists view a new policy

process not only as a rational choice process, but also as one compromise of both external

and internal pressure to maintain minimum compliance. In centralized systems, the

development of education policies is embedded deeply in economic and political

environments. Strength of policy message (sense of social and political crisis),

convergence of education and economy, together with policy coherence and solidity,

become main indicators of policy feasibility.

(2) **Structure.** Neo-institutionalism viewed structure as the primary carrier of policy mandates. The assumption is that "the structural components of a system must be integrated in order for the system to survive, since the components are interrelated parts of the whole" (Tolbert & Zucker, 1996, p. 176). The focus of structure is on the tendency of implementers — especially that of key players — to incorporate social structure and norms, systemic coordination, and common evaluation standards into their preexisting organizational structure, in order to promote a policy's legitimacy and increase the chance for its success.

(3) **Resources.** Policies can be implemented in situations in which it is in the interests of all policy players (policy makers, actors, and implementers) to enforce policy mandates and get work done, but Elmore's conflict and bargaining model already told us that it rarely happens. School organizations are strongly influenced by resources available that constrain their choices. The institutional perspective focuses more on the pressures and constraints of organizational environments. In this analytical framework, these pressures and constraints include political, public, policy (administrative), and fiscal resources.

(4) **Capacity.** Individual implementers' preference over actions is optimally formed with respect to their capacity to achieve policy goals. In institutional environments with unclear information and technical uncertainty such as schools, professionalization, including professional networks and professional development, becomes instrumental in bringing about expected reform outcomes. To a large extent, strategic choice has to depend on the capacity of implementers who work everyday at the street level.

(5) **Culture.** The institutional theory places a strong emphasis on culture and views policy actors as sense makers. The collective values and cultural beliefs impose social obligations on individual implementers and exert influence on their mindsets, habits, and routines. As Meyer (1987) put it, "culture has both ontological aspect, assigning reality to actors and action, to means and ends, with meaning and legitimacy" (p. 21). In other words, institutional culture creates and spreads common beliefs and values to accelerate (or inhibit) the diffusion of new policies, among which the most important is the ideology held by organizations and individuals, either formally or informally.

Concluding Comments

Central leadership, mass line, tokenism, experimentalism, and preference falsification are interwoven with China's policy implementation problem in a complicated way. Studies on literature about policy implementation reveal the transition from control management model to "mutual adaptation," which leads me into the world of institutional theory. Using an institutional perspective of organizations and the proposed analytical framework to study policy implementation in schools may help policy scientist decipher the enigma of policy implementation in a centralized system like China.
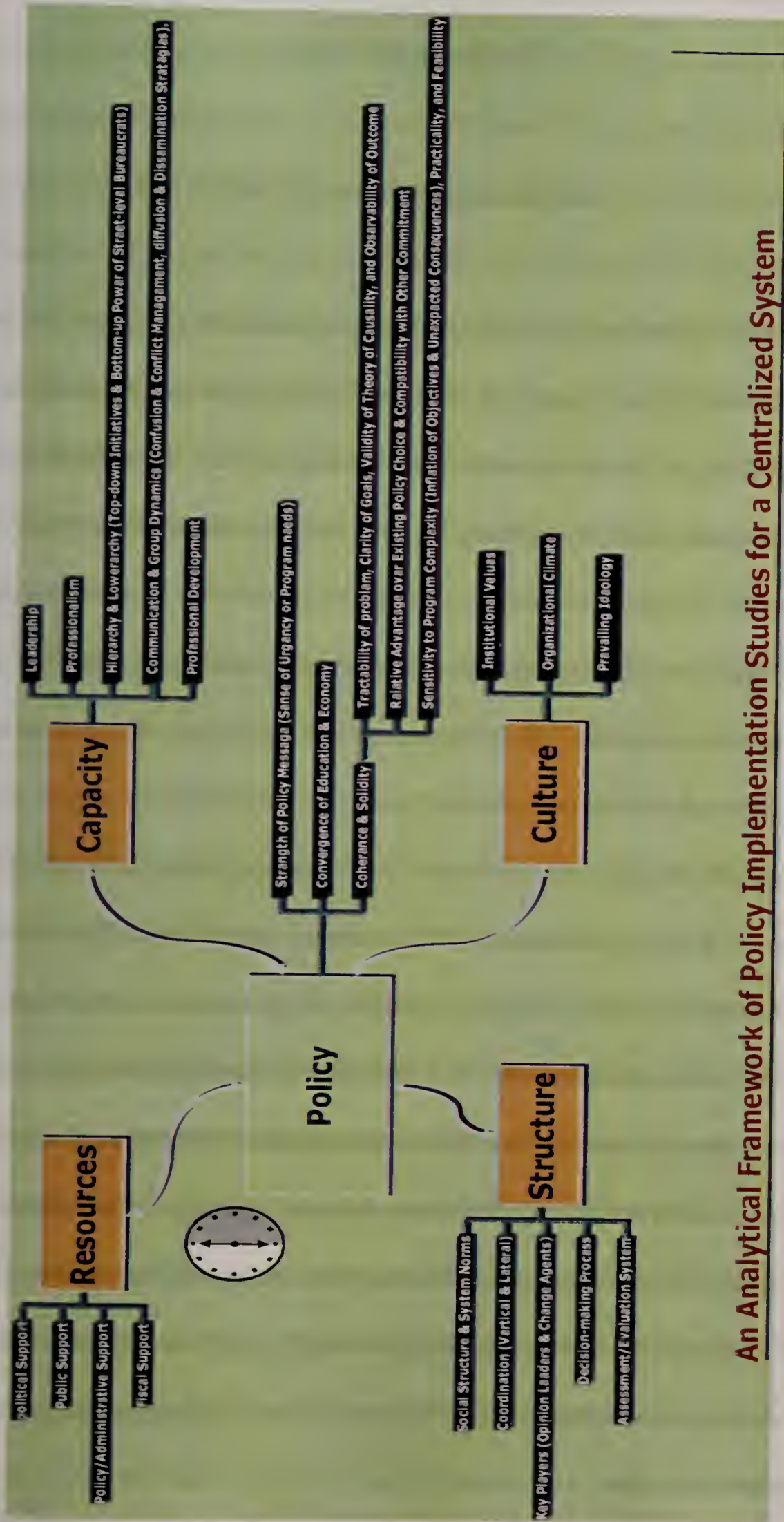
Figure 2-5: An Analytical Framework of Policy Implementation for a Centralized System

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

Overall Approach and Rationale

This study addresses the problem that has been defined as a perceived gap between the prevailing meritocratic ideology at the street level and the central government's policy efforts to dismantle the tracking structure. A qualitative research design is most appropriate for this study because it is important to understand the street level bureaucrats' needs for an inclusive education, examine their attitudes towards it, and to what extent they already implement inclusive education practices. The qualitative research focuses on an insider's perspective, and can reveal how all the parts work together in a process to tell a coherent story.

The qualitative research involves an interpretative process in which the researcher gradually makes sense of participants' perceptions and experiences. The attempt is not to reconstruct a certain subject's reality and perspective, but to examine multiple ones (Merriam, 2001). According to John W. Creswell, the selection of an approach for a study involves three considerations: "the research problem, the personal experiences of the researcher, and the audience(s) for whom the report will be written" (Creswell, 2003, p. 21). The intended purpose and targeted audiences are especially important when deciding on choice of research methods (Patton, 2002, p. 12). In addition, intensive qualitative data are less expensive to collect, and more rewarding to analyze than extensive quantitative data.

The problem. This study attempts to identify factors that influence the outcomes of implementing an inclusive education program, to choose the unity of policy intervention, and to understand the best predictors of outcomes. To serve this end, this study uses an open-ended, discovery-oriented approach to describe program processes and changes. "Qualitative methods facilitate study of issues in depth and detail. Approaching fieldwork without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth, openness, and detail of qualitative inquiry" (Patton, 2002, p. 14). In this study, qualitative research methods are especially useful to uncovering and understanding China's policy implementation process about which little is known.

Personal experience. Analysis is the interplay between researchers and data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 13). The essence of this study relies on my experiences as a policy analyst and the relationships that I developed with street level bureaucrats involved in this project. I propose to conduct open-ended interviews, observations, and include my personal life experiences. My theoretical sensitivity, i.e., my "ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and the capacity to separate the pertinent from what isn't" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 42) represents a filter through which I can try to seek a unique way of seeing the world. It allows space for creative explanation, literary-style writing, and personal research-designed framework.

Audience. One audience for this study is a group of American scholars who have limited awareness and knowledge of China's policy setting and educational system. It is important for them to understand how the drama of national policies unfolds at the street level in a system different from an American one. One way to achieve this objective is to

highlight the stories of teachers and principals in the frontlines. Exploring and understanding one's story is always a meaning-making process. Feagin offered a good metaphor in this regard: "We see the city as it dissolves into the countryside, the broad patterns of streets and blocks but to understand the daily rhythm of life in that city, we must come down to earth and walk the streets" (Feagin, 2001, p.190). Another audience for this study is policy makers. These stories will apprise and remind policy makers in China of the power relationship and constraints that can be found in implementing inclusive education. These stories can help policy makers understand what is occurring at the street level and inform them of the work to be done in order to remove any obstacles that might hinder the implementation process.

Methods: Option and Nature

Inclusive education has its clearly-cut goals, i.e., increasing the participation of all students in cultures, curricula, and communities, and treating them with the least difference. At the same time, it has far-reaching implications for today's schooling in China. It is important to collect data directly on program's actual outcomes without being constrained by narrow preset program objectives. This project is an implementation evaluation and follows the standard procedures: documenting inputs, activities, processes, and structures; describing local deviations from national education policies and expectations; capturing differences among schools and among people; evaluating efforts and outcomes of individuals and organizations; and providing direction for action.

I use a grounded theory approach. Grounded theory is less concerned with particular content than the process of generating theory. The implementation process in China remains uncharted by educational researchers. This study attempts to derive a general theory of the policy processes, actions, and interactions grounded on the views of street-level bureaucrats in China. Grounded theory "emphasizes steps and procedures for connecting induction and deduction through the constant comparative method, comparing research sites, doing theoretical sampling, and testing emergent concepts with additional fieldwork" (Patton, 2002, p. 125). This study has a broader goal than merely interpreting the implementation process of inclusive education. It employs a more systematic and creative perspective to help provide analytical tools for handling raw data. "[Grounded theory] is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to the phenomenon" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). It involves an inductive process of building from qualitative data to discussion themes and categories to a generalized theory.

In a grounded theory approach, it is important to maintain a balance between the qualities of objectivity and sensitivity. "Objectivity enables the research to have confidence that his or her findings are a reasonable, impartial representation of a problem under investigation, whereas sensitivity enables creativity and the discovery of new theory from data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 53). Early on in this project, using descriptive and deductive modes, I will examine the data to understand and interpret what is going on in this case study. Later, this study will employ a more inductive and critical perspective. I will come up with a set of themes and categories and explain how they are

systematically interrelated. Finally, this study will propose a theoretical framework that explains the implementation process of inclusive education at the street level.

Research Questions

The research questions addressed in this study are:

1. How do the street-level bureaucrats understand their respective roles with regards to the implementation of inclusive education;

2. What are changes happening in the detracking schools and everyday classrooms;

3. What deeply held values and beliefs guide teachers' actions, interactions, and teaching activities to deliver the central government's policy mandates;

4. What are the personal, organizational, and institutional factors that facilitate or inhibit the implementation of national educational policy in China?

Sampling Plan

This study targets a few high schools in Haidian, Beijing.

Beijing is selected because it has been one of pioneering areas in implementing the central government's inclusive education requirement. The municipal education authority has had a detracking policy mandate and established a set of evaluation indicators for inclusive education since 2003, three years earlier than the enactment of revised CEL. The policy mandate and evaluation system show the commitment and accountability infrastructure of local government in response to the central government's

inclusive education policy, from which other cities that are not far behind might be able to learn their lessons for implementation of this project.

Haidian district is selected for a number of reasons. First, it is a large-size district with urban schools and suburban schools. There are different types of schools in this district: former key schools, non-key schools, schools administered by local education authority, schools affiliated to universities and central government agencies, etc. This study expects Haidian district to reflect the diverse policy environment in Beijing. Second, as a fast-growing high technology area, Haidian district has attracted a big population of migrant workers during past twenty years. Educational opportunity for migrant workers' next generation is becoming one of the top priorities for the local government.[6] Third, the district has recently reviewed the implementation of the quality education project, which makes background information readily available. Fourth, Haidian is the district in which I conducted educational research when working in Beijing, so compared to other districts, I am more familiar with the district and have more connections.

The study focuses on high schools instead of elementary or middle schools because of the greater tension at this critical education transition stage: On one hand,

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[6] According to the registered address system, Chinese citizens are divided into urban and rural residents. Job opportunities in cities are exclusively provided to urban residents. Since late 1980s, central government has founded dual resident system by admitting temporary residence, i.e., people can work outside their original registered residence if they apply for temporary residence permit in their working city. College and university students will automatically get registered address in urban areas from the day they are admitted in colleges. Basically, it is the outcome of plan economy. With the founding of market economy, this system has been widely criticized of its discriminatory treatment toward rural residents. At present over 120 millions of temporary residents, most peasants, are working in urban areas, and more people are working in places different from their registered address. Almost all employers except governmental agencies and state-owned teaching and research institutions have not taken registered address into account when they make hiring decision, given that applicants have a temporary residence permit. Central government has also held the local government responsible for the free education to migrant workers' children. The appeal for abolishing the dual residence system has been high on central government's agenda.

Beijing municipal government and Haidian school district already made a promise to promote quality education in its high schools, a bold step far beyond the central government's policy mandate that only requires its implementation in elementary schools and middle schools. On the other hand, the parents and high school students have expressed growing concern about training for excellence in high- stake college admission exams, which creates a more challenging outside environment for implementing inclusive education.

This project uses purposeful sampling and specifically a critical case sampling. This study relies on information-rich cases (schools) to yield insights and in-depth understanding and knowledge rather than pure empirical generalizations. The cases in this project are those that manifest sufficient intensity to illuminate the nature of inclusion as success or failure, but not at the extreme. I select the sites where acceptance of an inclusive education program is expected to vary from greatest to least so that these sites would have the greatest potential to contribute to the development of understanding and insight of the project goals.

There are two ways to select schools which should be involved in this study: by key informants and by email. I rely on education innovation experts who advise local schools to get in the school district's central office. From there I get permission to contact each of high schools principals in Haidian via email or post mail (See Appendix B for Introductory Letter). Since this dissertation project is more concerned about depth than extent of the study, I expect to gain a deeper insight to the implementation issue by limiting the final selected schools to four, although the candidate schools pool was bigger at the beginning of data collection stage. The final selected schools are a good

representation of various school types (urban schools and suburban schools), school levels (former key schools and non-key schools), and different levels of acceptance of inclusive education requirement (from resistance, compliance, to advocacy). The main factor that decides a school's level of acceptance is the principal's attitude toward inclusive education requirement. The four high schools make up nearly 6.6% of high schools within Haidian district (61), and 1.2% of the high schools within Beijing (335).

The participants in this study are high school teachers and principals. The primary participants are the teachers who implement the inclusive education program in their everyday classrooms. After getting the principals' permission to conduct this project in their schools, there are two ways to identify actors to interview and observe: One is to ask the principals to provide the names of teachers and staff who have been involved in the quality education project. The other way is to build up trust with teachers and staff and find volunteers to participate in this project. These participants, especially teachers and staff, fall into one of the following categories: (1) those who are academic subject directors or grade leaders involved in planning and coordination, (2) those who are regular teachers of different subjects involved in everyday classroom teaching, (3) those who are support staff indirectly involved in education change.

Observations and interviews with principals and teachers were conducted at selected schools in June and July 2007. I was sitting in the classroom to observe their teaching, having casual talks in dining hall, and conducting person-to-person interview in private settings. I have also taken part in certain schools' administrative meetings when such participation was not disruptive or intrusive to participants.

Data Types and Collection Procedures

The qualitative data types for this project include observations, interviews, and the examination of documents.

Observations

The on-site observations focuses on principals and teachers' activities and interactions, and other subtle factors, like informal and unplanned activities, symbolic, and connotative objects that elicit educational ideas. Later on the observations shift focus from general environment to specific persons, in order to identify potential interviewees in case that the principal does not get involved in the process of identifying teachers interviewed (See Appendix E for Teacher Observation Protocol).

For each observation, field notes are taken to keep description of the setting, the people, the activities, and my comments.

Interviews

The interviews employ semistructured questions research in order for participants to respond to the emerging situation and to gather new ideas on the topic from respondents. The interview guide (protocol, or schedule) is a mixture of hypothetical, devil's advocate, ideal position, and interpretative questions (Strauss, 1981). Data from

teachers' interview are supplemented by interviews with principals from each of selected high schools (See Appendix D for Teacher and Principal Interview Protocols).

To assist in the data collection phase, I utilize a digital recorder to audiotape all interviews for transcription and analysis. In addition, I can focus on participants' nonverbal responses through observation and taking notes during the interviews. I also use this equipment to record my own thinking, feelings, reflection, and perceptions after each interview. Later, I complete a detailed log based on these interview notes.

Documents

This project takes time to collect personal artifacts, course samples, journals, autobiographies from participants; collect public documents (e.g., official memos, minutes, records, archival materials, photographs, audio and video materials, electronic materials).

Anticipated Ethical Issues

This project has its research plans reviewed and approved by the institutional Review Board (IRB). I also develop an informed consent form for participants to read, review, and consent by signing before they engage in the research. This form acknowledges that participants' rights have been protected during data collection (See Appendix for C Consent for Voluntary Participation).

In negotiating permission to do this study, I make it clear to the principals and other senior administrators that control the access to these participants what the terms of the agreement are, and I would abide by that contract. The process for collecting data is carried on the basis that the sites examined are left undisturbed.

The research objectives are explained verbally and in writing so that they are clearly understood by all the participants. The participants are informed of all data collection devices (digital camera, digital recorder) and activities. The participants' rights, interests, and wishes are considered as a first priority when difficult decision needs to be made.

The participants' identities are protected on the basis of anonymity. I use pseudonyms to avoid any reference to a certain person or institution during the data analysis and reporting process.

Data Analysis Procedures

Patton (2002) explained the data analysis procedures of grounded theory:

> Grounded theory begins with basis description, moves to conceptual ordering (organizing data into discrete categories "according to their properties and dimensions and then using description to elucidate those categories"), and then theorizing ("conceiving or intuiting ideas — concepts — then also formulating them into a logic, systematic, and explanatory scheme"). (p. 490)

In this project's data analysis process, the data is organized categorically and chronologically, grouped together on similar dimensions, reviewed repeatedly, and

continuously recoded. This project employs constant comparative method to reconstruct multiple realities of implementing inclusive education, and to maximize the similarities and the differences of information (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

To facilitate this process, this study uses Bogdan and Biklen's coding families to develop my own coding categories that have been helpful in analyzing qualitative data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, pp. 166-172):

- Setting/Context Codes
- Definition of the Situation Codes
- Perspectives Held by Subjects
- Subjects' Ways of Thinking about People and Objects
- Process Codes
- Activities Codes
- Event Codes
- Strategy Codes
- Relationship and Social Structure Codes
- Methods Codes
- Preassigned Coding Systems

Using qualitative data, this study develops a substantive theory interrelating categories of implementing inclusive education at the street level. A substantive theory is not a "grand" theory. As Merriam (2001) noted,

> Substantive theory has as its referent specific, everyday-world situation such as an innovative middle school science program, the coping mechanisms of returning adult students, or stages of late-life development. A substantive theory has a specificity and hence usefulness to practice often lacking in theories that cover more global concerns. (p. 17)

The substantive theory serves as final outcome of this project and is addressed in the last section of the study, where I present a visual model of the theory developed inductively from categories of information supplied by interviewees. In addition, this

study also advances a directional hypotheses and policy suggestions that logically follow from the model. Moreover, in the section of the model and hypotheses, this study compares its results with findings from other studies and theoretical speculations in the literature.

In addition, the data analysis process is aided by the use of a qualitative data analysis computer program called AnSWR, Analysis Software for Word-based Record.

The Researcher's Role

It is critical for qualitative researchers to identify the primary data collection instrument and their personal values, assumptions, and biases at the beginning of the study. As Merriam (1998) stated, "the investigator as human instrument is limited by being human — that is, mistakes are made, opportunities are missed, personal biases interfere. . . . The extent to which a researcher has certain personality characteristics and skills necessary for this type of research needs to be assessed" (p. 20). The perceptions of implementing inclusive pedagogy have been shaped by my personal education and experiences. From July 1999 to August 2003 I served as an education policy analyst for the National Educational Evaluation Center in Beijing. During this period, I was involved with almost all top level education officials regarding the development of educational policies and worked closely with various levels of local educational administrators to evaluate policy implementation. I believe this awareness and knowledge of policy context and key implementer's role enhance my understanding and sensitivity to many of the challenges, decisions, and issues in policy implementation process.

My previous experiences working closely with policy makers at the national level present certain biases to this study. Although every effort has been made to ensure objectivity, these biases may shape the way I view and understand the data and how the data is analyzed. I commence this study with the perspective that national policy is usually a multidimensional and complex undertaking. This study seeks to discover what kinds of resources need to be provided and who is in the best position to make change happen in key policy fields.

In addition to examining designed and alleged outcomes, this project also checks on the program's observable outcomes and documentable effects (including "unanticipated and side effects") (Patton, 1997). I am open to whatever data emerge from the program itself and participants' experience, at the same time, make every effort to avoid rhetoric and perceptual biases when conducting observations and interviews.

Strategies for Validating Findings

This study uses conceptualizations and classifications developed from the interview data to identify and analyze themes. The coding is the process of organizing the material into categories before bringing meaning to those categories. The themes are interrelated to show a higher level of analysis and abstraction. In ensuring internal validity, some strategies suggested by Creswell (1998) have been employed:

1. Triangulation of data collection — Data is collected through multiple sites and sources to build a coherent justification for themes;

2. Member checking — A group of participants are asked to serve as a check on my interpretations of their experience and perception throughout the analysis process;

3. Peer examination — A doctoral student in the Educational Policy, Research and Administration Department serves as a peer examiner so that the account resonates with people other than the participants and researcher;

4. External auditor — A professor of Beijing Normal University who advised my last doctoral dissertation but is new to this project provides an assessment at the conclusion of this study.

Limitations

Like every other study, this project also has its boundaries, exceptions, reservations, and limitations.

1. This study is limited to exploration of implementing a national education program in metropolitan areas. I cannot conclude that findings from this study will necessarily apply to other areas (e.g., a rural area). However, there is some transferable understanding and knowledge that may be useful in other settings;

2. The purposeful sampling in high schools decreases the generalizability of findings to other levels of schools;

3. This study is considered to be interpretative research, and recognizes the findings may be influenced by my bias or subjectivity. The findings could be subject to other interpretations.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Overview

This chapter describes the study results. The chapter is divided into five main

sections. The first section describes the policy settings, including the state context, an

overview of basic education in Beijing, the general school context, policy mandates, and

theory of action. The second section presents a panorama of the teachers' reflections on

the implementation process of the detracking policy. The third section draws on data

from principal interviews, observation, and reflection logs to present coherent

implementation stories for the four schools. The fourth section constructs categories of

cross-case analysis and reports on dimensions of attitudes and beliefs, instructional and

pedagogical practices for implementing inclusive education program. The final section

provides a summary that reflects upon my research questions and general interpretations

of the interviewees' responses.

The Context

The State

China has witnessed breakneck economic growth since the late 1980s, but

education in the most populous country is still an underdeveloped field. At present, the

average education level of the Chinese people is only around eight years, the same as that in countries with very low incomes. The Chinese business sector complains that they cannot find enough qualified talents to fill the Research and Development (R&D) positions in order to compete internationally. With unbalanced economic and social development at home, the Chinese government has identified weakness in its educational system as the most important factor in this failure and has begun to place education reform among its top priorities.

China has set up a centralized educational system with the government as the major investor and administrator. As China's supreme education administration, the Ministry of Education has issued more than 200 sets of administrative rules and regulations that are used as guidelines for subordinate local government. It also administers an annual nationwide entrance examination for universities and colleges.

In 2005, the total number of teachers in secondary and elementary schools had reached 11,190,713, out of which 5,637,144 were primary school teachers, 3,497,192 middle school teachers and 2,056,377 high school teachers (Ministry of Education of People's Republic of China, 2007a). Most of these graduate from normal universities or colleges, a special type of higher education institution aimed at bringing up new teachers and carrying on educational research in China.

In general, public schools have a higher academic reputation than their private counterparts in China. The principals in public schools are appointed by different levels of governments and treated as civil servants. From 2000 on, they have the right to fire teachers for misconduct or poor performance. The teacher union has very little influence on schools' personnel decisions in China. Basically, it is a place for teachers to get

together and help each other. However, with the new labor law going into effect in January of 2008, this situation will definitely change in the near future.

As far as the budget for education is concerned, schools directly administered by the provincial or municipal governments are funded by the government's financial pool, while schools sponsored by township governments are mainly financed by the sponsoring institutions and subsidized by local governments. No public funds can be made available to private schools in China.

The City

Beijing has a compulsory education system of nine years and the largest student population among the main cities of China. There are 2,142 high, middle and elementary schools in Beijing with 1.09 million students, among which there are 816,000 students participating in compulsory education. In Beijing in 2006, there were 69 high schools, 266 combined Middle and High schools, and 278,358 students and 19,875 professional teachers in the high schools. The capital has regarded education as a top priority of urban development and continuously made efforts to produce enough talent to satisfy economic and social development needs. It has pushed hard to increase the enrollment in high schools, especially to top high schools in order to satisfy its residents' need for high quality education. Despite the annual increases in number of examinees for the NAE, Beijing has maintained a college admission rate of over 70 percent, with 72.9 percent in 2006 (80,356 college students admitted). Also the migrating population is now assured compulsory education for young children by official policy. There are 375,000 children

from outside who are qualified for matriculation, among which 228,000 are currently attending public schools (Beijing Municipal Education Commission, 2007b). Table 4-1 provides an overview of secondary education in Beijing.

Table 4-1: Secondary Education in Beijing (2005)

		Number of Schools	Number of Graduates	Number of Student Admission	Number of Students	Number of Faculty	
						Professional Teachers	Total
Vocational Schools	Technical Schools	51	28450	32543	114979	3515	7120
	Normal Schools	1	159	264	755	53	114
	Total	52	28609	32807	115734	3568	7234
Skill Training Schools		45	18100	17000	61000	2086	3876
Secondary Schools	High Schools	335	73260	88605	278358	19875	
	Middle Schools	404	156388	93048	321585	31095	
	Total	739	229648	181653	599943	50970	75837
Professional High Schools		75	27223	27100	81266	6302	10804
Special Education Schools		6	421	573	1189	228	426
Total		917	304001	259133	859132	63154	98177

Source: Division of Planning, Beijing Municipal Commission of Education, 01/11/2006

The municipal government decided to turn its attention from the expansion of educational scale to the improvement of educational quality after its successful implementation of nine-year compulsory education. The year of 2005 marked the beginning of a new wave of educational reform in Beijing. With fewer school-age students in elementary and middle schools and a higher high school entrance rate, the Beijing Municipal Commission of Education (COE) has decided to reform resource

allocation and improve the school system for equity and equality. The Commission shut down a total of 787 elementary and middle schools and combined them into other schools with better educational resources and quality. In 2005, the proportion of teachers with a bachelor's degree and higher at the middle school level reached 74.6 percent and that at the high school level reached 96.3 percent, among whom 991 teachers, or nearly 5 percent have master's degrees or above. More than 60,000 middle and high school teachers have participated in professional development programs (Beijing Municipal Education Commission, 2007a).

