Between Centralization and Decentralization:

Changed Curriculum Governance in Chinese Education after 1986

A Dissertation Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Tingting Qi

December 2011

Copyright © 2011 by Tingting Qi

All rights reserved.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank all those who helped me complete my Doctor of Philosophy degree in cultural studies in education foundations at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

I am deeply grateful to Dr. Barbara Thayer-Bacon, my major professor and mentor, for her guidance in writing this dissertation and for her encouragement throughout this project. Her comments and feedbacks make this study an invaluable learning experience. Her dedication to research and teaching will inspire me in my future career. I would like to express my appreciation to the members of my dissertation committee, Dr Anders, Dr Dahms and Dr Zhong, for their valuable insights and helpful discussions. I also want to thank all of my colleagues in the cultural studies in educational foundations program for assisting me to get through this process. Lastly, I want to thank my family and friends for their unconditional love and care.

Without the support and encouragement from all of you, I would have never completed this dissertation. Thank you!

Abstract

China's curriculum system has been undergoing substantial transformations since 1986. In response to public criticism of the highly prescribed national curriculum, the central state of China is attempting to build a more inclusive system which is composed of national curriculum, province curriculum and school-based curriculum. The new curriculum system accommodates more flexibility in carrying out national curriculum policies and even encourages local input in curriculum development and management. Apparently, the current curriculum reform in China is moving toward decentralization.

The purpose of this work is to demonstrate the complexity of decentralization reform in China's curriculum system and examine the dynamics of policy formulation and outcomes of reform efforts in great depth. The main argument made in this socio-philosophical work is that the on-going Chinese curriculum reform is a process of centralized decentralization, which merely transfers work to the local level but not real authority. With an inquiry into the impetus of current Chinese curriculum reform, this theoretical research illustrates that centralized decentralization is taken as a strategic imperative by the state to avoid loss of control over school curriculum that carries particular social and political significance for China in a transitional period. Another major task for this cultural studies research is to problematize the strategy of centralized decentralization, investigating the consequences of the superficial

decentralization in reality and analyzing the bottlenecks in promoting current Chinese curriculum reform.

In this research, Mark Hanson's conceptual framework of education decentralization is used to clarify ambiguity in defining decentralization reform in the education sector in China. Meanwhile, Foucault's theory about power/knowledge and governmentality and Williams' theory about hegemony are used to deepen the understanding of the state-education relationship in contemporary China. Besides a descriptive analysis of phenomena in current Chinese curriculum reform, the discussion is deployed through pragmatic approach and logic-based reasoning. Most data are obtained from literature review, including previous studies on Chinese education reform, government documents, laws and regulations related to current Chinese curriculum reform.

Preface

I was educated in China's public schools. Sitting in the classrooms, I was being given knowledge, but also being socialized to be part of Chinese society. Gradually, I have acknowledged a plurality of shared norms and social customs and learned to make myself acceptable to my own groups and the larger society. Situated in this specific socio-cultural context, I simply used my own experience to understand the nuances in my daily life and looked at issues in Chinese education through an insider's perspective. Four years ago, I came to study at an American university. Immediately upon arrival, I was surrounded by an alien language and beings whose social codes are unlike my own. After experiencing excitement with irritability, I have learned to enjoy my sojourning in the cultural borderland between the two countries and think reflectively on my knowledge about China. At the same time, despite being physically distanced from my homeland, I felt much stronger sentimental attachment to China and become more concerned about Chinese education reform. Writing this dissertation is a chance for me to rethink the issues newly emerging in Chinese education, especially in current curriculum reform.

Since 1949, the curriculum system in China has experienced substantial change. The focus and content of these changes have varied over time and among different parts of the system. Yet there has been a discernible trend of decentralization in Chinese education reform since 1985. The purpose of this study is to reexamine this trend in the changing socio-political context of China in this reform era and draw

attention to the complexity of the tension between centralization and decentralization in the curriculum reform. By doing so, I intend to question some assumptions that people have taken for granted and open a new discussion on the on-going curriculum reform in China.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction 1

1.1 Overview and Research Objectives 1

1.2 Philosophical and Mythological Positioning 8

1.3 Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks 16

Chapter 2 Chinese Curriculum Reform on the Way 25

2.1 Contemporary Chinese Education after 1949 25

2.2 Changed Central-local Relations in Economic Reform 38

2.3 Changed Social Policy Model in Accelerated Globalization 43

2.3.1 Conceptualize Globalization 43

2.3.2 Decentralization as Global Tendency in Public Sector Reforms 49

2.4 Chinese Education Reform in Action 54

2.4.1 Fiscal and Administrative Reforms in Chinese Education 54

2.4.2 Current Curriculum Reform in Broader Chinese Education Reform 58

Chapter 3 Gear toward Centralized Decentralization 68

3.1 Complexities of Education Decentralization 68

3.2 Deconcentration in Chinese Curriculum Reform 73

3.3 Paradoxical Mixture of Centralization and Decentralization 87

3.3.1 Conceptualize Centralization and Decentralization 87

3.3.2 Centralized Decentralization as Strategic Imperative 94

Chapter 4 National Curriculum as Monopolistic Authority 99

4.1 Sociological Nature of National Curriculum 100

4.1.1 Social Construction of Knowledge in Schooling 100

4.1.2 Social Discipline Mechanism in Imposing National Curriculum 105

4.1.3 Discipline Mechanism in Chinese National Curriculum 109

4.2 Politics of Unified National Curriculum 119

4.2.1 Power Relations in Selective Knowledge 119

4.2.2 Political Hegemony Mechanism in Imposing National Curriculum 125

4.2.3 Hegemony Process in Chinese National Curriculum 129

Chapter 5 Chinese Curriculum Reform, Dancing in Chains 137

5.1 Bottleneck in Implementing Curriculum Reform 138

5.2 Crux of Centralized Decentralization Strategy 142

5.2.1 Visible Contradiction in Curriculum Management 143

5.2.2 Invisible Conflict in Curriculum Philosophy 149

5.2.2.1 Utilitarianism in Examination-oriented Education 151

5.2.2.2 Examination-oriented education vs Quality-oriented Education 164

5.3 Enduring Dilemma in Chinese Schooling 175

Chapter 6 Conclusion 183

References 191

Appendices 216

VITA 222

Abbreviations

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCPCC	Chinese Communist Party Central Committee
CFEC	Central Financial and Economic Commission
GAC	Government Administrative Council
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOF	Ministry of Finance
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission
NPC	National People's Congress
PEP	People's Education Press
PRC	People's Republic of China
SPC	State Planning Commission
EQO education	Essential-qualities-oriented

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Overview and Research Objectives

Historically, the central-local relations are the core issue in China due to its vast territory and huge population. The economic reform initiated in the late 1970s has redefined the central-local relations in China. In the three decades of economic reform, the central command economy has been gradually replaced by the market mechanism. This structural transformation "fundamentally shakes China's centrally planned system which over decades constituted the very basis of the nation's state socialist polity" (Jia & Wang, 1994, p. 35). In top-down economic reform, step by step, the central authority allows more discretion to local governments and encourages innovations in local affairs. Meanwhile, driven by the force of market, local entities are becoming more sensitive to their own economic performance. Consequently, local autonomy grows rapidly in the economic reform. The impact of the changing central-local relations in Chinese economy is far-reaching.

In the education sector, immediately after the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the new regime began to restore a public school system under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). By transforming public schools inherited from the previous regime and nationalizing private schools, charity schools and missionary schools, all non-state schools were excluded from China until the 1980s. In 1950s, a highly centralized public school

system was established in China. Meanwhile, insisting on the centrally-planned funding, hierarchized administrative management and unified national curriculum, schools across the state were put into a fixed model. The goal of the school system was to educate as many people as possible under equal conditions. This egalitarian strategy was to reduce the differences between city and countryside; workers and peasants and mental and manual labors (Pepper, 1980a; Rosen, 1982). In the early years of the PRC, to provide education for all children, especially for children from previously under-privileged social groups, the state favored the centralized model of mass education. The idea of egalitarian education led to a rapid quantitative expansion in school education until the outbreak of the Great Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) when regular schooling in primary and secondary schools were suspended, and later urban youth were sent to the countryside to accept manual labor education from the peasants[1].

To restore Chinese education from the chaos in the Great Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), a top-down education reform was initiated in 1985. First, as part of the broad fiscal reform in the state, the central government began to reduce subsidies for schools; consequently, education officials at local levels started to pursue alternative sources to fund local schools (Hawkins, 2006; Wong, 2006).

[1] In 1968, a nationally organized movement of "sending-youth-to-countryside" was officially initiated with the encouragement and support directly from Mao Zedong. Millions of urban youth were sent to countryside in order to be reeducated by the peasants. Mao (1968) asserts the down to countryside movement was a necessary approach to remove the differences between workers and peasants, between city and countryside and between mental and manual labors.

By 1997, an estimated 45 percent of funding for precollegiate education in China was from nongovernmental sources (Li & Wang, 2001).

Accompanying the emergence of the diversified financial provision system for school education in China, a variety of social forces have stepped into local educational affairs and participated in the operation of schools. As a result, almost all aspects of Chinese education, from provision and administration to curriculum development have been re-shaped (Tsang, 1996; Mok, 1998; Chan & Wang, 2006; Zhong, 2006; Shi & Englert, 2008). Some studies have illustrated that the central authority intends to retreat from its previous role as the sole provider of education services. Meanwhile, local entities are playing more important roles in the Chinese education system. In the trend of privatizing and marketizing Chinese schools, an internal market or quasi-market for education is slowly emerging in China (Mok, 1997; Mok & Chan, 1998&2001; Mok, Wong& Zhang, 2009; Ngok, 2007). These changes create an appearance that this wave of education reform is framed within a larger decentralization strategy.

Yet, the decentralization reform in Chinese education is not an isolated phenomenon. Transferring the governance of a nation state's education system to lower levels, both at fiscal and administrative levels, has become a global trend (Currie & Newson, 1998; Spring, 1998; Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard & Henry, 1997). In recent years, international funding organizations, such as the World Bank, UNESCO, and Asia Development Bank (ADB), have devoted their resources to advancing

education reforms across the world, often making decentralization a precondition for financial assistance (Conyers, 1984; Hanson, 2000; Rhoten, 2000). According to Hong Kong scholar Mok Ka-Ho (2005), decentralization has become a popular public policy strategy widely adopted by many nations, being offered as a solution for improving the organization and management of the public sector. American comparative education scholar Christopher Bjork (2006) notes that in the context of decentralization, nations that choose not to follow this trend risk being marginalized in international policy circles.

In the midst of the worldwide trend of decentralizing a nation state's education system, the shared assumption is that transferring education governance to local levels would contribute to promoting resource allocation, fostering innovations and encouraging diversities in education. Ultimately, localizing education governance will contribute to promoting education equality and quality. However, this is only a theoretical assumption. Education policy scholar, Diana Rhoten (1999) observes that due to the dearth of studies on education decentralization, "little is known about the nation course and local outcomes of decentralization within developing countries, nor know they differ" (p.9). Cathy Gaynor (1998), a consultant of the World Bank's Human Development Department agrees with Rhoten that "while the view of decentralization of education continues to attract considerable interest and support, there is an increasing demand to extract lessons from experience and to critically challenge assumptions about decentralization" (p.4). More importantly, under the

name of decentralization, the actual reform initiative and process could vary widely from state to state. Thus, a growing need is to provide a better contextualized analysis on education decentralization reform.

The current wave of education reform in China is broad in scope and in scale, including almost all aspects of the state's education sector and affecting everyone involved in the system. To establish my own niche in the dissertation, I concentrate on the current curriculum reform initiated in 1986, when the *Compulsory Education Law of People's Republic of China* was promulgated. Curriculum reform is a crucial step in the chain of education reform. Curriculum reform is also the battleground where diverse social forces take positions and all conflicts play out. Comparative education scholar John Hawkins (2006) observes, "[C]ontrol over the content of schooling is usually one of the last areas that central authorities are willing to decentralize" (p.35). This observation is also true in the case of China. In the current wave of Chinese education reform, the central authority is very cautious of any reform effort in the curriculum field. However, some fundamental adjustments in the curriculum field have been evidenced. The supportive example is the emergence of a three-level curriculum system of state, province and school within which the MOE maintains control over 80 percent of school curriculum, but allows local education departments and schools to innovate on 20 percent of courses (MOE, 2001a).

Undoubtedly, the new Chinese curriculum system constructed in the reform has begun to tolerate more local inputs and diversities. How do we understand this change

in the unique socio-political context of Chinese education? Does this change mean China's curriculum system is moving toward decentralization? In a nation state with a long history of centralized controlling over its school curriculum, such a conclusion could be rash. In fact, in transitional China, central-local relations in education sector is very complicated, especially considering that the reform policies are always in change and the real efforts could differentiate in regions. After 15 years of efforts, the curriculum reform in China is now at a crucial moment, waiting for a major breakthrough. On the one hand, from the policy-makers at the center to school administrators on the ground, from educational scholars to school teachers, everyone is seeking the right path for improving China's curriculum system in the changing national and international contexts. On the other hand, until now the reform has seemed to lead only to mediocre result, even with the boost for innovations and incentives in curriculum management and development. Thus, it is imperative to reexamine the current curriculum reform in China both at the policy-making and implementation levels.

Comparative education scholar Christopher Bjork (2006) finds that the few studies of decentralization policies enacted in Asia primarily concentrate on decision-making at upper levels of government bureaucracies, but the implementation of those decisions for local education stakeholders is not explored in great depth. Literature on decentralization reform in Chinese education at the precollegiate level is in a similar situation. The few studies focus on the reform policy input, describing the shifting of

national policy toward devolving education governance over fiscal, administrative and academic management to the local level (Hawkins, 2000; Ngok, 2007; Chan & Wang, 2009). The case studies on education decentralization analyze the reform process in some specific settings (Mok, 1997, Lun & Chan, 2003, Wong, 2006). What is missing from the literature is a deepened examination of the contextual factors that shape the so-called decentralization reform in Chinese education. More noticeably, the previous studies incline to put attention purely on decentralization, ignoring the tension between centralization and decentralization in the unique socio-political context of China. This dissertation intends to provide a relatively comprehensive picture of the current curriculum reform in China with focus on the tension between centralization and decentralization.

The primary purpose of this dissertation is to demonstrate the complexity of central-local relations in Chinese curriculum reform, to identify contextual factors that shape current curriculum policies in China, and to investigate authority-sharing issues in the reform process. Concretely, in contextualizing the curriculum reform into its specific historical and contemporary background, the dissertation seeks answers to why curriculum reform is occurring at this particular moment and in this particular form. This study illustrates the complexity of the decentralization trend in the unique socio-political context of China through investigating the motivation, objectives and practices of the reform. To draw attention to the tension between centralization and decentralization in curriculum reform, this study explores the particularity of school

curriculum in terms of its social and political functions and reexamines the state's role in current curriculum reform. At the end, the focus is placed on the outcome of reform. In analyzing the bottlenecks in promoting the curriculum reform, this study investigates policy dilemmas in this top-down curriculum reform and deep causes of these dilemmas.

1.2 Philosophical and Mythological Positioning

At the outset, I should position myself in the research and describe my research method. As a Chinese studying in an US university, I am a cultural sojourner traversing boundaries of countries, races and languages. After experiencing a strong sense of displacement regarding environment and culture, I am dedicated to building an ongoing dialogic relationship between my Chinese cultural roots and the US social context. In this project, I reexamine Chinese curriculum reform from a cross-cultural perspective. As a cultural studies practitioner, I would follow the lead of Raymond Williams, one of the pioneers in the field, who describes that culture is "the ordinary processes of human societies and human minds" that make up the lived experience of culture as "a whole way of life" (Williams, 1989, p.4). I insist studies should make meaning of ordinary people's everyday life and dethrone the hierarchized dichotomy inherent to our social, cultural, and historical discourses. The ongoing curriculum reform is significantly changing Chinese society and individuals' life in the country. This project is to straighten out some twists in the current wave of curriculum reform

in China and open more reflective thinking about the effects of reform as well as the future direction of reform.

Epistemologically, I am a social-constructivist, embracing the view that knowledge is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Ernest, 1998) and that human beings are social beings-in-relations (Dewey, 1931/2008; James, 1907/1975; Noddings, 1984; Thayer-Bacon, 2003). As Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) insist, all knowledge, including the most basic, taken-for-granted common sense knowledge of everyday life, is derived from social interactions between individuals and their environments. In fact, each individual is positioned in a given historical, social, and cultural context; and each individual is positioned in a net of relationships. Thus, individuals experience and perceive their own life in certain ways, but individuals never live alone. They influence others and are influenced by others. When people interact with each other, they do so with their respective perceptions of the world surrounding them and act on their own understanding. The most important point is that people negotiate with diverse standpoints in social interactions and then construct an ultimate criterion to judge knowledge. In this sense, knowledge is socially constructed and human beings are "social beings-in-relation" (Thayer-Bacon, 2003). Consistent with my social constructive paradigm, it is necessary to develop an inclusive mode to understand the realities and connect superficially separate phenomena or objects with their particular contexts.

I am unable to bracket out all the bias and taken-for-grantedness in my studies, because my own experience and knowledge are inevitably embedded in certain contexts. However, as Thayer-Bacon (2003) says, "we are greatly determined by our social settings as social being, but we are also able to become aware of our embeddedness, because we are social beings. Others shape our views, but also help us become aware of how views differ" (p.32). In this dissertation, taking a cross-national perspective, I intend to problematize the current reform strategy in the on-going curriculum restructuring process in China and open up new possibility for others to rethink of China's curriculum system.

In this dissertation, my major approach to reexamine Chinese curriculum reform is a socio-philosophical one. To put it concretely, besides a descriptive analysis, I deploy the discussion through pragmatic analysis and logic-based reasoning. Meanwhile ordinary language analysis is used to explain and clarify key concepts in the project. Here, I explain how the methodology works in my dissertation. According to Bertrand Russell (1910), description is an approach to knowledge:

> Our knowledge of physical objects and of other minds is only knowledge by description, the descriptions involved being usually such as involve sense-data. All propositions intelligible to us, whether or not they primarily concern things only known to us by description, are composed wholly of constituents with which we are

acquainted, for a constituent with which we are not acquainted is unintelligible to us. (p.128)

Here, Russell not only shows how knowledge by description differs from knowledge by acquaintance, but also points out how knowledge by description is related to knowledge by acquaintance. The crucial point made in his statement is that we can acknowledge the objects through description, though we can't be acquainted with all objects, we still could acknowledge the objects through description.

The purpose of the factually-grounded description is to draw attention to core issues covered in the dissertation and build a solid factual basis for further discussion. In this dissertation, descriptive analysis is used to contextualize the Chinese curriculum reform in its social, political, historical and contemporary background. Meanwhile, the description of what is actually taking place under the name of decentralization reform and how its effects on Chinese education are also provided.

Pragmatic philosophy [2] also inspires me with its particular emphasis on experience and fallibilism. William James, Charles Peirce and John Dewey, three core figures in classic pragmatism, share the opinion that experience contributes to knowing. James's radical empiricism (1912/1976) claims that "there is a function in

[2] Barbara Thayer-Bacon puts particular focus on epistemology issues in her book *Transforming Critical Thinking* and *Relational "(e)pistemologies*". She has developed insightful discussion about how pragmatism, feminism and post-modernism address the epistemology issues and present an analytic critique on the epistemology issues form her pragmatist social feminist view. The two books are the source for me to construct my own epistemological position as well as the pragmatist approach in the dissertation.

experience which thoughts perform, and for the performance of which this quality of being is invoked. That function is knowing" (p.4). Peirce (1878/2000) argues that "[C]onsider what effects that might conceivable have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object" (p.31). Dewey (1916/1966) asserts experience is not primarily cognitive, but "the measure of the value of an experience lies in the perception of relationships or continuities to which it leads up. It includes cognition in the degree in which it is cumulative or amounts to something, or has meaning" (p.139). These pragmatists treat experience as an approach to knowing. Drawing attention to the value of experience, pragmatism connects the knower with the knowing, thinking with doing.

Fallibilism is a widely-held belief of pragmatists. Peirce (1905/1998) asserts that Truth is in the material world, but human beings are fallible, limited, contextual beings who cannot trust their ideas or their experience to lead them to Truth. Thus, Peirce suggests that we need work as a community of rational inquirers to further our knowledge and understanding. Insisting on the notion that truth is related to an individual's situation, James' epistemology "aims to dissolve the absolute/relative distinction" (Thayer-Bacon, 2003). James (1907/1975) claims that "[T]rue ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate, and verify. False ideas are those that we cannot" (p. 97). Dewey uses "warranted assertion" to replace the terms belief and knowledge: "[W]hen knowledge is taken as a general abstract term related to

inquiry in the abstract, it means 'warranted assertiblility'" (1938/2008, p.16). Merging truth and inquiry together, Dewey's "warranted assertibility" problematizes the existence of universal truth and unchangeable knowledge, but emphasizes that the construction of knowledge/truth is an ever-ongoing, social, communal process. From the standpoint of fallibilism, it is more understandable why classical pragmatists continually question the dualism in body/mind, objective/subjective and absolute/relative and knower/known in traditional Western philosophy.