The School

In December of 1995, the State Council promulgated *Regulations on Teachers Qualification*, in which the standards for recruiting teachers are strictly regulated. Teachers must have passed the qualification exam and obtained certificates before taking their jobs. A bachelor's degree, and sometimes a master's degree in metropolitan areas, is now a must-have in order to get hired in middle school or above. China has also announced that in the near future all elementary teachers will be required to hold a bachelor's degree.

For a long time, teaching was a lifelong job, because the schools themselves did not have the right to fire teachers under the old job allocation system related to the planned economy. For over five decades, teachers and schools did not need to sign a labor agreement. Beginning in 2000, some Chinese schools began hiring new teachers on both permanent and temporary labor contracts. The temporary employment accounts for

over 15 percent of the total teaching staff in these schools, and the schools have the right to fire unqualified teachers (Xinhua News, 2000). Under the new national labor law of 2007, all new employees need to sign a renewable labor contract.

Teacher training in China consists of pre-service education and in-service training. Four-year teacher training institutions, including normal universities and colleges, three-year teacher training colleges, and secondary teacher training schools constitute teachers' pre-service education. These educational institutions train teachers for high, middle and elementary schools respectively. In-service training is conducted by the LEA's teacher education institutes and in-service teacher training programs. In-service training of teachers in elementary and secondary schools can be divided into degree and non-degree education. Degree education includes the make-up education for in-service teachers who do not meet the minimum degree requirements and upgrading education for in-service teachers with qualified certificates. The non-degree education for teachers is the main part of professional development, which has been the key to elementary and secondary teacher training.

New teachers in China begin their job as apprentices, working with a reduced teaching load, observing other teachers, and preparing courses under the coaching of experienced teachers. Teachers are assigned to different teaching groups according to their course and grades in which they collaborate for planning lessons and peer observation. It is common practice for teachers in Beijing to participate in professional development activities, to collaborate with colleagues, and to meet with students and their parents.

Program Chronology

Beijing's compliance with the inclusive education requirement is part of the

national campaign for Quality Education Project (QEP), which was influenced by a series

of important educational events:

- In February of 1993, the CCP Central Committee and the State Council issued the *Outline for Educational Reform and Development in China*, which set up the goals of educational reform. The outline requires "elementary and secondary schools to turn from exam-oriented education to the track of education for improving the nation's quality, to face all students, to focus on student's all-round development including student's ethical, intellectual, and problem-solving qualities, physical and mental health."

- On June 17, 1994 at the Second National Conference on Education, Vice Premier Li Lanqing in his concluding comments stressed that K-12 education reform should aim to improve the quality of all aspects of education.

- In February of 1996, the State Education Commission (SEC)-sponsored *People Education Magazine* published the experience of Miluo County in implementing Quality Education. The report of this experiment was regarded as the turning point of Quality Education practice (As I explained, Quality Education includes inclusive education and holistic education).

- On March 17, 1996, the Fourth Session of the Eighth National People's Congress passed the *Outline of the Ninth Five-Year Plan (1996-2000) for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-term Prospects and Goals to the Year 2010*. The outline highlighted the transformation from exam-oriented education to comprehensive Quality Education.

- In September of 1997, the State Education Commission sponsored the National Conference on Quality Education of Elementary and Secondary Schools at Yantai. Vice Premier Li Lanqing was present and delivered a speech. It signaled a nationwide endorsement of Quality Education.

- On October 29, 1997, the State Education Commission published *Some Suggestions on the Implementation of Quality Education in Elementary and*

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Secondary Schools. The recommendations included improving the quality of "weak" schools, setting up a new course framework in favor of Quality Education, changing the standards evaluating school work, reforming the graduation and promotion test, improving ethical education, enhancing professional development of principals and teachers, etc.

- On February 2, 1998, the State Education Commission published *Suggestions on the Adjustment of Course Framework and Enforcement of Instruction Leadership to Implement Quality Education*. This official document required elementary and middle schools adjust their course framework by increasing the proportion of activity courses and research projects to get students actively involved in the learning process.

- In January of 1999, the CCP Central Committee and the State Council approved *Action Plan for Reviving Education toward the 21st Century* made by Ministry of Education. The Plan proposed the Trans-century Quality Education Project, promising to reform the course framework and the NAE to advance the implementation of QEP.

- On June 13, 1999, the CCP Central Committee and the State Council released the *Decision on Deepening Education Reform and Promoting Quality Education* and convened the Third National Conference on Education. The Decision stressed that the QEP should bring up a generation of students with all-round development in ethical, intellectual, physical, and aesthetic fields; and that the key points of the QEP should be students' creativity and practical skills.

- In March of 2001, the fourth session of the Ninth National People's Congress passed *Outline of the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2001-2005) for National Economic and Social Development* which echoed the appeal of the State Council for the QEP and wrote it into the Outline.

- In May of 2001, the State Council released *the Decision on Reform and Development of Basic Education*. The Decision urged that a new curriculum reform should be immediately delivered to make sure implementation of the QEP in the classroom.

- In July of 2001, the Ministry of Education formulated the *Outline of Curriculum Reform in Basic Education* and published *New Course Standard* for 15 academic subjects. The MOE required that all K-12 educational institutions followed the new standard from the fall semester of this year, in order to promote the QEP.

- On June 29, 2006, President Hu Jintao signed a revised version of the Compulsory Education Law (CEL). For the first time, Quality Education is written into national laws. The revised Compulsory Education Law went into

effect from September 1, 2006 (China Education and Research Network, 2005).

Policy Mandates: An Overview

In *Outline of Capital Educational Development to the Year 2010*, Beijing laid out its educational development goals: to keep the enrollment rate at 99 percent and above throughout the nine years of compulsory education, to increase new school-age students' schooling period to more than 12 years, and to increase the workforce's average schooling period to more than 12 years. To achieve these goals, the Beijing Municipal Commission of Education (COE) decided "to coordinate educational resources; to accelerate educational restructuring; and to gradually shift the focus of development from quantity to quality and from school education to lifelong education" (Beijing Municipal Education Commission, 2007c). In the section of basic education, the Commission of Education introduced its strategies:

> Efforts should be made in the following aspects: to build a system that provides financial preferences for compulsory education and rural basic education; to practice "two exemptions and one grant" for compulsory education in the whole municipality, i.e., total exemptions of incidental expenses and textbooks expenses and grants for poor students; to adjust the geographical layout of primary and middle schools; to increase teaching facilities standard for operating primary and middle schools; to strengthen professional development and encourage college students to teach in rural areas; to enhance the overall capacity of teachers; to improve rural school conditions; to support balanced development of compulsory basic education; to accelerate curriculum reforms in basic education; to improve the instruction quality control and evaluation system; to adjust the educational structure for high schools; to make premium educational resources more available to the public, and to safeguard the rights and interests of children whose parents are migrant workers in Beijing. (Beijing Municipal Education Commission, 2007c)

Since 1999, to promote the QEP, the COE has issued various administrative rules and regulations that are used as guidelines in K-12 education. As far as inclusive education is concerned, the following policy mandates and recommendations are in place:

1. In the early 1990s, the COE declared that it would no longer designate new key schools and the title of existing key schools would cease to be used.

2. In 2000, the COE mandated that K-12 schools should use a 4-point grading system (i.e., A, B, C, D) instead of centesimal system on student report card; it also banned any kind of academic ranking in all classes.

3. The COE recommended that the class size should be kept well under 35 in secondary schools and under 25 in elementary schools to encourage more communication between students and teachers.

4. Beginning from 2000, the COE has ended the city's unified entrance exams to high schools. Instead, the schools hold their own exams that would test students' abilities to solve social and daily life problems, rather than simply memorizing textbooks.

5. In compliance with the Ministry of Education's requirement about relieving students' loads to encourage creativity, Beijing eliminated 70 textbooks which were either outdated or too difficult for students in elementary and middle schools.

6. The COE set a higher standard for a high school to be considered exemplary. There are 83 high schools currently meeting this standard, among which 68 have already been certified.

7. Since 2001 when the COE advocated instruction research among elementary and secondary education, Beijing has seen the past six years filled with feedback about various best practices. The COE has established a research-informed instruction (RII) system with integrated feedback, making sure all facets of the school system, from instruction to leadership, are imbued with the latest research updates.

8. Since 2000, the COE has launched a campaign for exploration-oriented learning (EOL) to encourage students to get more actively and deeply involved in classroom activities, to encourage more open-ended discussion.

9. Beginning from the fall semester of 2001, a new course standard has been launched in Beijing elementary and middle schools. By strengthening the link

between knowledge and real-world issues, the new course standard encourages students to take an active attitude in study.

10. In 2003, the COE made a list of taboo words that teachers were not allowed to use in classroom instruction and personal talks with students (Beijing Municipal Education Commission, 2001).

It appears that such solid regulations as abolishing the centesimal grading system have been ensured by different levels of local education agencies (LEA). If we check the "hardware" part of the inclusive education implementation, we will see that the student assessment system has been changed, curriculum reform launched, and new paths of schooling opened up. However, the "software" part of the project, such as classroom instruction, remains a "black box." I will employ my theoretical framework to organize my presentation of the data I obtained to get the big picture of the implementation process at the street level of a centralized educational system.

Theory of Action

In chapter one, we defined inclusive education as an educational institution that is open to all students, that maximizes the extent to which students are exposed to the same educational environment, and that ensures all students learn and participate effectively within supportive cultures, curricula, and communities. There are four main components of the inclusive education program in the COE policy mandates. They are (1) a new course standard, (2) a new student assessment system, (3) research-informed instruction (RII), and (4) exploration-oriented learning (EOL).

Based on the Commission of Education's policy mandates, Figure 4-1 shows the theory of action the COE assumed in the implementation of the inclusive education program in its relationship to the teachers and students. The EOL and the RII, introduced by the COE as best practices, have important impacts on the implementation of inclusive education program. Figure 4-2 shows the interaction of the EOL and the RII in the classroom settings.
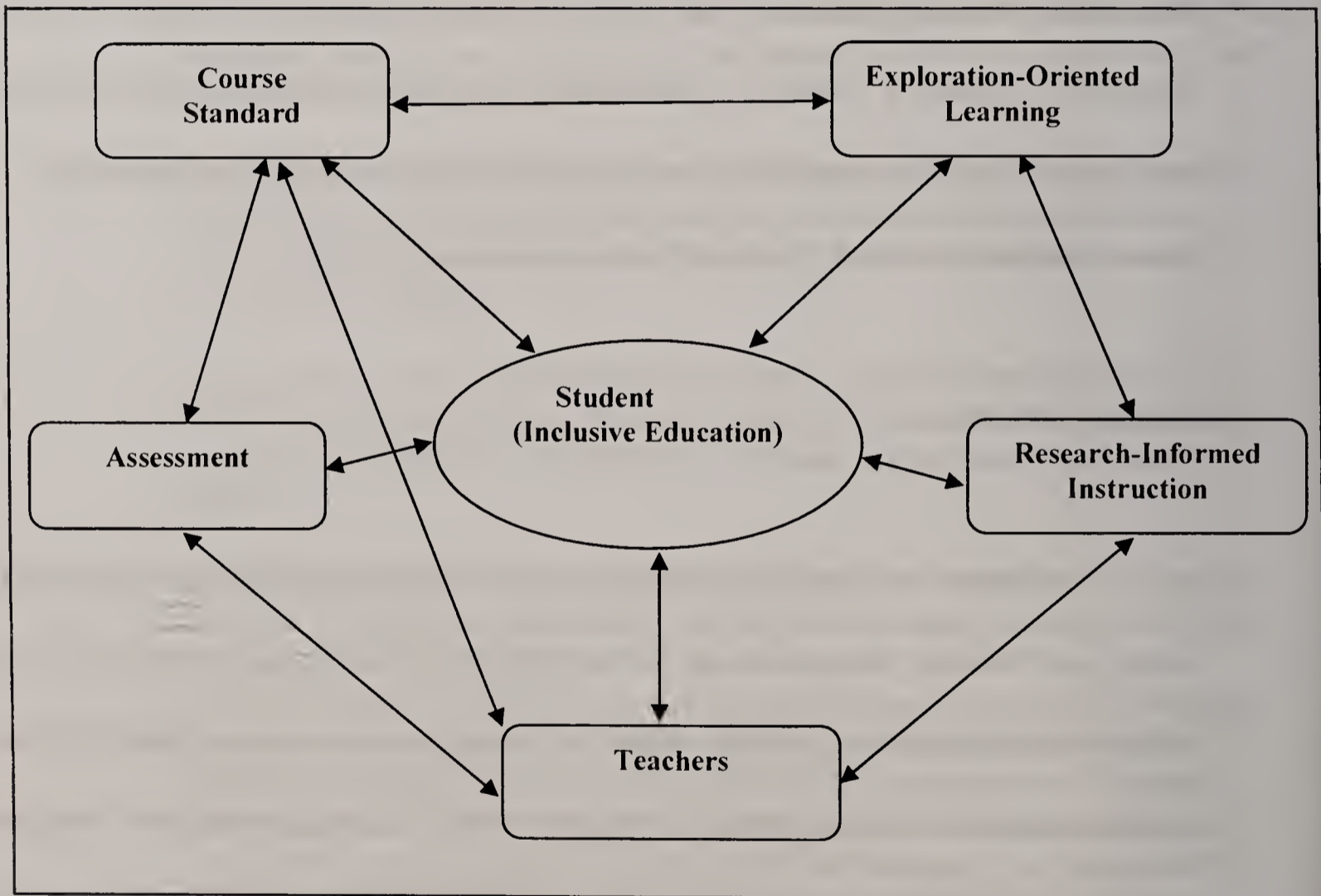
Figure 4-1: Inclusive Education: Theory of Action
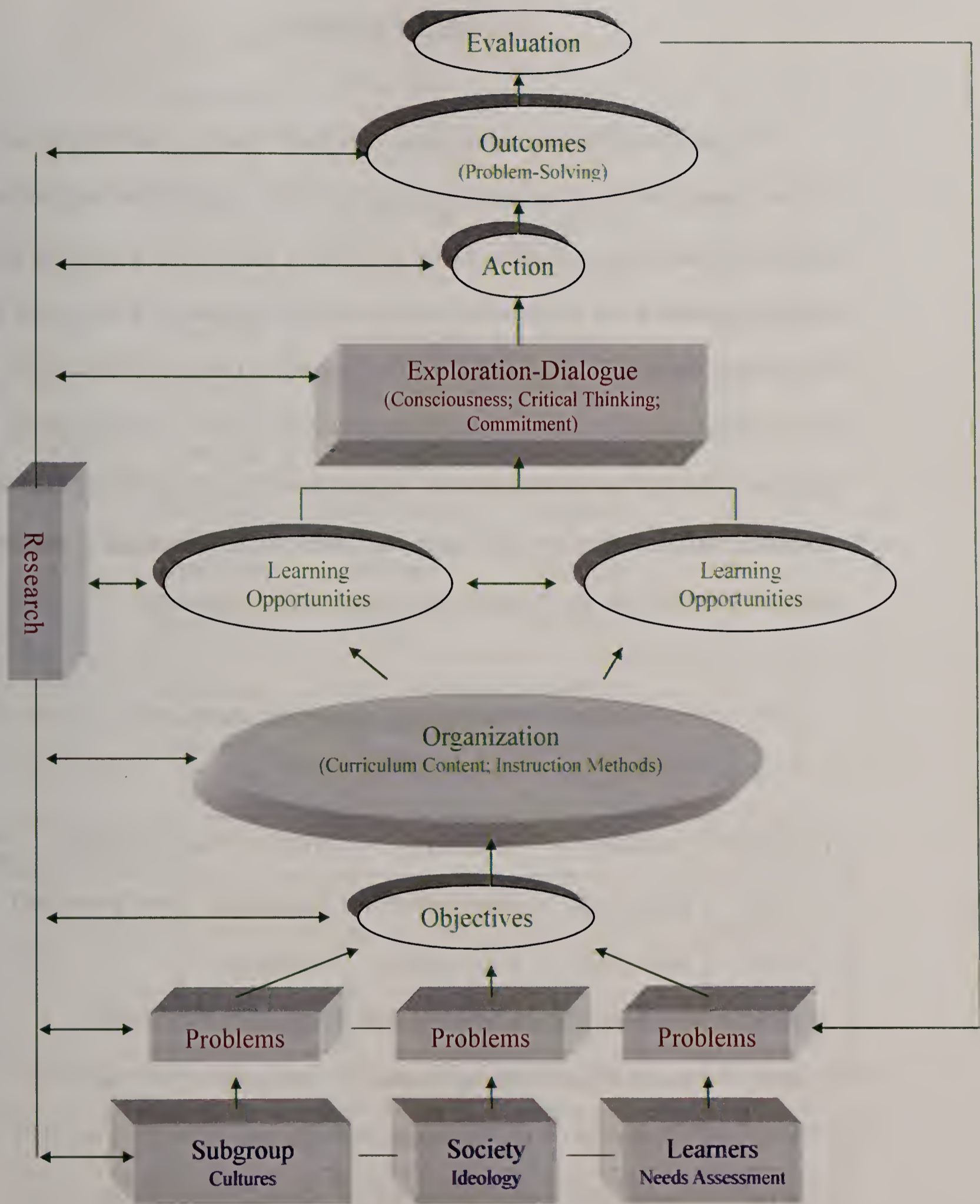
Figure 4-2: The Interaction of Exploration-Oriented Learning (EOL) and
Research-Informed Instruction (RII)

<u>Interview Data Presentation</u>

This section will present a panorama of the interviewees' reflections on the implementation process of the detracking policy. I will be examining the similarities and differences found among the interviewees' responses to each interview question, and seeking to identify a few thematic clusters that recurred throughout the interviews. I will first describe the thematic cluster and then I will report my findings for each of the corresponding interview questions related to the thematic cluster. For each specific question I will try to use the interviewees' original words from their interviews in order to help the reader envision how they understand each of issues embedded in the interview protocol. Table 4-2 lists all 21 participants' demographic information.

Table 4-2: Participant Demographic Information

TEACHER	SCHOOL	JOB TITLE	EDUCATION	GENDER	YEARS IN EDUCATION
NP1	North High	Principal	Doctorate	F	34
NP2	North High	Vice Principal	Bachelor's	F	24
NT1	North High	Chinese Teacher	Bachelor's	F	10
NT2	North High	Chinese Teacher	Master's	M	3
NT3	North High	English Teacher	Bachelor's	F	20
NT4	North High	English Teacher	Master's	M	10
NT5	North High	History Teacher	Master's	F	18
EP1	East High	Principal	Master's	F	18

EP2	East High	Vice Principal	Doctorate	M	29
ET1	East High	Geography Teacher	Bachelor's	F	16
ET2	East High	Chinese Teacher	Bachelor's	F	20
ET3	East High	Math Teacher	Master's	M	15
WP1	West High	Principal	Doctorate	M	12
WP2	West High	Vice Principal	Master's	M	8
WT1	West High	Physics Teacher	Bachelor's	M	17
WT2	West High	Chemistry Teacher	Master's	F	17
WT3	West High	Chinese Teacher	Bachelor's	M	22
SP1	South High	Principal	Doctorate	M	5
ST1	South High	Geography Teacher	Bachelor's	F	20
ST2	South High	English Teacher	Bachelor's	F	14
ST3	South High	Multi-subject Teacher	Bachelor's	F	14

Thematic Cluster: Career Life and Daily Routines

This thematic cluster encompasses working conditions associated with the detracking policy and teachers' implementation practice. The first question in Teacher Interview Protocol is "Tell me about your career life at this school. What is a typical day like for you?" I am interested in finding out how the teachers' life experience guides teaching practice and whether or not teachers have the expertise to deal with the new course standard, the new assessment system, best practices, and other programs of change.

93 percent of teachers interviewed in this study have worked over 10 years and 64 percent over 15, and none has changed teaching careers. 71 percent of interviewed teachers changed schools in the past but most have stayed in their present school for over five years. Job satisfaction accounts for the low turnover. When talking about the career choice, a teacher at North High recalled that:

> I was born in a teacher's family. My father was a principal and history teacher. I wanted to become a teacher from a very early age. People have a mixed metaphor for the teaching career. When people compare our work to a gardener's, they mean that this job can give you a large sense of self-actualization. A gardener deals with plants, and we deal with each and every person on whose mind we could have powerful influence; when people draw an analogy between teachers and a candle, they imply that it takes self-sacrifice to accomplish our mission: burning yourself and lighting for others. I have mixed feelings about my career. On the one hand, it has become a great pleasure when I see young students come with a desire to learn something new and leave with a good harvest. On the other hand, this career asks extra time and effort to make a good teacher. We have been working a lot of overtime and we have been working at a breakneck pace, I mean, each and every one of my colleagues in all the schools I worked for.

This is a common response when teachers reflect their career life. The metaphors of gardener and candle represent different facets of a teacher career. Being a "gardener of human minds" comes with great responsibilities, which calls for enormous enthusiasm and work. Almost all teachers in this study take great pride in their career, which may compensate for the heavy workload. At the same time, most teachers feel overwhelmed by the hectic schedule. When asked what a typical weekday is like for her, a curriculum coordinator (or academic subject director) at East High described her routine on Tuesdays:

> Every day I arrive at school at seven o'clock to attend students' Reading Aloud session. On Tuesdays I give two Chinese classes in the morning, one at eight and the other at eleven, each for 40 minutes. During the

intermission I get time to grade students' paper and prepare my course plan, although my work could be interrupted by parents' phone calls asking for updates about their children. Today [is Tuesday.] I had a regular lunch appointment with the school's Academic Director at noon. We discussed students' test scores in the term exam and an action plan for improvement. As the curriculum coordinator for the Chinese subject area, I take care of course planning, peer observation, and group discussion. Usually I use afternoon for teachers' group activities such as designing and grading quizzes and exam papers, having seminars, and discussing the new course standard. At four all teachers who have no class will go to the school district's Teacher Training Institute for professional development. I also have to finish reviewing the script of our Chinese online broadcast before six each Tuesday, a distance education program launched by East High. The night is my own time, but I have a coauthored book to finish. I count on this book to get my promotion to senior advanced teacher in the next two years. So you can imagine [the pace of my life].

China set up a set of professional credentials system, i.e., junior teacher, intermediate teacher, advanced teacher, and senior advanced teacher, based on teachers' academic competencies and job performance. This is also a merit-based pay system in which teachers' income is connected with their professional credentials. By this professional track, teachers are encouraged to take teaching as a lifelong career. However, they also come under great pressure from the requirements of minimal academic degree, working experience, peer review, and publications. A 2006 poll found over 69 percent of teachers are considered sub healthy, a 16 percent increase compared with 2005 and a 35 percent increase compared with 2004. The average life expectancy of teachers is ten years lower than the average national level (J. Wang, 2007). During my observation sessions in North High, the teachers were having their annual health check, and some of them had been diagnosed with heart and brain diseases, which are especially prevalent among teacher population. It is believed these typical occupational diseases are closely related to teachers' everyday hectic schedules.

All teachers in this study are licensed. Beijing municipal government has already raised the standards for the entry-level teachers: all teachers have to meet the minimal academic degree requirement, pass the spoken mandarin Chinese test, and get a teaching license before they start their career. Most schools in China have preferred normal university graduates when they recruit teachers, since normal university graduates have learned to master pedagogy and completed a half-year apprenticeship. During my observation sessions, all interviewed principals expressed the same preference. Regular participation in professional development is mandated by the LEAs. Due to intensive pre-service and continuous in-service education, most teachers in these four schools are generally qualified.

Thematic Cluster: Students' Different Abilities and Needs and Ideal Inclusive Education

This thematic cluster encompasses teachers' preconceptions about inclusive education. The second question in the Teacher Interview Protocol is "Tell me about your experience with students with different abilities and needs." The seventh question is "In your opinion, what would an effective Inclusive Education program look like for your school? Why would these features be effective?" I am interested in finding out how teachers' experience with students with different abilities and needs shapes their expectations of inclusive education.

There is a consensus among teachers that children should be placed in different tracks according to their abilities and needs, which is obviously contrary to the central government and the LEA's policy mandates. As a teacher at East High explained,

> On some level, a student's performance is a reflection of his abilities and the extent of his hard work. In a perfect world, students can choose to learn whatever they like to learn, including fast-track classes and advanced elective courses, but a lot of kids even could not catch up with their peers in the regular track and mandatory courses. It would take these students with lower abilities more time to figure out what's going on in the class. We cannot guarantee that they will leave the classroom with the same level of understanding as the students with higher abilities. The gap [between students with low abilities and high abilities] will widen as time goes on.

These kinds of concerns may be caused by lack of knowledge about special education, as another teacher added:

> Students with higher abilities are pretty predictable, which means you can expect them to keep a certain understanding level on different subjects and a stable performance level on tests. I am not saying the students with lower abilities couldn't excel in any course, but they are a complete enigma. They can learn the classroom materials to perfection sometimes, then all of a sudden they fail to digest any bit the next day. Their motivation and morale also seem unstable. One day they may be high-spirited, the other day they are sluggish to the point of depression. It is very difficult to achieve the same teaching results for all students in the heterogeneous classes.

These assumptions are in complete accord with Goldberg, Passow, and Justman (1966) and Jeannie Oakes (2005)'s summarization, against which I have already presented my arguments. It is reasonable to argue that particular educational arrangements have to respond to the individuals' different demands, but it is not necessary to have different tracks in order to attend to these different needs.

Because low-track teaching is a routine part of almost all teachers' work load in these four schools, it does not carry a stigma unless the teacher teaches only low-track classes all the time. Sometimes low-track teaching can be a pleasant experience since it lacks some of the pressures of fast-track teaching, as one teacher remarked:

> I guess I find slow-track students fun to work with. Fast-track students can be very motivated by their personal ambition and they focus on their own stuff. Slow-track students are different. They are more caring about others' feelings. If you do something for them, even small things, they will remember you forever. And many fast-track students, if things don't go well, will look more for a scapegoat. They want to find someone — like parents or teachers — to blame it on.

When asked about an ideal inclusive education, a teacher emphasized that

> An ideal inclusive education should focus on diversity. Sure we are here to help students to develop talents needed by the society, but the society has diverse needs for talents. Students have different cultural, emotional, and psychological qualities that may be all beneficial to this society. We do not have to make them have the same kind of talents, as the exam-oriented education did. First of all, we should stop thinking of them as our working materials and treating them as tools.

Most interviewees compared inclusive education with exam-oriented education and referred to the differences between "to do" and "to be" education,[7] as another teacher from North High added:

> When we had a joint conference with Eton College, we were impressed by our counterpart's focus on personality, teamwork, problem-solving, and liberal education. I feel safe to say our students and Eton students are both

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[7] According to the UNESCO (2008), "Learning to be, the report of the International Commission on the Development of Education, presided over by Edgar Faure, was published in 1972. With its many reprints and language versions it became one of UNESCO's most popular publications. . . . The main theme, as Edgar Faure wrote in his presentation of the report, is that education can only be overall and lifelong. 'We should no longer assiduously acquire knowledge once and for all, but learn how to build up a constantly evolving body of knowledge all through life - learn to be'" (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2008).

intelligent, I mean they may have IQs at the same level, but I am not sure our students can excel with the emotional quotient. "To do," or know-how, is important, but we have come to a point that we need to turn to students' personalities. Changing people's mind is more difficult than the changes in the fields of science and technology.

The discussion about "to do" and "to be" education has resonance for other professionals. Xiaochun Wang (2000) used the example of music education to clarify the gap between these two kinds of educational ideologies:

> Today's piano teaching materials are all designed for the training of musical professionals but in reality they try to make children master music by learning musical techniques. These are dry and uninteresting. No wonder children are opposed to them. Even if the children manage to score some high grades, they still lack a feeling for music. The result is that they have music, but no culture. (X. Wang, 1998)

Thematic Cluster: Dis/advantages Associated with Inclusive Education and Detracking

This thematic cluster encompasses teachers' conceptions about inclusive education and tracking. The third question in Teacher Interview Protocol is "What are the key disadvantages associated with inclusive education?" The fourth question is "What additional disadvantages are associated with detracking?" The fifth question is "What are the key advantages or benefits associated with inclusive education?" The sixth question is "What additional advantages, if any, are associated with detracking?" I am interested in finding out the pros and cons of inclusive education and detracking for teachers.

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The teachers' opinions concerning the key disadvantages associated with inclusive education are almost unanimous. The workload is the greatest concern, as a teacher from South High stated:

> [Inclusive education] is a program with good ideas, but it poses a great challenge to us. In the past we need to deal only with the test scores and think only about the National Admission Exam for Colleges and Universities. Now it seems that we have two front lines at the same time. On one hand, we still have to focus on students' academic performance. On the other hand, we need to do more work about students' socio-emotional development. Let me put it in this way: it's like they doubled our workload with the same time and pay.

Most teachers echoed this statement in their response to the key disadvantages associated with inclusive education. Another key disadvantage is teachers' lack of training to work with more heterogeneous classes. Students' systematic acquisition of knowledge has been a cornerstone of Chinese secondary education for decades. The new course standards and the exploration-oriented learning have different aims, with which a lot of teachers feel uncomfortable and uneasy. A West High teacher stated that

> I found it hard to adapt to the change [proposed by the inclusive education program]. One of the major components of inclusive education is the exploration-oriented learning. In an ideal situation. I would really start with students. I would ask, what does he *want* to know, and what can I do to help further his growth? With the exploration-oriented learning we were required to return the classroom to students and let them take over the learning process. You know what? Once students get excited about a certain topic, they became obsessed with it and would never stop. Sure they show great interest. On the other hand, my job is to provide them with knowledge they *need*. There are some kinds of knowledge that I would gauge that the children are ready for. I was stressed out because I couldn't finish my course plan in each class. My colleagues had the same problem.

One of disadvantages associated with detracking is its incompatibility with teachers' other commitments—although this seems more a challenge than a disadvantage. Helping students to achieve academic success, i.e., getting ahead at the National Admission Exams for Colleges and Universities, has been always among teachers' top priorities. Although there is no solid evidence that the tracking system has substantial positive effects on academic achievement, teachers still prefer to teach homogeneous classes to students with similar levels of academic preparation because they fear that high-achieving students will be slowed down by less-prepared classmates in heterogeneous classes. Therefore, inclusive education's relative advantages over the existing exam-oriented education have narrowed. This sentiment could be best summarized in one teacher's response to the question about the disadvantages associated with detracking:

> The various advance exams are our baton. We have to follow it. The school district said they would not rank schools by the test scores, but we all know that is not true. They do look at the test scores to figure out how we are doing, because they also have other school districts to compete with. Our school's reputation depends on the test score, and our parents have great expectations from us. Our students count on us to provide them with solid training and to help them to excel at the exams and in the job market. It is safe to keep focusing on students' academic training and using the same pedagogy, i.e., tracked teaching, in order to make enough progress.

Another additional disadvantage of inclusive education is the ambiguity of its goals and low observability of program outcomes. This confusion is very common among teachers in different schools. A teacher from East High summed this up, saying that

> It's like the emperor's new clothes. You can hear everyone is talking about it, but you still don't know what it is or how it looks. Today

whenever people talk about educational reform, they always use the phrase, "quality education," or "inclusive education," as if it's one-size-fits-all stuff. For teachers who work every day in the classroom, the inclusive education program should have clearly-cut goals and effective indicators of program outcome. That the test scores can be used for an indicator for teaching outcomes is because they are easy to assess and we always know how we are doing. On the other hand, a lot of teachers claim that they are implementing the inclusive education program but they are doing something that is actually against the ideas of inclusive education. If they [the school district] can tell us what they expect from us in regards to inclusive education, the situation may be better. But I am not optimistic because they also seem very confused.

Although teachers have concerns about inclusive education and detracking policies, they clearly understand the central government and local educational agencies' intents and efforts to promote inclusive education in their schools. When asked what the key advantages or benefits associated with inclusive education were, a teacher from North High was especially interested in having students as the focus of education:

It is important for educators to appreciate students' potential and respect their personalities. We are used to the mindset that the student's role is one of receiving information and the teacher's role is one of sending it. Inclusive Education provides another way to think of teaching. That is to say, guiding, assisting, and helping students explore the unknown world is more important than the acquisition of knowledge.

Another teacher from East High agreed with the above statement. She reinforced the same idea concerning inclusive education's impact on students' learning and affirmed her belief that inclusive education can provide more learning opportunities to students:

I think I can see the point of inclusive education now. It is more important to teach students how to fish, not just give them fish. The critical thinking and problem solving skills matter more than ever in today's world. They are the key to great treasure of knowledge because nobody could catch up with the rapid development of human knowledge. If I have to name one thing I like about inclusive education, it is always method. In the past we

thought that there was always only one correct answer to a certain question, a most correct one. Now students realize that the different answers to the same question could all be right.

An additional advantage of the detracking system is that it helps develop a democratic mindset, although not all teachers pay attention to this. At least one teacher mentioned this in the interview, saying

> There is something we are missing in our society, and it is also related to our schooling system. We get used to treat people with different ways, I mean, by their appearance, manners, education, and social status. Every day we judge people around us and we treat them differently. Same thing happens in our classroom. We treat students differently by giving them different teaching materials and other educational resources. We have different expectations from them. We don't think they deserve the same amount of attention and respect just because they differ in academic achievement. I do think it's unfair. With inclusive education, we get a chance to change the situation. Every student is valuable and they shine in different ways. You really couldn't ignore someone just because s/he is not doing well at a certain academic subject. We really need to appreciate each and every individual's potential and encourage them to pursue different paths for personal growth. I mean, success doesn't have only one meaning.

Thematic Cluster: Implementation Plan, Support and Gap

This thematic cluster encompasses the schools' plans for change, their available resources, and the gap between the plans and the outcomes of implementation. The eighth question in Teacher Interview Protocol is "What kinds of changes did your principal try to make in order to implement Inclusive Education Program, especially detracking? How close are you to implementing these changes now?" The eleventh question is "What kind of supports and resources did your school administration or district staff provide for you to implement these changes?" I am interested in finding the different paths and

approaches the four schools were pursuing, the resources they were receiving, and each school's respective implementation outcome.

This thematic cluster polarized the teachers, depending on which school they were working for. Those working in high-performing schools seemed to favor inclusive education more than those in low-performing schools. When answering the question about the school's plan for change related to inclusive education, there is a general consensus among teachers from high-performing schools, as one teacher stated:

> When our school embarked on the track of inclusive education, it was very clear that we would focus on the "to be" education, an education to take care of every and each student and help fulfill their unique potential, rather than an education that just gave students some pieces of knowledge. The principal's ideas of education have been so well accepted that every teacher can remember it: "Respect students' personalities and fulfill their potential. Everything we do, we do it for students and our country." We know she's serious, consistent, and right. For the History subject [which I am teaching], both history facts and the insight into historical phenomena are important to my teaching. A walking library [of history] is not enough for this goal. We focus on the students' world outlook and sense of history.

Other teachers from this high-performing school responded to this question affirmatively with a similar opinion, but they disagreed with each other as to how close they were to implementing the change. Some teachers considered that they had accomplished what the principal set out to do so well that they "don't think there's too much to improve in this regard," other teachers estimated that they only achieved one third of the principals' goals since they thought these goals were too lofty to be fully accomplished. All interviewed teachers of this high-performing school agreed that they made impressive progress on the track the principal set. There is no doubt that they felt that they had plenty of resources and support, as a new teacher recalled:

I am really glad to be here. I have no complaint about the pay or working environment. This is my third year and so far so good. I already have gotten a lot of professional development, like mentoring, seminar, and peer observation. Our school is a learning organization. I am happy that I can continue to learn something new. [Interviewer: Do you feel there is anything you still need in order to implement inclusive education?] If you ask if we need more support, I think we should talk about social environment, like the national admission exam, or parents' great expectations and obsession with the test scores. The principal tried her best to provide resources for us as much as possible, but it is hard to change the entire society's mindset and preference.

Not all teachers in the same school agreed that there was nothing to complain about. Risk-taking requires high levels of support, but some teachers felt the support they were receiving was not enough:

I got some new ideas about teaching the English subject, but I never gave it a full try. I did want to experiment with the new ideas. There is a lot at stake since we are close to the National Admission Exam. Every student bears the great hopes of their family, and the NAE is a big event for them. I could not let them down. The experiment may cost my job. If successful, it'll be fine. If it fails, I will be done. So my solution is to give a little bit every time. I do not really think I have another choice.

Teachers in medium-performing schools felt the impact of the inclusive education program, but their principals were not fully committed, as one teacher recalled:

The campaign for inclusive education is everywhere. You really could not overlook it. The school district staff and our principal talked about it, some peer teachers at seminars presented sample lesson plans, and we need to reflect on our practice to see if we can improve our practice in the spirit of inclusive education. However, I feel it's more like a fashion trend. The principal doesn't seem to be very serious although he did approve more extra-curricular activities to reinforce students' socio-emotional development. The main focus is still on the test scores, which is our blood line.

However, new course standards and new textbooks, one of key components of inclusive education, forced almost all teachers in these medium-performing schools to change their routines. Unlike those in high-performing schools, teachers in the medium-performing schools felt they were receiving insufficient support. A teacher at East High expressed her concerns about the time available for reflection:

> What I need most is a period of full-time training. I could use the time to reflect on my teaching experience and digest new pedagogical ideas. I feel I need more theoretical guidance after these years of practice. The in-service regular professional development is good, but it's not enough. The best way, at least for me, is to have some hours waived from the workload and to focus on learning, reflection and improvement. Time is also important resources.

Another teacher from South High agreed with the above statement to the point that she felt she needed to take a sabbatical for self improvement, but she thought that something in professional development was still missing:

> The school district organized mental health training sessions for teachers and students, which was really helpful. The information technology literacy sessions also went well, and now we are comfortable to make multimedia presentations. However, some professional development requirements don't make sense to me, like spoken English training. I am a Geography teacher and I don't use English a lot. What I need most is peer observations, preferably sample lessons in those prestigious high schools. I want to know how teachers are giving geography class and how students are doing there. I think the staff in the school district could focus on this aspect.

It is hard for teachers in these schools to evaluate to what degree they have already implemented their principal's plan of change. Like their principals, most teachers in these schools do not feel compelled to follow inclusive education all the way down.

They tend to argue that there is no guidance for them to evaluate their implementation of this program since there is no consensus on the exact definition of inclusive education.

Most teachers in the low-performing school reported that a clear plan of change and systemic implementation did not exist. They were struggling to improve students' test scores and they did not think that inclusive education could be helpful on this issue. A teacher of this school affirmed that

> What our principal proposed was actually showcase. He had no clear requirements about the inclusive education program, so we assume we should continue with our old track. We set up some extra-curricular activities and after-school programs to show we were cooperating with the school district on the inclusive education program. We showed them we did something other than only preparation for exam and we went the extra mile to help students on socio-emotional development, but these measures did not have real impact on the teaching and learning processes. My daily routines and the focus of my work did not change with inclusive education. The reason is simple. We are struggling to improve our academic reputation and meet the parents' expectations. What inclusive education asked is something we could not afford.

Teachers in this school were more concerned about the resources and support they could get to improve their instruction and students' test scores. They realized that the central government had used the National Admission Exam as a lever to promote inclusive education. They had to adapt to the new direction. When asked about the support teachers need, a chemistry teacher said that

> The National Chemistry exam shifted its focus towards students' problem-solving abilities in recent years. The exam questions are situated in real-life experience. It's been impossible to deal with this kind of change with our original teaching plan, like focusing on abstract theories and assigning heavy homework. How to relate the learning process to students' real-life experience? How to design the course around real-life problems? These questions are asking for a new solution. I remember there was a great practice introduced in a seminar. It was really inspiring since it showed me

how important the dialogue between teacher and student was. This kind of professional development is what teachers in schools at our level need.

Thematic Cluster: Implementation Practice

This thematic cluster encompasses the teachers' implementation practices at the classroom level where teaching and student assessment — two key components of the inclusive education requirements — are concerned. The ninth question in the Teacher Interview Protocol is "Describe your teaching strategies to implement the inclusive education requirement in your classroom." The tenth question is "Describe your approach to assess student work. Is there any change before and after the introduction of inclusive education in your school?" I am interested in finding actual changes happening in the detracking schools and everyday classrooms, and different approaches and practice employed by teachers to implement the inclusive education program at the front line.

Whether or not teachers were strongly committed to inclusive education, they have become deeply involved in various changes. The new course standards are more flexible, and most schools are choosing the textbooks they consider most suitable to their students, which was unimaginable in the past. Pedagogy has to change too. A Math teacher stated that

> We are not emphasizing mathematical concepts and rules so much in the manner they were taught and understood. We made some changes according to the requirements of inclusive education. We make it clear that it is not the ability of students to figure out the correct answers to exam questions that need more training, but the thinking which controls the problem-solving abilities. Real-life situations and other math games are planned to exercise the developing thinking of the students, not only for theoretical performance or the memorizing of mathematical concepts and rules. Students quickly get our message that what counts in the

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classroom is not an arbitrary level of performance. To build capacities from these different experiences means to analyze and interpret. Knowing how to do this is primarily a developmental process of thinking and not a mere matter of learning a piece of information and memorizing it.

More and more teachers in my interviews began to realize that every student makes his own sense of the world and there are different learning outcomes. The reproduction of the teacher's knowledge by the student does not necessarily mean an exact copy of such knowledge. The learning process can involve the production of new knowledge. This is a radical move away from the traditional transmission of knowledge model of teaching and learning. To achieve the ideal situation for this, teachers need to establish a student-teacher interaction that recognizes that it is capable of producing both knowledge and the acquisition of knowledge. As one teacher affirmed,

> We used to think that the school was a place to pass a certain culture, a lot of skills, information, and knowledge on to the young people. We don't take this view any more after the introduction of inclusive education. We try to see students as whole people with emotional needs, intellectual needs, as well as physical needs. We are trying to treat the education of the whole person. We are not stocked up with facts and that sort of thing. We are organizers of their learning process, and this process should be the students' own exploration of themselves, their well-being, and personal growth. We have to think of as many ways as we can to encourage students to pursue their own interest.

New elective courses were invented in some schools to expand students' horizons. Many teachers from North High mentioned a few popular courses, like *The Youth of Today* that covers topics from interpersonal communication to education of tolerance and love, *body building*, and *robotics*. All four schools increased the proportion of activities courses in their coursework, and many teachers showed great interest in this kind of

course. However, it seems these schools usually mix activity courses, extra-curricular

activities and after-school programs, as a new Chinese teacher commented:

> People would like to consider activity courses as something like
> cultivating students' teamwork. This is a very narrow concept [of activity
> courses]. I want to experiment with activity courses in my classroom in
> order for my students to appreciate the beauty of Chinese poetry. We can
> do it in a very interesting way. Such experience in group activities is very
> necessary for students' emotional development. I will suggest that my
> principal invest more in it if my experiments become successful.

Relief of students' homework load has been one of main concerns of inclusive

education. Most teachers in the interviews said they went extra miles to choose the most

typical questions for students to answer in their homework. "You want students to do less

homework, then you have to do more homework," a teacher states. Open-ended

assignments have become more popular in all four schools that I studied. Most teachers

tend to accept the idea that teachers should be able to accommodate a wide range of

ability levels, personal needs, and learning patterns.

There may be no more successful change in the inclusive education program than

the implementation of the new student assessment system. Almost all teachers in this

study emphasized that they were considering various factors when they composed their

assessment in the students' growth handbooks. A teacher from East High exemplifies

teachers' common responses:

> The Beijing Council of Education has replaced the report card with new
> student growth handbook. A big change is that we won't use only test
> scores to assess students' performance. The new student assessment
> system also pays attention to students' organizational abilities,
> interpersonal communication skills, and popularity. There is a shift from a
> focus on criticism of students' shortcomings to praise for their positive
> qualities in this assessment system. Another change is that the star

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students are not only high-performing students but also students who care about community service and who make considerable progress on different aspects. Although we still rank students according to their test scores, we don't publicize the ranking in order to protect students' self-respect and self-confidence. The reason we still do ranking is that we have to know how our students are doing and accordingly make plans for improvement. After all, the National Admission Exam is still there. The whole focus is on encouraging students to fulfill their potential and pursue different tracks of development depending on their personal properties.

The shift from students' test scores to their more general well-being and welfare has been a great achievement of inclusive education. Teachers reported that they also encouraged students to develop their capacities in music, arts, and sports. All four schools have special policies to admit students with special talents.

Thematic Cluster: Implementation Conflicts

This thematic cluster encompasses problems and conflicts teachers encountered in their implementation practice. The twelfth question in Teacher Interview Protocol is "What is the biggest challenge for your school to implement Inclusive Education Program especially detracking?" The thirteenth question is "What could you do that you aren't already doing to promote Inclusive Education in your classroom? What holds you back from doing it?" I am interested in finding out what are the personal, organizational, and institutional factors that inhibit the implementation of inclusive education.

Teachers felt that various factors held them back from fully implementing the inclusive education program. The most important factor is the National Admission Exam, which seems to draw a lot attention from teachers. A teacher from West High stated that

We were educated from our childhood that everyone is equal before the test scores, and we all thought it was fair. At present we do not have a better way to choose who can receive higher education. We understand this, but the problem is that this examination system, which has actually been the infrastructure of our basic education system, also became a nightmare for generations of students. It's so overwhelming that students are investing all their time and energy on this exam. The stakes are huge. You may go to a good university and find a good job if you do well on the exam, and you may stop before the gate and feel like a loser throughout all your life. All your future depends on the three days when you take the exam. There is nothing more important than helping students prepare for the exam. To make it worse, we have a one-child policy. We feel so overwhelmed by the stakes.

The National Admission Exam fueled parents' high expectations of their children. When schools were required to focus on students' holistic development, parents felt obliged to push their children to excel on the tests. Despite schools' cooperation with the LEAs to relieve students' homework load, parents were seeking personal tutors to help their children gain advantages in the exams. Many teachers felt that there was a mismatch between schooling and family education. A new North High teacher commented on this issue, saying that

An educational problem is also social problem. We cannot only fix the problem inside the school. For centuries Chinese people have counted on the exam to get ahead and achieve their personal ambition. It's hard to change this with only one policy package and in one generation. Unlike the western countries, we don't have many avenues to achieve personal success. It's understandable that people value education, or I should say exams, at this point because it provides hope for them. But it has a price. Dealing with exam is only one of human being's abilities. Obsession with it inhibits this country's vigor and creativity. That's why we have inclusive education: to help students develop their unique capacities, to help them pursue different ways to success. The crux is that the society hasn't come to the point where we are ready for it.

Class size is also a factor that inhibits the implementation of inclusive education. Most Chinese schools maintain a fixed class system in which the same group of students studies all subjects together. The Beijing Council of Education recommended that the class size should be kept well under 35 per class in secondary schools, but this policy is not strictly enforced in some schools with excellent academic records in this study. The actual class size in these schools has sometimes been over 50, due to the huge demand for good educational resources. One teacher stated that

> It's impossible to take care of every student if you get 50 students in your classroom. A class of 20 will be more comfortable for me to do inclusion. How about if every student wants to make comments? They [staff in the school district] said we don't need to finish all the parts of our lesson plan, but what about if the principals and parents blame us for failing to provide solid teaching? According to the inclusive education program, students should learn from each other in group activities, it's also hard to do if you have 50 students.

Many teachers in this study voiced their concerns about the new course standards and new textbooks. They thought they needed more time to adapt to the new course standards although they did agree that these were well suited to the purposes of inclusive education. Another teacher remarked that

> The old course standards and textbooks stood the test of time. We used them for more than twenty years to educate generations of students. They're solid, I mean, they laid a solid base for the transmission of basic knowledge. It's something we're proud of. I can assure you that all of us knew every point in the old course standards and textbooks. However, the new course standards are based on totally different ideas. They are more flexible, more open-ended, and most of all they require more time to teach. I think we need three classes to finish the content of one class with the new course standards. At the same time, the new textbooks are a total mess. We all dislike the new textbooks. Students may like them since the new textbooks can be humorous for them, but it's hard to teach. We just don't really know how to extract the main points from the new textbooks.

The new course standards are compulsory but the textbooks don't need to be unified any more after the introduction of inclusive education. The four schools in this study are using two different sets of textbooks. A teacher from West High told me that a teacher from another school compiled a new Chinese textbook with new materials including modern poetry and novels. "It's really good, and students liked it very much." However, the experiment collapsed shortly after the first unified exam administered by the school district. The test scores were a total failure. The interviewee said, "I never saw the teacher again [which implied the teacher got fired]. Such a radical experiment involved huge stakes." The interviewee himself also hoped that he could use his own textbook that combined systemic transmission of knowledge with emphasis on students' capacity-building.

Thematic Cluster: Successful Implementation History

This thematic cluster encompasses the unique culture in different schools driven by stories, ceremonies, rituals and heroes. The fourteenth question in Teacher Interview Protocol is "Tell me any story about successful policy implementation in the history of your school. What do you think were the most important reasons for the successful implementation?" I am interested in finding out how school leaders used organizational values and norms to form a spiritual network and enhance their organizational culture.

This question has polarized schools. When asked about successful implementation history, most teachers mentioned minor achievements like human resources management, as a teacher from North High recalled:

> There was a time when the principal sat with all the teachers at a meeting that was supposed to be in appreciation of the teachers' great efforts in the past semester. We were in a multimedia classroom where we ran a distance education program with all the high-tech gadgets. She turned the electronic blackboard on and it came as a big surprise all of a sudden. A few student camera crews had gone to teachers' home to ask our family members to talk to us in front of camera. My daughter said to me: "Mom, I wish you could come home earlier." I broke in tears and was so moved by the scene. That's a big support and appreciation of my work.

Teachers in other schools mentioned similar experiences when asked about implementation history. A teacher from West High said his principal remembered every teacher's birthday and always sent a small gift on the day. Other teachers from West High added that the school administration responded to students' needs such as food and accommodation very quickly. A teacher remarked that "Ours is a boarding school and all students are minorities. Resentment from minority students is the last thing they [the school leaders] want to see since it's a very sensitive issue." A certain principal even vouched for teachers to get housing mortgages.

The four schools had different implementation histories. South High, East High, and West High had painful implementation experiences. As a teacher from East High recalled, "For a school at our level, it's always difficult to get things done." He considered resources as the biggest challenge. A principal from West High also thought his school did not get sufficient support, adding that, "it took three years of negotiation with different governmental departments to get approval for our students to take the

National Admission Exam in Beijing rather than their original residential area. You can imagine that [difficulties]." Teachers from North High feel satisfied with their implementation history and attributed it to their leadership, as a teacher remarked, "Our principal is such a great leader. If she wants something, she always gets it done." But the principal disagreed: "I don't think that I have magic power. It's not the resources but people that matter most. 70 percent of our resources are created by us."

Case Study

Haidian is a large-size district with a mix of with urban, suburban, and rural schools. There are different types of schools in this district: former key schools, non-key schools, schools administered by the LEA, schools affiliated with universities and central government agencies, etc. The geographic areas of the schools represent the rich variety of Beijing's metropolitan communities. As a fast-growing high technology area, Haidian district has attracted a large population of migrant workers during the past twenty years. Inclusion of migrant children has become one of the top priorities for the local educational agencies. For the past decade, Haidian has been one of the pioneering areas in implementing the central and municipal governments' education policies. All four participating schools in this study are located in the Haidian district. Table 4-3 lists participating schools' brief information.

Table 4-3: Participating Schools Information

School	School Designation	Admission Scope	Students' Social-Economic Status

North High	Urban	Citywide	Upper-middle class
East High	Urban	District-wide	Lower-middle class
West High	Urban	Nationwide	Upper-middle class minorities
South High	Rural	District-wide	Working class

This section draws on data from principal interviews, observation, and reflection logs to present coherent implementation stories for the four schools.

North High: "For every student and for student's every need"

North High is a 100,000 square-meter, fairly affluent metropolitan high school attended by upper-middle class children from all around Beijing. It was founded in 1950 and in 2005 became one of the first 44 certified exemplary public high schools. North High leads in gifted programs for secondary education at both a regional and a national level. Its students have won many Gold medals at the International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO), the International Physics Olympiad (IPHO), and the World Youth under 16 Chess Olympiads. In 2004, 12 teachers and students from North High took part in the Human Genome Initiative, an international research program for the creation of detailed genetic and physical maps for each of the twenty four different human chromosomes and the elucidation of the complete deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) sequence of the human genome, and contributed to an article in the journal *Nature*. In 2006, 217 students from North High were accepted into Tsinghua University and Peking University, the two most prestigious colleges in China. The school operates an almost fee-free

weekend gifted program for Beijing's elementary school students who pass its designated exam in mathematics, with the intent of attracting these gifted students to apply to North High. Its soccer team participated in U-17 leagues and won two World Championships, four National Championships, and 38 Beijing Championships. A total of 41 North High players now play in professional soccer leagues. The 3000-square meter school library has a collection of 120,000 books, 300 selected magazines, and various electronic databases. At present 120 international students from 16 countries study at North High.

When I first got to North High, the words engraved on the granite wall to the left of its main entrance caught my eye right away. They read "respect students' personalities and fulfill their potential. Everything we do, we do it for students and our country. We do it for every student, for the student's everything." Every teacher in my observation sessions seemed able to recite this motto easily and all agreed that these words summarized the school's ideas about education very well.

Like most high schools in Beijing, teachers are divided into different offices by their subjects and grades. The offices are also used for teachers to grade students' homework or group meetings. Every teacher has his/her own office space, including a workstation and cabinet. The pace of life in North High is fast. During the week I spent at North High — a time close to term exams — the office was like a battlefield command center. Course coordinators and grade leaders were meeting with their teachers to arrange for the final exam, students were coming to turn in their assignments, parents were calling to inquire about their childrens' performance, and the school administrative staff was coming to collect various statistical data.

It was not easy to make an appointment with the principal because of her very hectic schedule. The first time I went to her office by appointment, she was meeting with a group of visiting American teachers. "I am sorry that I couldn't see you right now," she told me, "The school district chief called me this morning saying that he wanted me to host these visitors." I took a rain check and decided that I should study her experience more closely.

She is in her sixties and has been slowly working her way up the school ladder since she was in her twenties. She became the principal in 1997. Teachers felt that she might be the most powerful principal in the metropolitan Beijing area. The most often repeated story has it that the first year she became the principal she booked a flight for 100 teachers to attend an international conference on gifted education in the United States. This was unimaginable at a time when most Chinese people never got a chance to set foot on other countries' soil. The miracle continued. North High has beaten all its long-time competitors in the National Admission Exam and its students have achieved the highest test scores since 2000. One of the main reasons is that the North High school employs a very aggressive admission policy to recruit the most brilliant students from all around the metropolitan area. A teacher told me that the principal even hired an unemployed single mother to work in the school cafeteria so that she would agree to keep her son at North High. She also made every effort to enroll high-performing teachers. Whenever and wherever she saw a good teacher, she would try to persuade him or her to work for North High with generous pay and other benefits including housing. During her term she had already hired over 20 senior advanced teachers from other provinces. She was so

aggressive in this that some educational officials in other provinces took the issue to the Ministry of Education.