Using a pragmatic approach, I focus on concrete educational issues related to people's everyday life rather than on abstract, obscure, broad inquiry about education and reform. Thus, this project is not satisfied at conceptualizing education decentralization or theorizing curriculum policies in China. Much more attention is put on what is actually taking place in China's curriculum system under the name of decentralization reform, why the reform occurs at this particular moment and in this particular form and how the strategy taken in the reform affects reconstructing the central-location relations in China's curriculum system. In addition, the discussion extends to analyze the bottlenecks in promoting the reform toward desired goals and to relate institutional impediments in the curriculum reform with the value dilemmas in China's education philosophy. It is insisted that to provide a contextualized picture of the current curriculum reform, all discussion and analysis are situated in the changing socio-political realities of China since the 1980s.

Following pragmatists' lead in rejecting dualism, this dissertation not only integrates policy-making in education bureaucracy with policy implementation in local realities, but also emphasizes the tension between centralization and decentralization in curriculum reform. This dissertation insists that neither centralization nor decentralization should be examined separately. Both are effective governing technologies with particular limitations and practicality, but the key is always about how to balance between the center and localities. Therefore, this dissertation draws attention to the complexity of central-local relations in China's curriculum governance and issues in authority/responsibility sharing in reforming China's curriculum system. Meanwhile, consistent with pragmatists' emphasis on connecting knowledge with social communities of inquirers, this dissertation cites scholars' works on educational decentralization and Chinese education reform. The purpose is to represent a variety of opinions on the decentralization trend in Chinese curriculum reform and ultimately illustrate how I have built my own arguments in this project.

Ordinary language analysis is another approach used in this dissertation. This approach seeks to understand philosophic ideas through a close and careful semantic examination of ordinary language, aiming to clarify ambiguity and possible misunderstandings of everyday language. Ordinary language analysis may appear empty and trivial. Ernest Gellner (1959) even claims this method can never provide insight into social reality, because "concepts are as liable to mask reality as to reveal

it, and masking some of it may be a part of their function" (p.148). However, I agree with political philosopher Wertheimer's argument that socially accepted language could not be simply treated as language itself. As Wertherimer (1976) states, "our language contains concepts that function as ideas or standards by which prevailing values, institutions and patterns can be evaluated" (p.411). In other words, the value of ordinary language lies in the connection between everyday language and its social context. The analysis of ordinary language could provide insight into realities where those terms are rooted. *Power*, *governmentality*, *knowledge*, *centralization* and *decentralization* are key concepts in this dissertation. Those are also some of the most-frequently-seen terms in the ordinary discourse about education reform. Before I move to further discussion, I will clarify the meanings and implications of these concepts in my dissertation.

The logic analysis used in this dissertation follows the traditional methodology used in Western philosophy. According to Patrick Hurley, logic is "the science that evaluates arguments". The purpose of logic is to "develop methods and techniques that allow us to distinguish good argument from bad" (Hurley, 2006, p.1). Like most scholars do in logic analysis, I look for validity and soundness in evaluating arguments. The argument's validity means that the system's rules of proof will never allow a false inference from true premises; soundness means that the system's rules of proof will never allow a false inference from true premises and the premises prove true (Bergmann, Moor & Nelson, 2009). In this dissertation, to make sound deductive

arguments, in which the premises purport to fully support the conclusion, I examine the validity of the logical form and make sure that the premises are true. To make strong inductive arguments, in which the premises purport to partially support the conclusion, I examine the reasonableness of the partial support offered by premises. Meanwhile, I reevaluate the findings and previous studies cited in the dissertation based on the evidence provided in their own analyses and highlight the assumptions within their arguments. I am always aware of the importance of precision, clarity and consistency in the logic analysis.

Most data shown in the study are obtained through literature review. I reread education-related government documents, provisions, regulations and laws to map the state's attitude and policies toward curriculum reform. Information obtained from newspapers and periodicals are used as necessary supplements to picture the context of Chinese education and issues in Chinese curriculum reform. Studies on Chinese curriculum reform by scholars from both inside and outside of China and relevant studies of education reform from international perspectives are also reviewed in this dissertation.

1.3 Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

This section offers some insight into the key concepts used in the following exploration. I start with the notion of *power*. In ordinary discourse, the term *power* usually makes people think of control and oppression between the dominated and the dominant. However, in the book *History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1978/1990) defines

power as “the multiplicity of force relations” (p.92). Foucault makes it very clear: 1) there is no binary or opposition between the dominant and the dominated in the manifold force relations; 2) power is immanent in all social relations. Foucault reminds us that “[W]here there is power, there is resistance” and that the resistance is always inside power: “there is no ‘escaping’ it” (p.95). Foucault further emphasizes that the existence of power relationships depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance: “these play the role of adversary, target, support or handle in power relations. These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network” (p.95). Thus, Foucault suggests that attention should not be placed on domination, but rather on *governmentality*, where the technologies of power, the exercise of power and project of power are happening. Foucault (1982) explains how power functions in the form of *governmentality*: “‘Government’ did not refer only to political structures or to the management of states; rather it designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed” (p.221).

Based on Foucault’s theory about power and governmentality, this dissertation refers *centralization* to a tactic of governmentality which operates on something called the state, and *decentralization* to an opposite to centralization. Both centralization and decentralization work at the point where power is produced. However, centralization functions toward concentration, convergence and homogenization; in contrast, decentralization functions toward dispersity, divergence and heterogenization. Concretely, c*entralization* is used to reformulate diverse social

forces into a coactive force through a set of means. Within the processes of centralization, there are struggles, confrontations and transformations among diverse forces and the terminal form of this force relations take could be domination. *Decentralization* is embedded in centralization, in the same way that resistances are inherent in the power network. The coactive force formed in centralization is always challenged by various social forces in different ways. In this sense, *decentralization* promises an effort to destabilize and deconstruct a consolidated arrangement of force relations, producing cleavages in a society and leading to a regrouping of those social forces.

Through Foucault's theoretical lens, centralization and decentralization mentioned in this dissertation are conceptualized in terms of the mobilization of multiple power forces. How are the two concepts applied in educational sittings? In the discourse of education reform, sometimes, the definitions of centralization and decentralization are ambiguous. As they appear in previous literature, there is little specified clarification about what is shifting in the process of centralization or decentralization. Is it authority, responsibility, personnel or resources? Meanwhile, such definitions also attempt to analyze the quantitative aspects of the shifting, i.e.: the comparison of the size of the public sectors versus the private sectors in education system; or the ratio of central government to local government expenditures on education. Definitely, all of those perspectives could be useful approaches to examine current trends in education reforms, but at the risk of oversimplification. In fact,

decentralization or centralization in particular national contexts could take different forms, have distinct content and move toward diverse ends. The focus in defining centralization and decentralization needs clarification.

This project attempts to build a conceptual framework to define centralization and decentralization with the focus on authority sharing in the process of decision-making. In this dissertation, *educational centralization* refers to the concentration of authority over all kinds of resource flows across decision-making points in an education system; and *educational decentralization* refers to the distribution of authority over all kinds of resource flows across decision-making points in an education system. Quantitative aspects of the reform, including finance, personnel, information, etc, are important indicators to the degree of centralization or decentralization in a system; but a deep examination of both centralization and decentralization reforms must involve the structural dimension of decision-making, i.e. what proportion of decision-makers control what proportion of decisions. Discussion on the current trends in China's curriculum reform in this dissertation centers on the latter.

Knowledge is another key concept in this dissertation. An unbroken line leads from the Ancient Greek, to the European Renaissance, to the Age of Enlightenment, and then to the modern Western philosophy that describes knowledge as innate and unchangeable and the absolute truth as a necessary condition for what can be defined as knowledge. Plato (Trans. 1892) believes that knowledge is in the certainty, because

knowledge derives from the Forms, which is the universal answer to the question "What is that?". Aristotle (Trans. 1986) asserts that actual knowledge is identical with its object, but knowledge in its highest phase is associated with the essential nature of reality. Descartes (1641/1984), the founding father of modern philosophy, defines knowledge as justified, true belief, and thus, knowledge is "incapable of being destroyed" (p.103). Siegel (1997), a present-day modernist, insists that it is dangerous to slide into the trap of relativism, where there is not a right/wrong answer to any question, because "absolutism is a necessary precondition of epistemological inquiry" (p.165). Obviously, with the emphasis on the transcendence of knowledge, traditional epistemology identifies knowledge with unshakable, universal truth. However, pragmatists, feminists and postmodernists bring in their concerns on the absolutism/relativism dualism in defining knowledge.

As mentioned before, classical pragmatists contribute significantly to problematizing the absolute/relative dichotomy through their emphasis on the association between experience and knowledge (Peirce 1878/2000, James, 1912/1976, Dewey, 1925/1981). Feminist epistemologists pay attention to the association between the knower and the known. Feminist scholar Seyla Benhabib (1992) brings in the concept of "embedded and embodied self" and stresses that one's self "can only develop within the human community into which it is born" (p.5). Lorraine Code (1996) argues the "S-knows-that-p" statement in Western philosophy devalues the importance of S, the subject, the knower and leads to an androcentric epistemological

conclusion that knowledge is transcendental. Donna Haraway (1988) asserts that most knowledge is always situated and produced by positioned actors working in/between all kinds of locations, working up/on/through all kinds of research relation(ships) and thus what is known and the ways in which this *knowledge* can be known is subject to the particular situation in which the knower is positioned. In short, feminist epistemology emphasizes the situatedness of the knower as well as the known.

Postmodern philosophy is characterized by its skepticism to fundamental values and assumptions in modern philosophy, especially concerning objectivity, certainty and norms. Jean Lyotard (1984), a French postmodernist who first brought the term "postmodernism" into philosophical discussion, examines how knowledge gets legitimated and the nature of legitimation itself. He points out that "knowledge and power are simply two sides of the same questions: who decides what knowledge is and who knows what needs to be decided" (1984, p.8). Richard Rorty (1979), the most prominent American neo-pragmatist often classified by others as a postmodernist, criticizes "the notion of knowledge as accurate representation, made possible by special mental processes and intelligible through a general theory of representation" (p.6). Instead, Rorty suggests we should "see knowledge as a matter of conversation and of social practice, rather than as an attempt to mirror nature" (p.171). In the postmodern epistemological system, *knowledge* is not out there, but is produced through the interaction between the knower and his/her social surroundings and changed in different historical periods. More importantly, postmodern

philosophers don't treat epistemology as an abstract issue, exclusively for philosophical discussion. In varying degree, postmodernists go further than only focusing on epistemology, but extend epistemology to sociology of knowledge.

Following the lead of pragmatism, feminism and postmodernism, in this dissertation, knowledge is not defined as transcendental, objective, absolute truth. I embrace the notion that *knowledge* cannot be out there, but is associated with the knower, a subject who is situated in a particular context and perceives the world from a particular perspective. Of course, claims always need to be justified based on certain agreed-on criteria. Barbara Thayer-Bacon (2003) proposes "qualified relativism" as a solution to dissolve the absolute/relative distinction. Thayer-Bacon suggests that the authority of knowledge ultimately derives from a community of people who agree about the truth. The quest for knowledge is not the process of discovering the universal truth, but the process of co-constructing meanings. Embracing the view that knowledge is socially constructed, this dissertation intends to examine power relations in the politics of knowledge and explore the social practice within the production of official knowledge legitimated in school curricula.

This dissertation consists of six chapters[3]. Chapter 1 is an introduction of the project, including the purpose of the study, the approach to deploy the examination,

[3] I would specify that the dissertation focuses on general education at elementary and secondary levels in China. The term "Chinese education" in this dissertation refers to education services provided in authorized educational institutions. In addition, the curriculum system examined in this dissertation is not limited to a range of courses taught in schools, but also includes curriculum goals, pedagogic methods, evaluation approaches and curriculum management and development.

the core issues addressed in the dissertation and the key concepts. Besides, crucial aspects of the tension between centralization and decentralization are highlighted in each chapter respectively, and ultimately, constitute a comprehensive, but deepened picture of policy shifts and changes in the current Chinese curriculum system.

Chapter 2 situates the on-going Chinese curriculum reform in its historical and contemporary contexts. The impact of the changed central-local relations in China's economic reform and the global trend of decentralizing education systems across the world are discussed to answer why the decentralization trend in Chinese curriculum is emerging at this particular moment and in this particular form.

Chapter 3 further examines the complexity of decentralization process in China's current curriculum reform. In analyzing the motive, objectives and actual efforts in the reform, this dissertation demonstrates the current curriculum reform is moving toward centralized decentralization. In addition, Foucault's theory about power, discipline and governmentality is used to understand the co-existence of centralization and decentralization in governing China's curriculum system.

Chapter 4 explores the social and political functions of school curriculum and seeks answers to why school curriculum is the last area the central state is willing to decentralize. Through a sociological inquiry into the legitimation of knowledge in the curriculum system, the chapter demonstrates how a national-wide consensus on knowledge is created in the curriculum system and how power manipulates the consensus knowledge. The argument made here is that curriculum knowledge

could be easily coded by dominant social categories and gradually used to build a homogenous social practice underlying people's daily lives.

Chapter 5 problematizes the centralized decentralization strategy applied to China's curriculum reform. The discussion starts by analyzing the split of authority and responsibility within the centralized decentralization strategy; and then extends to examining the dilemmas in implementing this centrally formulated strategy in realistic education settings at the local level. At the end, the chapter summarizes the arguments made in the previous sections and concludes the dissertation by seeking a possible solution.

Chapter 2 Chinese Curriculum Reform on the Way

The purpose of the chapter is to provide a relatively comprehensive picture of the socio-economic context of China in which the current curriculum reform is embedded. To contextualize the on-going Chinese curriculum reform in its historical background, the chapter begins with a schematic description of Chinese education after 1949 with the focus on the centralized controlling exerted by the top. The following discussion situates the current curriculum reform into a more contemporary context, nationally and globally, seeking answers to 1) how the changed central-local relations in China's economic reform impacts on Chinese education; 2) how the trend of decentralization in global public sector reforms affects Chinese education governance. Meanwhile, the reform efforts in Chinese education since the 1980s are investigated to gain a better understanding of what is occurring in China's curriculum system. This chapter serves as a substantial foundation for the further examination of the current wave of Chinese curriculum reform found in the following chapters.

2.1 Contemporary Chinese Education after 1949

Curriculum reform is a search for innovative solutions to problems in schooling. In this sense, the school system is the actual site where the curriculum reform is eventually applied. The examination of any reform effort in the present school system must begin with seeing the school system as the outgrowth of a specific historical context. To better understand changes in Chinese education and school curriculum, it is necessary to trace back to the early years of the People's Republic of China (PRC,

中华人民共和国) when the Chinese school system was established and the mechanism of the system took its primary shape.

The past, usually, is the key to understanding the present. The founding of the PRC in 1949 did not solve a series of daunting problems in China. Inside the country, society and the polity were fragmented, public order and morale decayed, and the war-torn economy suffered from severe inflation and unemployment (Teiwes, 1987). Outside the country, the new regime had to deal with the hostility against the communist China during the Cold War, then the conflicts in Korea in the 1950s, followed by the political rivalry with the Soviet Union in the 1960s. All of these provided a continuous pretext for appeals to the strong anti-imperialist sentiments throughout the country (Lewis & Teets, 2008). Pressure both from the inside and outside urged the new communist regime to take radical actions to build a powerful, centralized state system under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP, 中国共产党). The education sector was also reshaped in the state formation process.

Before 1949, the school system in China was dysfunctional in providing basic education for all children. According to a report by the Ministry of Education (MOE, 教育部) (2004), prior to 1949 the access to education was extremely limited in China. More than 80% of the population in cities was illiterate. The rate in the countryside was 95% or higher. In 1946, the peak year of educational development, the country had only 1,300 kindergartens, 289,000 primary schools, and 4,266 secondary schools.

In a county where 80% to 90% of the population was uneducated, it was imperative for the new regime to establish a new school system which could provide educational services for all children, especially for those of the poor workers and peasants who constituted the population with the highest illiteracy rate. At the end of 1949, the MOE was established as a central government agency, taking full responsibility for national education affairs. With strong support from the central government, the MOE was dedicated to building a public school system under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. Through transforming public schools inherited from the previous regime and nationalizing private schools, including charity schools and missionary schools, an extremely centralized public school system was established in the early 1950s. Private education disappeared throughout the state until 1978.

In Maoist China (1949-1976), the state-run school system was completely under the control of the authorities at the top of the state system, financially, institutionally, and academically. Financially, Chinese economy during the Maoist period was defined by its central planning mechanism. In 1949, immediately after the victory of the communists in the Chinese Mainland, the Central Financial and Economic Commission (CFEC, 中央财政经济委员会) was established to take charge of nationwide economic activities. In 1950, the Government Administrative Council (GAC, 政务院) issued the *Decision on Unifying State Financial and Economic Work* (《关于统一国家财政经济工作的决定》). The 1950 *Decision* claimed that all financial revenues and expenditures, material

distribution and cash management should be under the unified control of the central state. In 1952, the State Planning Commission (SPC, 中央计划委员会) was established. In 1953, the *First Five-year Plan* was launched for rapidly building up a state-controlled heavy industry from 1953 to 1957. By the late 1950s, a centrally planned economic mechanism was formed in the state of China. Public finance was also highly centralized, practicing the financial policy of unified revenue and allocation (统收统支). Education finance scholar Mun Tsang (1996) summarizes the policy as:

> a lower-level government would turn in all its tax revenues to a higher-level government and would receive all its expenditures from the higher-level government. All tax revenues would ultimately be controlled by the central government, and all expenditures would also come from the central government… The amount of total government expenditure at a given level was based on the corresponding amount in the previous year with a marginal adjustment; and the initial expenditure level was determined in the 1950s. (p. 424)

There were several adjustments in implementing this fiscal policy from 1951 to 1976. However, the central authority took full control over the state's financial revenues and resource allocation. The education sector was no exception.

The state funded its public school system through its bureaucratic chain from the central government to the provincial government, and then to the prefectural government, to the county government, and finally down to the town or township government. Public expenditures on general secondary schools came from the budgetary allocation of the central government through the provincial to prefectural and then to the county governments (Tsang, 1996). In the primary education, as Chinese studies scholar Suzanne Pepper (1990) observes, the funds were through the same budgetary allocations, but differentiated between urban schools and rural schools:

> The all-important budgetary allocation came down the bureaucratic chain through the provinces and counties, which apportioned funds for their commune elementary schools. Only city schools were fully state-funded, however. In the countryside, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the crucial intervening variable was the commune (公社) or more specifically its constituent parts, the village-level production brigades (生产队)... Allocations were made in such a way that the communes and brigades had to rely on their own local resources to make up the difference between their small share of state funds and the total cost of maintaining their village elementary schools. (p. 76)

Basically, urban public schools in Maoist China were funded by the state and thus were administrated by the central state.

Institutionally, the bureaucratic structure of Chinese education in Maoist China was highly hierarchized, concentrating authority at the top of the organizational pyramid. The basic five-level bureaucratic system in Chinese education hasn't changed a lot since it was first established (see Figure 2.1).

1) Ministry of Education (MOE, 教育部) at the national level;

2) Department of Education (教育厅) at the provincial level[4];

3) Bureau of Education (教育局) at the prefectural level;

4) Branch Bureau of Education (教育(分)局) at the county level;

5) Group of Education (教育组) at the township/town level in rural areas or Street Neighborhood Education Commission (街道教育委员会) at the community level in urban areas.

The mission of the MOE is "to take charge of the overall planning, coordination and management of all forms of education at various levels; to formulate, in collaboration with relevant departments, the standards for the setting-up of schools of all types at various levels" (MOE, 2010). The bureaucratic organization of Chinese education at the local level is administrated dually: the local education bureaucratic organization not only reports to its direct supervisor

[4]There are four municipalities directly under the Central Government in the Chinese Mainland, including Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin and Chongqing. These four municipalities are at the same administrative level as provinces. The Municipal Commission of Education is in charge of education in its own administrative region.

in educational bureaucracy, but also to the local government at the corresponding level.

In the expanded hierarchical structure, the MOE directly reports to the State Council (国务院), previously known as the Government Administrative Council (GAC, 政务院), the chief administrative authority of the state. Above the State Council is the National People's Congress (NPC, 全国人民代表大会), the highest state body and the only legislative house in China. The NPC has a nationwide network at different levels. The MOE and its branches at various levels consult and collaborate with the NPC and its branches at corresponding levels. The Chinese Communist Party Central Committee (CCPCC, 中国共产党中央委员会), as the highest authority within the Chinese Communist Party, also plays a crucial role in making educational policy and jointly announces education policies with the State Council of China. Meanwhile, the State Development and Reform Commission (NDRC, 国家发展改革委员会), previously known as the State Planning Commission (SPC, 国家计划委员会)[5] and the Ministry of Finance (MOF, 财政部) impact on Chinese education through budgetary control. In Maoist China, all elementary and secondary schools were organized, operated and monitored by this highly structured bureaucracy.