Teachers had mentioned that their principal was a workaholic. They said she even gone so far as to call the grade leaders at 3 a.m. to confirm some statistical data. Many staff and teachers are regularly obliged to go home very late but rarely complain since the principal works hard around the clock. She has "success depends on the details" as her motto and always sets high standards for herself and other staff.

The second time I met the principal of North High was in her office, but she immediately said she was heading to a meeting with other principals. She invited me to sit in on the meeting and asked me if we could do the interview afterwards. I was glad to do so. On the way to the conference room in another building, we saw that a group of school district officials was inspecting the school's sports facilities. The principal stopped to extend her brief greeting to them. It was clear that these officials knew her very well and had great respect to her. The meeting of the day was about distance education sponsored by North High. It lasted two hours and went smoothly. The principal displayed her excellent organizational abilities and made quick decisions.

Immediately after the meeting I had the opportunity to interview the principal along with another vice principal. When asked about her understanding of inclusive education requirement, the principal stated that

> We don't get entangled in the debate about what exactly constitutes inclusive education. In 1997 when we started our inclusive education experiment, we deemed that we should do everything for students' needs. Whatever needs they have, we should help them to fulfill their full potential. People usually put the National Admission Exam and inclusive education on opposite sites. It doesn't have to be this way. To help

students excel in the exam is also a part of our inclusive education program.

The vice principal told me a story. The school's conference rooms had a "first come first serve" policy. Three teachers who came to the conference room for a group talk found that some books had been left on the table to show that the room was reserved. The teachers thought faculty members had priority to use the conference room and went on with their talk. When a group of students came back after a minute and found their room occupied, they went to the principal's office to report the issue. The principal asked the teachers to make an apology and leave. This event stirred up discussion among teachers, but they soon got a clear message: North High had the student needs as top priorities. The student associations are active on campus, from organizing sports tournaments to simulated United Nations. The school administration takes student needs very seriously.

As one of first schools that advocated for inclusive education and carried out the reforms, North High wants to seek a third way between exam-oriented education and inclusive education. When asked about the advantages of inclusive education and detracking, the principal recalled the pre-reform state of affairs, saying that

> Every student has his/her own unique needs and abilities, but our education focused on only tests. As a result, student life was painful and the learning process was tedious. Education should not be so miserable. After I took the position of vice principal in 1989, I began to convince my colleagues that we could do education in a different way, a way that makes students feel happy and satisfied. I think one of main advantages of inclusive education is that students feel they have more control over their exploration process. If they feel included, engaged, and empowered, their curiosity and interest will increase, which will also help them on the exams. This is a totally different direction. This is student-oriented. As I said, I don't look at the inclusive education program and the National

Admission Exam as being at odds, because we are obliged to work for the parents' expectations as well as students' chance for success. We have to live up to our promise to help them as much as we can.

The principal believes that inclusive education can attract students' interest in learning and thus increase their academic performance, including their test scores. She mentioned Howard Gardner's multiple intelligence theory, a very popular topic in the late 1990s. Speaking of students' different intellectual compositions, she affirmed that "it is not students but teachers who need to change." By this she meant that teachers should adapt the teaching style to the students' learning style — they should explain a subject in a variety of ways, and personalize the instruction process to take students' needs and abilities seriously.

The principal of North High's prescription for implementing inclusive education in her school is based on differentiated instruction. In this case, differentiated instruction does not mean tracking or ability grouping; quite the contrary, it does not propose that students should be grouped by their abilities. The principal herself has been advocating for differentiated instruction since she was a math teacher in the gifted program. To achieve her goals, she has requested that teachers create a "student-friendly" environment in which multiple paths allowed students of different abilities to have their different needs met in equally appropriate ways. The principal believes that differentiated instruction can provide different avenues to acquiring knowledge and processing learning content and allow students to take greater responsibility and ownership for their own learning.

To examine how differentiated instruction focused on meaningful learning for all students, I observed an English teacher's courses covering a whole chapter, which took a

total of four days. What the teacher presented was a three-part study plan. In the first part, he used whole-class instruction to teach content, and made use of multimedia presentation to highlight key points. The teacher-student voices were well balanced and students with different abilities all participated in the discussion in an active way. Before moving on to the second part, he offered students a chance to do a quiz. The teacher gave those who had already demonstrated their abilities in regards to the competency guidelines, including situational dialogues and library research, a chance to create cooperative teams so they could apply the key points in their independent studies and team projects. The teacher worked closely with students who were still struggling to grasp the key points so that he could help them focus on the concepts and skills they had no fully understood. He built rapport with students and interacted equitably with those with lower abilities in the class. If some of them seemed able to digest these points, they were given two options: go to the existing teams or form their own teams. During the last part of the chapter, all students were working in pairs on application tasks.

This was definitely not a one-size-fits-all instruction such as I saw in most whole-class teaching. The teacher used a variety of instructional approaches to match teaching content and process to the readiness, interest, and talents of his students. He tried to design his instruction to challenge students individually by offering a variety of learning arrangements. The crux of his teaching methodology was the multiple instruction methods and strategies, and multi-sensory activities, rather than multiple tracks and groups for students to follow.

The principal also increased the proportion of elective courses in the coursework as a part of her efforts to comply with the exploration-oriented learning requirement. The

school provides 120 elective courses at present, from French, Opera, and Astronomy to Artificial Intelligence. I was impressed by the facilities used, and projects that the students made. For instance, in a project dealing with climate and climate change, a group of North High students recorded the city's temperature, barometric pressure, humidity, visibility, and wind for five years, and continuously analyzed the impact of human activities on climate change. The school is deeply involved in helping students connect with universities and research institutes in order to get sufficient assistance with their projects. North High has a science month during which students display their research papers and project outcomes with posters and multimedia presentations. "It was not easy to take this step forward at the beginning [when I was one of the vice principals]," the principal recalled,

> I even ran into resistance from other vice principals, but the ideas of elective courses and research team projects were popular among students. You asked about what values we would hold on to even if it means a change in our operation. The answer is the student-centered orientation. During the past ten years I have already written a lot about our experience; but I believe it's hard to copy. The reason is simple: it takes time to build a community culture like ours. Our school culture based on student-centered orientation is one of our core competencies. Among other factors are our excellent faculty and a set of management regulations.

North High has a merit pay system which provides bonuses for workers who performs better at their jobs. The principal emphasizes that she is managing the school like a company:

> I want the extent of freedom that CEOs enjoy when I implement a change plan. I need the power to hire high-performing teachers and fire those who are unqualified or can't fit in our school. I pay teachers by how much they contribute to this school. We do differentiate teachers' salary and we don't allow teachers to know others' salaries, but they all know the principals'

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salary. If someone wants to question the transparency of our salary system or complain that his salary is too low, they can come to me, and I will show him our financial records or explain why he gets the amount he does by comparing his performance and salary with others.

To make this management style feasible, the principal deems moral character important. In 2000, North High finished construction of a 100-condominium building for its faculty members. The principal and other school administrators decided that they would not participate in the housing distribution. All condos were reserved for those faculty members with titles of advanced teachers and above. There was no conflict throughout the whole distribution process — something which is rare in other schools. The principal considered the housing distribution as the most successful implementation of a single school policy in North High's history. According to her, the most important factor contributing to the success is her selfless moral character. When asked about her role in the implementation process, the principal liked the metaphor of the "helmsman." "It takes very delicate leadership to keep the balance between our guiding principles and humane management," she said.

In conclusion, there are three important factors that contribute to North High's successful implementation of the inclusive education program. The most important factor is its strong leadership. As a charismatic leader, the principal shows her vision and her ability to build up consensus around a change plan among the school administrators, and a new community culture among the faculty members. The second factor is its practical strategy to advance inclusive education at the street level. This involves differentiated instruction combined with a student-centered orientation, as well as a balance between the requirements of inclusive education and a more traditional focus on students'

academic performance. The third factor is that North High has used innovative ways to build up and maintain its abundant resources. Although the principal and teachers claimed that over 70 percent of their resources were created by themselves, North High can take advantage of its excellent academic reputation to recruit the most brilliant students and most qualified teachers, to raise extra funds for its equipment and facilities, and to get around LEA requirements that it considers unnecessary.

East High: "They may not get what they want, but they get what they need"

East High is a small urban combined middle and high school. Founded in 1964, East High graduated over 6,000 high school students, among whom 3,500 went to college — 1,300 to Tier-1 Colleges. Its students come from middle-class families from the immediate neighborhood of downtown Beijing, close to a high-technology park. East High began its bilingual teaching experiment in 1995 and has had 17 bilingual classes so far. In 2001, it became the first bilingual public school sponsored by the Haidian school district. This 5000-square meter school underwent a multimillion-dollar renovation and upgraded all of its teaching facilities in 2000. The school has two information technology classrooms, three comprehensive digital classrooms, and a good collection of multimedia teaching materials to which every classroom can have easy access. East High has won the title of "Science Education Exemplary School" from the LEA for eight consecutive years. The academic courses of all 30 classes are college track and the class size is smaller than the LEA recommended level of 35 students per class. East High has a middle school graduation rate of 98 percent and a college admission rate of 91.4 percent. The school's

after-school activities won East High 51 national awards, 25 city awards, and 68 district awards. To get parents involved, East High has a special "Parents Day" on which parents are invited to sit in the classroom to watch instruction and provide feedback.

East High is very easy to access, not only because it is located in downtown Beijing, but also because the school administration is community-friendly. Unlike North High, there are no security guards at the school entrance — there is not even a secretary or assistant in the principal's office. It appears that everyone can reach the principal easily. The principal is a humble middle-age man with a pleasant face that always seems ready to break into a smile. He was a History teacher for 15 years before he was promoted to the principal's position. His office, just like most teachers' offices in East High, is compact. To my surprise, the principal had no computer in his office. "I like using a phone to communicate with people and get things done," he explained, "and don't get me wrong, our teachers are so much better than I in the high-tech stuff." That is true. East High leads the Haidian district in its Computer-aided Instruction (CAI) program. Students from grade 7 to 11 have information technology as a required course.

On average, East High students score in the second or third rather than the bottom quartile on standardized achievement tests. Teachers told me, "These students are mediocre." Indeed, most students at East High appear to acknowledge the importance of education and to maintain a commitment at least to survive the National Admission Exam. Unlike North High which has privileges in admitting the most brilliant students, East High, together with South High, has been under direct supervision of the school district. The school district sets up a computerized system to randomly distribute students to its neighboring schools, a move to comply with the inclusive education program and against

interschool grouping. As a result, East High students come from a broad range of socioeconomic backgrounds rather than a single stratum, although the great majority of East High students could be generally labeled as urban middle class. The principal expressed his discontent with this system while at the same time saying he understood the reasons behind it.

The principal describes his leadership as "practical" and his role as a "facilitator" to address teachers, parents, and students' concerns:

> I don't know how well I have done because the school district never had a principal evaluation. I would like to say I'm doing ok. We are in an educationally developed district. Maybe I should say it's the most educated area in this country. Sure East High is not the best school in this district. . . . More than anything else, I want to be viewed by teachers and parents as someone who's open and accessible, not a final arbiter of everything. My role is to encourage people to be more cooperative. . . . There is not much I personally can change in this school, and I don't do as much as I would like to do. I'm not running a top school, and I am not supposed to be very innovative, like providing impetus for change or leading an educational reform. I want to see that everything goes smoothly, specifically, that students' test scores can improve every year. Students may not get all they want, but they can get what they need here. This is a safe way. I see myself as being more reactive than I'd like to be.

One of the principal's "down-to-earth" strategies for inclusive education is to develop networks of support. The principal believes that both improvement of students' academic performance and inclusion of all students necessitates an array of professional and nonprofessional supports such as parents, peers, friends, and tutors for students, peer observations and group planning for teachers, as well as technological support to improve teaching and learning processes.

As far as the parents are concerned, East High sets up a school board in which parents, students, and community organizations get involved — something which is rare in most of schools in Beijing. On this subject the principal remarked that

> Student's problems are sometimes rooted in poor parenting. It's very important to make family education a part of our efforts to improve students' test scores. We need parents to get involved. This school has a pretty good relationship with parents now. The turnout ratio of parents on the last Parent Day was really high. There were only one or two parents in each class who couldn't show up due to scheduling conflicts. Parents showed an active interest in their children's academic performance [in the parent-teacher meeting]. Our teachers have their contact information and always keep close contact with them. If parents care, their kids will care.

Another strategy is "practical" instruction through which East High promises all students an adequate preparation for their future with a focus on improving their test scores. The principal believes his school is compelled to improve academic performance at this point. As he said, "I don't really care about the new fad in school reform [inclusive education]. Students' test scores speak for themselves." He further explained:

> Inclusive Education has been promoted by different educational administrations for over ten years, but exam-oriented education has not perished. The National Admission Exam and other advancement exams have been the great obstacle that stands in the way [of the Inclusive Education program]. The most important reason for this is that we have great population and employment pressures in this country. These have driven people to seek their opportunities for success in education. I think it's wrong to disregard parents' concerns about their children's academic performance, so to help students to be prepared for the high stakes tests is still my main concern. We can implement Inclusive Education by afterschool programs, but I hope our teachers can focus on practical instruction to improve students' academic performance when they do their job in their classrooms.

Guided by the principle of "practical instruction," East High's academic subject matter consists primarily of "utilitarian basics." These consist of the basic skills that any high school graduate should have mastered, and that even the mediocre students could be expected to have understood. This represents a redefinition of the standard courses of study. Although skills-based, its coursework has a tendency to deteriorate into routinized units. Teachers present structured activities and enact their control, breaking skills into manageable bits that students retrieve under teachers' watch. The "practical" instruction proceeds through repetitive practice on clear-cut questions and skills, as teachers deem repetition to be useful in maintaining standards. Simplification and standardization are undertaken to ensure that students master the criteria by breaking knowledge into "practical" skills. Both students and teachers generally find that they are making "progress" through repetitive stimulus-response practice because they have multiple opportunities to participate. Unlike the classes in North High where frequent changes in direction are instituted to maintain students' interest, the instruction in East High becomes a steady march in a pre-established direction using pre-established procedures. This method demands compliance from students rather than curiosity and commitment. Concerns about discipline and procedures predominate in East High's classrooms.

Despite the reasoning for instituting such an approach, East High students' scores have not significantly increased in the past years. When I asked different teachers from East High about the reasons for this they blamed the new course standards. Teachers at East High may be the group among these four schools that is most disappointed with the new course framework. According to them, new course standards are becoming more flexible and it is harder to reach consensus on these "basics." When I went on to ask them

why North High students could still succeed in the tests with Inclusive Education reform, their immediate response was that "our students are not as good as theirs." Later on I ran into the same answers in other schools when I brought up the same issue to teachers.

East High's working relationship with the school district can be seen as one of main reasons for which they take a more conservative standpoint in implementing the Inclusive Education program. East High is under direct supervision of the local school district and thus is in compliance with different administrative policies: Its class size is well kept under 35, i.e., the local school district's recommended level, due to the declining school-age population; it uses a four-point grading system on student report cards; its teachers take part in regular professional development activities organized by the school district. On the other hand, although the school district is obliged to advocate for Inclusive Education, most of its schools dismissed it as mere rhetoric, as the principal of East High explained:

> If people in the local Education Commission really cared about the implementation of Inclusive Education, they would lay down solid standards for us to follow. So far it seems to me that the Inclusive Education program is just a campaign slogan or an educational blueprint at most. On the other hand, if our students could not improve their test scores, the Education Commission would have a very harsh punishment for us. They would cut off our funding, downsize our faculty and staff, and even close our school.

The principal considered the National Admission Exams as the major source of conflict in the implementation of the Inclusive Education program. Most East High teachers agreed with him and, during our interviews, mentioned the enormous pressure brought about by the academic excellence expectations. In East High, there are big differences in the instruction process between "main" subjects that are tested by the NAE

system and "affiliated" subjects that are not tested. The "main" subjects get more class time and emphasis. In "main" subject classrooms, the instruction employs a teacher-centered pedagogy and has a focus on repetitive practice of NAE-like questions and quizzes; on the contrary, "affiliated" subject teachers are encouraged to experiment with new instruction methods in compliance with Inclusive Education requirements.

On the one hand, East High has abolished ability grouping in one stroke to comply with the LEA's policy, while on the other, it has expanded specialized tracks to "meet the needs of" their students that they consider as having relatively low abilities or additional needs. The principal and teachers have a narrow definition of student needs, i.e., academic performance — or, I should say, they tend to confuse students' needs with parents' expectations. The school administration and the teachers understand the importance of Inclusive Education but they are reluctant to implement it fully. They fear that a complete implementation of Inclusive Education would put their students' academic performance — a pillar of their school's legitimacy — at risk, so they give the implementation a try in "affiliated" subjects. The "main" subject teachers still employ a pedagogy that coincides with tightened standardization, reinstated "basics", and demands for improvement in academic performance, in order to gain advantages in the National Admission Exams,. The principal and teachers tend to believe that "mediocre" students can learn better and the instruction process can be more efficient when students are exposed to routinized "utilitarian basics" and repetitive practice; but this approach did not increase students' test scores in past years.

West High: "What is Rational is Actual, and What is Actual is Rational"

Founded in 1913 as a higher education institution for Mongolians and Tibetans, West High is now a large urban college preparatory school attended exclusively by ethnic minority students. These minority students come from 21 provinces and 55 ethnic minority groups from all around the country. In 2006, West High received 2008 nationwide applications and accepted 173 based on the applicants' test scores. It also accepted another 201 who could not meet the minimum requirement for the test scores, but had been ethnically underrepresented in higher learning, and another 71 applicants with special talents in music or art. Historically, ethnic minority students have had difficulty competing academically with majority Han students in the National Admission Exam (NAE). As a kind of affirmative action employed by the central government to increase the representation of minority students in higher education institutions, as of 2003 West High students can take the NAE in Beijing and are considered as Beijing residents when they apply to colleges. Since students in Beijing have a lower test score requirement in order to be admitted to college, West High students benefit. In 2006, 192 West High Students took the NAE and 102, or 53 percent, were accepted to college, of whom 42, or 22 percent, went to Tier-1 colleges under a lower admission standard in favor of minority students. To improve students' academic competency, West High has had a screening system in place since 2007: Students who fail three term exams are put on probation, and are dismissed if they fail one more. West High is also one of the few public boarding high schools in Beijing. A breeding ground for radical politics from the very beginning, West High has probably witnessed the most unrest of any high school

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campus in China. Its students have taken part in almost every student movement since its founding in the 1919 May Fourth Movement. The ethnic issue may be particularly salient in West High, given the school's history and politics. Teachers often expressed their greatest sensitivity when they came to ethnic traditions and cultures and talked about students' ethnic backgrounds. The school lives up to its mission to prepare minority students to become leaders in different fields — in fact, one of its alumni became the first minority vice president of the People's Republic. The 32,252-square meters school can accommodate 24 classes and 800 students. At present, West High has a staff of 62 professional teachers, 32.3 percent of whom hold a master's or doctoral degree. The 5,000-square meter dorm building is split into two sections for male and female students that have 74 rooms each. The student dining hall has a separate section for Muslim students.

Frequent leadership changes have caused a loss of morale within West High community. No principal had stayed on in the position for more than two years until the present principal was appointed after a national search in 2000. It is a tough job for any principal, because he or she will have to deal with two separate supervising governmental departments: the State Ethnic Affairs Committee and the Ministry of Education. Sometimes it takes extra effort to go through two sets of bureaucratic procedures to in order to get things done here. The unstable leadership has made policy making and implementation more unpredictable and inconsistent. Different teachers gave voice to their complaints about this instability during our interviews.

When asked about their understanding of the inclusive education requirement, both principal and vice principal repeatedly mentioned the after-school programs.

Although they realized that inclusive education had a mission to ensure that all students learn and participate effectively within supportive cultures, curricula, and communities, they had an inclination to consider such a reform plan as merely decoration for the existing educational practice. Speaking about his strategy for implementation of inclusive education, the principal stated that

> We understood that we had responsibilities for students' socio-emotional development and fulfillment of their potential, so we set up various after-school programs for students to find confidence in their talents and enthusiasm for life. The after-school programs also function to relieve pressure on students from the high stakes test. At least, we expect students can learn the main subjects better with these after-school programs. Our student group is very diverse. We want them to continuously build up their special talents in sports, music, and arts, in which fields they can excel themselves to their peers in other schools. We are planning to ask each teacher to give an elective course in the upcoming semester to make our school education more interesting. This is how we cooperate with the educational administration to promote inclusive education in our school. But all these activities should not disrupt our main subject classes, because we have to focus on students' academic performance. I know a lot people don't like the idea of the National Admission Exam. I understand, but it is right there. As Hegel said, "What is rational is actual, and what is actual is rational." Teachers can dislike the NAE, but they have to deal with it.

The principal deemed that the focus of his work is students' test scores, and that tracking must be kept because he assumed that many academically "unqualified" students cannot excel at scholastic pursuits. This idiosyncratic prejudice reflected West High's lack of understanding of tracking: student behavior — and control over student behavior — outweigh concerns about their intellectual development. In the interview, the principal justified the tracking system by citing students' deficiencies, beginning with academic unpreparedness but always moving to behavioral problems such as smoking, drinking, dating, etc. Such a mixed student portrait can be interpreted as evidence of teachers'

considerable ambivalence regarding student needs and abilities. They lamented the apathy and lack of engagement of students with low abilities, while they also emphasized preparation for exam as a principal concern and accentuated low-performing students' differences from high-performing ones.

This kind of prejudice is the outcome of a largely negative stereotype of students with low abilities and additional needs as troublemakers. The informal consensus among West High teachers about low-performing students seemed not to be the product of clear, accountable, administrative policies, but rather of "common sense" and anecdotes on which teachers relied to communicate about students' academic ability. I heard many times statements like "low-performing students can't think abstractly," "they have difficulties in setting up connections between different knowledge points," and so on. This kind of "common sense" represented a more widely repeated stereotype about low-track students, not only in West High but nationwide. This context might explain similarities among the low-track classes of all four schools in this study.

I decided to observe a low-track class. After a class that seemed to have gone well, I asked the teacher for his judgment about the class. He acted as if something went wrong: "The class is not bad today. I don't know why, but I am thankful for the small favors they gave me. You know, these kids are not consistent." Throughout my time with the class, the low-track students did not behave in a way that was "hard to deal with" as teachers claimed. On the contrary, the teacher's classes experienced few interruptions. Students did not talk or tease each other too much, nor did they disrupt the classroom or act hostile. They showed compliance with class procedures and respect toward the teacher. Although academic work in the teacher's classroom proceeded slowly, his lesson plans could be

finished in his original time frame. It appeared to me that these low-track students received less recognition in teachers' characterization of their behavioral pattern than they deserved, and that their image had been twisted and distorted, although maybe not intentionally, to cater to teachers' stereotypes about low-performing students.

Although teachers talk about meeting the individual educational needs of students through the existing course framework, its design is largely taken for granted, rarely based on formal diagnoses, and seldom implemented in an individualized approach for each student. The underlying assumption was not only that low-track students cannot go into a subject with the depth that higher-track students achieve, but also, that they were unpredictable, immature, and negative.

Based on my observation protocol, I went through the artifacts: course syllabi and lesson plans, instructional materials, teacher-students interaction, organizational and community contexts. Teachers were still held accountable for instruction, and academic progress was still the most important thing in West High's low-track classes. During my three-day observation sessions, teachers signaled the seriousness with which students should regard lessons and homework, the kinds of topics appropriate for students' attention, the degree to which students should engage with and contribute ideas, the respect they should accord peers, and a host of other activities. The principles guiding the instruction process were not only cognitive, logical, and technical, but also cultural, symbolic, and political. Teachers enacted their role by offering true-false or matching questions, insisting on discipline and respect, and limiting open-ended discussions. In particular with the low-track classes they acted as impersonal, relentless taskmasters. As a result, the low-track students experienced a passive role: they simply sat back, listened,

answered straightforward questions, and worked on their exam papers quietly and individually.

The low-track students at West High appeared to have "equal access to knowledge" (Goodlad, 1984). Adaptive curricula were provided to low-track classes while retaining aspects of the academic focus. The content of the low-track curriculum seemed the same as those of regular-track and fast-track classes, although they were covered in less detail, less depth, at a slower pace, and with fewer connections. In this way, it represented a reduction of regular-track and fast-track courses of study. Although still academic, it involved a watered-down knowledge transmission and proceeded with "feeding" instruction. Academic discourse was still dominant in West High, but teachers perceived low-track students in relation to regular-track and fast-track students within the school rather than in separate terms based on their different needs. There is a distinction between knowledge (content) and educational objectives. Students in all tracks were exposed to the same information, but the educational objectives differed from track to track. Students at lower levels were only asked to engage in lower order thinking, while those at the higher levels are asked to engage in higher order thinking.

Open-ended discussion and student-centered instruction were virtually non-existent in West High's low-track classes. Teachers insisted on "standard" answers to questions and expected students to repeat these answers when they took exams. They rendered complex, academic subjects as simple, straightforward techniques and expected students to follow a strict "formula" when solving problems or taking exams, but they did not discuss the meaning of these techniques or "formulas" or why students should use one rather than another. About one third of class time was devoted to the worksheet on

which students worked individually and silently. These worksheets consisted of simple, unambiguous, short-answer questions that guided students' reading and foreshadowed the questions they would encounter on tests. On worksheets, students engaged with knowledge mainly by retrieving and memorizing information. When essays were required, teachers preferred to certify answers that students could copy, memorize, and reiterate verbatim. Exams would repeat questions that had been covered on the worksheets and in the quizzes.

To succeed in their classes, low-track students in West High must focus on the teachers' thinking rather than on their own or their peers'. They must also consistently participate in the recitation. When students would arrive at a "wrong" answer, teachers usually did not ask for an explanation of their choice. Instead, they simply called on another student for a different shot at it or directly provided the "right" answer as if it was self-evident. The learning process became continuous recitation and memorization rather than exploration. As a result, low-track students increasingly became passive retrievers of knowledge and developed a "strategy" to cope with the daily stream of problems and thereby avoid the effort of comprehending complex situations. Their way of thinking was simply an increasingly automated and routinized practice of this coping mechanism on a daily basis. The structural practice of tracking developed a different meaning for the educational enterprises in which low-track students were bound. It also contributed to low-track students' shrewdness about their image in their teachers' eyes, as well as their lowered educational expectations and achievement.

In conclusion, West High has maintained the tracking system in which low-track students do not really have "equal access to knowledge" like their higher-track peers.

Although regular-track and fast-track students seem to share the same instruction materials, teachers used them differently so that higher-track students' relationship to knowledge was active and motivating. Not only did higher-track students spend more time in group projects and discussions, manipulating and evaluating information, but teachers also encouraged them to share, compare, and debate their conclusions. The prejudice against low-track students and the teachers' practice in low-track classes echoed and drew its potency from the widely acknowledged stereotype about students who fail academically in school. West High's outrageous resistance to inclusive education finds its justification in a focus on students' academic performances. This resistance became possible because of the school's dissociation from the local educational agencies and its exploitation of policies favoring ethnic minority educational institutions.

South High: "Wandering between two front lines"

South High is a large rural combined middle and high school attended almost entirely by students from the immediate country neighborhood. Close to the Old Summer Palace, South High has a beautiful garden-style campus. Founded in 1960, this 60,000-square meter school provides 45 classes for 2,000 students. 180 teachers and professional staff work from grades 7 to 12. South High has a science building for students' scientific experiments in Physics, Chemistry, and Biology. The school library has a collection of 70,000 books, 300 selected magazines, and an electronic resource database. South High is the only public secondary school in its community and the student population is very

diverse. The majority of its student population comes from working-class families (peasants, factory workers, and small business owners); a small number of students are from an educated family background, with parents working in universities or research institutions located in the neighboring suburbs or country towns. There is also a group of students from Xinjiang studying in South High, an effort of the Beijing municipal government to help the underdeveloped western areas. In 1999, the school became one of the UNESCO Joint Innovative Project (JIP) schools in China, as a part of UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Program of Educational Innovation for Development (APEID)'s effort to improve education in disadvantaged contexts. South High has been one of the China National Institute for Educational Research (CNIER) -sponsored partner schools that has carried out pilot education experiments. It also has a bilingual boarding program in which it collaborates with Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) to conduct small-size class instruction.

South High's involvement in various educational experiments caused a backlash when its test scores in the National Admission Exam plummeted in 2001. A teacher recalled an unusual event at a parent-teacher meeting during that time:

> The parents showed up at the meeting with a petition with about 100 names signed to it, demanding the school administration remove a few teachers who they thought might be responsible for the failure. These teachers had taken part in the educational experiments in different academic subjects. Although we felt the parents had not investigated what was going on, we were scared by this event. The school administration did not comply with the parents' demand, and later on they took the issue to the school district. But it hurts. Now we need to think twice when we want to go a little further.

After this event, South High got a new principal. The present principal seems to be unassuming and distant from his teachers. He has been in this position for only five years, much shorter than the other the principals' service. During my four days of observation, teachers complained that their principal "hid in his office," and "didn't exercise the kind of firm and solid leadership our school needs to get going." Some analyzed the principal's remote leadership as a response to the intensity of the school's warring factions that had been a major issue for a long time. Others feared their principal would leave for another leadership position in the school district. In sum, there was a general uncertainty haunting South High.

The administrative leadership is obviously powerful. All faculty and staff members in South High have clearly delineated roles. The administrators have more decision-making power than teachers, and the teachers are subordinate to the administrators. South High's bureaucratic mode of operation was also manifested in the principal's response to my questions. During our interview, the principal rarely gave questions a quick answer but instead promised to check with the school district or his assistant before he got back to me.

The principal claims that South High accommodates students with different abilities and needs without partiality. In actuality, teachers do not consider information about students' family backgrounds inappropriate in determining educational needs. Ability grouping occurred informally and intermittently. By using the names "experimental class" for the fast-track class, and "parallel class" for the lower-track class, South High's administration hopes to avoid questions from the local school district and parents about having kept the tracking system.

South High shares the same policy implementation environments as East High. Among these are the local educational agencies' direct supervision, insufficient resources, and heterogeneous school population. The principal used the term "street-smart" to describe South High students. His strategy for implementing Inclusive Education is to fight on two fronts: to teach low-performing students "practical skills" and to develop high-performing students' "distinct cultural identity." As he explained,

> Our school population is not homogeneous in terms of their family background, abilities, and needs. Some students come from a very educated family background and have high level of commitment, abilities, and expectations. Others are satisfied with getting through the school days and finding company here, and if lucky enough, getting accepted to a college. This is the main challenge we are facing. After deliberations, the school administration decided that we should have different paths for students with different commitments, abilities, and needs. I think it is in accord with the inclusive education requirements: to maintain the minimal academic standards and to engage students in the study that is most suitable for their abilities and needs. Inclusive education does not mean everyone is the same, nor does it mean everyone should be treated the same.

The curricular differences between South High and North High mirror the principle social differentiation. North High's elitism is consonant with the large proportion of students with intellectual or professional parents (about 70%), whereas South High's skills-based curriculum responds to the large proportion of students from working-class families (45%). Unlike in West High, where low-track classes copied the curriculum of regular-track and fast-track classes, South High emphasized the "practical" skills that low-track students would need in life.

In the low-track classes at South High, teachers generally substitute interesting and motivating topics that they consider personally important to students in the place of

the standard curriculum. They deem that scholastic curriculum and "deep, abstract" knowledge are unsuitable to the low-performing students. Therefore, they try to invent some kinds of curricula that are different from the familiar coursework in which students have failed. These courses are, more than anything else, efforts to give the disadvantaged students a few self-evidently important "survival skills." Among these are car repair and maintenance, home improvement, comic sketch, and others. Such courses are South High's effort to avoid frustrating students who are not interested in "abstract" and "complicated" knowledge. Teachers expect students to engage with materials because these materials are at their level and meet their interests. The principal justifies the different course design by saying:

> A stratified society necessitates differentiated education, and school education should maintain minimal standards. Students with low abilities should learn how to solve the problems in the real world, how to communicate with other people, how to act as a qualified citizen and participate as a member of society. Not everyone could go to Tsinghua or Peking University. The majority of our students are not excellent in academics. The main goal of instruction in the low-track classes is to keep students disciplined, interested, achieving our minimal academic standards, and learning practical skills that will benefit students' future life. It is like "tailoring the same suit of clothes according to body size."

However, this practice, taken outside of the academic versus vocational debate, represents a rejection of regular-track and fast-track courses of study for low-track students. It does not represent different routes to common goals. Instead, it is based on the assumption that low-track classes correspond necessarily to low-status knowledge, low teacher expectations, and low-ability students, and it downplays the importance of the effort put forth by students, teachers, and parents. The substitution of "practical skills" for the regular curriculum is by definition invasive and insulting. This practice

leaves low-track students feeling inferior because these courses include negative, self-fulfilling prophecies and embody influential adults' disparaging assessment of students' present academic preparation and future destinations.

The bureaucratic mode of operation in South High also contributes to the predominance of a transmission model of instruction. Complying with bureaucratic imperatives of accountability and coordination, South High teachers provide consistently solid lessons with traditional pedagogy to the school's 2000 students: students memorize facts; learn basic skills; apply formulas for problem-solving; and follow rules and routines. Although the bureaucratic mode promises certitude in terms of hierarchical control, a pattern of ambiguous instructional leadership prevails in this school, even though it varies in many regards, including subject and grade levels, and teaching styles. Curricular ambiguity is manifested in classroom practice as well as in general guidelines: South High abolished ability grouping in one stroke and in the next, initiated vocational education classes. The new, more "practical" courses draw students in with promises of academic success, but education is often eschewed in an effort to maximize order. These classes require students to respect academic traditions but also anticipate students' indifference.

Like principals in other schools, the principal considered the pressure under the National Admission Exam an obstacle to the implementation of the Inclusive Education program. During my interview with him, I found that the bureaucratic institutional culture may be also a major source of conflict. The principal explained his leadership style by asserting that

My style is not to try to be aggressive and pushy. I rely on consensus and collaboration to get things done. The old school culture is powerful and people get used to old routines. I figured out that we were not ready for the new directions the Inclusive Education program sets. I had to go around before I could really handle the change plan. Sometimes you have to step back before you move forward. You test people's response and you know where the border is. Any new change plan involves negotiation and compromise in this school.

The principal considered insufficient resources to be another factor inhibiting full implementation of inclusive education. A big challenge for him was managing the oversized faculty and staff with the limited budget: "You could not ask people to take more work load and change their working style by paying them the same salary," he said.

In conclusion, South High's oscillations in the implementation process of inclusive education program occur because it must promote both differentiated and integrated coursework to maintain legitimacy. On the one hand, the school decided it had to differentiate its coursework to fit in the old routines and institutional culture, so it chose a hidden tracking system by inventing different-status knowledge to take care of students with different abilities and needs. On the other hand, the school had to comply with the local educational agencies' requirements about the Inclusive Education program, but it misinterpreted or intentionally distorted the integration requirement as merely maintaining the minimal academic standards. The bureaucratic mode of operation also accounted for the lack of motivation and energy for the new reform. The failure in its implementation history had a great impact on the later change plans. This initial failure has pushed the present school administration to take more conservative and oscillatory standpoints.

Cross-case Analysis

The inclusive education program in Beijing can be viewed as a policy solution on the part of a centralized government in order to respond to a crisis in its educational system by introducing new reforms at a rapid rate. To achieve the goals of the inclusive education program, the education authorities in Beijing approached the problem from several fronts: they designed a new course standard to boost the infrastructure of the reform plan; they introduced Research-Informed Instruction to provide technical support to teachers; they promoted Exploration-Oriented Learning to engage students; and finally they proposed an improved assessment system to attend to student needs and create visible outcomes (see Figure 4-1: Inclusive Education: Theory of Action). Is it possible for a group of street-level bureaucrats, who are protected by professionalism and who embrace the prevailing social belief in meritocracy, to dismantle the tracking system and implement inclusive education in this new wave of educational reform? My basic task in this dissertation is to describe and explain different steering and coping mechanisms and the internal and external forces that buffet the ship of education in the course of policy implementation.

The following cross-case analysis uses Bogdan and Biklen's coding families to develop the coding categories that will be needed in qualitative data analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, pp. 166-172). Table 4-4 provides a comparison between my interim theoretical framework and Bogdan & Biklen's coding families.

Table 4-4: Comparison between Interim Theoretical Framework and In-use Coding
Families

Interim Coding System	Bogdan & Biklen's Coding Families	
	Categories	Brief Description
Resource	Setting/Context	Setting, topics, subjects, and preparedness
Program Properties	Definition of the situation	How teachers/principals define themselves in relation to the setting or inclusive education
Culture	Perspective held by subjects	Shared rules, norms & general points of view about "how things are done here"
Culture/Structure	Subjects' ways of thinking about people & objects	Teachers/principals' understanding of each other, of outsides, and of the subjects
Capacity/Culture	Process codes	Sequences of events, change over time, and passages from one type or kind of status to another
Capacity	Activities codes	Formal/informal activities (regular)
Capacity	Events codes	Infrequent activities (irregular)
Structure/Capacity	Strategies codes	Subjects' tactics, methods, ways, techniques
Structure/Culture	Relationship & social structure	Regular patterns of behavior (not official)

Setting/Context

Table 4-5 presents the extent of acceptance to the inclusive education program among four schools, based on the principals' interview data.

Table 4-5: Acceptance of the Inclusive Education Program

ACCEPTANCE TO THE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM	SCHOOL	PRINCIPAL RESPONSE
PATHFINDING	North High	"We started to carry on inclusive education program in 1997, leading the whole country in this experiment. We still pride ourselves on being a pioneer" (NP1).
SELECTIVE COMPLIANCE	East High	"Inclusive education has a focus on helping students with low academic performance achieve better exam results. I am interested in this part of the program, but have reservations towards other requirements" (EP1).
SKETICAL AND RELUCTANT COMPLIANCE	South High	"Our implementation of inclusive education is to comply with the school district's requirement. My attitude toward it is to wait and see" (SP1).
RESISTING	West High	"Inclusive education is just a fad. The priority of my school is still to prepare our students to get into colleges. Tracked teaching was effective, and it still works. I still have serious reservation about this program, given that they [the central government] don't abolish the NAE" (WP1).

To get the details of all four schools' general setting/context, I identified nine

important aspects of daily school operation and incorporated them into my interview and

observation protocols. See Appendix F for the categories, codes, and protocol reference (I

will employ the same approach to conduct data analysis in most categories to come).

Although these nine items are not necessarily most closely related to the implementation

of the inclusive education program, they provide general information on the context in

which the innovative programs unfold. A setting/context matrix is present in Table 4-6.

In the categories of setting/context, the four schools have similar working environments (materials, facilities, equipment, technology, training, etc.) and standard operational procedures (planning, coordination, communication, etc.), but North High seems to provide more administrative support to its teachers and have a more successful implementation history, which gives it momentum for the new program of change. Another difference is that West High and North High are more independent from the local educational agencies' supervision while East High and South High rely heavily on the LEA's support and direction.

Table 4-6: Setting/Context Matrix

CODES		SCHOOLS
COMMUNICATION		Strong – "We feel like a family" (NT1). "We do things together all the time" (ET2). "It's easy to find people to talk with here, whether in the office, corridor, or cafeteria" (WT3). "I once got a call from my team leader at 1 a.m., who was still working in the office on the preparation of the next day's meeting" (ST1).
MATERIALS, FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT		Adequate – No teacher in any of the four schools complains of materials shortage. Also see the above school profiles for detailed information.
FRONT-END TRAINING		Strong – All teachers in the four schools are licensed, most graduated with a bachelor degree or above from normal universities and teacher colleges.
SKILLS	Lecture	Strong – Most teachers in the four schools display professional knowledge about the academic subjects they are teaching and developmental characteristics of age groups. Lectures are appropriately sequenced and feedback given when necessary. Most instructions experience minimal interruption.
	Technologies	Strong – North High & East High: "I try my best to present course materials in different ways, especially using the multimedia presentation. I think that students learn more effectively if they can learn by different media" (NT4). "I am proud of our teachers' leading the CAI in the school district" (EP2).

	Basic – South High & West High	"The school district required us to pass the information technology exam. It's not easy for old teachers like me, but I managed to pass it. Now I can catch up with young folks [in this field]" (ST1). "Not all people like the [technological] tricks in their instruction, but you have to know how to handle it, even just for a showcase" (WT2).
ONGOING INSERVICE	Adequate – The LEA has a unified compulsory professional development program that requires teachers to maintain a minimal attendance. District-wide lecture, seminar, and peer observations are available, although without a fixed schedule.	
PLANNING & COORDINATION	Strong – All four schools have set up subject teams on the lateral level and grade teams on the vertical level which designate senior teachers to plan and coordinate group activities.	
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION SUPPORT	School administration and teachers are very supportive to each other	North High: "Everyone in this school is allowed to give a new elective course" (NP2). "Once you get a good idea, the principals are eager to put it into practice and to see what will happen" (NT2).
	Basic	South High: "We can get what we need, but you know, it's not a top school, so what do you expect?" (ST3) West High: "I have been here for a long time and know all the ins-and-outs. It's not so hard to walk through the system [in this school]" (WT3). East High: "They [school administrators] have everything in place, you just find the right place and the right person" (ET1).

SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERVISION	<u>Very strong</u> – East High & South High. Both get their budget from the LEA and have to compete with each other to win more resources and policy support. The LEA has the final say on both schools' decisions about personnel and operations.
	<u>Basic</u> – North High & West High. Both get their budget from the universities with whom they are affiliated, but also receive the LEA's leadership and comply with the LEA's compulsory regulations and guidelines for the operations.
RELEVANT IMPLEMENTATION EXPERIENCE	<u>Smooth</u> – North High: "I couldn't remember any failure in implementing our programs in our recent school history. I think I finished everything I really want to do" (NP1).
	<u>Painful but successful</u> – Principals in all three other schools have bitter memories when they recall the implementation history of their school programs. Teachers' responses echoes their feelings.

Definition of Situation

According to *World Development Report 1999/2000*, China's general population

quality was ranked No. 56 among all nations, lower than the world average (Yusuf, 1999).

In 2004, the average education level of the Chinese population was 8.3 years, one year

more than the world average, but three years less than the Organization of Economic

Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries (Ministry of Education of People's

Republic of China, 2007b). In the NPC-approved *Outline of the Tenth Five-Year Plan*

(2001-2005) for National Economic and Social Development, China has set the year 2010

as the deadline to lift the country's K-12 education up to the standard of the developed

countries.

Since the mid–1990s, the neighboring school system, a measure the central

government adopted to promote education equity, has gained increased momentum in

most metropolitan areas. However, China's K-12 education, haunted as it is by the

meritocratic ideology, still leads to a "single-plank bridge": preparation for college

entrance, specifically, prestigious colleges that provide significant advantages for

graduates entering the labor market.

Intense competition, or "diploma disease," causes many social and emotional

problems for students. According to *China Youth* of July 25, 1995, as many as 29.97

percent of 24,378 primary school students scored the lowest points in six out of 26

categories of mental indicators on the social and emotional development test, namely

competitive spirit, self-esteem, self-expression, self-confidence, adaptability, and

independent spirit. Unfortunately, these six categories may be precisely the most

important factors contributing to mental health in the future. In 1997, the Psychological Assessment Advisory Center of the China Academy of Science conducted a survey of students' mental health in 1,016 elementary and middle schools. The research group found that the average ratio of students who were frequently or sometimes unhappy at school was 40.85 percent, and that the percentage of those who felt very frustrated and worried and had no one to talk with reached as high as 55.71 percent. Furthermore, 66.52 percent of students felt they were inferior to other "bright students" in many areas. 18.99 percent of students said they would not like to grow up; 6.39 percent of students felt life was meaningless and had the tendency to be alienated from the world (Jia, 1997). Even more alarmingly, with market mechanisms roaring into the field of public services, an elite group captured a majority share of educational resources and benefited more than others, as I have already discussed in Chapter two. The central government prescribed inclusive education to address these problems.

The institutional theorists view the policy process not only as a rational choice process but also as a compromise between external and internal pressure to maintain minimum compliance. As a course of action chosen by the legislature to address public concerns about emerging problems, a policy or program has to gather allies to enhance its acceptability to the general public, including the public service workers. A successful program, therefore, has a number of properties that make it appealing or at least more acceptable at the street level. I identified eight items to measure teachers and principals' definitions of inclusive education, mainly related to their needs for a program of change, awareness of contextual pressure and urgency, and attitudes toward the solution. Figure 4-3 to 4-10 present the interviewees' definition of situation.

Strength   □ Teachers   □ Principals
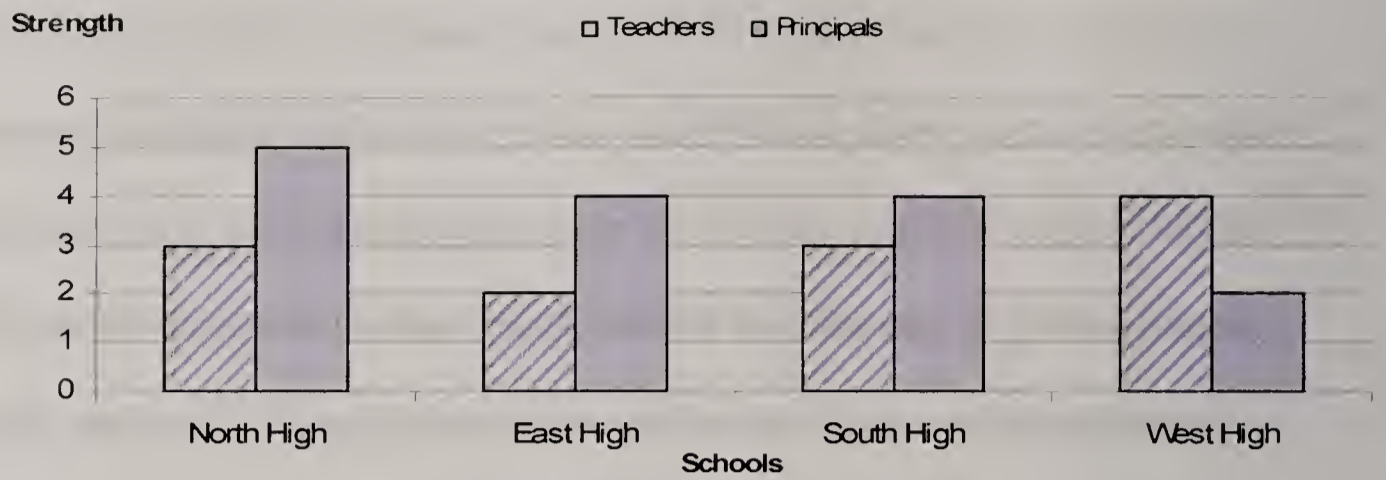
Figure 4-3: Tractability Of Problem

Note: The numbers from 0 to 5 stand for the weakest to the strongest. The numbers for principals and teachers are based on their response to the interview protocol. A weighted average is used.

Strength   □ Teachers   □ Principals
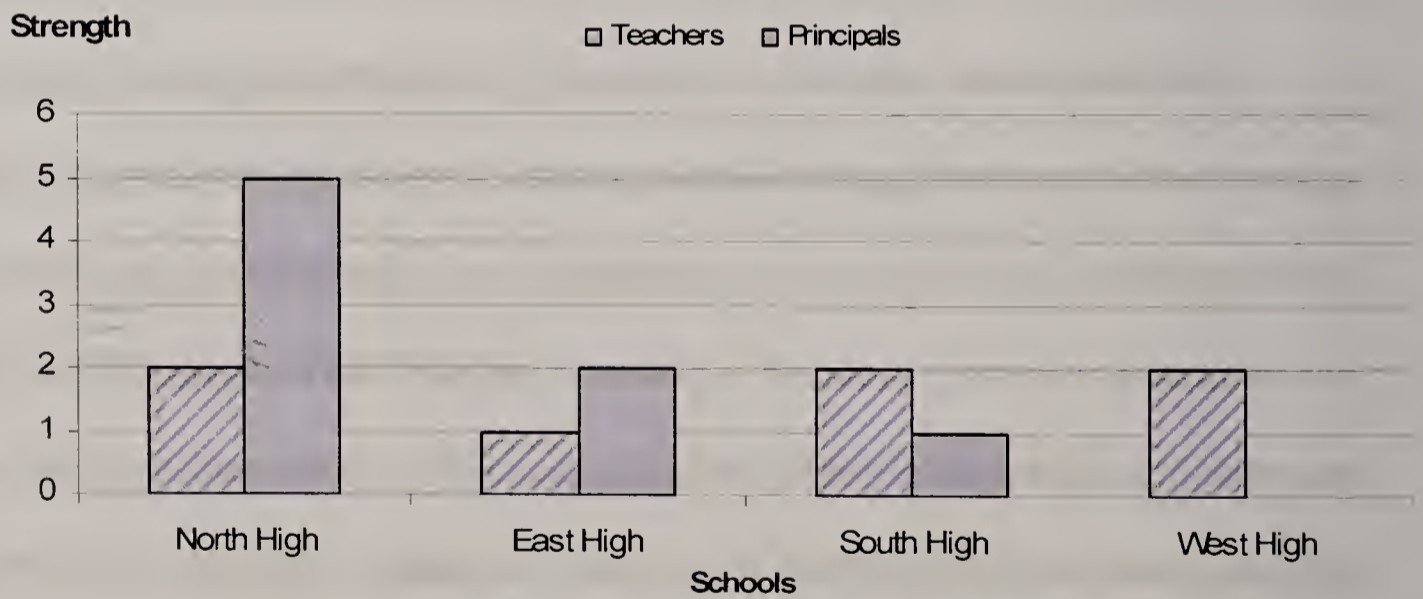
Figure 4-4: Sense of Program Needs

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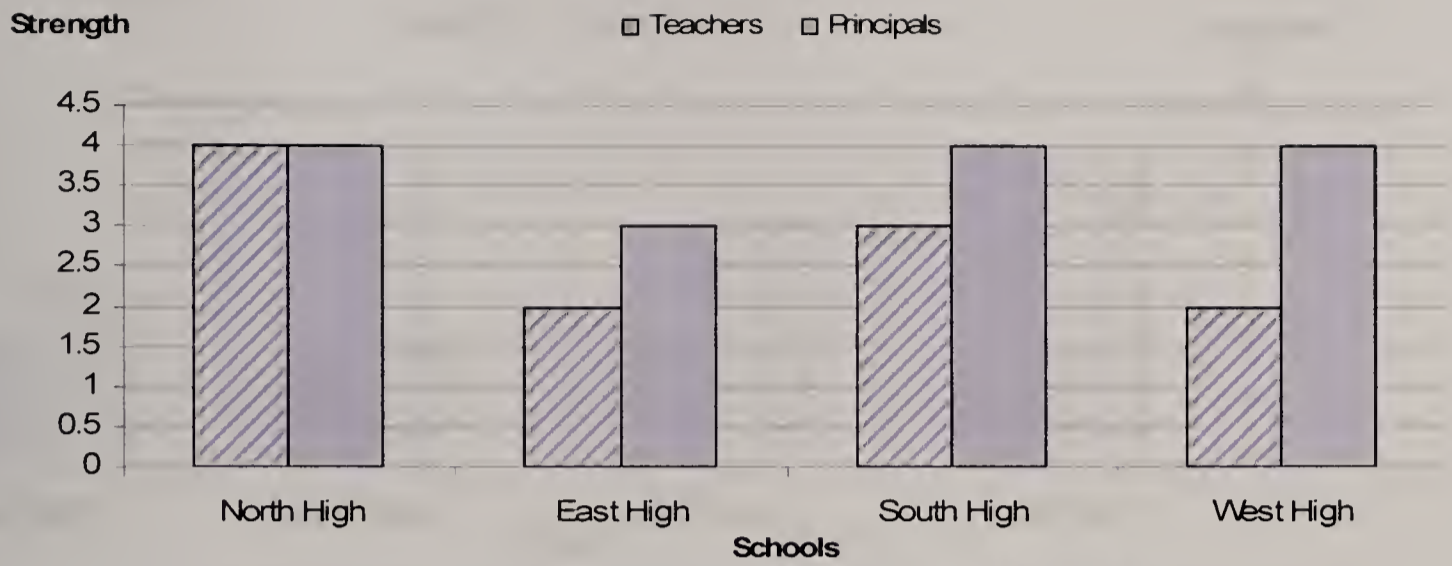
Figure 4-5: Strength of Policy Message
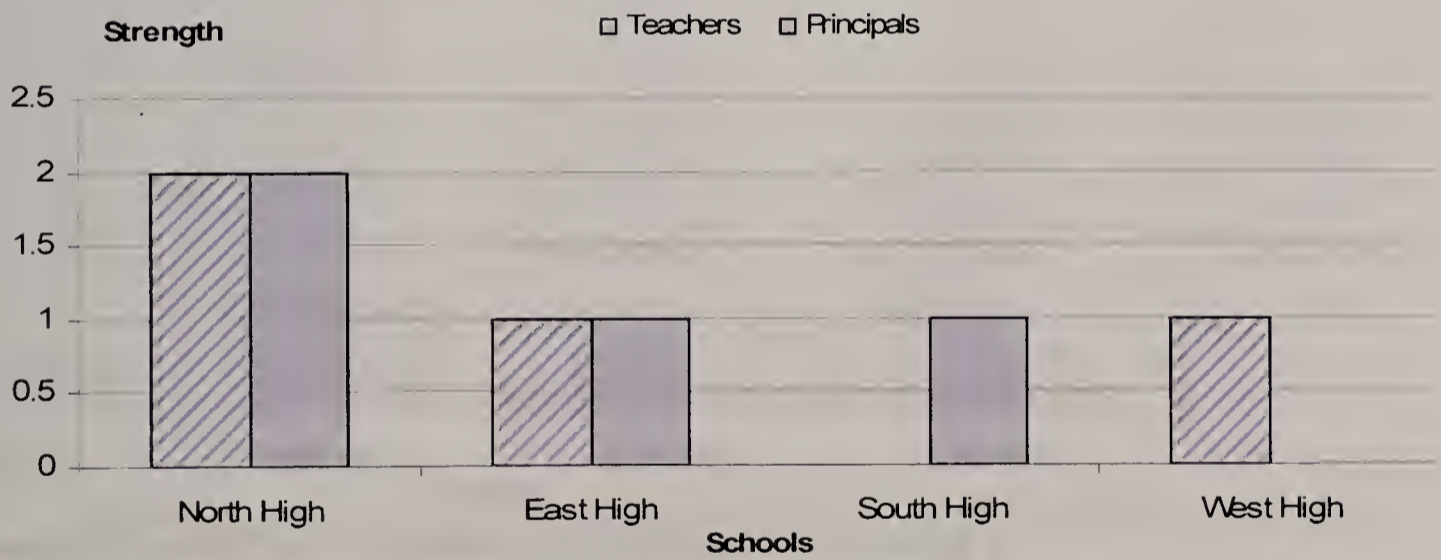
Figure 4-6: Clarity of Objectives