[5] The National Development and Reform Commission (previously known as State Planning Commission) is a macroeconomic management agency under the Chinese State Council which exerts broad planning control and policy monitoring over the entire Chinese economy.

Academically, the implementation of a national curriculum unified the content of schooling in Maoist China was unified across the country. In 1951, the *Decision on Reforming Chinese School Structure* (《关于改革学制的决定》) was promulgated to regulate Chinese education by standardizing the structure of the Chinese school system. The 1951 *Decision* fixed the levels of school education, the admission ages of students, and the length of schooling at different levels. The requisite examination became the criteria considered in selecting students at each step of the educational ladder. Meanwhile, the 1951 *Decision* laid down the principles for developing teacher education, higher education, technical education, special education, distance education, etc. In the next year, the *Temporary Provision of Elementary and Secondary Schools* (《中、小学暂行规程》) was issued to detail how to put the 1951 *Decision* into effect.

At this time, the MOE began creating the first set of national curriculum to guide education at the elementary and secondary levels. In 1950, the *Curriculum Standards of All Subjects for Secondary Schools* (*Draft*) (《普通中学各科课程标准(草案)》) was issued. In 1952, the *Elementary School Teaching Plan* (《小学教学计划》) was launched. Meanwhile, The MOE established the People's Education Press (PEP) to compile and publish school textbooks for nationwide use. Under the direct leadership of the MOE, the PEP was the sole legal textbook publisher in China from 1950 to 1986. In 1951, the first set of national textbooks for elementary and secondary education was published. This set of national

curriculum laid down a unified model of schooling in China, regulating teaching content, targeted attainment, and detailed course arrangement for all schools across the state, irrespective of local conditions and individual differences in ability, personality, and interest. Local education departments/bureaus, schools and teachers were not allowed to make any changes. Through the implementation of this national curriculum, Chinese schooling was integrated into a standardized system. From 1952 to 1964, the central state adjusted the national curriculum to reflect the changes in Chinese economy and society. In 1957, in response to the national policy of combining learning with laboring, the national curriculum downsized school courses offered at the secondary level to make more time for students to gain experience in workplaces. In 1960, under the same policy, the length of schooling from the elementary to secondary levels was cut down from 12 years to 10 years. However, the highly prescribed national curriculum was well maintained until all schools were shut down in the Great Cultural Revolution (文化大革命)[6].

School education in Maoist China demonstrated strong ideological color. The central state consistently strengthened the association between education and ideological indoctrination. As early as 1949, at the opening ceremony of the *First*

[6]The Great Cultural Revolution or simply the Cultural Revolution was a mass movement in the PRC from 1966 to 1976. The Cultural Revolution was launched by Mao with the calling to remove all liberal bourgeoise elements which were permeating the Party and society. The movement subsequently spread into all aspects of Chinese society and caused nationwide social, political and economic upheaval in the PRC until the death of Mao in 1976.

National Conference of Educational Work in Beijing, Ma Xulun, Minister of Education explained the guiding principle of Chinese education in the PRC: "[E]ducation is expected to be a new one, reflecting the new China's politics and economy, as a class struggle tool to consolidate and develop the people's democratic dictatorship" (p. 6). In 1957, Mao gave a speech entitled "*On Correctly Handling Contradictions among the People*" (《关于正确处理人民内部矛盾的问题》) at the Eleventh Session (Enlarged) of the Supreme State Council Conference. Mao (1957) asserted that "[O]ur educational principle must enable educatees to develop morally, intellectually and physically and become workers with both socialist consciousness and culture" (p. A1). At another meeting in the spring of 1958, Mao claimed that "Education must serve the proletarian politics and be combined with productive labor. Laboring people should receive education, while the intellectuals should participate in labor work" (p.11). In accordance with Mao's two speeches, the CCPCC and the State Council announced an official governmental document, *Directive on Educational Work* (《关于教育工作的指示》) in 1958. The general principle of Chinese education was stated: "[E]ducation must serve the proletarian politics and be combined with productive laboring. To implement the principle, education affairs must be under the Party's leadership. Without the Party's leading, socialist education is impossible"(p.5).

At the broader social level, from 1962 to 1965, the CCP initiated a series of nationwide socialist education movements to restore socialist ideological purity and intensify class struggle[7]. Chinese schools also plunged into these nationwide political movements. The emphasis on this ideological approach to Chinese education reached its culmination in the Great Cultural Revolution initiated in 1966. The atmosphere of anti-intellectualism was pervasive throughout the school system. Schooling was oriented toward the needs of class struggle. Millions of teenagers organized into brigades of Red Guards with the revolutionary ideal of sweeping away the old to bring forth the new (Major, 1989). Under the slogan of destroying Four Olds (四旧): old culture, old ideology, old customs and old habits, Red Guards across the country destroyed their classrooms, burned books, and even harshly criticized their teachers for not emphasizing proletarian politics in teaching. In the ten-year turmoil, almost all elementary and secondary schools in China were disrupted for at least six years. Even when schools were reopened in the early 1970s, students' performance was mainly measured based on their political loyalty to the Party.

[7] After the socialist transformation of all private entities in the economic sector was completed in 1950s, bourgeois as a social class were eradicated from Maoist China. However, in the 1960s, Mao advanced the slogan "Never forget class struggle", thereby initiating a series of social movements to intensify a unified socialist class consciousness and to liquidate the remains of so-called bourgeois ideology. Class struggle in the Great Cultural Revolution particularly refers to an ideological struggle against bourgeois ideas, customs, and traditions.

In Maoist China, the ultimate purpose of education was to serve a unitary and cohesive state under the leadership of the CCP. The motivating force behind centralizing Chinese education was more than educating Chinese children equally. Jonathan Unger (1982), a journalist and an expert on China, asserts that "school systems obviously provide more than just book knowledge. They provide also the means by which any modern society's official values are transmitted to its younger generations" (p.11). In centralizing school education, the socialist regime intentionally instilled communist ideology into younger generations and highlighted political commitment to the Party. Political science scholars Orion Lewis and Jessica Teets (2008) observes that by maintaining a unified model of schooling, the communist regime ensured that "generations of youth were indoctrinated regarding the superiority of the communist system and the importance of political loyalty" (p. 678). In this sense, the ideological function of education rationalized the choice of consistently centralized Chinese education in all aspects from 1949 to 1976.

In Maoist China, the centrally planned fiscal system, highly structured bureaucratic management, and unified national curriculum were used to exert a rigid control over the state's school system. However, this highly centralized school system failed to improve education nationwide, though there was a rapid quantitative expansion. Suzanne Pepper (1996) observes that the unified model of schooling "would not safeguard China against the most basic dysfunctions of

development, because the model's urban-based, heavy-industry focus didn't contribute to closing the gap between urban-rural education at elementary and secondary levels" (p. 211). In the Great Cultural Revolution, the top-down over-emphasis on class struggle and consciousness in schooling completely stagnated Chinese education. To restore Chinese education, both the center and localities were urged to reconsider the role of education in China and ways to improve Chinese education.

After the Cultural Revolution ended in 1976, it was imperative for China to reconstruct all sectors of the state. In 1979, a top-down economic reform was initiated to restore the state's economy. During the economic reform, the central planning mechanism in the economy has been gradually replaced by a market-driven model. The impact of the economic reform has moved far beyond the economic field. Both the rhetoric and practice of that economic reform are dramatically changing all aspects of the Chinese society, including the central-location relation in Chinese education. The current curriculum reform was initiated during the era of broad reform in China. Understanding changes in China's central-location relation is crucial to mapping out the socioeconomic environment of the current curriculum reform.

2.2 Changed Central-local Relations in Economic Reform

Political economy professor Huang Yasheng (1996) points out that "[T]he central-local relations are a core but problematic issue in China's reform process" (p. 655). In pre-reform China (1949-1979), the center was the only source of power and the so-called local authority was only a responsive agent of the center (Schurmann, 1968). To put it concretely, the central authority formulated decisions on all major sectors of the state, whereas the local authority merely carried out central policies to the letter. The rhetoric of centralism, strongly colored by collectivism, was always highlighted in pre-reform China. There always existed a particular emphasis on taking the long-term needs of the state as a whole into account. To fulfill national goals, it was more likely that local needs and interests were ignored or suppressed. Localities and individuals in pre-reform China were often required to sacrifice for the good of the state (RACER, 1984).

The central authority would occasionally consult with localities in formulating national policies and even tolerated some flexibility when national policies applied to local situations. In late 1957, decentralization policy in the Chinese economic system was even taken into consideration by the center (Schurmann, 1968; Lardy, 1975). However, as Doak Barnett (1967) summarizes, even though decentralization did happen, it took place only when the center wanted it to. Power, thus, could easily be recentralized if the need arose. Within this framework, the central-local relation in pre-reform China was merely the one between the superordinate and subordinate.

The highly centralized state system could not guarantee the consistency between decision-making at the center and policy implementation at the localities. In other words, the central authority was not always effective in exercising its authority. Political scholar James Scott (1998) has already theorized centralization as statecraft and problematized the effectiveness of centralized control. Scott stresses that no state system is capable of representing any existing social community, because "a human community is surely far too complicated and variable to easily yield its secrets to bureaucratic formulae" (p. 22). Thus, the state has to rely on a greatly schematized process of abstraction and simplification "which is always far more static and schematic than actual human societies" (p. 46).

Pre-reform China followed Scott's model. Being removed from the actual sites, usually, the central officials in Capital Beijing approached Chinese society through the schematic information abstracted from statistics or other documents rather than from full realities. Inevitably, the center lacked sufficient, timely and precise information to appropriately fulfill its governance function for localities, while the localities knew their situations from inside, but were powerless to make any decision based on their own knowledge. As a result, national policies lagged behind the constantly changing social reality. Sometimes, even though the center had made appropriate policy adjustments, it was difficult for the localities at a distance from the power center to follow those adjustments. Due to the lack of plasticity and

adaptability, the rigid centralized system resulted in inefficiency and ineffectiveness in exercising governance.

In the early years of the PRC, the central authority might easily exert its coercive force over the state under the name of constructing a unitary China with strength and glory. However, when Chinese economy increased in size and Chinese society expanded in complexity, some inherent deficiencies of the highly centralized state system became apparent. Chinese studies scholars Jia Hao and Lin Zhimin (1994) note that the centralized system "caused low efficiency or sheer waster in resource allocation, not to mention the heavy burden of administration it imposed on a giant country" (p. 3). Meanwhile, after the 10-year economic disarray and stagnation in the Cultural Revolution, the cost of maintaining such a high level of centralization became an unbearable fiscal burden on the central government (Li, 1998; Shirk, 1993). In response, a top-down economic reform was initiated in 1979. In the following three decades of Chinese economic reform, the central command economy has been gradually replaced by the market mechanism. This transformation "fundamentally shakes China's centrally planned system which over decades constituted the very basis of the nation's state socialist polity" (Jia & Wang, 1994, p. 35).

During the fiscal reform, the center began allowing more and more local discretion in resource allocation, revenue assignment, government expenditures, credit allocation, investment project proposal, price and wage control, foreign

trade management and local agricultural and industrial policy formation (Li, 1998; Huang, 1996; Wang, 1994; Zhang & Zou, 1994). Meanwhile, the economic reform has also granted great autonomy to urban enterprises and rural households across the entire state. Transferring fiscal responsibility to localities is an obvious trend in Chinese economic reform. Accompanying with this shift, local autonomy has grown and the market mechanism has gone into full gear. As Karl Polanyi (1944) notes, the most important effect of the market mechanism lies in the fact that it provides an environment for domestic competition. In the economic reform, as local governments have gained greater fiscal autonomy to allocate resources and more policy flexibility regarding local innovation, they are more sensitive to local interests and their own performance. Meanwhile, driven by market forces, local economic entities have become independent profit units and expected to maximize what they could gain from the market. The impact of economic reform is far-reaching. Certainly, it has not only relaxed the unaffordable fiscal burden on the shoulder of the central government, but also further redefined the central-local relation in Chinese education.

In the education sector, the reform began with the transformation of the centralized funding for Chinese schools. The economic reform has created a huge demand for professionals and educated workers. Considering the insufficient resources and the cost of maintaining a centralized education provision system, the central government in Beijing had to realize that the state alone would be

unable to provide adequate education services to meet the increasing education demands in China. The fiscal burden was the initial motive for diversifying funding system for Chinese education (Bray, 2003; Mok, 1997; Hawkins, 2006). Of course, the shifting of fiscal responsibility for education provision to a lower level was also a part of the broader fiscal reform aimed at disengaging the central state from the heavy fiscal burden. Following the national policy of self-financing, local authorities turned to alternative sources for funding schools, while the central authority began to retreat from its previous role as the sole provider of education services.

Fortunately, in the economic reform, local enterprises, institutions, organizations, and individuals have grown to be vigorous economic entities capable of providing reliable fiscal resources for funding local schools. Meanwhile, both the local governments and economic units have acknowledged the close connection between education and economy. The most direct economic benefit of education is more productive labor forces that create economic growth. Educational institutions are the best sites for fostering the professionals, experts, technical staff, and skilled workers needed in local economic development. Thus, wherever local funds are involved, local interests and local needs become prominent in the school system. Accordingly, the economic reform has significantly changed the broad socioeconomic environment of Chinese education reform. Local sectors has been gradually empowered to be relatively autonomous

economic entities and involved in funding local schools. Also, they expect to speak to local education affairs. Later, this situation leads to a new wave of curriculum reform aimed at addressing a series of issues concerning how to reflect local needs in schooling based on local realities.

2.3 Changed Social Policy Model in Accelerated Globalization

2.3.1 Conceptualize Globalization

Chinese scholar Jiang Xiaoxing (1992) notes a major shift in social policy in transitional China. The new value system stresses market-driven economic efficiency and competition. Efficiency has replaced the traditional goal of egalitarianism and uniformity in social policy practice. In the education sector, there remained an assumption that a school system run by local forces could more nimbly respond to local needs. The central state began to retreat from its previous role as the sole provider of education services in the state. This shifting is not an isolated phenomenon, taking place only in China and only because of the on-going economic reform in China.

Public service reforms in different countries may take different forms. However, a common mode has been emerging in the past thirty years. The state is deliberately retreating from its role as the sole provider of public services and gradually leaving those services to the non-state sectors. In other words, the state-guaranteed public service provision and delivery mode is giving way to a new mode. Alberta Sbragia (2000) finds that the state's role is fundamentally changed from "provider of benefits" to "builder of market", whereby the state actively

builds markets, shapes them, and regulates them in different ways (p. 196). Jan Aart Scholte (2005) also observes that "the responsibilities for the provision of education, health care, housing, pensions and the like have tended to shift from the state to non-state actors" (p. 196). A report by the United Nations in 2001 also reveals that there is a global trend of public service reforms initiated in the mid-1980s, which "sought to reduce the role of the state in production, as well as in service delivery and to encourage the deregulation of public enterprises" (p. 32). These fundamental changes in the philosophy of governance and methods of running the public sector are closely related to the process of globalization (Flynn, 1997; Hood, 1991).

Especially since the early 1990s, globalization has become increasingly prominent and its impacts have already swept across economic, social, political and cultural fronts (Giddens, 1990; Held, 1991; Robertson, 1992; Sklair, 1991). Even though globalization has quickly become a term that people are living with, there is no agreed-on definition of the term in its popular usages. The definitions provided by some sociologists might be helpful for clarifying the ambiguousness, inconsistency and confusion in the concept of globalization. Roland Robertson (1992) explains that "[G]lobalization as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" (p. 8). Anthony Giddens (1990) writes that globalization is "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local

happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (p. 64). David Held (1999) conceptualizes globalization as

> a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions—assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact—generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power. (p. 16)

A consensus on some basic elements in conceptualizing globalization appears in the definitions above. Two of these elements are about deterritorialization and reterritorialization. French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guatari (1972/2004) create the concept of deterritorialization in their book *Anti-Oedipus* and refer to deterritorialization as a disjunction between the boundaries of a location and the established traditions tied to the location. Deleuze and Guattari (1972/2004) reiterate that deterritorialization is always followed by reterritorialization, the reconstructing of a transformed interconnection between territory and its socio-culture. When referring to globalization, the term deterritorialization indicates a weakening of the ties between a particular location and social activities taking place at the location. As Jan Aart Scholte (1996) observes, "global events can—via telecommunication, digital computers, audiovisual media, rocketry and the like—occur almost simultaneously anywhere and everywhere in the world" (p. 45). It is in this way

that a territory loses its natural relation with localized cultural and social activities. However, Deleuze and Guattari (1972/2004) further point out that it is important not to stereotype deterritorialization as merely a deconstructive force in delocalizing human activities which were initially bonded with a particular, geographical location. Deterritorialization is a constructive force in opening increased possibilities for reterritorialization which aims to build a transformed interconnection produced by the growing interactions between people in situations where locations seem immaterial to human activities. In this sense, deterritorialization and reterritorialization constitute both sides of the same coin—globalization. The notion of the dynamics between deterritorialization and reterritorialization is found in one form or another in most contemporary accounts of globalization.

John Tomlinson (1999) uses complex connectivity to describe the dynamics between the apparently paradoxical processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization in globalization. Tomlinson writes that "[By] this I mean that globalization refers to the rapidly developing and ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependences that characterize modern social life" (p. 2). Anthony Giddens (1990) speaks of globalization as "a dialectical process". He writes,

> The undue reliance which sociologists have placed upon the idea of "society" where this means a bounded system, should be

> replaced by a starting point that concentrates upon analysing how social life is ordered across time and space—the problematic of time-space distanciation. The conceptual framework of time-space distanciation directs our attention to the complex relations between local involvements (circumstances of co-presence) and interaction across distance (the connections of presence and absence). In the modern era, the level of time-space distanciation is much higher than in any previous period, and the relations between local and distant social forms and events become correspondingly 'stretched'. Globalization refers essentially to that stretching process, in so far as the modes of connection between different social contexts or regions become networked across the earth's surface as a whole. (p. 64)

Viewing the dynamics between deterritorialization and reterritorialization as the essentials in understanding globalization, a theoretical framework for analyzing the impact of globalization on nation states is generated. Held et al (1999) summarize that the impact of globalization is characterized by four types of changes:

- A stretching of social, political and economic activities across political frontiers, regions and continents.

- Intensification, or the growing magnitude, of interconnectionness and flows of trade, investment, finance, migration, culture, etc.
- Growing extensity and intensity of global interconnectedness can be linked to a speeding up of global interactions and processes, as the evolution of worldwide systems of transport and communication increases the velocity of the diffusion of ideas, goods, information, capital and people.
- A blurring of the boundaries between domestic matters and global affairs in which global interactions can obtain local significance and even the most local developments may come to have global consequence.

Held has made his point clear that the rise of globalization is breaking the clear-cut boundaries of nation states, which were historically associated with particular geographical locations and a bounded social system, by encouraging world-wide interconnectedness. The transformation described by theorists has been illustrated by the proliferation and strengthening of international organizations or intergovernmental cooperative communities. The number of international organizations rose from 61 in 1940 to 260 by 1996 (Barnett, 2002). In addition, the existing international organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund, the Word Bank and the World Trade Organization, have transformed their roles

substantively, gaining further involvement in formulating and implementing international policies (Camillery and Falk, 1992; O'Brien et al, 2000).

2.3.2 Decentralization as Global Tendency in Public Sector Reforms

With the increase in cross-national connections, globalization has become a transforming power in changing governance models worldwide. Jan Aart Scholte (2005) notes that the transformation is a shift from a statist mode of governance to a polycentric one: "a move away from territorialism in geography has, not surprisingly, unfolded together with a move away from statism in governance. As a result, society in today's globalized world is regulated in what can be termed a polycentric manner" (p. 186). Scholte points out that the state does not share governance over its realm with any other party in statist circumstances. The formulation, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of societal rules occur through the state and inter-state relations. The state, with its agencies, exercises supreme, comprehensive, unqualified and exclusive rule over its territory and all social activities in the territory. Local authorities have few chances to engage directly with the wider world outside their state. Scholte (2005) further argues that governance in the more global world has become distinctly multi-layered and policies could be formulated at municipal, provincial, national, macro-regional and global levels. A polycentric mode of governance is emerging in the accelerated globalization: "governance tends to be diffuse, emanating from

multiple locales at once, with points and lines of authority that are not always clear" (p. 186).

Scholte's argument about the changed model of governance is somewhat shared by other scholars. Jong Jun & Deil Wright (1996) point out that the linkages between global and local socioeconomic, political, and administrative organizations constitute a widely spread network of transnational cooperation and human interactions in an era of large-scale globalization. Local and global events become more directly intertwined. It becomes more possible for local institutions and organizations to develop direct connections with the outside world. As a result, localities at different levels are becoming more conscious of global events and getting further involved in global influence. Meanwhile, many localities acquire relative autonomy to take their own initiatives in global affairs. In this sense, polycentric governance demonstrates more tolerance to trans-national cooperation and more flexibility to local incentives. It is in this policy climate that the strategy of decentralization is introduced to countries across the world.