Strength

□ Teachers □ Principals
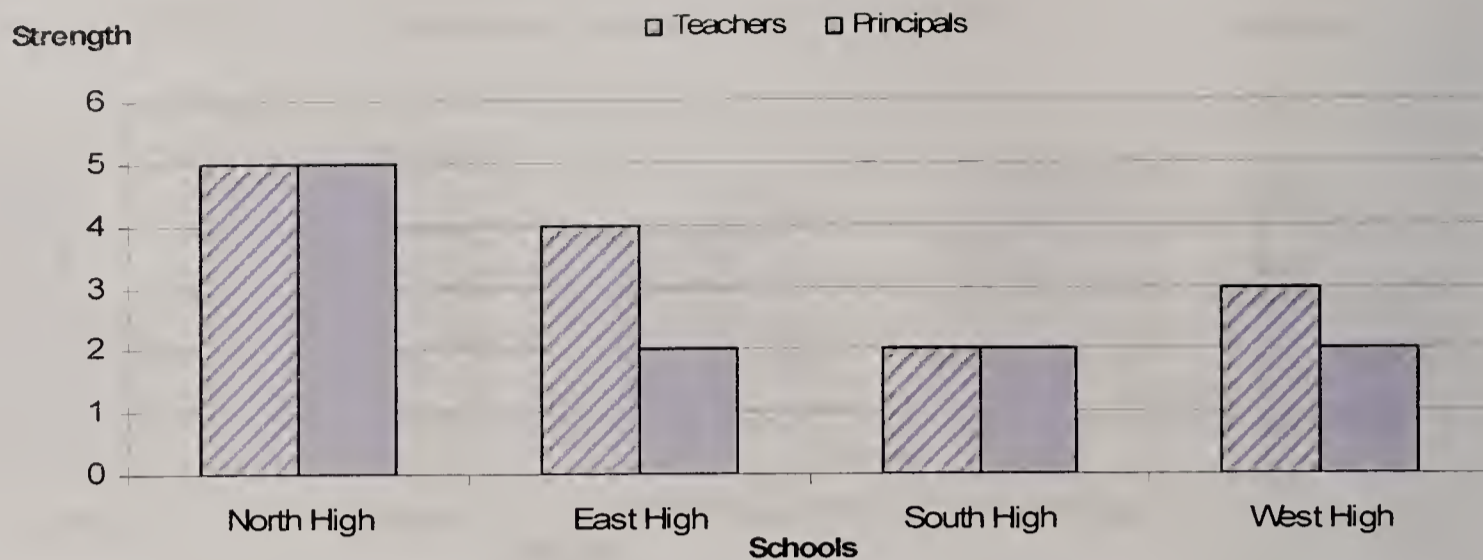
Figure 4-7: Validity of Theory of Action

Strength

□ Teachers □ Principals
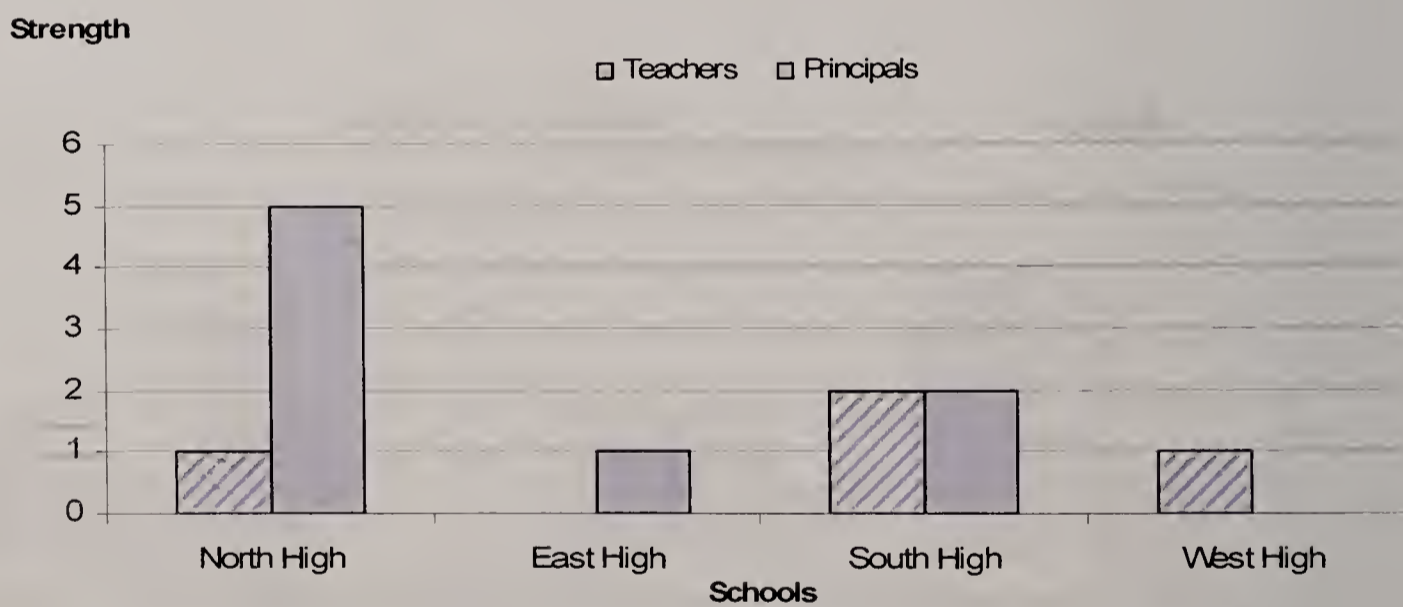
Figure 4-8: Comparative Advantages over Former Policies

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Strength

□ Teachers □ Principals
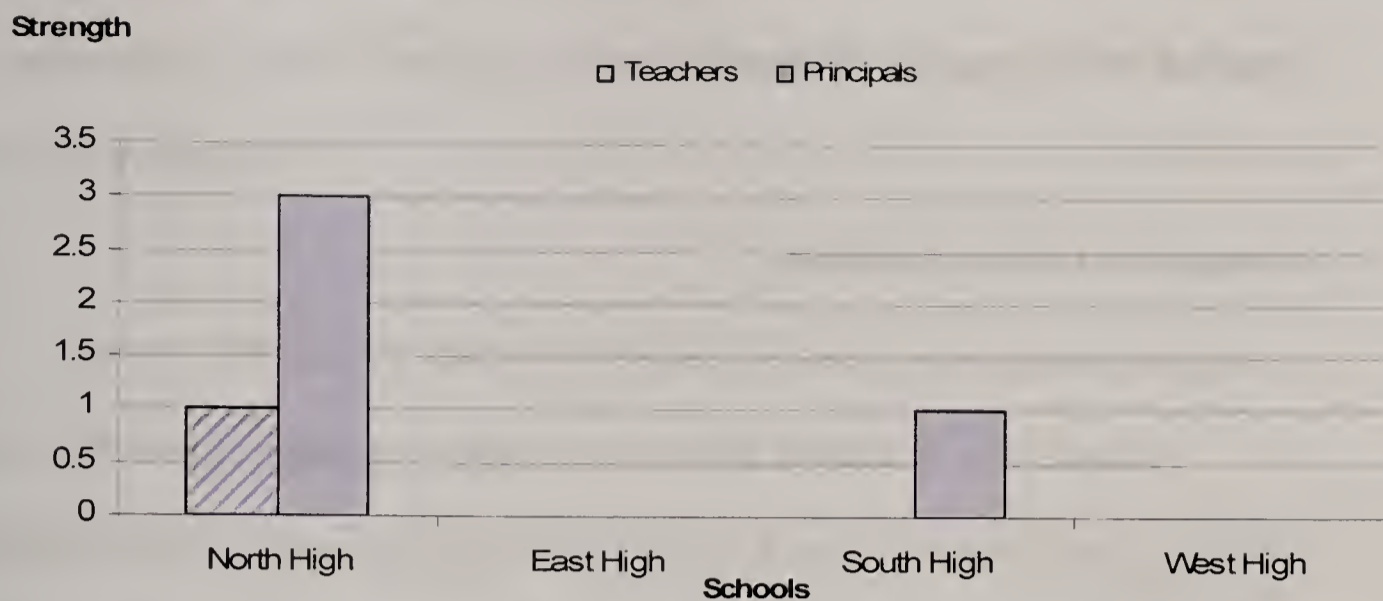
Figure 4-9: Compatibility with Other Policy Commitments

Strength

□ Teachers □ Principals
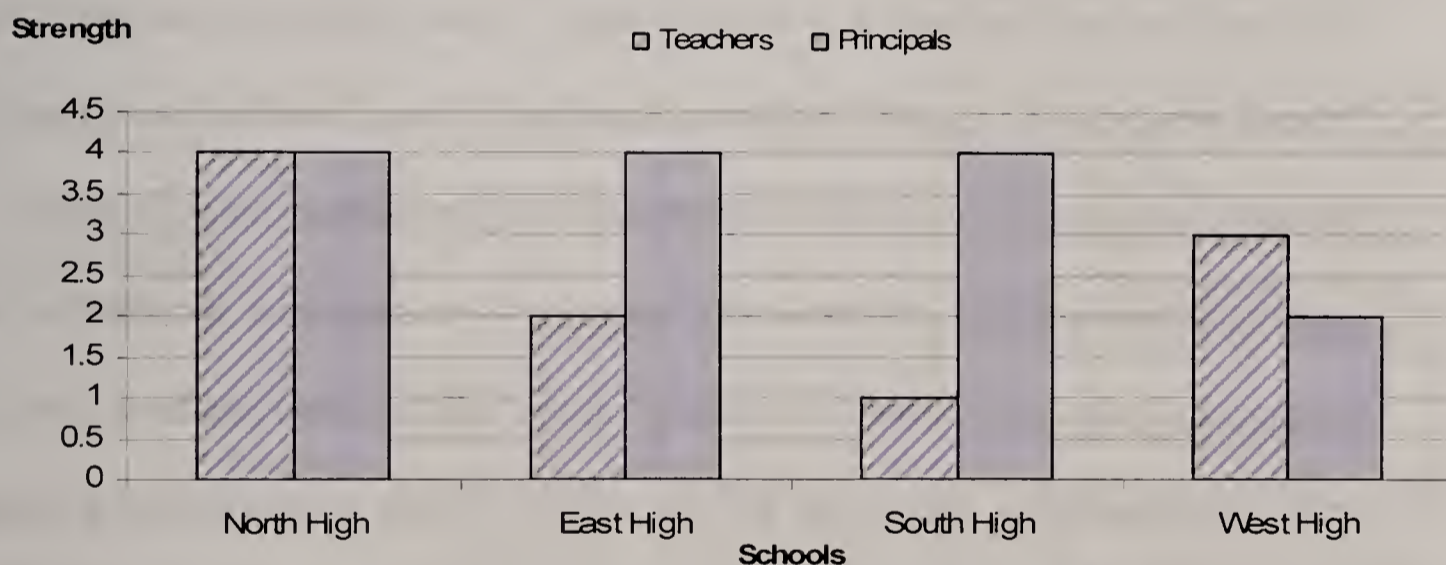
Figure 4-10: Observability of Outcome

Generally, principals have a more positive outlook than teachers concerning

issues such as the tractability of problem, strength of policy message, comparative

advantages over former policies, compatability with other policy commitments, and

observability of outcome. North High leads other schools in the strength of postive

attitudes on almost all items, which indicates that its campaign for the inclusive education

program has been very successful and that both principals and teachers were well prepared for the program of change.

Perspective Held by Subjects

According to Bogdan & Biklen, the category of perspective held by subjects "includes codes oriented toward ways of thinking all or some subjects share that are not as general as their overall definition of the situation but indicate orientations toward particular aspects of a setting. They include shared rules and norms as well as some general points of view." An understanding about shared rules, norms, and general points of view about implementation, or in other words, "how things are done here," is critical for us to penetrate the myth of inclusive education. I have identified seven items — including decision-making, path to the principalship, centrality, innovation and implementation histories, morale, and monitoring — to categorize perspectives held by teachers and principals. "Decision-making" at the building level can have direct impact on the implementation process by the selection of a course of action among several alternatives. The "legitimacy" of leadership is the staff's acceptance of the school administration. Without a minimal amount of legitimacy, the leadership will run into deadlock in the course of implementation in the long run. "Autonomy" refers to the extent to which school leaders grant school staff flexibility in implementing aspects of the process. "Monitoring" allows actions to be taken to avoid the operation failure, before it is too late. "Morale" is the capacity of people to maintain belief in their cause and work together persistently and consistently to it. "Innovation and implementation

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histories" are good indicators about how well schools function when they implementation

new change plans. Table 4-7 presents a detailed summary of perspectives held by

teachers and principals.

Table 4-7: Summary Table for Perspectives Held by Subjects Category

	TYPE	SCHOOL	DESCRIPTION
DECISION-MAKING	Top-down	West High	"The principals propose a working plan based on the LEA's policy mandates and the school context. The course director, team leaders, and other school administrators then discuss the plan and give feedback for revising. The final plan will be presented at the faculty meeting for vote" (WP1).
	Combination of top-down and bottom-up	East High North High South High	"We (principals) have a three-year plan. There are both top-down and bottom-up channels" (EP1). "The school administration knows there are boundaries and protocols. They are common sense. [Here] before you push your agenda, make sure others feel comfortable and follow. Grade leaders and course coordinators have a lot of say about our direction too" (NT4).

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LEGITIMACY OF LEADERSHIP	Promotion from inside	North High	The principal has been in this school for over 30 years. She assumed responsibilities as math teacher, team leader, director of gifted program, and vice principal before she was elected as principal by the general faculty meeting in the 1990s. The university with which North High is affiliated confirmed the appointment.
	Open for competition	West High	West High held an open nationwide search for a principal in 2000. Before getting the job, the principal had been an outstanding Chemistry teacher for 12 years and worked in the principal's position for three years in a high school in Hunan province.
	Appointment by school district	East High South High	Both principals were appointed by the school district. The details about the procedures are not available.
AUTONOMY	Strong	South High	The building administration authorizes changes, controls the schedule, and makes sure everyone is on the same page. Teachers seem to feel policed.
	Not strong	North High West High East High	Teachers have a certain degree of flexibility. The teacher network is close. Lateral coordination prevails in the form of group activities.
MONITORING	Tight	North High South High	Both have clear procedure, schedule, and personnel to examine teachers' course plans, research papers, and professional development plans.
	Not tight	East High West High	The monitoring in these two schools is pretty laissez-faire. It seems that professionalism still prevails.

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MORALE	High	North High East High	Most teachers felt encouraged and helped. They are brisk, talkative, and have a sense of humor.
	Modest	South High West High	Most teachers felt helped yet coerced. They seem not so happy and reserved when engaged in conversation with outsiders. However, they are still energetic, even passionate in their classrooms.
INNOVATION HISTORY	Constant	North High	"If you want to survive and shine in this school, you have to invent new tricks all the time. This is a big school, and that is the only way you can get the attention" (NT2).
	Push-and-move	West High	"There is a passive mindset here. Most teachers don't want change. You have to push them and they may move a small step" (WT1).
	Rare	South High East High	Both teachers and principals rarely talked about innovation in the interview and observation.
IMPLEMENTATION HISTORY	Always successful	North High	"The principal is such a great leader. If she wants something, she always gets it done" (NT5). "I don't think I have magic power. It's not the resources but the people that matter most. 70 percent of our resources are created by ourselves" (NP1).
	Mostly painful	South High West High East High	"For a school at our level, it's always difficult to get things done. Resources are always a problem" (ET3). "It took three years of negotiation with different departments to get approval for our students to take the NAE in Beijing rather than their original resident area. You can imagine that [difficulties]" (WP2).

Generally, Chinese high schools are places where professionalism prevails. The grade leaders and course coordinators who interact with teachers on a daily base have substantial influence over their school's operation and direction. As a result, many principals and teachers regard their decision-making structure as a combination of bottom-up and top-down channels. West High is an exception. It is very hierarchical in its power structure, which may explain why it develops a push-and-move innovation mode. The path to the principalship varies according to the school's connection with the local educational administrations. The schools that are supervised by the LEAs probably have their principals appointed by the latter, which also may invoke more compliance from the schools. Like in the United States, Chinese high schools are loosely coupled systems in which authority, supervision, regulation, and coercion do not always work out. Most schools have no strong centrality, although monitoring varies from school to school.

Subjects' Way of Thinking about People & Objects

The category of subjects' way of thinking about people and objects deals with teachers and principals' understandings of each other, of outsiders, and of the main issues related to their instruction. I identified eight items, including teamwork, student performance, job satisfaction, time management, course standard, student assessment, Research-informed Instruction (RII), and Exploration-oriented Learning (EOL), as the main subjects that are connected with the daily operation of the inclusive education program. Among these eight items, course standard, student assessment, RII, and EOL are main parts of the theory of action for the inclusive education program. It is important

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for this study to understand teachers' definitions about these aspects of the proposed plan of change. I categorized the teachers' way of thinking according to the people and objects they deal with on the daily basis, which include teachers' view about the colleagues (teamwork), their view about the students (student performance), their view about the job (job satisfaction), and their view about time and duty (time management). The reason that time management was included in this category is obvious. According to Nancy Adelman (1997), problems "can arise when, in the rush to implement bold new ideas, educational reformers underestimate the time necessary for classroom practitioners to understand and come to terms with what it being asked of them. This miscalculation is often self-defeating because it can actually impede the pace of change by diverting teachers' time and energy away from a rational examination of the proposed new practices and toward an enervating and unproductive period of complaints, resistance, and recrimination" (Adelman, 1997, p. 8). Table 4-8 provides a detailed summary for this category.

Table 4-8: Summary Table for Subjects' Way of Thinking about People and Objects Category

	TYPE	SCHOOL
TEAMWORK	Strong	All four schools
STUDENT PERFORMANCE	High	North High
	Upper-middle	East High and South High
	Low	West High
JOB SATISFACTION	High	North High and East High
	Moderate	South High
	Low	West High
TIME MANAGEMENT	Tight, hectic	North High and South High
	Not tight	East High and West High

	TYPE	SCHOOL	DESCRIPTION
COURSE STANDARD	Support without reservation	North High West High	"The new course standard empowers me with more freedom and flexibility so that I always desire to change the 'spoon-feed' teaching style" (NT5).
	Comply with reservation	South High East High	"The new course standard is very flexible, while the old one was very solid. I agree that we need change, but it doesn't mean we have to abandon all good qualities of old framework" (ET1).
STUDENT ASSESSMENT SYSTEM	Academic-oriented	East High West High	"Our students have not done very well these years since a lot of unprepared students got accepted to our school. There is pressure from our parents. I already asked our teachers to focus on academic training" (WP2).
	Socio-emotional-oriented	North High South High	"There is a transformation from 'to do' education to 'to be' education. Students' organizational and communication skills will matter more in the future" (NT1).
RESEARCH-INFORMED INSTRUCTION	Support	All four schools	"The seminars given by educational researchers are very helpful. I wish I could have more chances to attend" (ET1).
EXPLORATION-ORIENTED LEARNING	Support	North High	"The activity classes work well as long as the teachers know how to adapt their teaching tactics" (NT2).
	Does not matter	West High	"Teachers have the right to choose the instruction style they favor" (WP1).
	Oppose	South High East High	"It's impossible for students to take over the classroom without worrying about failing to achieve the objectives of a class. Maybe once in a while for a showcase, but how about a whole academic year?" (ET3)

Teamwork in all four schools is strong. Student academic performance seems to contribute to teachers' job satisfaction: Teachers in higher-performing schools generally have higher job satisfaction. However, it comes with a price: Teachers in higher-

performing schools, where the working pace is faster and the schedule is more hectic, also more tend to feel stressed out. Student academic performance also accounts for teacher attitudes towards student assessment system: Higher-performing schools are more likely to focus on students' socio-emotional development. Teacher attitudes towards new course standards are highly related to the extent of acceptance to exploration-oriented learning. Those who support new course standards are also more likely to accept the student-centered instruction method. All four schools welcome research-informed instruction, which implies that professional development still has space to improve.

Process

A complete implementation process includes contextual press, emergence of the problem, awareness, program design, program adoption and preparation, and implementation and institutionalization. These time periods occur simultaneously and overlap at different implementation levels. Tables 4-9 and 4-10 list the program chronology at state, LEA, and school levels.

Table 4-9: Phases of the Inclusive Education Program (1)

LEVEL	BEFORE 1997	1997-1999	2000
		AWARENESS AND EMERGENCY OF THE PROBLEM	
State/Macro	In 1993, the CCP Central Committee and the State Council issued *Outline for Educational Reform and Development in China*; In 1994, the State Council convened the Second National Conference on Education;	In 1997, the SEC published *Some Suggestions on the Implementation of Quality Education in Elementary and Secondary Schools*; In 1998, the SEC published *Suggestions on the Adjustment of Course Framework and Enforcement of Instruction Leadership to Implement Quality Education*; In 1999, the CCP Central Committee and the State Council approved the *Action Plan for Reviving Education toward the 21st Century* made by MOE; The CCP Central Committee and the State Council released the *Decision on Deepening Education Reform and Promoting Quality Education* and the State Council convened the Third National Conference on Education; In 2000, President Jiang Zemin delivered a speech on educational problems, commenting on two homicides committed by depressed students.	
Local Education		AWARENESS AND PROPOSAL OF SOLUTION	

Agencies	In the early 1990s, the COE declared that it would no longer designate new key schools.		The COE mandated that K-12 schools use 4-point grading system instead of centesimal system on student report card; The COE introduced small size class to K-12 education; The COE ended the city's unified entrance exams to high schools; The COE set higher standard for exemplary high school; The COE launched a campaign for EOL;
North High	**AWARENESS** International exchange; Peer review; Research seminar.	**ADOPTION AND PREPARATION** On August 8, 1997, the faculty meeting voted for an inclusive education experiment; In December, the school administration published an action plan for 1998 to 2000; In 1998, the school began to hire highly-qualified teachers, to reshuffle the building administration, to renovate buildings and to upgrade facilities and equipment.	**IMPLEMENTATION** The school administration began to reform six aspects of its operation, including organization, personnel, budget, award and punishment, etc.
East High South High West High	**N/A**	**AWARENESS** Peer review; Professional development; National and district campaign.	**ADOPTION** Schools discussed the LEA proposal and decided on areas that needed improvement in order to follow the LEA's policy mandates.

Table 4-10: Phases of the Inclusive Education Program (2)

LEVEL	2001 – 2004	2005 – the present
State/Macro	PROPOSAL OF SOLUTION In 2001, the State Council released *the Decision on Reform and Development of Basic Education* in which it urged that a new curriculum reform should be immediately delivered; The MOE formulated the *Outline of Curriculum Reform in Basic Education* and published *New Course Standard* for 15 academic subjects.	STABILIZATION OF INNOVATION In 2006, President Hu Jintao signed a revised version of CEL. For the first time, Quality Education is written into national laws.
Local Education Agencies	STABILIZATION OF INNOVATION The COE established the RII system; The COE launched a campaign for EOL; The COE set up new course standards for its K-12 education.	
North High	IMPLEMENTATION The school introduced new selective courses; explored new teaching, learning, and assessment procedures.	INSTITUTIONALIZATION The school set up a new teacher evaluation system in which inclusion became one of most important indicators.
East High	OSCILLATING (Schools tried to comply with the LEA's minimal requirement about inclusive education, but did not change the infrastructure of instruction leadership and classroom practice)	SELECTIVE COMPLIANCE The school invented IT training for a showcase of inclusion and kept on investing heavily in old routines.

	SKEPTICAL AND RELUCTANT COMPLIANCE
South High	The school tried to fight on two fronts: academic training and practical skills.
	ABORTED IMPLEMENTATION
West High	The new school leadership decided to go back to tracked teaching in order to address concerns from parents and the supervising administration on students' failing academic performance.

As Table 4-9 and 4-10 show, North High went far ahead of other schools in carrying out inclusive education, a voluntary local innovation which was endorsed by policy makers and followed by other organizations; the other three schools cautiously and only partially complied with the policy mandates. After an initial period of exploring how to be somewhat responsive while protecting themselves, the three schools chose different program institutionalization paths according to their attitude towards continuation: resisting, selective compliance, or skeptical and reluctant compliance.

Activities

Professional development, course planning, classroom instruction, assigning homework, administering exams, and parent/teacher conferences are all teachers' regular activities that have an impact on the operation of a school and the implementation of an innovation program. Table 4-11 summarizes my findings in this category.

Table 4-11: Summary Table for Activities Category

	TYPE	SCHOOL	DESCRIPTION
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Adequate	All four schools	In-service training, research seminar, peer review.
COURSE PLANNING	Adequate	All four schools	There are subject teams and professional staff who examine and coordinate all teachers' course plan.
INSTRUCTION	Student-centered	North High East High	"I want my students to be human beings, not same kind of human being. I want them to be art, not tools" (NT2). "It's more important to teach students how to fish, not just give them fish" (ET1).
	Teacher-centered	South High West High	"Teachers are still the dominant character in their classroom, and it has to be this way if you want to achieve your teaching objectives. Students can feel included when they take part in after-school programs. That's their stage" (WT3).
HOMEWORK/ASSIGNMENT	Heavy	South High West High	"We are devoted in time and effort to make sure students work hard" (ST3). "Students in this school are not academically ready and not motivated. Heavy homework is the only way to keep them working and catch up with other schools" (WT2).
	Moderate	North High East High	"To assign students lot homework doesn't make sense for me. It's quality, not quantity of homework matters. You have to choose and design the homework very carefully. Sometimes it takes more time to prepare homework than class lecture" (NT1).
EXAMINATION	Frequent and intense	All four schools	Exams are given in a frequent and intense way. Public students ranking is abolished in all four schools but students still know their testing scores.
AWARD/PUNISHMENT	Big award/ punishment	North High	"To attract highly qualified teachers working here, our school provides competitive pay and housing. However, if any teacher can't meet our standards, they must leave" (NP2).

| | Moderate award/ punishment | South High, East High & West High | "The levers we can use are very limited under the existing personnel system. We want to hire good teachers from other provinces but it's difficult to get through various barriers. Some teachers are not doing well, but you have to keep [them]" (SP1). |
| PARENTS/ TEACHERS CONFERENCE | Regular | All four schools | Twice per semester. The forms of parent/teacher conferences in four schools are the same: updates about district and school plan; every student's recent performance; matters that need parents' cooperation. |

All four schools have very similar working protocols: locally organized professional development, similar course planning processes, frequent and intense examinations, and regular parents/teachers conferences, but they divided between student-centered and teacher-centered instruction. Besides, North High adopts merit-based pay system, while other schools employ a more moderate motivation mechanism.

Events

Some events from the inside and the outside can have a powerful impact on the implementation of an innovative program. I also summarize problems that all four schools encountered in their implementation process, based on the interview data. Table 4-12 gives a detailed summary of this category.

Table 4-12: Event Listing

SCHOOL	CATEGORY	EVENT
NORTH HIGH	EXTERNAL ACTORS THAT HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION	N/A
	INTERNAL FACTORS THAT HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION	In 1997, North High faculty meeting elected its principal for the first time in its history; In 2000, the school underwent a renovation project and encountered resistance from inside. The principal received a death threat warning that she should stop her plan; In 2005, the school became one of the first 44 certified exemplary public high schools.

		"We had carried on inclusive education very well from grade 10 to 11, but at the grade 12, we had to go back to tracking in order to prepare our students for the NAE" (NT1).
	IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEM	"There is a gap between high school and middle school at this point [inclusion]" (NT1).
		"Teachers' mindset is hard to change" (NT3).
EAST HIGH	EXTERNAL ACTORS THAT HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION	N/A
	INTERNAL FACTORS THAT HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION	In 2000, the school underwent a multimillion-dollar renovation and upgraded all its teaching facilities; In 2001, it became the first bilingual public school sponsored by the school district.
	IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEM	"The NAE should be reformed or abolished" (EP1). "It's wrong to put inclusive education and academic training on opposite sides" (EP2). "The NAE is definitely a barrier" (ET2). "The new course standard needs more class time, but it's impossible under the inclusive education program" (ET3).
WEST HIGH	EXTERNAL ACTORS THAT HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION	Since 2003, students can take NAE in Beijing and are considered Beijing residents when they apply to colleges. As a result, a lot of academically unprepared students pushed their way into this school to get that advantage.
	INTERNAL FACTORS THAT HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION	Most principals of this school cannot hold their position for more than one year. This created confusion for teachers. West High held an open nationwide search for a principal in 2000. A qualified principal was eventually installed.
	IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEM	"As a result of affirmative action, a lot of academically unprepared students pushed their way into this school to get an advantage; the class size is bigger and the teachers' workload is heavier" (WT1). "There are no clearly-cut inclusive education objectives. Everyone has his own understanding. It's confusing" (WT2).

SOUTH HIGH	EXTERNAL ACTORS THAT HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION	N/A
	INTERNAL FACTORS THAT HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION	In 1999, the school became one of UNESCO Joint Innovative Project (JIP) schools in China; Since 2000, it has been one of the China National Institute for Educational Research (CNIER) – sponsored partner schools and collaborated with Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) to set up a bilingual program; Its test scores in the National Admission Exam plummeted in 2001.
	IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEM	"We have more human resources than we need, but the salary pool is limited" (SP1); "There is a contradiction between the NAE and inclusive education" (ST3).

Schools can rarely track external factors that have an impact on their implementation, except West High that had a different student group due to an admission policy change, which was accidental. As far as internal factors are concerned, coping with a change in leadership seem to be the issue teachers are most concerned about. Sudden change in students' academic performance can also have an impact on the school's implementation process. Schools have different implementation problems, and the National Admission Exam is a common issue.

Strategies

Strategies deal with an organization's tactics, methods, and techniques for accomplishing the mission of innovation. I identified user-fit, training, debugging and stabilizing, and evaluation as the main strategies involved in the implementation of the

inclusive education program. "User-fit" refers to the process by which the school administration determines the fit between job position and teachers' qualifications. "Training strategy" refers to the process by which school leaders build and maintain teachers' capacities in order to keep their school up with new instructional and pedagogical ideas and practices. Innovation never goes smoothly as scheduled and planned. Therefore, "debugging and stabilization" have to be an important part of institutionalizing innovations and become school administration's everyday work. "Method of evaluation" is about how the evaluation could contribute to program improvement, how the evaluation could contribute to making decisions based on program outcome, and what you expect to do differently because of the evaluation. Evaluation is regarded as a part of program implementation and improvement (Patton, 1997). Table 4-13 summarizes the strategies used.

Table 4-13: Summary Table for Strategies Category

SCHOOL	CATEGORY	STRATEGY
NORTH HIGH	USER-FIT	Competition for position; Volunteering for selective course.
	TRAINING	Sending teachers to other countries' prestigious high schools for observations; Encouraging teachers to take graduate-level courses; High-quality research seminar.
	DEBUGGING AND STABILIZATION OF THE INNOVATION	Emotional support; Establishing a learning community; Setting up role models; Peer observation; Merit-based pay; Big reward and harsh punishment.

	METHOD OF EVALUATION	Students rating teachers; Subject and grade team leaders rating teachers.
EAST HIGH	USER-FIT	Allowing subject and grade teams to decide.
	TRAINING	Professional development organized by school district.
	DEBUGGING AND STABILIZATION OF THE INNOVATION	Paying attention to teachers' comments and suggestion; Setting up role models; Peer observation.
	METHOD OF EVALUATION	Subject and grade team leaders rating teachers.
WEST HIGH	USER-FIT	Allowing individual teachers to use their discretion.
	TRAINING	Professional development organized by school district.
	DEBUGGING AND STABILIZATION OF THE INNOVATION	Peer observation; Responding to teacher needs quickly.
	METHOD OF EVALUATION	Subject and grade team leaders rating teachers.
SOUTH HIGH	USER-FIT	Allowing subject and grade teams to decide.
	TRAINING	Professional development organized by school district.
	DEBUGGING AND STABILIZATION OF THE INNOVATION	Raise awareness; Peer observation.
	METHOD OF EVALUATION	Subject and grade team leaders rating teachers.

Based on its access to more educational resources, North High leads other schools in the implementation strategies such as teacher training. In most schools, the main evaluation method is for subject and grade team leaders to rate teachers, but North High goes the extra mile to have students rate their teachers. Most schools are content to leave work division to grade and subject teams, but North High opens competition for position and encourages faculty to volunteer to teach selective courses. Most schools have peer

observation and emotional support as their debugging and stabilizing mechanism, but North High adds merit-based pay system and pledges to establish a learning community. These innovative strategies contribute to North High's successful implementation.

Relationship and Social Structure

A successful program has to create symbols to inspire people, provide cohesiveness, and give direction for the organization. Over time, these symbols represent core beliefs and values that give cultural and historical systems shared meaning, where group membership determines individual interpretations of organizational phenomena. Table 4-14 provides a summary for this category.

Table 4-14: Summary Table for Relationship and Social Structure Category

CATEGORY	TYPE	SCHOOL	SUMMARY
SOCIAL STRUCTURE	Collectivist	All four schools	The prevailing working style is group activities: course plans, exams, professional development, peer observation, etc.
KEY PLAYERS	Identified	All four schools	Principals and teachers can easily name star teachers and powerful figures in the building. They earn respect from their work performance and have influence on school policies.
CONFLICTS	Strong	North High & West High	"Every day is a struggle. If you want to survive, you have to run fast, otherwise you will be left behind" (NT1). "I had a hard time when I began my work here. It took time to get around here, to know about office politics" (WT2).

			"The interpersonal relationship is simple here. It's my second job since I settled down in Beijing. This is not a top school, so you don't feel pressured" (ST1). "People get along in this school. Most folks keep a very low profile" (ET3).
	Weak	South High & East High	
COALITIONS	Tight	North High & East High	"Team leaders have some say in our evaluation. They are always the people you need to keep close to" (ET2). "I learned a lot from the experienced teachers. They are good mentors and role models" (NT2).
	Loose	South High & West High	Loose, compared with the above two schools.
RITUALS AND CEREMONIES	Strong	North High & West High	"It's our tradition to invite the retired teachers to come back and sit in the front of the annual meeting to honor their contribution to this school" (NT1). "Minority culture is the most distinct characteristic for us. We celebrate every ethnic holiday" (WP2). "The former principal remembered every teacher's birthday and always gave a present" (WT3).
	Not strong	South High & East High	Not strong compared with the above two schools.

If school leaders are to implement a plan for change that they believe the nation needs, they must adapt to their environment without sacrificing the essential objectives of their organizations. In the case of inclusive education, there are two main objectives that have run into tension: the academic preparedness that principals and teachers believe has penetrated the operation of schools across the country and even extended internationally and the citizenship education on which the central government has decided to focus. John Goodlad (1984) states that "to survive, an institution requires from its clients substantial faith in its usefulness and a measure of satisfaction with its performance" (Goodlad, 1984, p. 1). Academic preparedness has been a pillar of schooling and served as a legitimacy

agent for a long time. By contrast, citizenship education is becoming a new change agent that seems, in this case, to jeopardize the hegemony of the former. In contrast to legitimacy agents, a change agent provides dynamic instruction leadership. Instructional leadership is a field that Schön would say is full of "uncertainty, uniqueness, and value conflict" (Schön, 1987, p. 6). The actual implementation process may be a struggle between the legitimacy agent and the change agent and the final outcome may be determined largely by the relative power of these agents. The students' academic performance is the bloodline of school operation. The goal of maintaining strong academic performance can be a force toward maintaining the status quo. The actual implementation process has to deal with the legitimacy agent — in this case, students' academic performance — that policy workers can neither ignore nor ever feel that it has been fully addressed.

The inclusive education program, with its intense attention to individualized instruction and multi-dimensional indicators of student assessment, is urban upper middle class-oriented and expensive by definition. Students in North High come from upper-middle class backgrounds and feel driven to excel intellectually. North High's privilege of recruiting its students from the whole metropolitan area, the tradition that the school district keeps of not intervening in North High's internal affairs, the virtual screening system that North High invented in its affiliating gifted program, all of these give it advantages in forming a homogenous, academically competent student group. Therefore, academic preparedness is not its main concern. Rather, North High's advocacy for inclusive education can be viewed as a part of its plan to realize its students' full potential and better prepare all of its students, who were already in a privileged group to begin

with, to lead tomorrow's society. Unfortunately, South High and East High, whose students do not have the same social and cultural capital, fail to see the significant benefits that would motivate them to take initiatives to carry on the program fully and with loyalty.

Research Questions Revisited

This study draws upon interviews of seven principals and fourteen teachers of four high schools in Beijing on their attitudes and beliefs, as well as their instructional and pedagogical practices for implementing the inclusive education program. The following summary reflects upon my research questions, which were introduced in chapter three, and provides general interpretations of the interviewees' responses. In this section, I try to combine my findings related to implementation of inclusive education and more general implications for policy implementation in China, wherever applicable.

Research Question One Revisited

How do the street-level bureaucrats understand their respective roles with regards to the implementation of inclusive education?

The study found that building-level support is critical to the teachers' commitments to the implementation of inclusive education. Although teachers' motivation to implement the program is generally lower than those of principals, they can

increase their awareness and effort if principals push hard (see Figure 4-3 to 4-10). Table

4-15 illustrates the relationship between user practice and program continuation.

Table 4-15: Relationship between User Practice and Program Continuation*

	Attitude towards Continuation	Likelihood of Continued Use	Prime Factors Contributing to High/Low Likelihood of Continuation
North High	Very positive (P) Mixed (T)	High	High building-level administrative support; High student academic performance; Sufficient budget
East High	Mixed (P, T)	Moderate	Improved student academic performance
South High	Negative (P, T)	Uncertain	Program mandated
West High	Negative (P, T)	Low	Low building-level administrative support; Low student academic performance; Leadership turnover

* Researcher assessment, using pooled data from interview and observation data and case report tables
P Principal response
T Teacher response

Table 4-15 shows that building-level administrative support acts as a catalyst for

the detracking reform. Both teachers and principals want to protect and enhance their

careers. Schools may decide that it is in their self-interest to maintain the existing

routines rather than take the risk of implementing a program of change, especially when

policy makers fail to convince them that detracking can maintain academic standards, a

pillar for their operation. . This study found that most teachers and principals see their

own priorities as being in conflict with the goals of the inclusive education program.

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However, depending on their school leadership, they can actually assimilate some of the program objectives into their organizational operation and build up capacities for innovation even if they do not tend to carry out the reform fully and with loyalty, as shown in the cases of selective compliance and skeptical and reluctant compliance.

This study also has some general implications. It found that the discretionary power of street-level bureaucrats is an important determinant in the implementation of public policy. The principals exercised influence by encouraging and facilitating the actions of others in order to build the structure of new policy implementation they believed the school needed

This study suggests that interpretations of program intent among implementers help add specification to directives that may lead to actual policy outcomes at the street level. The meaning of policy is constructed not only in abstract definitions offered by policy makers and education reform experts, but also from personal perceptions of the implementers' circumstances and community. As Yanow (1996) argued:

> What is being communicated is not solely "legislative intent," if we could even clearly establish what that is for any piece of legislation. What is being communicated are the societal meanings. . . . concerning the subject of the policy, meanings that have developed over time. . . . and which are carried in the policy's language, but also in the language of the debate about its legislation and in discussions surrounding its implementation. They are carried in the objects that the implementing agency creates and uses in its operations. . . . And they are carried in the agency's acts, in its daily, weekly, monthly, annual operations. (p. 127)

Individuals may misunderstand and misinterpret a policy and thus implement it in different directions (D. K. Cohen, 1990). Implementers "exercise discretion in order to improve their local position or address specific problems of interest to them; they

interpret policy directives in ways that transform their prior desires into the wishes of policy makers" (Baier et al., 1988, p. 154). The strength of a program of change rests not so much on the power of the ideas, purposes, and values that the policy makers intended as on the reinterpretation of the implementers based on their personal understandings of their institution and their practice.

Research Question Two Revisited

What changes are happening in detracking schools and everyday classrooms?

For the inclusive education program, the formal signals sent by different levels of educational administrations revolve around "social and emotional development first" and exposure of all students to the same educational environment with the least difference. Yet the vast majority of teachers and principals interviewed interpret the inclusive education program's priority to be a reduction in the time and effort spent on academic subjects. This is particularly the case at West High, South High, and East High.

The 2006 Compulsory Education Law provides an educational provision that set mandated detracking. Most schools in this study are poised to respond to the challenge of the inclusive education program, in which students with different abilities and needs may take many paths toward academic achievement and socio-emotional development. As mandated by the Compulsory Education Law, interschool grouping, where students of different academic competencies were sent to different schools (key schools and non-key schools), has ceased to function. In contrast to this, intraschool grouping, where students of different achievements are separated into different classes within the same school, has

not disappeared, but simply taken on other forms (experimental class, parallel class). The discriminatory labels of fast-track and slow-track classes and the open ranking of students' testing scores have disappeared, but the intensive focus on academic subjects and harmful judgments about student academic performance still persist, especially given the high-stakes NAE that pervades almost every school. Detracking has not just been ignored, it has been considered as an obstacle to instruction, and has often been dismantled.

There is a consensus among teachers that children should be placed in different tracks according to their abilities and needs, which is obviously contrary to the central government and the LEA's policy mandates. However, low-track teaching is a routine part of almost all teachers' work load in these four schools, and it does not carry a stigma unless the teacher teaches only low-track classes all the time. Those working in high-performing schools seemed to favor inclusive education more than those in low-performing schools. Most teachers do not feel compelled to follow inclusive education all the way down. They tend to argue that there is no guidance for them to evaluate their implementation of this program since there is no consensus on the exact definition of inclusive education.

Whether or not teachers were strongly committed to inclusive education, they have become deeply involved in various changes. The new course standards are more flexible, and most schools are choosing the textbooks they consider most suitable to their students. The change to a new student assessment system may be the more successful part in the implementation of the inclusive education program. The shift from students' test scores to their more general well-being and welfare has been a great achievement of

inclusive education. However, the National Admission Exam, class size, and new course

standards remain important concerns to teachers when implementing inclusive education.

Research Question Three Revisited

What deeply held values and beliefs guide teachers' actions, interactions, and

teaching activities to deliver the central government's policy mandates?

In this case, the tracking system has been tightly woven into the texture of the

widespread meritocratic ideology and the government's previous policy preferences. The

significance of merit lies in the fact that it is a major basis on which people earn and

justify their political power, economic returns, or social position. The benefits of the

tracking system are widely experienced and even more widely acknowledged. The

imperatives of meritocratic ideology have undermined the detracking policy and its

practice. Indoctrinated into the meritocratic ideology, teachers still believe that the

placement processes are fair to students who are separated into different groups, and that

homogeneous classes are easier and more convenient to deal with — this despite the fact

that no evidence supports these assumptions and heterogeneously run classes, if taught

competently, are just as effective. "Ideological differences, micropolitics and gender

dynamics among teachers are all part of a school's culture and, accordingly, all play into

the school reform process" (Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000 p. 132).

For the inclusive education program, professionalism among Chinese teachers

stems from the exam-oriented track. The teachers in this study identify themselves

primarily with their subject area, which is the cornerstone of school organization in China.

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Most teachers, especially in academic subjects, believe strongly in the value of these subjects and want to uphold a high standard in these fields. The whole society has a strong belief that schools and teachers have a high level of expertise and should be able to exercise discretion in preparing the students for tests in academic subjects. The LEA has a tradition of not intervening in schools' choices concerning professional affairs, although they do supervise policy implementation and evaluate the final outcomes. Teachers who have a strong predisposition against the tracking system also believe that the academic preparedness of students should be protected. As a result, teachers are most likely to resist drastic changes in the way they are teaching. Educational reform plans from academics and the LEA have little standing with teachers who work on the front line.

To deliver the central government's policy mandates, it is important to promote consubstantial ideology and establish supportive institutional environment.

There are hierarchical disparities among street-level bureaucrats' views of program priorities. In most schools, principals agree that students can benefit from the proposed plan of change in the long run, but teachers, sometimes with a different sense of urgency, believe that only they know what should be done and how to do it in the classroom. They must act on the basis of immediate need to fix problems and respond constantly to student demands. Therefore, a policy proposal can be blunted, negotiated, or counteracted in the name of professionalism.

The Chinese people's collectivism and their preoccupation with group harmony play an important role in the organization's survival and development. Relationships with other people involve reciprocal obligations in China, which can create a bureaucratic organizational climate rather than an entrepreneurial one (Block, 1987). The reality is that

most principals have a deep fear that teachers will go too far in the name of innovation, so they are usually ambivalent, sending such messages as "Do what you think is right, but make sure you get my approval." Most Chinese schools invent various mechanisms to build up group dynamics. Team leaders coordinate planning, peer observation, and group discussion at the grade or academic subject level. Collectivist culture can be the seedbed of a learning community if it is used wisely, but can also lead to coercion and exploitation if it is abused. At this point, innovations take root only with difficulties, and the old routines are hard to change without an organizational climate that encourages critical thinking and risk-taking.

Research Question Four Revisited

What are the personal, organizational, and institutional factors that facilitate or inhibit the implementation of national educational policy in China?

During the implementation of inclusive education, the LEA may also underestimate the program's complexity, especially the inflation of program objectives and unexpected consequences. For example, they might have underestimated the complicated relationship between population trends (particularly the one-child policy) and job market changes (especially increasing demands for academic credentials among new college graduates).

The inclusive education program competes with teachers' other commitments. Although not inherently in conflict, new and existing policies tend to produce contradictory impulses that may lead to complexity and instability in policy practice. As

one researcher insisted, "We maintain that, in the process of transforming exam-oriented education to quality education, we need to be courageous in retaining and preserving all the positive and reasonable elements in the existing educational system, such as the systematic and solidly based transmission of basic knowledge, classroom-centered education, an appropriate number of examinations, and so on. This ought to be a foundation for the establishment and development of quality education" (Yang, 1997). China has boasted that it has world-class basic education. This confidence is based on students' systematic command of academic knowledge. Any LEA cannot afford to lose these outcomes.

The comparative advantages of the inclusive education program over an exam-oriented approach, and its compatibility with the existing NAE system, remain serious issues. Largely because of the academic orientation toward efficiency as a both a value axis and a simple convenience for daily operation, schools have focused on intensive academic training, and have neglected the social roots of schooling. Almost all interviewees see the NAE system as the main barrier to the implementation of the inclusive education program. The need to help students become prepared for high stakes testing has made the program less appealing among most schools — and even unacceptable in the case of West High. The inclusive education program fails to dismantle the structure on which the tracking system is based, i.e., the academic-intensive schooling system, although academic orientation and socio-emotional development are not necessarily or always in conflict with each other. In other words, the inclusive education program is not sufficient to produce a workable system. It claims that "all students must be able to participate meaningfully in the future society," but at the same

time, it tries to perpetuate a high stakes testing system, which actually reinforces both the belief in, and the practice of tracking on a daily basis.

This study supports the hypothesis that successful implementation is closely related to program design. The obstacles to implementation efforts can be illustrated by the issues of program design. Lin (1997) has observed that

> Successful implementation . . . requires the happy coincidence of improvement over established staff routines, visible and immediate benefits to clients, and easily observable indicators of progress for policymakers. Thus, successful implementation is often accidental, while failed implementation is the result of design. (p. 4)

Program design includes strength of policy message, convergence of education and economy, and policy coherence and solidity, which consists of sensitivity of program complexity, observability of outcome, new policy's relative advantages over existing policy choice and compatibility with other commitments.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Overview

This chapter uses causal links among the existing categories to discuss different implementation instruments and outcomes — specifically, pathfinding, selective compliance, skeptical and reluctant compliance, and resisting. It will furthermore provide recommendations for the improvement of policy process from the political, cultural and technical perspectives.

Implementation Instruments

The four cases in this study illustrate different approaches and problems that can arise when the street-level bureaucrats implement innovative programs (see Table 4-9, 4-10). They also represent negotiation between stability agents and change agents, and they therefore fall between two extremes: pathfinding and resisting. On the continuum of the change process are two other implementation instruments: bargaining and oscillating. Table 5-1 lists assumptions and consequences of these four different implementation instruments. It is clear that different implementation instruments imply a choice between the long and short-term interests of the parties concerned, and between stability forces and change forces.

Table 5-1: Implementation Instruments Defined

	Assumptions	Primary Elements	Key Characteristic	Benefits	Costs
Pathfinding	Valued good would be produced with proper experiments in absence of solutions to the sensible problems	Entrepreneurial spirit	Experimental	Long-term self-esteem for individuals and organization	Risk-taking
Selective Compliance	Capacities vary from policy to policy, organization to organization; "trade-off"	Pragmatism	Productivity Cost Efficiency	Long-term standing for the core principles of school operation	Short-term struggle against skepticism
Skeptical and Reluctant Compliance	Policy oscillation is unavoidable; "catch me if you can"	Bureaucratic careerism	Opportunistic	Short-term financial and political gains by ostensible compliance	Long-term struggle against uncertainty
Resisting	The priority of an organization is to survive and serve self-interest	Parochialism	System stability	Short-term benefits to survival of organization	Long-term loss of capacity for innovation and improvement

Pathfinding, as we have seen in the case of North High, starts with the school's own innovative experiments before the practices are endorsed by policy makers and followed by other organizations. This process is usually a voluntary, bottom-up solution with a clear reference to local conditions. The pathfinding organizations gain some advantages in the change process. The most appealing factor is that their program objectives are usually incremental and ambiguous, which makes the program more acceptable to the implementers at the beginning when they solicit support. Another important factor is that although the pathfinding organizations may take some risk in starting the experiment, the risk starts low and grows gradually and thus is fairly affordable. This leaves space for flexibility and adaptation when the program unfolds.

However, availability of resources remains a big issue for the voluntary programs. In a centralized system like China's, pathfinding organizations must possess certain local conditions favorable to the experiment that they propose to conduct, so that the new change agent can challenge the stability agent and take root. The attention they get from the LEA or other institutions may be little at the beginning, but they are also relieved from great pressure accompanied by great expectations. If successful, they will reap long-term self-esteem and consistently build up their morale. Therefore, they have more opportunities to become a learning community for constant innovation.

For pathfinding organizations like North High, although the successful history of implementing innovative programs builds up the morale among the community (see Table 4-6, 4-7), leading a new experiment still comes with extra workload and risk-taking. The pathfinding organizations must deal with various unexpected consequences of the program and respond to emerging needs on a daily basis. The teachers report that they

have tight and hectic schedules, frequent conflicts with colleagues, and feelings of being worn out (see Table 4-11, 4-14). The hard-line big reward/harsh punishment approach, under a charismatic leadership, may be a choice to monitor the implementation results, but a supportive community atmosphere can be more sustainable for the institutionalization of a program of change.

The case of West High exemplifies a resisting organization that decides not to comply with the LEA's policy directives. The resistance could be attributed to the undesirability, or perceived ineffectiveness of the policy proposal in dealing with the organization's conspicuous problems. In West High, the principals and teachers are struggling to improve the students' academic performance, and academic preparedness is still the first priority. The inclusive education program's compatibility with the teachers' commitment to students' academic preparedness leads to a deadlock, and the new program's comparative advantages over tracking practice remain narrow. In other words, the stability agent prevails over the new change agent to prevent the latter from nourishing the former.

There are other important factors that made outright resistance become the reality in the case of West High. As an outcome of affirmative action and one of the campuses in China most subject to political unrest, West High occupies a unique place and has assumed a sensitive role in the Chinese high school system. The LEA would prefer laissez-faire leadership to getting deeply involved into the school's operation, in order to avoid resentment from minority students. It leads to the public service workers' outright resistance to, which is very rare in the context of a centralized system.

The cases of East High and South High describe the difficulties of institutionalizing an innovative program. As Jeffrey W. Eiseman (1990) stated, "successfully implemented innovations may die . . . unless organizations pay attention to institutionalization, the process by which the practice or practices of an innovation become embedded in operating procedures" (Eiseman, Fleming, & Roody, 1990). These two schools are following the LEA's top-down policy directives to implement the inclusive education program and both are struggling between forces for stability and those for change. In the end, they could not integrate the innovations into their daily operation to produce enduring change. Both selective compliance and skeptical & reluctant compliance show the power of discretion and expertise of "the bottom over the top" (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Elmore, 1983), or "lowerarchy" (Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005). As a result, both have to trade their short-term gain (loss) with long-term loss (gain) for the organizations. As Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003) pointed out:

> Street-level workers must decide which rules or procedures to apply. The proliferation of rules — often contradictory rules — requires matching the case to the rule or procedure, and this process requires discretion. . . . Thus, like putty, discretion can be squeezed by oversight and rules but never eliminated; it will shift and reemerge in some other form in some other place. This is a fact of life in the modern state. (p. 10)

Selective compliance, as exemplified by the East High case, generally accept adopted policies but also have serious reservations toward some parts of the policy objectives. Unlike the pathfinders, selective compliance is implementing a policy to which the organization would not spontaneously offer their support. They tend to implement a reduced version of the proposed program by ignoring some of the parts

about which they have reservations. This could be caused by a program design that lacks flexibility with reference to local conditions. The organizations view success or failure of the program in terms of their own organizational objectives and insist that some local conditions are not favorable for the program to be fully implemented. With regard to the inclusive education program, North High might argue that the effective implementation of the new course standards requires flexible teaching strategies, while East High might argue that students' weaker academic preparedness is a big obstacle for teachers to go ahead without worrying about the loss of essential concepts (see Table 4-8). Although they may be haunted by skepticism about their decision, they will gain long-term standing for their core values that they value more than anything else. The core values provide guidance for school personnel and influence individuals to perform their job accordingly. They give meaning to the organization.

Skeptical and reluctant compliance is exemplified by the South High case, which remains cautious and holds on to a "wait-and-see" attitude when implementing an innovation. This defensive reaction pattern is very normal especially in places where risk-taking is not encouraged. Unlike the pioneers, they usually do not own enough resources to keep their operation, and thus depend on their supervising authorities in meeting their needs. They lack the motivation to fully carry out the adopted policy, but neither could afford the price of disobedience. As a result, these organizations are wary of the LEA's every move in order to develop safe options when facing choices. The street-level bureaucrats in this kind of organizations know the system very well and understand that they need not totally and strictly comply with rules. They employ an opportunistic approach and their priority is to boost their career. These organizations can successfully

shrug off their responsibilities to policy mandates by exploiting the ambiguities of program objectives and by skillfully manipulating public opinion.

Implications and Recommendations

The extent to which the inclusive education program will help to ensure that students with low abilities and high needs are fully educated is unclear, and whether the future related policies will help facilitate better educational opportunities for all remains to be seen. However, the idea of detracking is taking root in high schools in Beijing in spite of the difficulties associated with the implementation process.

I contend that it is not necessary to speculate about policy implications and recommendations that differentiate between policy makers and implementers, since the two sometimes overlap in terms of roles and functions. Pathfinding organizations can actively take initiatives to push their agenda and lead the innovations and the implementers can exert their discretion and act as policy makers at the front line of policy process (Croll, Abbott, Broadfoot, Osborn, & Pollard, 1994). With regard to policy implementation in the context of China, there are political, cultural, and technical mechanisms that come into play. This section will provide more general recommendations for education policy implementation in China's context. The recommendations from political perspective have statesmen as potential audience to reflect on their lessons to improve future policies. Those from cultural perspective appeal educational reform experts to pay more attention on organizational culture when they proposed new plan of educational change. The recommendations from technical

perspective focus on the improvement of street-level bureaucrats' policy practice in the front line.