The idea of decentralizing public sectors spread along with economic integration and institutional isomorphism. Economic integration is not only a prominent phenomenon in the globalization process, but also an extensive force in introducing the idea of decentralizing public sectors in countries across the world. Centuries ago, commerce and trade between distant areas took place. Today, improvement in the technology of transportation and communication

dramatically exaggerates economic globalization at an unprecedented scale and intensity. As Geoffrey Garrett and Jonathan Rodden (2000) observe, during the last three decades, governments have reduced legal barriers to the movements across national borders of capital, goods and services. Nations across the world are integrated differently into the global economy. A world market is emerging with the flows of trade, capital and labor organized across a set of trans-state networks. In global economic integration, the force of market is reaching most places and providing the foundation on which institutions rely and individual life is organized and reorganized (Cox, 2000; Gill, 2000; Story, 2000). In pursuing maximized efficiency and cost/benefit ratio in a market economy, the responsibilities of the state in running its public sectors are increasingly shared by other actors, including individuals, families, and the third sector (Peters, 2000; Pierre, 2000; Rhodes, 1997; Salamon, 2002). The emergence of global market fundamentally redefines the state and non-state sector relations in a nation state's public sectors and rationalizes decentralization as a strategy in reforming a nation state's public sectors.

Meanwhile, economic integration is also a powerful force in nurturing interconnections between states which are not limited to economic fields. Trans-state connections provide much more opportunities for joint work between the local and global spheres, including sharing information and other cooperative activities. Not surprisingly, a cross-national convergence could easily occur at the

institutional level. Studies on organizational institutions have illustrated the idea that the multilateral, trans-state relations stemming from globalization are directly affecting on the process of homogenization in institutional structure. Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell (1983) propose the concept of institutional isomorphism to best capture the process. In DiMaggio and Powell's description, institutional isomorphism is a transformative process through which institutions worldwide are modified in the direction of increasing compatibility in organizational structure, government mandate, legitimacy, operating procedures, etc. Fernanda Astiz, Alexander Wiseman and David Baker (2002) further explain the process of institutional isomorphism in national education systems:

> At the heart of this transformation is the convergence of formal institutions within and across nations toward similar goals and operating structures. Cross-national descriptions of schools, health care, social welfare, and justice systems reveal significant trends in this convergence. Institutional convergence tends to create isomorphic polities, reinforcing uniform patterns among organization structure in these sectors. (p. 67)

In short, accelerated globalization has been widening and intensifying a trend toward institutional convergence worldwide. Under the impact of globalization, the model of polycentric governance is spreading all around the world. The

strategy of decentralization is adopted in the public sector reforms in nation states across the world, following the spread of the dispersal of governance worldwide.

In addition, the growing number and influence of inter-governmental organizations (e.g. the UNESCO, the OECD, the World Bank, etc.) constitute a participative force in spreading the notion of decentralization in the global education reform movement. In recent years, international funding organizations, such as the World Bank and the Asia Development Bank (ADB) have also devoted themselves to advancing decentralization reform in education systems across the world, often making decentralization a precondition for financial assistance (Conyers, 1984; Hanson, 2000; Rhoten, 2000). From 1998 to 2008, the World Bank funded education projects in around 50 nations and areas that were attempting to decentralize their education systems (World Bank, 2009). The UNESCO also advocates decentralized governance in education as a way to improve access to educational services. At the World Education Forum (2000) in Dakar, the international community pledged to "develop a responsive, participatory and accountable system of educational governance and management" (p. iii). In line with the *Dakar Framework for Action*, the UNESCO Program on *Educational Governance at Local Levels* was initiated to build national capacities to formulate and implement decentralization policies in the world (UNESCO, 2007). Mok Ka-Ho (2005) indicates that decentralization has become a popular public policy strategy widely adopted by many nations, and being offered as a solution for improving the organization and

management of the public sector. American comparative education scholar Christopher Bjork (2006) notes that in the context of globalization, nations that choose not to follow this decentralization trend risk being marginalized in international policy circles. As the force of globalization is sweeping across the world, transitional China could not be an exception.

2.4 Chinese Education Reform in Action

2.4.1 Fiscal and Administrative Reforms in Chinese Education

The changed central-local relations in China's economic reform and the global trend of decentralizing public sectors have led to a series of substantial adjustments in the education sector in China. A comprehensive reform was initiated in 1985 with the release of the *Decision on Reforming Chinese Educational System* (CCPCC & State Council). According to the 1985 *Decision*, the core principle of Chinese education reform is "streamlining administration, enhancing local school autonomy, while strengthening macro-management". The reform began with the transformation of the highly centralized financial support for the Chinese school system. To reduce the financial burden on the central government, local authorities are required to bear more of the financial costs of education than before and multiple channels of finance are encouraged. Consequently, local governments are expected to find alternative fundings to support schools. A variety of local sectors are involved in financially supporting Chinese education. The five main methods for funding precollegiate education in China are: 1) government expenditure from both the central and local; 2) funds

from industry or other social organizations; 3) donations from communities or individuals; 4) tuition fees from students' families; 5) income from school-run enterprises. By 1997, it was estimated that roughly 45 percent of fundings for precollegiate education in China was from nongovernmental sources (Li & Wang, 2001).

The fiscal reform in Chinese education is actually a part of the broad economic reform in China which is guided by the ideology of market. Thus, it is not surprising that the logic of market would be applied to the operation of China's education system. In the later 1990s, a policy orientation of enterpreneurializing education (教育产业化) took shape. Literally, enterpreneurializing education refers to the transformation of the education sector to an enterprise for moneymaking, just like other business sectors (Ngok, 2007). With the acquiescence of the central authority, in the late 1990s, enterpreneurializing education was expected to play an active role in stimulating consumption and investment, driving economic growth and relieving employment pressure (Ning, 2005). However, the commodification of education, while contributing funds to the deficit, was not a solution for the promotion of education equality and quality in China. In carrying out the policy, "education becomes a commodity provided by competitive suppliers; educational services are priced, and access to them depends on consumer calculations and ability to pay" (Yin & White, 1994, p. 217). In response to criticism of the negative effects of over-enterpreneurializing

education, the central state had to clarify that education in China was still regarded as a public good, not as a commodity, no matter who runs the schools (Li, 2004). However, it was through the process of enterpreneurializing education that the market mechanism was introduced to the Chinese education system.

The educational market emerging in the current reform offers an alternative to the state-run school system. In 1993, the *Outline of Chinese Education Reform and Development* (《中国教育改革和发展纲要》) was issued. The 1993 *Outline* clarified the state's attitude toward non-state-run schools: "active encouragement, strong support, proper guidance, and sound management". As a result, *minban* education[8] was introduced to China in 1987, but it has flourished since the 1990s. In this non-state-run sector, a variety of social forces, including enterprises, organizations, and individuals, are allowed and encouraged to run *minban* schools to meet the increasing demand for education for Chinese people. According to the MOE (2007), by 2007, there were 4488 *minban* middle schools and 5798 *minban* primary schools across the country. By running *minban* schools, these local

[8]Literally, *minban education* refers to people-run education. In 2002, China issued *Minban Education Promotion Law* and defined *minban* education as educational services provided in educational institutions that are run by corporations, public enterprises, social organizations, social groups, or individuals through non-governmental expenditure. The central and local governments regulate *minban* education through policy control and quality inspection. Because education privatization is a very sensitive issue in China, the ownership of Chinese *minban* schools remains ambiguous.

sectors are now seeking to take their own interests and needs into account. As Mok Ka-Ho (1997) notes, "[R]evitalizing local initiatives and utilizing individual efforts and overseas support promote a more direct relationship between those who provide educational services and those who pay for them" (p.265). As a result, more local interests and individual needs are now taken into account in running Chinese schools.

Coupled with the diversification of funding for Chinese schools is a reform in education administration. Scholars have noted that education administration is not a matter solely for the central authority (Ngok, 2007; Mok, 2001; Bray, 2003; Hawkins, 2006). The central government and the MOE began allowing their administrative subdivisions to participate in administering the Chinese education system. According to the *Education Law of People's Republic of China* (《中华人民共和国教育法》) issued in 1995, the MOE operates centrally in administrating and monitoring Chinese education in a general way, while local government and education departments/bureaus function at the local level. Specifically, the MOE coordinates the management and development of Chinese education and formulates broad frameworks and overall plans for curriculum development personnel management, resource coordination, etc. The local governments and departments/bureaus of education administer regional school systems and carry out national policies in local conditions. Meanwhile, the principal-accountability system has been legitimatized by the 1995 *Education Law*. School principals gain

more autonomy in school matters, such as teacher recruitment and training, school resource coordination, staff performance evaluation, school-community relation maintenance, etc. The adjustment in education administration grants local units somewhat more flexibility in running schools according to local conditions.

2.4.2 Current Curriculum Reform in Broader Chinese Education Reform

The curriculum reform is the most crucial step in the chain of the current Chinese education reform begun in 1985. In fact, the content of schooling is always of great importance for education. In the case of Chinese education, the central authority is particularly cautious of any changes in the curriculum field. The fiscal and administrative reforms in Chinese education have brought about a series of structural adjustments in Chinese education. Curriculum reform has also become imperative. The current curriculum reform, initiated in 1986, is unprecedented in intensity and in scope in the history of socialist China (Zhong, Cui & Zhang 2001).

In Maoist China, the central state and MOE were dedicated to maintaining a unified national curriculum with a strong ideological color. However, at the National Conference of Educational Work in 1978, Deng Xiaoping (1978/1983), the core figure of the power bloc in post-Mao China, asserts that "educational undertakings must be geared towards the needs of national economic development" (p.123). Deng made it clear that class struggle would no longer be put at the pivotal position in the school curriculum. Instead, under the policy of linking education with economy, science and technology have become the most

prestigious subjects in schools. Deng's concept of Chinese education was cited repeatedly as the support for a series of reforms in the curriculum field after 1976.

The first wave of curriculum reforms in post-Mao China focused on fixing the chaos caused by the Great Cultural Revolution in school. To restore orders, the MOE launched a new set of unified national curriculum in 1981 which placed the emphasis on academic education. The national curriculum reregulated the length of schooling for full-time primary and secondary education was 11 years (5 years for primary education plus 6 years for secondary education). Meanwhile, the national curriculum specified the common objectives of school education at different levels, school course structure and instruction plans for core subjects. The People's Education Press published a new set of textbooks for nationwide use in accordance with the 1981 national curriculum. In the 1980s, the national curriculum in China basically maintained its uniformity in content and conformity in enforcement. In this sense, the intention of the 1981 national curriculum was to regulate all irregulations in China's curriculum sector.

The promulgation of the *Compulsory Education Law* of *People's Republic of China* (《中华人民共和国义务教育法》) is a milestone in the history of Chinese curriculum reform. Closely related to the changed state-education relationship in the broad education reform, a new round of curriculum reform was initiated, after the law was enacted. Compulsory education in China covers a period of nine years and is mandatory for all children who have reached the age of six,

regardless of sex, ethnicity, socio-economic status or religion. The *Compulsory Education Law* also specifies that the state policy on compulsory education is to improve the quality of Chinese education and to enable school-age children to achieve all-round development, morally, intellectually and physically. Under the unified leadership of the central state, local authorities assume responsibility for putting compulsory education into effect nationwide, including raising funds to cover the insufficiency of the state appropriations for compulsory education, laying down concrete course structures and teaching plans, etc.

In accordance with the 1986 *Compulsory Education Law*, the MOE issued *Teaching Scheme for Compulsory Education Full-time Primary and Middle Schools* (*Pilot*) (《义务教育全日制小学、初级中学教学计划(试行)》) in 1988 and amended it to *Curriculum Scheme for Compulsory Education Full-time Primary and Middle Schools* (《义务教育全日制小学、初级中学课程计划》) in 1992. The 1992 *Curriculum Scheme* resembled the previous national curriculum, specifying teaching content, course work, the emphases and weighting of subjects and the pedagogical approaches and expected achievement goals of instruction. It is noteworthy that the 1992 *Curriculum Scheme* was innovative, providing more flexibility for local education departments and schools. The 1992 *Curriculum Scheme* divided school courses into two categories: subject courses and activity courses. The former covered all academic instruction for students at school and the latter included after-class activities and community service organized by

schools. At the same time, for middle schools, optional courses and optional teaching content were encouraged for those with need. To carry out the 1992 *Curriculum Scheme*, the MOE issued the new national *Teaching Syllabuses* (《教学大纲》), covering all 24 obligatory subjects taught in primary and middle schools. This time, the MOE closely worked with local schools in creating the new *Teaching Syllabuses*, drawing lessons from the pilot implementation in some selected local schools.

In addition, immediately following the implementation of the 1986 *Compulsory Education Law*, the MOE began reforming the textbook selection and publication process. This was the first time that the MOE adopted a policy of diversifying the compilation and publication of textbooks across the country and with the condition that unified national requirements of teaching must be complied with. In 1986, the State Textbook Examination and Approval Committee was established to supervise school textbook publication. In the next few years, the People's Education Press and the Beijing Normal University published three sets of textbooks for nationwide use. Education departments in Shanghai, Guangdong, Zhejiang and Sichuan organized educational experts, scholars and teachers to compile another four sets of textbooks for regional use. The publication of these regional textbooks was a radical change from the previous practice, in which only one set of national textbooks was used throughout the state. Meanwhile, reference books, manuals, booklets, wall charts,

slides and visual materials for classroom instruction were published as supplements for the textbooks (MOE, 2004). Among the supplementary teaching materials, many were designed to meet the needs of local schools.

Following the lead of the 1986 *Compulsory Education Law*, the central state has taken regional disparities in economic, social and cultural development into account. Taking into account that local schools varied a great deal regarding available resources and needs, the new national curriculum for basic education set general references for schools, but it allowed local schools to expand upon the implementation of the national curriculum by designing activity courses, optional courses and by allowing selection from to multiple sets of textbooks and other supplementary teaching materials. The innovations in the 1992 *Curriculum Scheme* became the prelude to further curriculum reform centered on diversifying school curriculum to accommodate various local conditions and needs.

In 1995, the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee launched the national strategies of rejuvenating China through science and reinvigorating China through human resource development. Through the implementation of these national strategies, education has become the top priority for China. With the purpose of accelerating Chinese education development in a comprehensive way for the coming 21st century, the central state adjusted its policy in the current curriculum reform. In 1999, the CCPCC and State Council jointly promulgated the *Decision on Deepening Educational Reform and Fully Promoting Essential-*

Qualities-Oriented Education （《关于深化教育改革全面推进素质教育的决定》and the *Action Scheme for Invigorating Education toward the 21st Century* (《面向 21 世纪教育振兴行动计划》). Drawing the blueprint for the development of Chinese education in the 21st Century, the two directives claim that the major theme of this deepened curriculum reform is a shifting from test-centered education to essential-qualities-oriented (EQO) education.

The EQO education is defined as a model of student-oriented education which centers on moral education and highlights all-round development for the student at all aspects, including knowledge, creativity and practical capability as well as mental and physical well-being (MOE, 1997). When focusing on students' all-around development, the narrowness of the prescribed national curriculum was seen as disadvantageous for meeting local students' needs and local schools' conditions. To ensure the EQO education from the top down, in 2001, the MOE issued the *Outline of Basic Education Curriculum Reform* (*Pilot*) (《基础教育课程改革纲要》 (试行)), providing guidance for the nationwide curriculum reform at primary and junior-secondary levels. The *2001 Outline* reconfirms the state-education relations in this wave of curriculum reform. The MOE, as the central authority for education, provides an overall curriculum framework, national requirements and guiding principles, but doesn't specify the detailed implementation of the national curriculum; the provincial education departments assume responsibility for laying down localized plans to put the national

curriculum into effect and for formulating provincial curriculum and curriculum standards with the approval of the MOE. Local schools are allowed to develop their own school-based curriculum with the focus on their specific characteristics and local needs, but under the supervision of the educational bureaucracy at all levels. The MOE (2001) makes it clear that the center maintains control over 80% to 84% of the total school hours, while allowing local governments and schools to innovate the rest. Insisting on diversified school textbooks, the *2001 Outline* reconfirms that all qualified publishers are encouraged to compile and publish textbooks for nationwide use, but all school textbooks must be in conformity with the national requirements and approved by the State Textbook Examination and Approval Committee. Textbooks for regional use must be examined and approved by the Provincial Textbook Examination and Approval Committee. Local education departments/bureaus are allowed to make selections from the pool of approved textbooks.

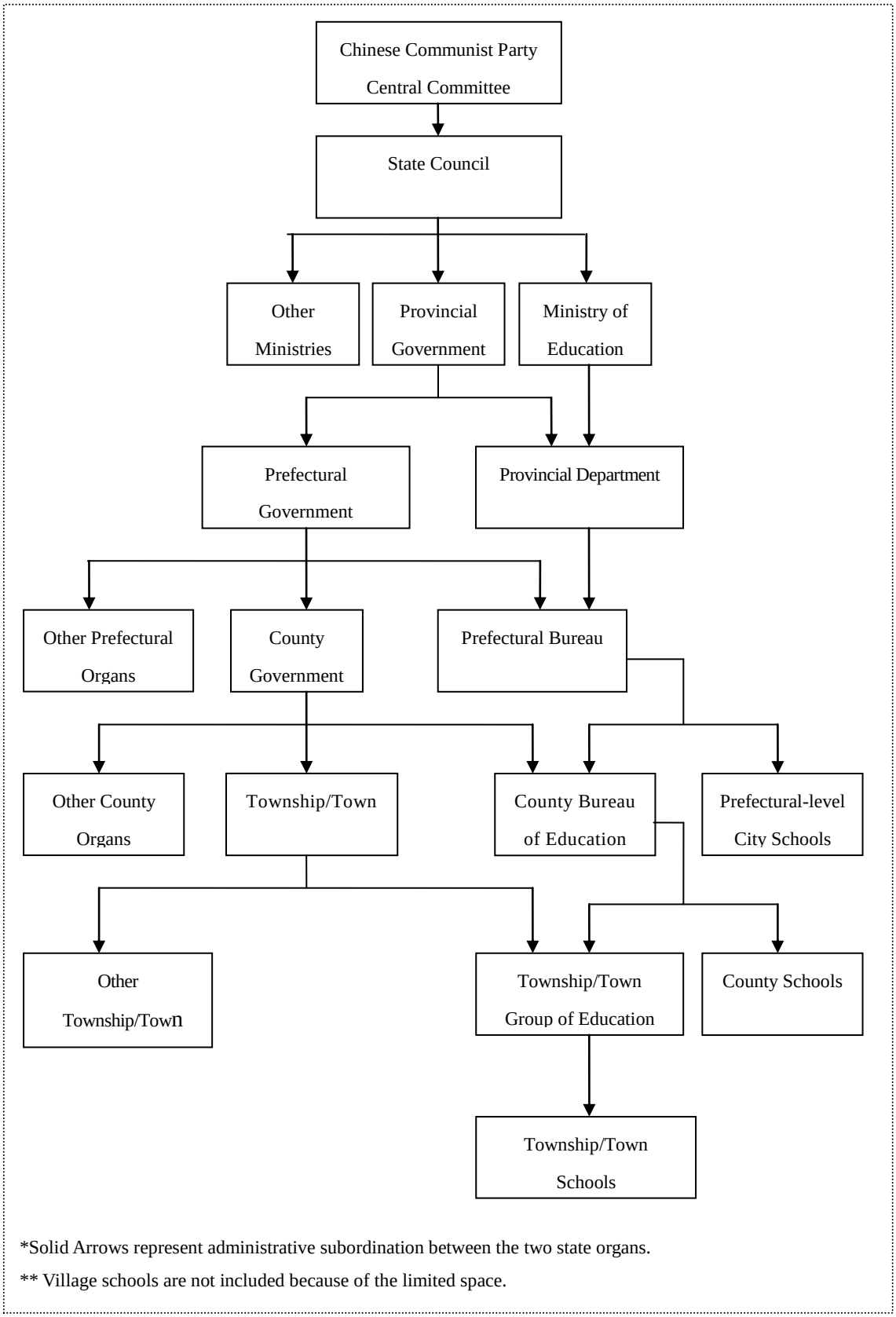
To replace the national *Teaching Syllabuses*, a set of *National Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education* was drafted in 2000 and officially launched in 2001, after a comprehensive public consultation process to include feedback and comments from all involved and affected parties, such as teachers, principals, experts, scholars, etc. Taking the policy of experimentalizing before popularizing, the *National Curriculum Standards* was first launched in 38 national level curriculum reform experimental areas in 29 provinces, involving 470,000 primary and middle school

students since September, 2001. The scope of the curriculum reform experiment has expanded each year. The number of counties and districts involved in the experiment was 330 in 2002, then increased to 1, 642 by 2003, accounting for 57% of the total number of the counties and districts in China. By the end of 2002, the framework of the new curriculum system for basic education had taken preliminary shape regarding content and methods of teaching, education assessment, teacher education, etc. By 2007, the new curriculum system has been introduced to all first-year students China at all levels.

The curriculum reform initiated in 1986 is not a simple readjustment in the content of schooling or replacement of textbooks, but a fundamental reconstruction of China's curriculum system. Different from previous practices in which the national curriculum was designed by the central state alone and carried out by the localities. The new curriculum system is a product of the joint work between the center and the localities. The tolerance to local curriculum and school-based curriculum has opened possibility of diversifying school curriculum to accommodate local varieties. The focus on the EQO education has led to a major change in curriculum philosophy, which took students' all-around development into account.

In building this more inclusive curriculum system, the central authority of education has left some discretion to local sectors. It is unprecedented that the central state allows important input from schools, scholars, teachers and other social sectors, and even leaves some curriculum development work to local education bureaucracy

and institutions. Viewed in this way, the current wave of curriculum reform creates the appearance that the role of the localities in Chinese education is changed from passively carrying out the instruction formulated at the top to actively working with the central state in reforming China's curriculum system. However, it is still too early to make the conclusion that the current curriculum reform in China is moving toward decentralization.



*Solid Arrows represent administrative subordination between the two state organs.

** Village schools are not included because of the limited space.

Figure 2.1 Administrative Structure of Chinese Education at Precollegiate Level

Chapter 3 Gear toward Centralized Decentralization

This chapter further examines the complexity of the decentralization trend in the current curriculum reform in China. To better understand education decentralization, Mark Hanson's (1989a, 1989b, 2000&2006) theory is cited to provide a conceptual framework for examining the current curriculum reform in China. In investigating the motive behind the current Chinese education reform, the paper demonstrates that the central state has no attempt to transfer its authority to the local level. The following discussion focuses on the tension between the center and the locality in the current curriculum reform and demonstrates that the reform is actually moving toward a centralized decentralization. Foucault's theory about power, governmentality and discipline is cited to build a theoretical lens to explore the seemingly paradoxical mixture of centralization and decentralization in education governance.

3.1 Complexities of Education Decentralization

The reform of financial provision for Chinese schools was deepened by a comprehensive reconstruction in all aspects of the Chinese education system. The initiation of curriculum reform also followed this trend. In response to criticism of the rigidity and narrowness of the highly prescribed national curriculum, the process of reconstructing the curriculum system features its unprecedented flexibilities and openness to local inputs. In the current wave of curriculum reform, local autonomy is accelerating in the curriculum design, implementation and development, while the central authority of education is deliberately

retreating from its previous role as the sole source of regulation and management. It is assumed that the ongoing curriculum reform is moving toward decentralizing its curriculum system. However, it is hasty to use the term decentralization to generalize the substantial reform efforts currently taking place in Chinese curriculum reform.

Decentralization is not a well-defined concept. Education policy scholar R. Govinda (1997) points out that "the concept has remained vague and highly ambiguous, even though used extensively by policy-makers as well as intellectuals" (p.3). The general use of the term focuses on the shift of governing from one level to another level within a system or from one organization to another. However, few of the studies specify the nature of the mobilization or clarify the complexities of the shifting. In fact, there is considerable variation in the actual practices of decentralization. Because of this, it is best to build a conceptual framework of decentralization before an examination of the reform trend in Chinese curriculum reform.

Aaron Schneider (2003) notes that "researchers have multiplied the conceptualization of decentralization; associated the various concepts with different meanings; imbued it with positive normative value; conflated it with other concepts; and ignore its multi-dimensionality" (p. 34). Schneider's argument regarding basic standard for measuring the conceptualization of decentralization is:

> if there are multiple dimensions, then decentralization along one dimension could be related to one set of causes and effects, and decentralization along another dimension could relate to a different or opposite set of causes and effects. Alternatively, decentralization along one dimension could interact or combine with decentralization along another dimension (to produce outcomes). Researchers who do not explicitly look at each dimension or haphazardly aggregate dimensions will mismeasure the type and degree of decentralization and draw incorrect inferences about the relationship between decentralization and other phenomena. (p. 35)

Conforming to the conceptual mode suggested by Schneider (2003), comparative education scholar Mark Hanson (1989a&b) offers a clear and coherent definition of education decentralization, along the dimension of resource transferring in the decision-making process. According to Hanson, decentralization refers to the transfer of authority, responsibility and tasks from higher to lower levels or between organizations. Thus, Hanson (2006) identifies three major forms of decentralization in terms of the degree to which the central state disperses its governing authority.

1. Deconcentration transfer typically involves the transfer of tasks and work, but not authority to other units in the organization.

2. Delegation involves the transfer of decision-making authority from higher to lower hierarchical units, but that authority can be withdrawn at the discretion of the delegating unit.
3. Devolution refers to the transfer of authority to an autonomous unit that can act independently, or a unit that can act without first asking permission. (p. 10)

To be more specific, *deconcentration* is a spatial transfer of the implementation of authority, but not the authority itself. In other words, *deconcentration* refers to a geographical relocation of where the task or work should be done and by whom, but not a shifting of authority to a lower level. In the process of *deconcentration*, the central state retains the integrity of its authority over state affairs and exercises that authority through the hierarchical channels of the bureaucracy, while the localities carry out the tasks previously done by the central state with very limited autonomy in implementation. By contrast, *delegation* is a transfer of responsibility to lower levels under state supervision. In this process, the center designs the broad management framework and overall policy objectives at the national level, but also appoints local delegates and encourages their participation in making policies for local affairs. Thus, the localities could gain certain degrees of autonomy in deciding what work should be done and how it should be done at the local level. However, in the process of delegation, all work must be completed within the framework set up by

the central authority and all decisions must be subject to the national guidelines laid down by the central authority. In this way, the central authority could easily take away local autonomy when there is need. *Devolution* is a maximum transfer of authority from the center to the periphery, as compared to the other two forms of decentralization. Through devolution, the center grants local units genuine authority over their own affairs, and thus, local units gain a great degree of autonomy to perform their own governance.

Hanson's (1989a, 1989b, 2000&2006) definition differentiates the three forms of decentralization in terms of the degree to which the central authority is transferred. Deconcentration is the most superficial decentralization, deepened by delegation, a moderately higher level of decentralization, and then by devolution, the highest level of decentralization. Hanson (1989a) argues that in the long run, devolution guarantees the continuity of the shared authority between the center and the localities, but delegation is often accompanied by the potentials of the frequently changed center-periphery authority-sharing arrangement, and that even the retraction of the local autonomy depends on the motivations of the moment. Hanson's interpretation of decentralization clarifies the ambiguousness in conceptualizing decentralization and explains the variety of labels applied to decentralization. In reality, actions taken in the name of decentralization vary in their motivations, objectives, and strength of implementation, and thus yield different results under different circumstances.

The current wave of education reform in China has been in the making for over two decades. The reform efforts in education finance, administrative management and curriculum development are moving toward disengaging the central state from the heavy burden of maintaining highly centralized education provision and delivery. In the process, a lot of work which was previously performed by the MOE at the central level has been transferred to the local level, such as funding schools, administering local school systems, developing local-based teaching content, etc. However, in Hanson's conceptual framework of education decentralization, it is important to investigate whether these changes have been accompanied by a shift of authority in the decision-making process.

3.2 Deconcentration in Chinese Curriculum Reform

Viewed through the conceptual framework offered by Hanson (1989a, 1989b, 2000&2006), the complexity of education decentralization should not be ignored or underestimated. The core issue is to what degree the central authority is transferring its authority in this wave of curriculum reform. The current curriculum reform in China appears to tolerate more local innovation and to accommodate flexibility in carrying out national curriculum policies. To inquire into the nature of the current trend of relaxing centralized controlling over school curriculum, the motivation and process of the reform must be examined in the context of China's unique socio-political context.

Schooling is inextricably linked to the larger society, and changes in the curriculum field are inevitably related to the broad socio-economic context in which it is embedded. In the late 1970s, when the central authority in Beijing initiated the economic reform, modernization was highlighted as the national goal for all Chinese people. Deng Xiaoping (1979/1983), as the core of the political power bloc in China after 1979, officially announced that socialist modernization was of supreme political importance for China. In the Chinese context, modernization is not a broad, abstract concept, but a set of specific development tasks in four fields: agriculture, industry, science and technology and national defense. Putting particular emphasis on economic modernization, Deng Xiaoping (1978/1983) introduced a new notion that science and technology constituted a primary productive force; education was the foundation for scientific and technological development and training for those field required personnel with professional knowledge and skills. Thus, Deng repeatedly emphasizes that education must be placed on the nation's development agenda as a strategic priority.

Following the lead of Deng's idea of linking education with socialist modernization, the 1985 *Decision on Reforming Chinese Education System* further confirms the relationship between socialist modernization and education. The *Decision* makes it clear that socialist modernization is built on the improvement of the quality of the entire population and the best use of intellectual resources. To meet the needs of economic and social development,

Chinese education must center its efforts on cultivating qualified personnel at all levels and in different fields. Thus, as summarized at the beginning of the 1985 *Decision*, education must serve socialist construction and socialist construction relies on education development. In the 1993 *Outline of Chinese Education Reform and Development*, the CCPCC and State Council claimed that "[E]ducation must serve the socialist modernization and must be combined with productive labor in order to foster builders and successors with all-round development—morally, intellectually, physically and aesthetically—for the socialist cause." In the *Educational Law* promulgated in 1995, this policy was put into the legislative form. As a result, the emphasis on the direct and functional relationship between education and socialist modernization has become the main theme in reconstructing Chinese education in the reform era.

The structural adjustment in the curriculum field is oriented by this reform theme. In the policy climate of linking education with modernization, the 1986 *Compulsory Education Law* announces that compulsory education must carry out national education policies, improve education quality, and cultivate children's all-around development in morality, intelligence, and physical well-being. The goal is to foster well-educated builders and successors for the socialist modernization. The 2001 *Outline of Basic Education Curriculum Reform* emphasizes that the curriculum reform of basic education must follow Deng's idea of education. That is, education

should be oriented toward meeting the needs of socialist modernization, globalization and challenges in the future.

As indicated by the educational laws and overall guidelines for education reform, schooling in China is not seen as a relatively autonomous social institution with its own independent purpose and scope, but is more regarded as a state apparatus serving the national goal of socialist modernization, especially economic modernization. The school system is viewed as the foremost vehicle for sending trained human resources with skills and knowledge to meet the needs of economic growth. Thus, following the structural transition from centrally planned economy to market-driven economy, reforms in Chinese education become imperative to a vibrant economic future for China. In this sense, the reforms in the Chinese education system are not primarily motivated by the needs of improving education itself, but by the needs of economic transition.

In the very beginning, the reform in diversifying fiscal provision for schools was based purely on financial considerations. While disengaging from the unaffordable fiscal burden of paying all costs of education, the central state is encouraging local bureaucracies and education institutions to look for alternative fundings for schools. The diversified financial provision has substantially changed the operation of the school system. Local actors not only invest in schools, but also seek to participate in running schools due to the increased sensitivity to their own education needs. In that same vein, there has developed a

need for a new curriculum system which could provide more freedom for localities to select and arrange the most appropriate curricula based on diverse local conditions. Responding to demands from below, the central state initiated this top-down curriculum reform in 1986. To strengthen direct management, the central state has to allow local education bureaucracies to take part in administering curriculum matters and coordinate between national policies and local realities. Through these effects, the emergence of the diversified funding system for schools is the immediate cause of the initiation of the current curriculum reform.

Being motivated by the national goal of socialist modernization, the major objective of the curriculum reform has been defined as the construction of a new curriculum system capable of equipping students with competencies and skills that will allow them to enter into the contemporary workforce and ultimately contribute to economic development of China. The motive and objectives of the current curriculum reform have already demonstrated that the central authority has no real desire to transfer decision-making authority to the local level, even though the reform is a response to the critique on the narrowness and rigidity of the national curriculum. As a result, despite the discernible trend of including relatively more local input in curriculum design and management, the central state's authority over school curriculum is always substantial and the governance structure is still hierarchical.

School curriculum in China was previously marked by its uniformity in curriculum philosophy and conformity in practice. In the current curriculum reform, initiated in 1986, there are obvious signs of accommodating more local flexibilities in curriculum design and implementation. The central authority of education works jointly with local authorities, social entities, scholars, schools and teachers to build a more inclusive curriculum system for China. However, the authority of the central state still prevails across the entire education system. The strength of the central authority in the current curriculum reform is expressed mainly through education legislation and pervasive supervision.

After the initiation of Chinese education reform in 1985, China launched a whole series of education-related laws designed to regulate all aspects of Chinese education, including teacher qualification, compulsory education, and non-state-run education. The central authority repeatedly emphasizes that all reform efforts at local levels must take shape within the legislative framework set up by the state. As a part of the top-down education reform, the current curriculum reform also takes shape within the legislative framework set up by the state. The MOE is dedicated in formulating concrete regulations, guidelines and overall plans for putting these education laws into effect. In the early stages of the current wave of curriculum reform (1986 to 1996), the MOE regulated the content of schooling through implementing a unified national curriculum composed of *National Curriculum Scheme* and *National Syllabuses*. The national curriculum prescribed

13 compulsory subject courses while allowing a small number of optional courses to be designed at the local level. In 2001, the MOE issued the *Outline of Basic Education Curriculum Reform* (Pilot). This directive outlines the objectives, scope and content of curriculum reform. The MOE issued the *2003-2007 Action Scheme for Invigorating Education* in 2004, followed by the *Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)* in 2010. The two plans set up a concrete timetable and define the content of the reform process. In this sense, the reform actually has been formulated in a uniform manner determined by the center. To ensure that the national curriculum policies are carried out correctly and that the national goals of education are achieved effectively, supervision pervades the entire education system in China.

Being empowered by the central authority of education, education supervision in China's education system is composed of a nationwide network of education inspection, a set of centrally imposed curriculum requirements and a standardized testing system. In 1986, the Office of National Education Inspectorate (OONEI) was established. The Inspectorate is in charge of monitoring, inspecting, evaluating and reporting the standards and quality of education in primary and secondary schools across the state. To normalize the work of the National Education Inspectorate, the *Provisional Regulation of Education Inspection* (《教育督导暂行规定》) was issued in 1991. According to the

Provisional Regulation, besides the Office of National Education Inspectorate operating centrally, local education inspection organs are required at lower levels from the province down to the county. The central office in Beijing frames the principles that guide the work at the local level, while the local offices undertake the work of inspection within the framework.

The mission of this hierarchical inspection system is "to inspect, evaluate and guide how work is done at local governments, local education departments and schools" (MOE, 1991). In the curriculum reform, this hierarchal inspection system has been strengthened to ensure the implementation of national education policies, adherence to various laws and regulations and the achievement of the targeted goals. On one hand, the organs of education inspection at all level regularly report their findings and provide their feedback to governments and departments/bureaus of education at corresponding levels and to education inspection organs at upper levels. On the other hand, when problems in local teaching or administrative institutions present themselves, and especially when those institutions do not follow the national policies, laws and regulations set up by the central state, the inspection organs take direct steps in an attempt to put them back onto the right pathway through proper administrative procedures.

Direct interference in classroom practice is through an imposed national curriculum requirement. In the new curriculum system, ultimate decision-making authority is not granted to local education bureaucracies and institutions. The

number of school hours allocated to the national curriculum is suggested to be 80 to 84 percent of the total school hours (MOE, 2001a). Within the national curriculum, a homogenous pattern of schooling is strengthened by a set of national curriculum standards. *Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education* (《义务教育国家课程标准》) was drafted in 2000 and was launched in 2001 as an authoritative directive in schooling, coupled with the release of the *Outline of Basic Education Curriculum Reform* in 2001. The *Curriculum Standards* covers all major subjects taught in Chinese schools and regulates the content of teaching, plans of instruction, targeted attainment, performance evaluation criteria and textbook development principles. Thus, tolerance to curriculum diversities and flexibility is very limited, confined to the remaining percentage of total instruction hours. Meanwhile, innovations in the province-based curriculum and school-based curriculum must be examined and approved by the hierarchical education bureaucracy.

A major reform in textbook policy is an inseparable part of the current curriculum reform. Since the initiation of the curriculum reform, the monopolistic state textbook adoption process has been replaced by a diversified textbook supply system which has competing alternative textbooks. The central state allows local publishers to organize the preparation and production of textbooks and encourages them to compete in the textbook market. The textbook adoption decision is also left up to local education departments/bureaus and schools. While

building a more diversified textbook supply, the central state applies a rigid approval process to ensure the textbooks used in Chinese schools are properly qualified. The State Textbook Examination and Approval Committee (全国教材审定委员会) was established to supervise school textbook publication in 1986. The *Provisional Procedures for Primary and Secondary School Textbook Compilation and Approval* (《中小学教材编写审定管理暂行办法》) was issued in 2001. According to the *Provisional Procedures*, all textbooks and very basic supporting materials for required subjects taught in primary and secondary schools must be examined and approved by the State Textbooks Examination and Approval Committee before publication to verify ideological content, academic quality and adaptability to classroom instruction. Supplementary teaching materials with local figures are to be examined and approved at the provincial level. To a great degree, the autonomy in designing local teaching materials is limited by this strict approval and examination procedure.

To ensure what is taught in schools strictly adheres to the standards and requirements set by the central state, standardized testing is used in all levels of the Chinese education system. The subject-based standardized testing has become in some ways routine for Chinese students. School teachers test students to assess their learning progress. Local education departments/bureaus give tests not only for research purposes but also for evaluating school performance. Students take

tests under formal test conditions on a given date and the papers are collected, marked and sorted based on scores, then for use in the classroom.

Passing the entrance examinations is the channel to higher education in China which is extremely structured with competitive entry to the top institutions and most popular majors. The large-scale entrance examinations are given in the last year of each school level from primary through junior high to high school. The outcome of this set of standardized testing is used as the determining factor for making admission decisions. The most important one is the college entrance examination. To strengthen supervision, the MOE set up the National Center of Testing as the central agency to administer the nationwide college entrance examinations, including formulating testing schemes for all subjects annually, formulating testing policies, collecting testing results and evaluating the performance of test takers. The local organs of the National Center of Testing at the provincial level assume the responsibilities for putting the national guidance into effect. Recently, innovations in the college entrance examinations started allowing provincial departments of education to choose the additional testing subjects outside of the three required ones: Chinese, English and Math. Since 2000, the MOE has credited 16 provinces and municipalities with designing their own testing content as alternatives to the national ones, with the consideration that the provincial/municipal-based propositions must conform to the national testing scheme formulated by the MOE. In addition, the college entrance

examinations must be given at the same time and in the same conditions across the country. The score obtained in the examinations is the only criterion for tertiary education admissions.

The local units carry more of the organization and management work previously done by the MOE, but have gained no real autonomy in challenging the unified national model of testing determined by the central authority of education. More importantly, the high-stakes testing becomes the key means to ensure that teaching and learning in schools across China are on the right track. Under the heavy pressure of high-stakes testing, teachers and principals are left with no choice other than teaching to the test. Thus, teaching relies mainly on the pedagogy of rote memorization and learning is a passive process of acquiring textbook knowledge. Not surprisingly, the majority of the curriculum resources are concentrated on the subjects examined in the entrance examinations, but not on curriculum innovations. In this sense, standardized testing system is becoming a powerful tool for the imposition of national standards and requirements on Chinese schooling.

The multi-level inspection of the day-to-day schooling, the single Beijing-based agency of approving textbooks production, the centrally imposed national requirements and the high-stakes testing system constitute an extensive network of education supervision over Chinese curriculum reform. The rigorous supervision functions effectively to maintain the absolute authority of the central

state in curriculum governance. No matter how much local innovation is tolerated, local education departments/bureaus as well as local schools must work within the policy framework set up by the central authority. Thus, the current curriculum system in China is particularly characterized by its conformity and uniformity.

In the on-going curriculum reform in China, there has been a discernible trend of transferring more work to the local level. However, this process has barely involved authority sharing in regard to curriculum governance in a significant way. Considering the motivation and objectives of the reform, the current curriculum reform is not to enhance the curriculum system, but to fix newly-emerging problems accompanying with the changed socio-economic context of China in a transitional period. The central state does not intend to change the existing authority-sharing arrangement between the center and the periphery which highlights the absolute authority of the central state in curriculum governance. In practice, the central state determines what should be done by whom and keeps a close watch on how the work is completed in localities. Local education bureaucracies and institutions have to take much more responsibility and caution to ensure that their work performance meets the central state's expectations. Thereby, all major policy decisions are continued to be made centrally, but educational services are delivered locally but based on centrally controlled agencies. This arrangement merely implies a shifting of workload from

the central officials to bureaucratic officials and educators outside the national capital without granting local agents the authority to decide what to do and how to do. In this sense, decentralization in Chinese curriculum reform remains superficial. Measured within Mark Hanson's (2006) conceptual framework, decentralization in Chinese curriculum reform only takes the shape of deconcentration that does not involve a real transfer of authority to intermediate or basic levels.