Politically, as the implementation stories of inclusive education have shown, it takes political reform to implement the inclusive education program, and more than that, it takes a political system that is open to all citizens, and not only to an elite group, a political system that treats all citizens with equality, equity, and dignity, and ensures that all citizens participate effectively and without discrimination based on class, ethnicity, gender, age, sexuality, or religion. Otherwise, it is impossible for a society which is obsessed with meritocratic ideology to secure a sustainable and harmonious development. It is impossible for an education of the elite, by the elite, and for the elite to bring up a new generation with a democratic mind and critical thinking abilities. It is impossible for a system that views individuals as "screws in a machine" to acknowledge each and every individual's value and make them meaningfully participate in the economic, social, political, and cultural life of their communities. For inclusive education, if the central government expects educators to take entrepreneurial risks in implementing its policy, it must have entrepreneurship itself. If the central government expects students to become creative, critical thinkers, then it has to abolish press censorship and promote freedom of speech. Other features of the political system and social organizations will also need to be adapted to fit with the change process. For example, an anti-discrimination law, which does not exist in today's China might destroy the infrastructure of meritocratic ideology and practice.

The general lesson is that if a government is to engage people in policy change, the proposed change has to be seen as a permanent part of its social structure and be

supported by various social institutions. Sometimes the government wants people to know that it is working hard to address social concerns, but it faces difficulties in making substantial changes to the political and social structures and norms, since these changes might cause social or political disruption and thus threaten its stability. As a result, the government sends mixed and even conflicting messages that may undermine the strength of its policy. It is not that the government could not propose a clear policy solution, but that the government usually employs a "politics of blame avoidance" as Weaver (1986) stated:

> Politicians are motivated primarily by the desire to avoid blame for unpopular actions rather than by seeking to claim credit for popular ones. This results from voters' "negativity bias": their tendency to be more sensitive to real or potential losses than they are to gains. Incentives to avoid blame lead politicians to adopt a distinctive set of political strategies, including agenda limitation, scapegoating, "passing the buck" and defection ("jumping on the bandwagon") that are different than those they would follow if they were primarily interested in pursuing good policy or maximizing crest-claiming opportunities. (Weaver, 1987)

Legitimacy of leadership should be given more attention. At a lower policy level, the decentralizing reform in Chinese education is shifting the authority of decision-making down to the school level. Changing the venue of decision-making and leadership-selecting systems can be expected to influence the course of program implementation. Implementation may face serious problems if a majority of school principals are appointed by the school district rather than being promoted from inside or popularly elected by the faculty. Installing a principal in a school does not necessarily produce consensus. On the contrary, it brings in "bureaucratic careerism," which only promotes a culture of "blame avoidance" in the building. Principals serve their self-interests by

focusing on the survival and expansion of their schools, the size of their budgets, and opportunities for promotion in the hierarchical bureaucracy.

Schools are also cultural and historical systems of shared meaning where school leaders and teachers can jointly construct an interpretation of school reform. School leaders evoke ceremonies, rituals, or artifacts to create a unifying system of beliefs and enhance shared identity in order to institutionalize school change. If change strategies violate a school's cultural norms and standards, they will be seen as illegitimate and inappropriate, and in the end, they will be ineffective. The LEA and principals have to work within the institutional culture to create change. Usually the outcome of change is a new school culture. The process of institutionalization also needs school leaders to discover their schools' core ideology to guide and inspire teachers to create a climate for change in the school.

Successful implementations differ in their approaches and processes, but they share certain characteristics that contribute to their success. Among these characteristics are self-understanding, clarity of values, a strong belief in equity and the democratic decision-making process, strategic thought about school improvement, knowledge of the work of teaching and learning, and the ability to develop such capacities in colleagues and in the organization. Above all, the most important agenda for school leaders may be to develop the school into a learning organization. Teachers and principals need to continually expand their capacity to try out new practices in order to learn how to prepare themselves better for incoming changes. In this way, there will be substantially lower fear of change and every educator will be prepared for the new culture of change.

Change means that teachers must reexamine their familiar routines and habits of mind. They will feel insecure and overwhelmed when excessive uncertainty appears. If school leaders fail to attend to individual needs. teachers may withdraw psychologically and become apathetic and passive to the change. although they may still stay on the job. Even worse. they might form alliances to seek leeway from the power structure and sabotage the policy process. Finally. the efforts to institutionalize the change could collapse. Institutionalization is possible only when a change suits teachers' intrinsic needs. Empowerment is important because it provides opportunities for teachers' personal growth. and thus lays a better foundation for persistent institutionalization of school reform.

Technically. the calibration of program intent and institutional values is the crux of program implementation. The institutional environment shapes the way in which principals and teachers interpret program objectives and moderate individual choices in order to achieve organizational goals. With conflicting beliefs. the program's strength and solidity tend to be weakened. the power of bureaucracy dispersed. and the reform itself vulnerable to attack. We cannot afford to ignore institutional values in school reform studies. By studying battles of ideologies among policy makers and implementers. researchers may work toward developing effective strategies for change in schools where institutional values are contested.

This study suggests that policy may fail for lack of learning opportunities for street-level bureaucrats to better understand the policy's intent. The learning opportunities are vehicles through which street-level bureaucrats understand and identify with policy ideas, purposes, and values, and are motivated by them. Policy makers may

take for granted that knowledge and expertise for the implementation of a proposed

program are in place for the implementers to explore and obtain, but inadequate

preparation and practice usually seems to be one of key elements in reform failure.

Teachers need time to decipher the purposes of the innovations, to learn about them and

practice the new behaviors that will be expected from them. Therefore, time becomes the

key issue (A. Hargreaves, 2000; A. Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, & Manning, 2001). The

world that teachers face is one full of routines, procedures and administrative rules.

Teachers need time and the chance to understand, learn, plan and rehearse the new

strategies, to reflect on school practice, conditions, and events so that these best practice

can be incorporated fully into daily life in the classrooms. It is necessary for teachers to

become reflective practitioners by means of a deliberate effort to identify helpful

knowledge and spread its use within the organization.

The implementing organizations will not automatically allocate their resources to

new routines. Either new resources needs to be secured or new resource allocation

strategies need to be invented in support of the program of change. It is not resources for

the operation of schools but resources available for new routines that matter in the

implementation process. Although it may often be the case that the allocation of

additional funds could increase the possibilities of implementation success, the district

and building-level administrative support, together with powerful political and public

support, also give the implementers considerable leverage for adoption, implementation,

and stabilization of innovations.

Too often teachers and principals are preoccupied with staff meetings, test scores,

absenteeism, discipline, and so on. People in unsuccessful schools sometimes assume that

principals make the decisions and teachers do what they are told. This causes teachers to become dependent on their school leaders, with little control over what they do or how they do it. It appears to be efficient, but in practice it generates low productivity, antagonism, apathy or indifference. The alternative solution to this dilemma is to encourage all teachers to think like their principal and superintendent. To think like their school leaders, all teachers and staff need to understand their organization's real situation as their principal or the LEA does, rather than being kept in the dark. Autonomy and participation are important in this process. When teachers become aware that the principal or superintendent does not claim to have all the answers to problems emerging from issues of school improvement, they may increase their participation. If teachers get more opportunities to influence decisions about their teaching and teaching environment, both morale and productivity will increase. In a successful implementation process, a system of shared governance and distributed leadership supports dynamic leadership built around a vision-driven, student-focused conceptual framework for school improvement.

APPENDIX A

ABBREVIATIONS

APEID	Asia-Pacific Program of Educational Innovation for Development
BFSU	Beijing Foreign Studies University
CAI	Computer-aided Instruction
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CEL	Compulsory Education Law
CNIER	China National Institute for Educational Research
COE	Commission of Education
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
EOL	Exploration-oriented Learning
IMO	International Mathematical Olympiad
IPHO	International Physics Olympiad
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
JIP	Joint Innovative Project
KMT	Kuomintang or Chinese Nationalist Party
LEA	Local Education Agencies
MOE	Ministry of Education
NAE	National Admission Exam for Colleges and Universities
NPC	National People's Congress
OECD	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
OTL	Opportunities to Learn
PRC	People's Republic of China
QEP	Quality Education Project
RII	Research-informed Instruction
R&D	Research and Development
SEC	State Education Committee
SES	Socio-economic Status
Two Alls	Face all students and ensure each student's all-round development
Three Orientations	Oriented toward modernization, world, and future
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

To: Participants of Inclusive Education Program
From: Kai Yu, Doctoral Student of University of Massachusetts Amherst
Subject: Appropriate Informed Consent

My name is Kai Yu and I am a doctoral student in the Education Policy and Leadership Program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. I am conducting a qualitative dissertation research that examines the implementation of inclusive education program. I am interested in understanding the perceptions of teachers and principals involved in the implementation process: their needs for change, their attitude toward it, and their feeling of the extent to which the inclusive education program is already implemented.

While this project is one that will certainly contribute to my dissertation research, it is also one that is intended to contribute to your organization. I hope to help your school explore some of its own questions about what is and is not working for the organization. I also hope to be able to provide some recommendations and strategies for change that are responsive to these questions.

Observations and interviews will be scheduled in a manner that is convenient to the organization – I am quite appreciative and aware of your time constraints. Observations and interviews will be held in person; the interviews may also be held in small groups depending on the nature of the interview and the preferences of the participants.

The results of this project will be shared with members of my dissertation committee and the Chairperson Dr. Jeffrey W. Eisemen. During data analysis process and in the final oral exam/presentation of this dissertation project, pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity.

Please note the following consent protocols that assure confidentiality and anonymity for your participation in this study. I do not see any risks to you if you decide to participate in this study at present. Your informed consent to participate in the study under the conditions described is assumed by your signing the consent form and submitting it to the researcher. Do not sign the form or hand it in if you do not understand or agree to these conditions. Your signature will represent your agreement with the following consent protocols. I appreciate your participation and value the information you are willing to disclose.

                                                              Kai Yu
                                                   kaiyu@educ.umass.edu

                                                   Researcher's Signature

                                                              Date

CONSENT FOR VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

I volunteer to participate in this qualitative study and understand the following:

1. I will be observed and interviewed by Kai Yu using an observation protocol and a guided interview format consisting of a set of questions. The observation will require at least one of my classes, and interview will require about one hour of my time. In addition, I may be asked to serve as a check on the researcher's interpretations of their experiences and perceptions during the researcher's analysis process. If I agree to participate in the check, it will require an additional hour of my time.

2. The questions I will answer and my classes that will be observed address focus on implementation of inclusive education in my school. I understand that the primary purpose of this study is to understand the perceptions of teachers and principals involved in the implementation process and identify the areas for improvement.

3. The interviews will be audio taped using a digital recorder and transcribed to facilitate analysis of data. The voice files of my interview will be deleted from digital recorder as soon as they are transferred to the hard drive of Kai Yu's private computer. The digital voice files will be protected by the password so that nobody except Kai Yu has the access to them. Kai Yu agrees that he will delete these voice files once he finishes the transcriptions. I will be assigned an ID number that can identify my school and professions. The ID number will be typed on the page that includes demographic information. The ID number/demographics page and the transcriptions will be separated before data analysis starts and kept in a locked file cabinet in Kai Yu's private house in Beijing. The ID number/demographics page will be destroyed as soon as his final oral examination has been passed and there are no more revisions that have to be done.

4. My name will not be used, nor will I be identified personally, in any way or at any time. I will be given a pseudonym to protect my identity in any and all materials used for this study. My supervisor will not read my response to the interview questions.

5. I may withdraw from part or all of this study at any time, and am free to participate or not participate without prejudice.

6. I understand that the results from the observations and interviews will be included in Kai Yu's dissertation and may be shared with her dissertation committee. In addition, I understand that the dissertation is considered a public document housed in the W.E.B. Dubois Library and stored as an electronic format in dissertation database, and that some of the materials may be reproduced for

publication in professional journals. I have the right to review all materials prior to the final exam or other publication.

7. I can contact Kai Yu at kaiyu@educ.umass.edu to discuss any needs or concerns I have about the process or consent of this study.

Participant's Signature

Date

TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Tell me about your career life at this school. What is a typical day like for you?
2. Tell me about your experience with students with different abilities and needs.
3. What are the key disadvantages associated with inclusive education?
4. What additional disadvantages are associated with detracking?
5. What are the key advantages or benefits associated with inclusive education?
6. What additional advantages, if any, are associated with detracking?
7. In your opinion, what would an effective Inclusive Education Program look like for your school? Why would these features be effective?
8. What kinds of changes did your principal try to make in order to implement Inclusive Education Program especially detracking? How close are you to implementing these changes now?
9. Describe your teaching strategies to implement inclusive education requirement in your classroom. If possible, what would you do to improve it?
10. Describe your approach to assess student work. Is there any change before and after the introduction of inclusive education in your school?
11. What kind of supports and resources did your school administration or district staff provide for you to implement these changes?
12. What is the biggest challenge for your school to implement Inclusive Education Program especially detracking?
13. What could you do that you aren't already doing to promote Inclusive Education in your classroom? What holds you back from doing it?
14. Tell me any story about successful policy implementation in the history of your school. What do you think were the most important reasons for the successful implementation?

PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Tell me about your career life at this school. What is a typical day like for you?
2. What is your understanding about inclusive education requirement?
3. What are the key disadvantages associated with inclusive education?
4. What additional disadvantages are associated with detracking?
5. What are the key advantages or benefits associated with inclusive education?
6. What additional advantages, if any, are associated with detracking?
7. What do you think your role in the implementation of inclusive education?
8. Describe your strategy for implementing Inclusive Education especially detracking in your school. How close is your school to achieve the goals?
9. Describe the working relationship between the local educational authority and your school over the implementation of inclusive education requirement. Is there anything regarding the working relationship could be improved?
10. Describe any changes inside or outside of your school during your term that you feel are significant related to your school's ability to implement the proposed changes?
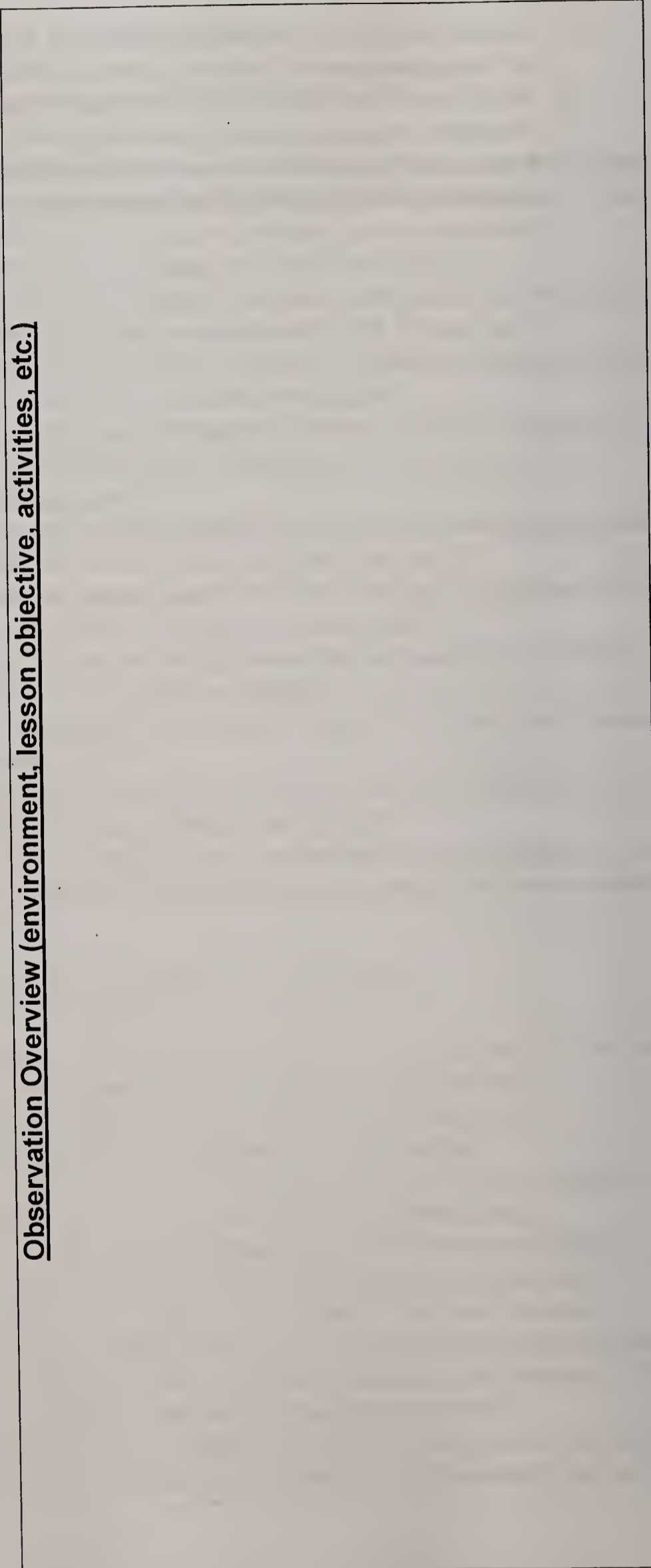
11. Describe what you consider to be the major sources of conflict (if there are any) for implementation of Inclusive Education Programs.
12. What about your school do you feel needs to be changed to make Inclusive Education Program especially detracking work?
13. What about your school do you value enough to preserve, even if it means modifying how Inclusive Education program is implemented?

APPENDIX E

TEACHER OBSERVATION PROTOCOL FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION*

School:
Position: **Subject:** **Grade:** **Class Size:**
Teacher's Year of Experience:
Date of Observation:
Length of Observation:

<u>**Observation Overview (environment, lesson objective, activities, etc.)**</u>

Beginning the Lesson

Classroom atmosphere & students' preparation:

Strategies used for engaging students:

Articulation of: ( ) Objectives ( ) Expectations ( ) Timelines ( ) Others (   )
Identification of: ( ) Prior knowledge ( ) Misconceptions

Middle of the Lesson

Process Description:

Appropriate: ( ) Sequence ( ) Transitions ( ) Balance ( ) Integration of diverse learning opportunities
Teaching strategies used:

Adjustment in the lesson to support different student abilities and needs:

Classroom Environment/Rapport with Student:

Percent teacher talk

Participation of students with low abilities	(Passive) 1	2	3	4	5 (Full)
Participation of students with average abilities	(Passive) 1	2	3	4	5 (Full)
Participation of students with high abilities	(Passive) 1	2	3	4	5 (Full)
Level of mutual respect between teacher and students	(Low) 1	2	3	4	5 (High)
Level of mutual respect among students with different abilities	(Low) 1	2	3	4	5 (High)

Use of Space:

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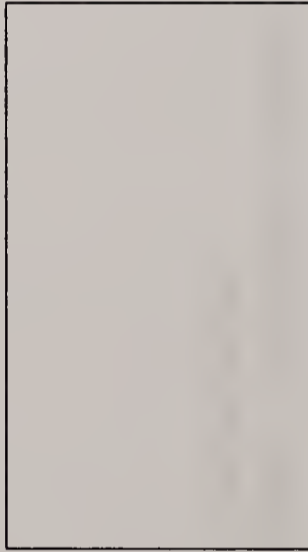
End of the lesson

Homework (if applicable):

Teacher's judgment and evidences about how well he or she has addressed the students' different needs?

Teacher Observation Rubric

Indicators	Observations	Examples (Teachers/Students)
	Knowledge	
Teacher displays knowledge of typical developmental characteristics of age group, of students with different needs, of students with different abilities, of typical behavior patterns of age group.		
Teacher pays attention to exceptions to the above patterns, and the extent to which each student follows patterns.		
	Curriculum	
All materials and resources support the instructional goals, and engage students with different abilities and needs in meaningful learning.		
The content is drawn from the real needs (goals and problems) of the students. To support this content, the teacher has selected real-life materials that are connected with what students need to do outside the classroom.		
	Learning Experiences	
All the goals are clear, and permit viable methods of assessment. The students understand the purpose of lesson activities. The teacher provides clear directions and explanations.		

Lessons include a variety of methods and strategies, and multi-sensory activities. The teacher chooses strategies to match the learning objectives and situation: large or small-group work. tutoring, computer-assisted instruction, direct teaching, or discovery learning, etc. as appropriate.

The teacher introduces skills in appropriate sequence, teaching less difficult/prerequisites before more difficult skills, and breaking complex tasks into smaller parts. Lesson activities are appropriately sequenced: introduction, background knowledge, modeling of skills, guided practice, independent practice.

The teacher asks questions at different thinking levels and directly teaches thinking and problem-solving skills. The teacher provides immediate assistance to students that need help.

When appropriate, lessons are problem-based, involving group work to solve real problems in learners' lives.

Assessment

Assessment criteria and standards have been clearly communicated to students. There is evidence that students comprehend the criteria and standards. If necessary, students can raise questions to their assessment to their homework.

The comments to student work are appropriate and clear. The assessment should aim to give clear direction for students to improve, not to discourage student morale.

Management

Classroom Climate

Students' learning continues with minimal interruptions. The teacher manages time efficiently, maintains learning momentum and appropriate pacing.

Engaging Learners

The teacher knows all students, keeps their attention on learning activities, addresses all skill levels, and paces activities appropriately. If possible, the teacher makes good use of volunteers.

The teacher builds rapport with students and interacts equitably with everyone in the class.

Learning Environment

The teacher acts as facilitator of learning. Communication is multidirectional: students' voices are heard. They participate in classroom decision-making.

The teacher addresses collaboration strategies when students work together. The teacher is sensitive to personal issues that may create barriers to learning.

APPENDIX F

CATEGORIES, CODES, SUBCODES AND PROTOCO REFERENCE

Code List of Setting/Context Category

SETTING/CONTXT	CON (SUBCODES)	PROTOCOL REFERENCE
CON: COMMUNICATION	CON-COM	TIP-1, 8, PIP-1, 7, 9, TOP
CON: MATERIALS, FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT	CON-MAT	TIP-11, PIP-9, TOP
CON: FRONT-END TRAINING	CON-FRO	TIP-11, PIP-9
CON: SKILLS	CON-SKI	TIP-1, 2, PIP-1, TOP
CON: ONGOING INSERVICE	CON-ONG	TIP-11
CON: PLANNING & COORDINATION	CON-PLA	TIP-8, PIP-8
CON: SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION SUPERVISION	CON-SCH	TIP-11
CON: SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPPORT	CON-DIS	TIP-11, PIP-9
CON: RELEVANT IMPLEMENTATION EXPERIENCE	CON-EXP	TIP-14

CON = Setting/context   TOP = Teacher observation protocol
TIP = Teacher interview protocol   TIP-2 = Teacher interview protocol item 2
PIP = Principal interview protocol   PIP-2 = Principal interview protocol item 2

Note: Adapted from Checklist Matrix: Conditions Supporting Preparedness at Smithson School, Banestown Case in *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 95.

Code List of Definition of Situation Category

DEFINITION OF SITUATION	SIT (SUBCODES)	PROTOCOL REFERENCE
SIT: TRACTABILITY OF PROBLEM	SIT-TRA	TIP-2, TOP
SIT: SENSE OF PROGRAM NEEDS	SIT-NED	PIP-2, TOP
SIT: STRENGTH OF POLICY MESSAGE	SIT-MES	PIP-2
SIT: CLARITY OF OBJECTIVES	SIT-OBJ	TIP-7, TOP
SIT: VALIDITY OF THEORY OF ACTION	SIT-VAL	TIP-3, 4, 5, 6, PIP-3, 4, 5, 6, TOP
SIT: COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES OVER FORMER POLICIES	SIT-ADV	TIP-5, 6, PIP-5, 6
SIT: COMPATIBILITY WITH OTHER POLICY COMMITMENTS	SIT-CMP	TIP-12, PIP-11
SIT: OBSERVABILITY OF OUTCOME	SIT-OBS	TIP-8, TOP

SIT = Program properties

Code List of Perspectives Held by Subjects Category

PERSPECTIVES HELD BY SUBJECTS	PER (SUBCODES)	PROTOCOL REFERENCE
PER: DECISION-MAKING	PER-DEC	PIP-7, TOP
PER: AUTHORITY	PER-AUT	PIP-7, TOP
PER: CENTRALITY	PER-CEN	PIP-7, TOP
PER: INNOVATION HISTORY	PER-INN	TIP-14

PER: IMPLEMENTATION HISTORY	PER-IMP	TIP-14
PER: MORALE	PER-MOR	TOP
PER: MONITORING	PER-MON	TIP-8, 13, PIP-8, 9, 11, 12, TOP

PER = Perspectives Held by Subjects

Code List of Subjects' Way of Thinking about People and Objects Category

SUBJECTS' WAY OF THINKING ABOUT PEOPLE & OBJECTS	THK (SUBCODES)	PROTOCOL REFERENCE
THK: TEAMWORK	THK-TEM	TOP
THK: STUDENT PERFORMANCE	THK-SPM	TOP
THK: JOB SATISFACTION	THK-JOB	TOP
THK: TIME MANAGEMENT	THK-TIM	TOP
THK: COURSE STANDARD	THK-COU	TOP
THK: STUDENT ASSESSMENT SYSTEM	THK-SAS	TIP-10, TOP
THK: RESEARCH-INFORMED INSTRUCTION	THK-RII	TOP
THK: EXPLORATION-ORIENTED LEARNING	THK-EOL	TOP

THK = Subjects' way of thinking

Code List of Activities Category

ACTIVITIES	ACT (SUBCODES)	PROTOCOL REFERENCE
ACT: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	ACT-PRD	TIP-11, PIP-9
ACT: COURSE PLAN	ACT-COU	TOP
ACT: INSTRUCTION	ACT-INS	TIP-9, 13, TOP
ACT: HOMEWORK/ASSIGNMENT	ACT-ASS	TOP
ACT: EXAMINATION	ACT-EXA	TIP-10
ACT: AWARD/PUNISHMENT	ACT-AWP	PIP-8, TOP
ACT: PARENTS/TEACHERS CONFERENCE	ACT-PTC	PIP-10, TOP

ACT = Activities

Code List of Events Category

EVENTS	EVE (SUBCODES)	PROTOCOL REFERENCE
EVE: EXTERNAL FACTORS THAT HAVE IMPACT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION	EVE-EXE	PIP-10
EVE: INTERNAL FACTORS THAT HAVE IMPACT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION	EVE-INT	PIP-10
EVE: IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEM	EVE-PRO	TIP-12, PIP-11

EVE = Events

Code List of Strategies Category

STRATEGIES	STR (SUBCODES)	PROTOCOL REFERENCE
STR: USER-FIT	STR-FIT	TIP-2, 9, 13, PIP-2, 7, 8, 12, TOP
STR: TRAINING	STR-TRA	TIP-11, PIP-9, TOP
STR: DEBUGGING AND STABILIZATION OF INNOVATION	STR-STA	TIP-3, 4, 9, 10, 12, 13, PIP-3, 4, 8, 11, 12, 13, TOP
STR: EVALUATION OF IMPLEMENTATION	STR-EVA	TIP-13, PIP-7, 11, 12, TOP

STR = Strategies

Code List of Relationship and Social Structure Category

RELATIONSHIP & SOCIAL STRUCTURE	REL (SUBCODES)	PROTOCOL REFERENCE
REL: SOCIAL STRUCTURE	REL-SOS	TIP-1, PIP-1, TOP
REL: KEY PLAYERS	REL-KEY	TIP-1, PIP-1, TOP
REL: CONFLICTS	REL-CON	TIP-1, PIP-1, 11, TOP
REL: COALITIONS	REL-COA	TIP-1, PIP-1, TOP
REL: RITUALS AND CEREMONIES	REL-RIT	TIP-1, PIP-1, 13, TOP

REL = Relationship and social structure

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