Deconcentration in Chinese curriculum reform may promote the efficiency and effectiveness of curriculum system and even create an illusion of increased local participation in curriculum governance, but it does not provide realistic opportunities to exercise substantial local discretion at the decision-making level. Distributing work and task to dependent local agencies, the central state has been disengaged from its heavy burden of carrying out all of the work in providing and distributing education services nationwide. As a result, the central state is able to concentrate on constructing a legislative framework to regulate all practices in the process and building a pervasive supervision system to ensure the conformity in policy implementation.

To some degree, deconcentration has become a device to strengthen the unshakable authority of the central state over school education in China. With greater interference over curriculum matters through policy control, the central state maintains its determinative role in regulating and orienting the

deconcentration process. Thus, even though the deconcentration process has gone quite far in many aspects of the curriculum system in China, the reform has never substantively challenged the centrally controlled model of curriculum governance. In other words, with the deconcentration process, strong centralized tendencies coexist with particular forms of decentralization in Chinese curriculum reform. Centralization indicates congregating at the center, but decentralization implies moving away from the center. The two move in opposite directions and even against each other. The problem is how to explain the apparently paradoxical mixture of centralization and decentralization in the current Chinese curriculum reform.

3.3 Paradoxical Mixture of Centralization and Decentralization

3.3.1 Conceptualize Centralization and Decentralization

The key to the seemingly paradoxical mixture of centralization and decentralization is the role of state in the education system. According to Max Weber's (1919/1994) influential definition of state in *Politics as a Vocation*, the modern state monopolizes the means of legitimate physical violence over a well-defined territory. Moreover, the legitimacy of this monopoly is of a very special kind, "rational-legal" legitimacy, which is based on impersonal rules that constrain the power of state elites. Here, Weber makes it very clear that an entity is a state, if it has a relatively settled population, a well-defined territory, and legitimated monopolies over the population and the territory. Meanwhile, Weber's definition also indicates that the state is not simply there; the rise of state, typically, involves legitimated

monopolies and imposed rules. It's not difficult to find supportive voices for Weber's definition in recent years. Political scholar Nancy Fraser (1989) argues that the state is an arena in which different groups struggle to legitimate and institute their own sense of needs and needed discourses. Reverberating Weber's echo, education scholar Andy Green (1994) refers to the state formation as a historical process through which ruling elites struggle to build a national unity at economic, cultural and territorial levels and consolidate political and ideological consensus. Bruce Curtis (1992) emphasizes that "the state may best be studied as a process of rule" (p. 9). These scholars have already reached an agreement that at all levels the state is constantly being formed by diverse social forces. Thus, it is necessary to look at the interplay between these social forces.

Foucault (1978/1991) offers us a deepened theoretical framework for the analysis of interactions between those social forces and how the examination of the formation of state in terms of power relations. Foucault rejects the attempts to theorize state. For Foucault, the state has no universal essence based on unexamined presumption about its essential unity, its given functions or its inherent tendency toward domination. Foucault claims that

> the state, no more probably today than at any other time in its history, does not have this unity, this individuality, this rigorous functionality, nor, to speak frankly, this importance; maybe, after all ,the state is no more than a composite reality and a mythicized abstraction, whose importance is a lot more limited than many of us think. (p. 103)

Breaking the fascination of the state, Foucault (1978/1991) argues that what is really important for the society is the governmentalization of the state. Foucault defines governmentalization as the tactics of government, which are internal and external to the state and which ensure the state's survival. Thus, Foucault argues that "state can only be understood in its survival and its limits on the basis of the general tactics of governmentality" (p.103). Foucault's emphasis on the art of government is closely connected with his concerns on the emergence of population, which is defined as "the end of government, the subjects of needs and aspirations, but also the object in the hands of the government" (p.100). In this sense, Foucault further points out that the state of government has to deal with the interest of individuals who make up the population, and the interest of the population as a whole regardless of any individual's interest. Individual's interest in Foucault's words should not be understood in a narrow sense. Individual could be extended from a person to any specific object in a collection, such as human society.

Interests might diverge or even conflict with each other, and thus diverse social forces might be produced. In his book, *History of Sexuality* Foucault (1978/1990) defines "the multiplicity of force relations" as power (p. 92). Foucault makes it very clear that power in his term "is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategically situation in a particular society" (p. 93). Foucault (1990) suggests that

power is immanent in all social relations and the understanding of power should begin from below, in the heterogeneous social forces.

At the same time, Foucault (1990) believes that there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between the dominant and the dominated. The manifold relationships between forces are the basis for "wide-ranging effects of cleavage that run through the social body as a whole" (p. 94). These manifold relationships can also form a general line of force and "bring about redistributions, realignments, homogenizations, serial arrangements and convergences of the false relations" (p. 94). Foucault also asserts that "[W]here there is power, there is resistance" and resistance is always inside power, "there is no 'escaping' it" (p. 95). Foucault emphasizes that the existence of power relationships depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance: these play the role of adversary, target, support or handle in power relations. These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network.

With his emphasis on immanent power and resistance, it is more understandable that Foucault would argue that there is no trans-historical, universal, unchanging notion of state. In fact, Foucault regards the state as an ensemble of power relations, which are in constantly changing. Thus, attention should be placed not on domination, but rather on governmentality, where the technologies of power, the exercise of power and projection of power are happening. Foucault (1982) explains how power functions in the form of governmentality:

> Basically power is less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one to the other than a question of government… "Government" did not refer only to political structures or to the management of states; rather it designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed... To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others. The relationship proper to power would not therefore be sought on the side of violence or of struggle, nor on that of voluntary linking (all of which can, at best, only be the instruments of power), but rather in the area of the singular mode of action, neither warlike nor juridical, which is government. (p. 221)

Based on Foucault's theory about state, power and governmentality, centralization may be viewed as a tactic of governmentality which operates on something called the state, and decentralization as a resistance against centralization. Centralization and decentralization work at the point where power is produced. However, centralization functions toward concentration, convergence and homogenization; whereas, as a resistance, decentralization functions toward disparity, divergence and heterogenization. Centralization is used to reformulate diverse social forces into a coactive force via a set of means. Within the processes of centralization, there are struggles, confrontations and transformations among diverse forces and the terminal form of these force relations take may be domination. Decentralization is

inscribed in centralization, in the same way that resistance is inherent in the power network. The coactive force formed in centralization is always challenged by various social forces in different forms. Indeed, decentralization is an effort to destabilize and deconstruct a consolidated arrangement of force relations, producing cleavages in a society and leading to a regrouping of those social forces. In this sense, centralization and decentralization, as the tactical strategies of governmentality, are always entangled together.

In the education sector, both centralization and decentralization function as effective means to realize governmentality over the system. Centralization involves the concentration of authority over resource flows across decision-making points at the upper level of a hierarchized system; decentralization involves the distribution of authority over resource flows across decision-making points down to the lower levels of the system or outside the system. Thus, quantitative aspects including finance, personnel and information, are important indicators of the degrees of centralization and decentralization. However, the most fundamental dimension of both centralization and decentralization is authority, which is the manipulating force behind those superficial phenomena. In terms of the shifting of authority, centralization and decentralization functions toward opposite directions, but they are not necessarily against each other.

In reality, there are no education systems which are completely centralized or decentralized. Both centralization and decentralization can be used by the central

authority, but are motivated by different intentions and toward diverse objectives. In Mark Hanson's (2006) words, "[C]entralization or decentralization are not ends in themselves, but only means to an end" (p. 9). Consequently, under given conditions the rationale behind strengthening centrality or decentrality is persuasive. In this sense, the tension between centralization and decentralization could be universal. The real issue surrounding this tension is how the two forces balance each other out.

Both centralization and decentralization assume there is a center that plays a vital role in the concentration or distribution of authority within or beyond a bounded system regardless of whether the pressure comes from the upper or the lower levels or from both. In the Chinese education system, the central state is playing this vital role. In the latest curriculum reform, the central state finds itself in a very complex situation that is common to quite a few countries in reconstructing their education systems. Educational foundations scholar Joseph Zajda (2007) summarizes:

> On one hand, the concept of nation-state necessitates the centralization of certain functions, including the provisions for mass education. Current educational policy reforms designed to achieve competitiveness and diversity by means of standardized curricula, national standards and standardized assessment also suggest an increasing centralization. On the other hand, the state defined policies of educational restructuring in response to demands for equality, participation and diversity, have the effect of encouraging decentralization of schooling. (p.3)

Different countries take different strategies to deal with this paradox. Current Chinese curriculum reform is through a top-down approach, where the content, the process, the goals and the strength of the reform are determined by the center and used as a tactic to reach desired outcomes of the state. In this sense, deconcentration in Chinese curriculum reform is a centralized decentralization.

3.3.2 Centralized Decentralization as Strategic Imperative

As the term centralized decentralization indicates, in the tension between centralization and decentralization, the former is weighted heavily by the central state. In other words, the authoritative position of the central state is intentionally reinforced in the current curriculum reform. The particular emphasis on centralization at this crucial moment is never an isolated phenomenon. In fact, it is related to the transitions in China's education system. In fiscal reform, the state has retreated from the previous role of the sole provider of education services in China. With the increasingly diversified funding, schools have become the site where different social forces are manifesting their own positions in Chinese education and seeking the maximized interest in the school system. With the fiscal reform has come a diversified administrative management in Chinese schools. The central government and the MOE started to allow their administrative subdivisions to participate in building a multi-layer management structure in Chinese education, where the central agencies function at the level of macro-regulation, but the local agencies work at a more immediate level in specific affairs (CCPCC, 1993). In the broad education reform, the

paradoxical role of state in the tension between education centralization and decentralization has become prominent. The central state is somewhat willing to relieve itself of the heavy burden of maintaining a highly centralized education system financially and administratively. However, the reduced role of central state in education becomes a pressing concern of loss of control, when more work is transferred to the local level. Compared to the fiscal and administrative reforms in Chinese education, the curriculum system is the last area over which the central state is willing to loosen its control.

Historically, the unification of school curriculum is seen as the core of Chinese education. In imperial China (134 BC - AD 1912), the dynasties kept changing, but the supreme position of Confucianism in state schools was never replaced. One of the central beliefs in Confucianism is *li* (礼), which stresses the structured order for society and proper behaviors for individual members. Thus, a hierarchized governance model was justified by Confucianism. By legitimizing Confucianism as the state ideology, the dynasties justified a highly structured governance model and thus strengthened the centralized state power. The idea about unification and centralization were continually reinterpreted by the followers of Confucianism, and practiced by the regimes for thousands of years. Ultimately, the emphasis on China as a unitary nation under centralized controlling has penetrated into the core of Chinese culture, history, politics and society.

After 1949, the political philosophy of Confucianism was rejected by the socialist regime, but the tradition of espousing a sole dominant ideology in schools has been continually used to maintain a centralized controlling over China's education system. In 1949, as the Chinese Communist Party gained the full control of the Chinese Mainland, the Party found it was far from fostering a strong identification with the state, especially since the state had been disintegrated for such a long time and had witnessed so many regime shifts. Furthermore, the socialist regime faced daunting problems in economic and social stability inside the country and hostility against communist China outside the country. To tie the country together under the name of People's Republic of China, the Party was dedicated to building a cohesive national identity for all Chinese people. Following the tradition of building a unitary nation through indoctrinating a set of unified ideology, schools were seen as site for the distribution of prescribed knowledge promoting the superiority of communism and the importance of political loyalty. Thus, it became imperative to exert tight control over the school curricula. Centralization was the most direct and effective means to ensure the unification and conformity of school curricula taught in schools across the state.

Since the initiation of Chinese economic reform in 1979, the national goal of China has already shifted from building national cohesion and identification with the socialist regime to developing socialist modernization. However, what has not changed is that Chinese education is treated as a part of the state apparatus serving the

unified national goal of a particular historical moment rather than an autonomous social device with its own scope and purpose. With the resurgence of market ideology and global discourse of decentralizing public services, various social sectors in China are calling for a more inclusive curriculum system to address their diverse needs and interests. The curriculum system built in the reform has become more open to local innovations and incentives in province-based and school-based curricula.

In order to restrict the strength, direction and process of the current curriculum reform in China, centralized decentralization is more like a strategic imperative in reinforcing the monopolistic authority of the central state over Chinese education in nature. In fact, as Mok Ka-Ho (2001) observes, "[E]ssentially, the role of the state changes from one carrying out most of the work of education itself, but it still determines where the work will be done and by whom" (p. 127). The crucial point to make is that, by tightly holding authority in hand, even though more work can be done at the local level, the central state continues to steer the Chinese curriculum. In fact, in Chinese schools, the content of schooling is accredited by the central state system and under the hierarchical supervision, and the flexibility in designing local-based curricula is administrated by the central state. In this sense, the curriculum system in China is still highly nationalized.

To a great degree, the decentralization reform in the form of deconcentration is largely under the realistic pressure of fixing the narrowness of the unified national curriculum. As a result, the decentralization process in the current Chinese curriculum

reform remains at the superficial level. The central state does not intend to transfer any real authority of curriculum governance to the periphery, but rather uses the national curriculum as a powerful tool to boost a strategic control from the top over China's curriculum system. The unification and conformity in the implementation of the national curriculum fits P. Watkins's (1993) argument that the centralized decentralization becomes the means to "avoid the loss of control, authoritative communication and managerial scrutiny" (p. 10).

In the early years of the People's Republic of China, the urgent need to form a unified national identity explains why the central state could easily exert its coercive force across the entire state. However, when the education system expands in complexity and reform goes deep in all aspects, the centralized decentralization reform in the curriculum system must be reexamined. Why is the central state unwilling to transfer its authority over its curriculum system? What factors distinguish curriculum reform from other reforms in Chinese education? How is the central authority actualized through a unified curriculum system? The answers rely on inquiries into the social and political nature of the nation curriculum.

Chapter 4 National Curriculum as Monopolistic Authority

Centralized decentralization improves diversity and inclusion in China's curriculum system. However, school curriculum is still the last area that the central state is willing to decentralize (Hawkins, 2006; Bray, 1999). The current curriculum reform is moving cautiously in line with the national education policy and dedicated to the national goals of education. In transferring work to the local level, the central state keeps a close watch on the work done at the local level and ensures that reform follows the desired pathway. In the current curriculum system, the national curriculum formulated at the state level dominates the classrooms and the implementation of national curriculum policies is under the strict supervision of the central state. The national curriculum becomes an effective means by which the central state's authority is maintained. Why does the central authority move so cautiously in any changes in the curriculum system? Why is a mandatory national curriculum needed? To answer these questions, this chapter concentrates on the social and political function of school curriculum. On the one hand, this chapter examines the sociological nature of the Chinese national curriculum, demonstrating the disciplinary mechanism functioning in regulating schooling. On the other hand, the chapter analyzes the politics of the national curriculum by illustrating the hegemonic mechanism operating in the Chinese curriculum system.

4.1 Sociological Nature of National Curriculum

4.1.1 Social Construction of Knowledge in Schooling

What counts as knowledge? This epistemological inquiry has been constantly reinvigorated from generation to generation. Following the lead of ancient Greek philosophy, traditional western epistemologists separate the mortal body from the immortal soul. The knower's physical body is an object related to a particular time and a particular place. However, the known is not limited to the body's sense experience, but rather is abstracted from the material world (Plato, Trans. 1892; Aristotle, Trans. 1924; Descartes, 1641/1984). The split between the knower and the known leads to a sharp distinction between individual belief and universal truth. The individual body is embedded in the material world, surrounded by the empirical senses, and influenced by its physical needs. The individual's ideas strongly rest on personal feelings, experiences and perceptions. Thus, individual belief is subjective and relative. On the other hand, embracing the dualisms in body and mind, it is assumed that knowledge is associated with the universal essence behind the phenomenal world and exists on its own. In this sense, only that which is absolutely true is Knowledge[9].

However, the absolutism and universalism of Knowledge are challenged by modern theorists in different ways. The critique on the transcendence of Knowledge

[9] In this chapter, to differentiate, Knowledge with capital "K" is a concept associated with the assumption that knowledge is absolute truth and absolute truth is independent from the empirical world.

begins with questioning the body and mind dualism that is the fundamental assumption centered in western traditional epistemology. The key point is drawing attention to the ignored role of the knower in the knowing process. In presenting her *(e)pistemology*[10], Barbara Thayer-Bacon (2003) begins with the assumption that "all people are social beings" (p. 7):

> We develop a sense of self through our relationships with others, and we need a sense of self in order to become potential knowers….Not only are all people social beings, we are contextual social beings. All of us have unique contexts that affect who we are and how we interpret the world. We are situated people who are embedded in a particular setting as well as embodied within a particular body. With our unique bodies we experience the world around us certain ways and not others. And, due to our embeddedness we inherit a past at birth, and are affected by our environment, including our social environment. The social practices that surround us promote us to believe certain beliefs and not others. How people begin to make sense of the world is due to their contextuality, including their own subjective experiences as well as their social setting, and its past. (p. 7-8)

[10] In order to break from the traditional definition of epistemology as transcendent, Barbara Thayer-Bacon (2003) uses "(e)epistemology" in her book *Rational "(e)pistemologies".* By demonstrating the association between the knower and the known, Barbara Thayer-Bacon argues that knowing is socially constructed by embedded, embodied people who are relating to each other.

Emphasizing the embeddedness and contextuality of the knower, Thayer-Bacon offers a relational perspective in reconsidering the role of the knower in the knowing process. Following the assumption that knowers are social beings in relations, the strong association between the knower and the known becomes obvious.

Being situated in a certain social setting, the knower develops a particular perspective and interprets reality from his or her own standpoint. The individual body is embedded in the material world, surrounded by the empirical senses, and influenced by its physical needs. The individual knower's ideas and thoughts deeply rest on his or her personal feelings, experiences and perceptions. Thus, the knower's belief is subjective and relative. More importantly, it is almost impossible to bracket out the knower's own situatedness and embeddedness in their effort to know. In this sense, the knower plays a central role in the knowing process. The known is in the empirical world and not independent from the knower, but strongly associated with the knower's subjective and relative beliefs. To know is not simply to discover transcendent truth[11]. *What counts as knowledge?* At this moment, the answer becomes ambiguous.

[11] Definitely, there is a need to justify truth claim. In fact, in Thayer-Bacon's book *Relational "(e)pistomology*, she develops an in-deep discussion about Dewey's "warranted assertion" and James' "satisfactory truths". Thayer-Bacon, herself, also proposes "qualified relativism" as an approach to build knowledge. However, this dissertation doesn't intend to answer what is true and how to justify truth. The focus here is the sociological meaning of "knowledge" as well as how it is related to reality.

Closing the divide between the knower and the known, the knowing process involves the communication and negotiation between the knowers who are situated and embedded in diverse social settings. The knower perceives reality via his or her experience in everyday life. Exchanging ideas and thoughts within the community of knowers, individual knowers acknowledge that they are differentiated from each other in terms of their unique subjectivities, but also recognize that they could hold shared beliefs within the community. In practice, there is a need to determine whether their beliefs are reliable and worthy of acting on. In John Dewey's (1938/1991) words, an agreement between the knowers must be reached to establish an epistemic claim. In constant communication and negotiation, the contextualized social beings build a common sense of what is real and what is certain. By nature, the process to build this common sense is an ever on-going inquiry of "knowledge". In this sense, "knowledge"[12] is socially-constructed. "What counts as knowledge?" is not a purely epistemological issue, exclusively for philosophical discussion, but also a complex sociological question related to socially contextualized human beings and their interpretations of realities.

The social constructive view of "knowledge" makes room for various possibilities in what to know and how to know. However, there is always a trend

[12] The quotation mark around "knowledge" is to distinguish it from the capitalized Knowledge with an assumption of transcendence. The quotation mark indicates that the use of "knowledge" is in a social constructivist sense. "knowledge" is not something settled and eternal, but something in a continual process of social construction.

toward building a relatively unified knowledge system. Historically, it is common that some knowledge is well-preserved throughout time, but some disappears from public memory. Also, it is not rare that some knowledge is valued as cultural wealth at a particular time or in a particular place, but devalued in another condition. Even in a given social environment, some knowledge is treated as much more important than other knowledge and more deserving of investment and attention. That is to say, it is typical that a single set of structured "knowledge" is treated as the most powerful one, monopolizing all discourses. This monopolistic "knowledge" is best manifested in school curriculum, which is designed for teaching younger generations across a nation state.

In effect, transcendental epistemology has been firmly embedded in the norms and routines of schooling for a long time. In schooling, Knowledge is reified as school curriculum. Highlighting objectivism and absolutism as inherent features of Knowledge, the academic culture in schools stresses the quest for universal truth that is detached from the subjective individuals and contextual experience. Such a view implicitly assumes that pupils and teachers are passive receivers and transmitters of Knowledge, respectively. As a result, the intentionality and initiatives of the knower in the learning process are ignored. Schooling is assumed to be the procedure by which the settled, eternal truth about the world is indoctrinated to the knower. There is little possibility of creating new "knowledge". Consequently, the uniformity of school curriculum is taken for granted. The myth of transcendent Knowledge may be a

rationalistic excuse, but it is an insufficient explanation, failing to recognize the association between the knower and the known.

Grounded on the constructivist paradigm, “knowledge” is produced, maintained and transmitted through negotiation within a supporting community of knowers. The members are contextualized social beings who are actively interpreting their perspective views. In other words, the knower is not passively accepting knowledge, but also engaged in creating “knowledge”. By viewing the knower as a situated agent, both the pupils and teachers in schools produce the content of “knowledge” in their joint work and intersubjective exchanges. Schooling becomes a process by which pupils and teachers make meanings of realities together. Thus, instead of a one-dimensional, uniform content of teaching, school curriculum becomes a composite of diverse meanings, perspectives and ways of thinking that are socially correlated. Undoubtedly, socially conceptualized “knowledge” conflicts with the practice of national curriculum, which emphasizes unified content and conformed implementation. This contradiction may not be as simple as it appears. Behind the contradiction is a fact about the social function of a national curriculum.

4.1.2 Social Discipline Mechanism in Imposing National Curriculum

Taking the situatedness and contextuality of the knower into account, classroom interaction may be a process to make meanings of reality and then construct “knowledge”. Epistemologically, the uniformity of school curriculum is untenable. However, the advocacy for a national curriculum deliberately ignores the social

constructive nature of "knowledge", highlighting instead the national curriculum as an assembly of settled, organized Knowledge most appropriate for teaching in schools. Moreover, the national curriculum is mandatory for all schools in the nation state. That is to say, the implementation of the national curriculum implies constant subjection and obedience to state power. By imposing conformity and uniformity to schools in the state, the national curriculum becomes, in effect, "a discipline" over schooling.

Discipline, in Foucault's (1975/1995) definition, "is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedure, levels of apparatus; targets; it is a 'physics' or an 'anatomy' of power, a technology" (p.138). Foucault writes,

> the disciplines create complex spaces that are at once architectural, functional and hierarchical. It is spaces that provide fixed positions and permit circulation; they carve out individual segments and establish operational links; they mark places and indicate values; they guarantee the obedience of individuals, but also a better economy of time and gesture. They are mixed spaces: real because they govern the disposition of buildings, rooms, furniture, but also ideal, because they are projected over this arrangement of characterizations, assessments, hierarchies. (p. 148)

That is to say, when being disciplined, the individual is regulated to a certain position and thus defined by that position as well as by the meanings assigned to the position. However, the procedure of discipline does not end at training docile bodies which "may be placed, moved and articulated on others" (p. 146). The manipulable body makes meticulous control over the individual possible. Foucault (1975/1995) argues that "[D]iscipline is no longer simply an art of distributing bodies, of extracting time from them and accumulating it, but of composing forces in order to obtain an efficient machine" (p. 164). With this particular focus on details, the discipline mechanism is not only processing docile bodies but also molding submissive minds. Thus, Foucault further points out that disciplines become general formulas of domination and that increased disciplinary coercion is linked with an increased domination.

According to Foucault (1975/1995), the chief function of disciplinary power is to train "the moving, confused, useless multitudes of bodies and forces into a multiplicity of individual elements—small, separate cells, organic autonomies, genetic identities and continuities, combinatory segment" (p. 170). The success of disciplinary power depends on three elements: hierarchical observation, normalized judgment, and examination. Foucault describes that hierarchical observation as an apparatus by which disciplinary power is exercised through the maximum surveillance in well-organized sites, such as schools, hospitals and military camps, because "it is everywhere and always alert", "leaving no zone of shade and constantly

supervising the very individuals"; and it is "absolutely discreet", functioning "permanently and largely in silence" (P. 176). For Foucault, normalization of judgment aims at correcting the slightest departures from correct behavior through punishment for infraction or reward for compliance. Examination is central to the procedure of disciplining individuals into the object of power, since it is the combination of the first two means. Examination introduces individuality into the field of documentation, a mass of writing fixes the individual, and also makes the individual a case that can be analyzed and described.

In *Discipline and Punishment*, Foucault (1975/1995) repeatedly cites schools as examples of disciplinary institutions where the mechanism of control is expressed and maintained. He focuses on how schools discipline pupils through analysis of the spatial arrangements of schools, norms set through continuous rewards for behavior and school examinations as the approach to rank and document the pupils. However, Foucault's concept of discipline is not only appropriate for analyzing how to train docile individuals in some well-organized institutions. Foucault himself doesn't intend to use the concept in so narrow a sense. Like most of his studies, the genealogical investigation of discipline is meant to represent the operation of power in the mechanism of discipline which pervades everywhere, throughout history and in any form.

Modern schools do not have the same appearance as those described in Foucault's (1975/1995) study. However, they have inherited certain basic

characteristics from the schools of the eighteenth century. The primary role and function of schooling has not significantly changed. Modern schools are still places specialized for a particular end—*educating* people. The mechanism of discipline still works, but has become more subtle and ulterior. The implementation of a national curriculum is illustrative of how the mechanism of discipline works in modern schools by continually normalizing centrally imposed national standards and examining the process and consequences to the letter in daily teaching and learning.

4.1.3 Discipline Mechanism in Chinese National Curriculum

In a large universe of potential knowledge, there must be a variety of ways of interpreting the world and making meaning of realities. However, diversities in "knowledge" are assumed to be a threat to a consensus culture and ultimately destabilize a homogenous society. Therefore, there is a strong need for a social filter to resolve diverse discourses into a set of unitary social meanings. Historically, school curriculum is used as the most effective social apparatus by which a particular set of basic norms is continually reinforced and deeply internalized into the individual's thoughts and behaviors. In order to reach a consensus, not all perspectives and meanings are allowed to be represented in classrooms. The policy of a national curriculum is adopted to ensure that only a single set of knowledge is allowed to be transmitted to the younger generations.

Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the policy of a unified national curriculum has been applied to Chinese schools. Several

rounds of curriculum reform have not shaken the supreme position of the mandatory national curriculum in Chinese education. Usually, it is assumed that the national curriculum represents the knowledge that we must teach to the younger generations in China. In other words, the selective knowledge in the national curriculum is treated as the knowledge with the most worth in the context of China. In organizing knowledge into a settled framework, national standards coupled with a rigid supervision procedure are laid down to ensure the national curriculum is distributed to the pupils in a uniform fashion. In this sense, the national curriculum is legislated and spread as *official knowledge*[13] in China.

Recently, proponents have claimed that a national curriculum is one way to improve education quality and establish benchmarks to evaluate schools. Following this trend, in China, the idea of a unified national curriculum has won wide acceptance as a way to secure equal educational opportunity for all pupils and to establish national standards for assessing education quality across classrooms. As announced in the 2006 amended *Compulsory Education Law* as well as the 2001 *Outline of Basic Education Curriculum Reform* (Pilot), the purpose of national curriculum is to equalize quality education provided in Chinese schools through standardizing the content taught across schools. Michael Apple (1990) asks American

[13] The concept of "official knowledge" is borrowed from Michael Apple (1993). Apple's examination of official knowledge is to analyze the politics of school curriculum in the United State. In this chapter, the term "official knowledge" is used in the similar way as Michael Apple, but the analysis focuses on the policy and practice of national curriculum in China.

educators, "[A]re things as they seem?" (p. 129). This question should also be asked in China at this transitional moment. Schooling is also a process to make meanings and "produce" people. The national curriculum is not simply about literacy or numeracy skills taught in classrooms, but bears more socio-cultural meanings than what is claimed in the governmental directives. Acknowledging the sociological function of national curriculum, the central state has made no attempt to shake the central role of national curriculum in China's curriculum system in the top-down reform.

The current curriculum reform is a response to the critique of the narrowness of the Chinese curriculum system. To accommodate more local input, a three-level curriculum system has emerged. As clearly stated in the *Outlines of Basic Education Curriculum Reform* (Pilot) issued by the MOE in 2001, the current curriculum system includes:

1) National curriculum: The MOE is responsible for drawing up overall plans of the basic education curriculum, laying down national policies on basic education curriculum management, deciding state subjects and required instructional hours for each subjects, setting national curriculum standards and introducing the new curriculum evaluation system.
2) Provincial curriculum: The provincial education departments assume the responsibility for setting out provincial plans to carry out the national curriculum and laying out local curriculum development and implementation

plans. With approval from the MOE, the provincial education departments are allowed to formulate provincial curriculum plans and standards for schools under their own jurisdictions.

3) School-based curriculum: while carrying out the national curriculum and provincial curriculum, schools are allowed to develop school-based curriculum based on school conditions as well as students' needs and interests. However, the school-based curriculum must be under the guidance and supervision of education bureaucracy at all levels.

Though the three-level curriculum system encourages innovations based on local or school conditions, the national curriculum still constrains flexibility in curriculum development and implementation in China. In fact, being mandated by the central state, the national curriculum regulates all aspects of schooling in great detail, including building course structure, setting up curriculum standards, imposing Beijing-based textbook approval procedures, and implementing standardized testing as the evaluation method. Meanwhile, the MOE clearly (2001a) states that the instruction hours allocated to the national curriculum are suggested to be 80 to 84 percent of the total school hours. Provincial curriculum and school curriculum largely cover elective subjects or activity-based practice courses which are seen as necessary supplements for the national curriculum. In this sense, the national curriculum is still central to the entire curriculum system, giving orientation to Chinese education in accordance with the central state's policy preference (Table 4.1&4.2).

Table 4.1 Subject structure of compulsory education in China (MOE, 2001a)

<table>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="9">Grades</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="10">Subjects</td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2" rowspan="3">Morality and Life</td><td colspan="4" rowspan="2">Morality and Society</td><td>Ideology and Morality</td><td>Ideology and Morality</td><td>Ideology and Morality</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">History and Society (or choice of History and Geography)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Science</td><td colspan="3">Science (or choice of biology, physics and Chemistry)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Chinese</td><td>Chinese</td><td>Chinese</td><td>Chinese</td><td>Chinese</td><td>Chinese</td><td>Chinese</td><td>Chinese</td><td>Chinese</td></tr>
<tr><td>Math</td><td>Math</td><td>Math</td><td>Math</td><td>Math</td><td>Math</td><td>Math</td><td>Math</td><td>Math</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>Foreign Language</td><td>Foreign Language</td><td>Foreign Language</td><td>Foreign Language</td><td>Foreign Language</td><td>Foreign Language</td><td>Foreign Language</td></tr>
<tr><td>P.E.</td><td>P.E.</td><td>P.E.</td><td>P.E.</td><td>P.E.</td><td>P.E.</td><td>P.E. and Health</td><td>P.E. and Health</td><td>P.E. and Health</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="9">Art (or choice of Music, Fine Arts)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2"></td><td colspan="7">Comprehensive Activity and Practice</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="9">Local and school-based courses</td></tr>
</table>

Table 4.2 Proportions of subjects in total sessions of compulsory education (MOE, 2001a)

	Grades									Proper-ion in Total Sessions in 9 year
Subjects	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
	Morality and Life	Morality and Life	Morality and Society	Morality and Society	Morality and Society	Morality and Society	Ideology and Morality	Ideology and Morality	Ideology and Morality	7～9%
							History and Society (or choice of History and Geography)			3～4%
			Science	Science	Science	Science	Science (or choice of biology, physics and Chemistry)			7～9%
	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	20～22%
	Math	Math	Math	Math	Math	Math	Math	Math	Math	13～15%
			Foreign Language	Foreign Language	Foreign Language	Foreign Language	Foreign Language	Foreign Language	Foreign Language	6～8%
	P.E.	P.E.	P.E.	P.E.	P.E.	P.E.	P.E. and Health	P.E. and Health	P.E. and Health	10～11%
	Art (or choice of Music, fine arts)									9～11%
		Comprehensive Activity and Practice								16～20%
	Local and school-based courses									
Weekly Total (Sessions)	26	26	30	30	30	30	34	34	34	274
Yearly Total (Sessions)	910	910	1050	1050	1050	1050	1190	1190	1122	9522

Note: 1. The total sessions in 9-year compulsory education is counted on 35 weeks a year.

2. The course of comprehensive activity and practice includes information technology education, research-based learning, community service and social practice, labor and vocational skill education

The core of the national curriculum is the *National Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education* (《义务教育课程标准》), which was officially issued by the MOE in 2001. To replace the over-prescribed *National Teaching Syllabuses*, which regulated every detail in the process of learning and teaching, the 2001 *Curriculum Standards* were created to provide national guidelines for core subjects in schools. Basically, the *National Curriculum Standard* for each subject is formulated in a standardized format, including the following sections:

1) Preface: Introduces the characteristics of a specific subject and the basic ideas of curriculum design for that subject.
2) Objectives: Defines the general objectives and the specific objectives for each stage, including Grade 1-2, Grade 3-4, Grade 5-6, and Grade 7-9.
3) Content Standards: Specifies the knowledge, concepts and skills that the students should acquire at each grade level.
4) Suggestions for implementation: Provides guidance on classroom pedagogy, textbook compilation, evaluation methods and educational resources utilization.
5) Terminology: Explains and clarifies key terms in the National Curriculum *Standards.*

Undeniably, the *National Curriculum Standards* accommodates more flexibility for curriculum development. The *National Curriculum Standards* provides a general framework of guidance and criteria for classroom teaching, performance evaluation

and textbook development, but leaves room for local education bureaucracies and schools to design their own plans to meet the expected national goals. However, the appearance of a softened policy stance in curriculum control doesn't change the fact that the Chinese national curriculum is still highly structured.

In the newly established three-level curriculum system in China, the national curriculum is fundamental to schooling. With the particular emphasis on national standards, the national curriculum itself becomes a powerful means to constrain deviation and foster docility by regulating, evaluating, supervising and correcting activities in schools. Meanwhile, with the mandatory implementation of national curriculum, the central state firmly upholds uniformity in the content of schooling and conformity in the practice of national curriculum policies. Based on this principle, a strategic control over Chinese school education is realized. As a result, even though the on-going reform allows diverse classroom pedagogies, multiple textbook adoption and local-based curriculum, teaching and learning in any particular school is rigorously conformed to the framework set by the central state. Local autonomy in school curriculum is extremely limited.

To a great degree, the national curriculum has become a state apparatus to maintain a strict disciplinary mechanism in China's school system. With little provision for flexibility, the national curriculum sets up the fundamental framework to regulate the behavior of individual schools at the state level. In carrying out the mandatory national curriculum, the central state could easily impose a set of coercive

disciplines in classrooms across the state by normalizing a strategic control from the top and regularly examining the conformity in local practice.

The national curriculum itself is composed of a series of rules, specifying teaching objectives, defining learning standards and providing suggested pedagogical guidelines at the central level. In imposing the national curriculum, the central state repeatedly indoctrinates school administrators, teachers and pupils with the idea that uniform content of schooling must be achieved in their daily work. The *National Curriculum Standard*s becomes a clearly-explained instruction manual for these educators. The *Education Law* (1995) and the amended *Compulsory Education Law* (2006) put the mandatory implementation of national curriculum into a legal form. This procedure intentionally identifies delimitations between the permitted and the forbidden, unifies behaviors and excludes deviations. As a result, the national curriculum is normalized as a sole set of standards for teaching and learning in every classroom. A homogeneous pattern of schooling is generated.

The implementation of the *National Curriculum Standards* is coupled with standardized achievement testing at different levels. Under the pressure of being assessed by high-stakes testing[14], students and teachers are encouraged to be strictly observant of the national curriculum. Those who comply with the rules of the standardized testing system may survive in the school system and those who are doing better than others in the testing may be treated as prospective social elites. Those who

[14] In China, the outcome of a standardized test is used as the sole determining factor for making a decision on selecting students to higher level education.

refuse to follow the rules or fail to prove their ability to live within the rules are excluded by the school system. Besides using standardized testing as the ultimate method to evaluate students and teachers, a nationwide network of education inspection also exists to supervise behaviors of schools and teachers. After the reestablishment of the Office of National Education Inspectorate under the direct leadership of the MOE in 1986, its local agencies have rapidly spread across the state and worked jointly with the local administrative bureaucracy at all levels. The role of the hierarchized inspection system in Chinese education has been increasingly strengthened through monitoring the implementation of the national curriculum at the local level.

By normalizing the idea of national standards, the application of high-stakes testing and the construction of a network of education inspection, the practice of national curriculum in China becomes Foucault's (1975/1995) technique of "examination". It makes every detail in schooling visible. Thus, it is possible to evaluate, to judge, to classify and to document. Also, it is easy to integrate all data into a cumulative system in such a way that everyone is trackable. Finally, examination ensures "the great disciplinary functions of distribution and classification, maximum extraction of forces and time, continuous genetic accumulation, optimum combination of aptitudes and, thereby, the fabrication of cellular, organic, genetic and combinatory individuality" (Foucault, 1975/1995, p. 192).

In sum, while retreating from direct interference in schooling, the central state of China successfully maintains a rigorous strategic control over the operation of schooling by normalizing a unified national curriculum as the most authoritative directive for schooling in the state. In pursuing conformity of implementation, the central state not only indoctrinates those involved in the system with an idea of national standards, but also normalizes the imposition of the national curriculum. Meanwhile, the examination system safeguards the homogeneity created through the normalization. In this view, the national curriculum in China functions to maintain the school system as a modern disciplinary space which intends not only to train docile bodies but also to process submissive minds. However, the knower does not passively accept knowledge, but also engages in creating knowledge. Students and educators working in the disciplinary space are still active agents involved in the process of constructing knowledge. Thus, there is always a possibility that the authority of the national curriculum at the central level could be challenged from below. In that situation, the state power is the mighty force which solidifies the disciplinary mechanism operating through the national curriculum. The involvement of the state power politicalizes national curriculum as a hegemonic mechanism.

4.2 Politics of Unified National Curriculum

4.2.1 Power Relations in Selective Knowledge

In 1861, English philosopher Herbert Spencer (1861/1890) stated that "[B]efore there can be a rational curriculum, we must settle which things it most concerns us to know, …we must determine the relative values of knowledge" (p. 13-4). For Spencer,

"What Knowledge Is of Most Worth?" is the question of questions in education. To seek the answer to the question, Spencer made a list of human activities arranged by descending value and concluded that science is of most worth, and even science should be stratified according to how particular knowledge is related to one's life. Spencer's naturalistic-evolutionary belief makes his answer controversial, but two hundred years later his question is still powerful for all practitioners in education. The crucial point made by Spencer is that out of the vast universe of what is known, only some can be labeled as knowledge; within the body of knowledge, some should be valued more. In this sense, knowledge is hierarchically structured.

In the contemporary education system, legitimated by state power, the national curriculum represents an assembly of official knowledge that is considered to be the most prestigious in a national context. With the involvement of the state, the production of national curriculum becomes a complex process operating on all kinds of bonded social actors. The state is the site where various social forces present themselves and also struggle to legitimize their perceptions of the realities. The state is also an arena of conflict and negotiation between diverse social discourses. Consequently, the national curriculum becomes politically contestable terrain.

A national curriculum represents the knowledge of most worth in a particular national context at a particular historical moment. The production of the national curriculum is a process of selecting, organizing and representing "knowledge" within a structured framework. It is impossible and unnecessary to package all potential

content into school courses. Only selected ones can be taught in schools and in an organized form. Who selects what should be taught in schools and by what criteria? These two crucial issues are intentionally overlooked. In effect, the selection tradition must involve particular principles and reflect the most powerful values in the social context. In this sense, what knowledge is eligible to be taught in schools is not a simple academic query. In Michael Apple's (1996) words,

> whether we like it or not, differential power intrudes into the very heart of curriculum, teaching and evaluation. What counts as knowledge, the ways in which it is organized, who is empowered to teach it, what counts as an appropriate display of having learned it, and—just as critically—who is allowed to ask and answer all these questions, are part and parcel of how dominance and subordination are reproduced and altered in this society. There is, then, always a politics of official knowledge, a politics that embodies conflict over what some regard as simply neutral descriptions of the world and what others regard as elite conceptions that empower some groups while disempowering others. (p. 23)

A typical national curriculum consists of core subjects, instructional materials, quality evaluation methods and achievement goals. Who selects and organizes the knowledge in this particular form? In terms of national curriculum, the central state makes the decision that only selective curriculum should be taught in schools and in a

specified form. To carry out the policy, a series of administrative methods are taken to guide and regulate local education departments/bureaus and schools in implementing the national curriculum. Meanwhile, the systematic selection operated by state-accredited experts and institutionalized distribution under the control from the center compose the legitimation process to identify the national curriculum as the sole assembly of official knowledge in the state. As a result, the national curriculum becomes the most prestigious curriculum in a particular national context and the entire curriculum system is hieratically structured. The mere act of asking who selects and organizes the knowledge in the national curriculum is not sufficient. Further questions should be asked: What knowledge is the most worth passing on to the young? Why is a hierarchized structure needed?

The national curriculum is declared to be that knowledge which we must have and the knowledge for all. The legitimation process also reinforces the supreme position of the national curriculum in the knowledge system. However, the national curriculum is only the result of the selection, but it does not answer questions related to what knowledge deserves to be preserved and transmitted to the younger generations. In reality, not all social sectors get the chance to make their discourse public. Also, not all public discourses could be legitimated as official knowledge. The crucial issue in the selection and legitimation is not what has been chosen, but what values are used as the criteria for choosing. In other words, what really matters is the selection criteria that determines what knowledge is of the most worth.

Apple (1993) argues that "knowledge is filtered through a complicated set of political screens and decisions before it gets to be declared legitimate" (p. 68). Legitimating certain knowledge as official knowledge is actually a process of legitimating the selection criteria. With the deep involvement of the state power, it is assumed that the legitimate knowledge is the knowledge of the dominant social group. This is far too simplistic, ignoring the complex power relations behind the production of legitimate knowledge. In fact, just as the formation of the state is continually in process, the conflict and negotiation between different social forces are continually in process. However, the primary purpose of the state is certain—to govern its members. A series of institutional means may regulate people's behaviors, but may not work well in building consensus in people's minds. An ideological apparatus is needed. For the state, schools are the disciplinary space for instilling behaviors in the pupils as well as shaping their minds. Consequently, school curriculum must be integrated into the ideological apparatus.

There is no pure consensus in "knowledge". Foucault (1978/1990) draws attention to the heterogeneity of knowledge/discourse as well as to the dynamics in power relations. Consistent with his view of the immanent power and the immanent resistance against power, he further notes that "we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies" (p. 100). In this sense, the

dominated groups' discourses could be the resistant force to deconstruct existing power relations at any possible moment. Also, the dominant group could make compromise with the dominated groups via conversation. Linking knowledge with power, Foucault argues "[D]iscourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it" (p. 101). Foucault makes clear his view that power and discourse/knowledge cannot be separated: in manipulating knowledge we exercise power and in exercising power we manipulate knowledge.

With the Foucaudian view of knowledge and power, the political nature of the national curriculum may be perceived. What knowledge is included or excluded in the national curriculum is not simply the result of an act of domination, but a consequence of the compromise between diverse social discourses. In the complex and unstable network of power relations, knowledge can be manipulated as an instrument for maintaining an existing structure or order. Meanwhile, power relations are also inherent in the production and distribution of certain knowledge. At this point, the principle of legitimating selective knowledge has been revealed. That is to what extent this particular knowledge would contribute to create a common sense that enables the existing framework of power relations to be maintained without the necessity of resorting to overt domination. How to create this common sense through manipulating knowledge must be related to the concept of hegemony.

4.2.2 Political Hegemony Mechanism in Imposing National Curriculum

For Antonio Gramsci (1971), the supremacy of a social group substantiates itself in two ways, as "domination" and as "intellectual and moral leadership". Domination tends to "liquidate" all antagonistic groups by armed force, while intellectual and moral leadership is attained by consent rather than coercive force of one class or group over others. The latter form of "the supremacy of a social group" is hegemony. To be more specific, Gramsci (1971) describes hegemony as:

> The spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is "historically caused" by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production. (p. 12)

Here, Gramsci refers to hegemony as an imposed social consent in which a dominant social discourse is spoken and represented in the thoughts and behaviors of a population.

It is Gramsci's great contribution that he recognizes the presence of hegemony in the actions and thoughts of ordinary people. Though Gramsci avoids using Marxist terms such as class, proletariat, and bourgeoisie in defining hegemony, as a Marxist philosopher, Gramsci still views hegemony as an oppression exercised by the dominant class in a Marxist sense. Raymond Williams (1977) further develops Gramsci's idea, extending his insight into the ulterior distinction between hegemony, culture and ideology. Williams refers to culture as "a whole social process, in which

men define and shape their whole lives" (p. 108); ideology is "a system of meaning and values, it is the expression or projection of a particular class interest" (p. 108). Hegemony goes beyond culture in "its insistence on relating the 'whole' social process to a specific distribution of power and influence" (p. 108); hegemony exceeds ideology in "its refusal to equate consciousness with the articulate formal system" which can be and ordinarily is abstracted as a worldview or a class outlook (p. 109). That is to say, hegemony concentrates on the power relations between domination and subordination that saturate the very heart of culture, but it doesn't reduce all consciousness to an ideology which typically articulates the formal meanings, values and beliefs of a dominant class.

Distinguishing the three concepts into fine nuances, Williams (1972) explicitly defines hegemony as "the strongest sense of a 'culture', but a culture which has also to be seen as the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes" (p. 110). To be more detailed,

> It is a whole body of practices and expectations; over the whole of living: our senses, our assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meanings and values—constitutive and constituting—which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of the absolute

> because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in the areas of their lives. (p. 110)

Moreover, Williams (1977) notices that a lived hegemony is not a uniform, static and abstract structure, but an active construction in process. It continually saturates into the very heart of culture, and divides it into dominant culture, alternative culture and oppositional culture. As he puts it,

> In practice, that is, hegemony can never be singular. Its internal structures are highly complex, as can readily be seen in any concrete analysis. Moreover (and this is crucial, reminding us of the necessary thrust of the concept), it does not just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, and challenged by pressures not at all its own. We have then to add to the concept of hegemony the concepts of counter-hegemony and alternative hegemony, which are real and persistent elements of practice. (p. 112-113)

Giving insight into the very nature of hegemony, Williams makes his crucial point clearly, that hegemony deeply saturates the whole process of living, dynamically interacting with the economic, political and social systems. He emphasizes the fact of domination, but also views hegemony as a process. In that process, education plays a fundamental role in preserving and transmitting the dominant culture.

According to Williams (1973), education is involved in the continual making and remaking of an effective dominant culture and educational institutions are agencies in distributing that dominant culture. Williams particularly notices the "selective tradition" in the process of education: "that which, within the terms of an effective dominant culture, is always passed off as 'the tradition', 'the significant past'" (p. 9). William further stresses that the selectivity is the point: among a whole possible area of past and present, only certain meanings and practices are chosen, while certain other meanings and practices are neglected and excluded. More crucially, "some of these meanings are reinterpreted, diluted, or put into forms which support or at least do not contradict other elements within the effective dominant culture" (p. 9). The selective process in school education, by nature, is the hegemonic process in school education, by which the meaning of reality and living is redefined based on dominant culture, and the existing relation of domination-subordination is normalized as every member's consciousness.

Highlighting the so-called neutrality of knowledge, school curriculum is declared to go beyond the interest of any social groups. The national curriculum is also legitimated in the name of the common interest or general will of the people. However, Williams's point should not be ignored. Hegemony saturates the whole process of living in an ulterior way. The national curriculum is not an exception. In reality, the dominant group not only sets limits on the selection process for formulating a system of school curriculum, but also exerts pressure on the

organization and affects distribution of the content of the system. The political purpose is to create a way for dominant culture to reinforce an already existing power relation. It is obvious that the dominant group plays a central role in the complex network of power relations and in creating a dominant culture by manipulating discourses and making compromise with different social interests. Through legitimating selective curriculum, the dominant culture could be easily ideologicalized into a set of imposed ideas and notions. However, as Williams (1973) writes,

> if what we learn were merely an imposed ideology, or if it were only the isolable meanings and practices of the ruling class, or of a section of the ruling class, which gets imposed on others, occupying merely the top of our minds, it would be—and one would be glad—a very much easier thing to overthrow. (p. 9)

In order to continually affirm the dominant culture as inevitable and commonsensical, the process of hegemony occurs. In diverse national contexts, the hegemonic process operating in formal education system varies in terms of intensity, scale and methods. Nevertheless, to internalize the imposed ideology into a saturated consciousness in everyday life, school curriculum, especially the national curriculum is considered the most direct hegemonic apparatus.

4.2.3 Hegemony Process in Chinese National Curriculum

In People's Republic of China (PRC), the history of current national curriculum can be traced back to the early 1950s. Chinese national curriculum is formulated

under the direct leadership and supervision of the central state. In the early years of the PRC, the emphasis on a unitary national curriculum had a strong ideological color. In 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officially declared the establishment of the PRC. However, for the socialist regime, it was just the beginning, not the end. The most imperative issues were how to form a unitary state and how to forge a national identity to tie the people to the state, especially when the people had witnessed so many regime shifts and the country had been disintegrated for such a long time. To create a cohesive identification with the socialist regime, the central state was dedicated to creating and indoctrinating a unitary socialist ideology into the population.

Following the establishment of the PRC, Chinese people were plunged into a series of socialist movements in economic, cultural and political areas. The interest of the Chinese proletarian class, the sole dominant group in new China, was repeatedly highlighted. For a new regime, the motive was obvious— to consolidate the socialist regime at all levels and in all aspects. From 1962 to 1965, the CCP initiated a nationwide Socialist Education Movement to propagate the ideas of class consciousness. As Orion Lewis and Jessica Teets (2008) describe,

> By maintaining tight control over school curriculum, the CCP was able to ensure that generations of youth were indoctrinated regarding the superiority of the communist system and the importance of political loyalty. This teaching was reinforced by the state-run media which

> served to disseminate CCP propaganda. In sum, the CCP designed a complex set of institutions that pervaded every aspect of the citizen's life and ensured that the CCP's messages of patriotism and anti-imperialism were heard by all. (p. 678)

In the Great Cultural Revolution, ideologicalized education reached its peak. The over-emphasis on class conflict and class consciousness caused nationwide chaos and brought the Chinese education system to a virtual halt from 1966 to 1976. After several waves of curriculum reforms, ideological indoctrination in the Chinese curriculum system is not as visible as before, except the patriotic themes in moral education classrooms. However, the strong need to maintain and transmit the dominant culture is still there. In the current reform, the changed socio-economic context of China makes this need much more imperative.

The transition from a command-based planned economy to a capital-oriented market economy has not only dramatically changed the economic structure of China, but also empowered local economic entities to be autonomous forces with consideration for their own interests and demands. The principle of market economy has encouraged these entities to compete with each other to gain maximized profit. As the economy increases in size and the society expands in complexity, the local autonomy grows and spreads. Thus, more and more conflicts of interest are happening, not only between regions, but also between the center and the localities (Zhao, 1994). To varying degrees, the rise of local autonomy has become the resistant

force challenging the existing power relation from below. The impact of increased local autonomy is not limited to the economic field. In the education sector, while the central state is retreating from its previous role as the sole provider of Chinese education, diverse social forces participate in operating schools. More crucially, they intend to establish a more inclusive curriculum system to address diversified local discourses. This diversification inevitably threatens the hegemonic social consciousness.

Meanwhile, with the development of communication and transportation technologies, the rapid traversing of flows of trade, migration and culture lead to an increased interconnectedness between people living in diverse locations. The exchange of ideas across national borders takes place instantaneously across the world. In China, global communication has manifested its potential in expanding the existing public sphere and provide easy access to dissident views. To a great degree, communication entails pluralism, diversity and two-way interaction and thereby reduces the potential for monolithic, centralized information control and direct or self-imposed censorship (Sussman, 1989). In other words, it cultivates heterogeneous discourse. For the dominant culture, the heterogeneity of social discourse is a provocative force with the ability to destabilize its authority and control.

To preserve the dominant culture, schooling is viewed as a social device for exerting pressure and imposing limits over social consciousness and discourse. National curriculum is the consequence of compromise and negation between diverse

social discourses. However, as Basil Bernstein (1990) points out that by the time selective knowledge gets into the national curriculum, it has been abstracted from its original context and then reinterpreted for use in a particular pedagogic text. This process enables the dominant group to constantly redefine and reshape the meanings of lived experience and reality, and implant a whole set of coded ideas, values and beliefs into the national curriculum. In other words, the central state, as the main agency of the dominant group could successfully transform the national curriculum into a hegemonic mechanism which justifies the interest of the dominant group and consolidates its domination, without the necessity of resorting to overt repression over the subordinated groups or formally articulating about their own ideology. Through schooling, the dominant culture becomes a saturating social consciousness distributed to whoever teaches and learns within the framework and then widely spread to the larger society. The expectation of the state is to build a stable identification with the dominant hegemony.

In the hierarchically structured curriculum system in China, the national curriculum is legitimated as the most authoritative one on the subject of what should be taught in which way. Meanwhile, national curriculum is put into effect through the power from the top of the state apparatus. The prescribed content, settled structure and mandatory implementation leave people with the impression that the national curriculum represents itself as the voice of the general will of the people. Thus, the Chinese national curriculum is declared to be the knowledge for all and the

knowledge we must have. In the day-to-day teaching and learning, the national curriculum regulates all aspects of schooling. Meanwhile, the imposition of this mandatory national curriculum is normalized. Ultimately, the national curriculum is used as an effective means to preserve and transmit the dominant culture, and gradually strengthen it as a norm or a fact that deeply saturates the consciousness of the society.

Apple (2003) argues that "[W]hether we like it or not, curriculum talk is power talk" (p. 7). The social construction of school knowledge and the politics of the selection process result in the inevitable tension between centralization and decentralization in the implementation of the national curriculum. The central state utilizes the national curriculum as a social device to determinate the boundary between what should be taught and what should not be taught in schools. Also, the supreme position of the national curriculum in the entire system becomes a coactive force to reinforce the values and beliefs of the dominant culture through schooling. However, the power relation is never stable: wherever there is power, there is resistance (Foucault, 1975/1995). The hegemonic process must be alert and responsive to the alternatives and oppositions which question or threaten its dominance (Williams, 1977). In this sense, reform must occur at some point in an attempt to readjust the power relations between the diverse social forces in China's curriculum system.

Both the changed economic structure inside of China and the global trend of decentralizing public sectors impact on the current Chinese curriculum reform and even lead to a series of relatively radical reform policies, from diversifying the fiscal system for Chinese education to transferring administrative management work to lower levels, as well as being deepened into deconcentrating curriculum development to the local level. However, the central state has never underestimated the sociological and political meanings of the school curriculum. In current curriculum reform, there is a much more intensive desire to preserve the existing structure of power relations and maintain a sole set of meanings of reality and living. Thus, even though faced with the critiques of narrowness and rigidity of the nationalized curriculum system, the central state insists on maintaining a centralized curriculum system by strengthening the absolute authority of the national curriculum.

With the evolution of the curriculum reform, the tension between centralization and decentralization is escalating. In diversifying school curriculum development, the innovations in implementing national curriculum in local conditions are accommodated in the current curriculum system. To solve the narrowness of a unified national curriculum, even local-based curriculum is allowed as a supplement to the national curriculum. However, considering the social and political functions of school curriculum, the central state is unwilling to transfer real authority to the local level. In fact, the state insists that all reform efforts must be framed within the process and manners determined by the central state. The national curriculum is strengthened

to retain the monopoly of the central authority in China's curriculum system. The negotiation between diverse social forces is an on-going process. Does the strategy of centralized decentralization really work in solving the confrontations and conflicts emerging in the current curriculum reform?

Chapter 5 Chinese Curriculum Reform, Dancing in Chains

There is no truly centralized or decentralized education system. In order to govern a curriculum system, both centralization and decentralization are useful technologies in coordinating within and between flows of work/tasks, responsibilities and authorities. The core issue is always about how to establish a dynamic balance between the center's control and the locality's autonomy. After over two decades of reform, Chinese curriculum system is now at a crucial point. The structural transformation both in the economic sector and public sectors has become an increasing pressure on further reforming China's curriculum system. However, the top-down curriculum reform is not moving smoothly as it was supposed. On numerous occasions, the results of the reform actions in realistic local settings are not close to the expected goals set by the central states.

This chapter focuses on the input and outcome of the strategy of centralized decentralization in the current curriculum reform in China. The chapter demonstrates the split between responsibility and authority in superficial decentralization and relates the unbalanced central-local relations in curriculum governance to the bottlenecks in achieving the goals of the curriculum reform. Meanwhile, this chapter explores the inherent impediment to build a balanced central-local relation in Chinese curriculum system and illustrates the enduring value dilemma regarding the purpose of schooling in the unique socio-political context of China. The chapter also seeks possible solutions.

5.1 Bottleneck in Implementing Curriculum Reform

"Dancing in chains" (Zhu, 2008) is now an often seen metaphor in describing local educators' daily work in the current curriculum reform in China. Chinese education scholar, Zhu Yongxin (2008) directly points out that the "chains" on local education administrators and teachers are from the imposed national requirements at the top as well as a social discourse that favors this centralized system. In the past 25 years, deconcentrating work and responsibilities to lower levels, the central state has been tolerating more and more local innovations and incentives in reforming China's curriculum system. There has come a demand from below for a redefined central-local relation in building a more inclusive curriculum system in China. However, the decentralization reform in the form of deconcentration in China's curriculum system barely solves deep problems, even though the reform has gone quite far in many aspects, such as more leeway in textbook adoption, course structure and classroom pedagogies.

In the current Chinese curriculum reform, the deconcentration process is merely a readjustment about what work should be done by whom. In pre-reform era, China adopted a highly centralized curriculum system. As the sole source of regulation and enforcement, the central state itself was not only deeply involved in school curriculum design, textbook compilation, quality assessment, but also directly managed the implementation of the national policies in great detail. Its function relied on a strong bureaucracy to exert a meticulous control over the curriculum applied to schools

across the country. As the central agency of the state in the education sector, the Ministry of Education (MOE) was in charge of the running of this centralized system practically. Thus, in the pre-reform era, schooling in China was unified on a nationwide basis.

Since the initiation of the curriculum reform in 1986, while the central state has retreated from the overwhelming work of maintaining this centralized system alone; local governments, education departments/bureaus, school administrators and teachers have been encouraged to do the work previously done by the MOE. Local-based curriculum design and textbook compilation are applied to enrich the diversity of Chinese curriculum system. Meanwhile, reform in national college entrance examinations has been launched. Starting from 2003, about 16 provinces are allowed to adopt independent propositions of the matriculation test. However, decentralization in China's curriculum system remains superficial. In shifting the work from the center to localities, the central state concentrates on improving education policy and legislation system, formulating national requirements and standards of schooling and monitoring the reform process at all aspects. Basically, all of the work and changes in China's curriculum system must be done in the strict framework set by the central state, even though seemingly there is more flexibility in carrying out national curriculum policies. Retaining the state's monopolistic authority over school curriculum, the current reform has not touched on the real core of the authority distribution in the Chinese curriculum system. In the superficial decentralization, the

unbalanced central-local relation remains and results in a series of dilemmas in evolving reform efforts.

The crux of these dilemmas arises from the division between responsibility and authority in reform China's curriculum system through centralized decentralization. In the current Chinese curriculum reform, the top-down approach deliberately blurs the line differentiated between authority and responsibility. According to Max Weber (1958), authority is the willing and unconditional compliance of people, resting upon their belief that it is legitimate for the superior to impose his will on them and illegitimate for them to refuse to obey. In other words, authority is normatively exercised to exert obedience, to command and to enforce. Responsibility is however different. It refers to the obligation to carry out assigned duties or achieve certain objectives. In a formalized system, authority and responsibility are the two fundamental factors that are inseparable from each other. Marshall Murphree (2000) argues authority and responsibility should be linked; when they are de-linked both are eroded. Authority without responsibility becomes meaningless and obstructive; responsibility without authority lacks the necessary components for its effective exercise.

In Chinese education system, the legitimacy of the authority of the MOE is rooted in the established rules and laws of the state and is normally exercised through the hierarchized structure of education governance. On the one hand, both the *Education Law* (1995) and the *Compulsory Education Law* (1986) confirm the

legitimate authority of the MOE in governing Chinese education. As the sole representative of the central state in the education sector, the MOE retains the monopolistic authority over the entire education system. The local education departments/bureaus are assumed to do the assigned jobs in a settled framework and toward unitary national goals under the leadership of the MOE. On the other hand, education governance in China is organized and arranged in a strict vertical hierarchy in which the MOE directs and supervises the work done at the local level. The current curriculum reform is also formulated and implemented in this way.

In 2001, the *Outline of Basic Education Curriculum Reform* (*Pilot*) was issued as the legitimate guideline for the reform in the Chinese curriculum system. It explicitly claims that the MOE functions at the central level, formulating curriculum development principles, imposing national standards and framing the evaluation system. Local education departments/bureaus take operating responsibilities for integrating the national policies into local realities. Schools are answerable for putting the policies into practice. In deconcentrating work to localities, undoubtedly, the central state accommodates flexibility of how to do the work in certain local conditions and even encourages innovations by somewhat extension. However, what remains ambiguous is to what extent the local actors are allowed to make decisions. While stressing the obligation of local education departments/bureaus and schools, the educational laws and reform guidelines don't clearly specify the role of these local sectors in the decision-making process. In fact, in the top-down decentralization

reform, the tolerance to curriculum diversities and flexibility in carrying out national standards appears to be very limited. All work done at the local level must conform to the national guidelines and challenges to the authority of education-related laws and regulations are not allowed. Meanwhile, through the statewide supervision system under the direct leadership of the MOE, the center takes a close watch on what is happening in the curriculum system.

The ambiguous line between responsibility and authority creates a seeming appearance of decentralization in the current curriculum reform. However, it is responsibility rather than authority that is devolved from the center to the periphery in this state-initiated and state-led decentralization reform. While burdening local education departments/bureaus and schools with increased responsibilities, the center has no attempt to grant matched authority to the localities in the process of centralized decentralization. The unbalanced central-local relations manifest into a sharp split between responsibility and authority. The de-linked responsibility and authority inevitably leads to some contradictions and dilemmas in reconstructing China's curriculum system.

5.2 Crux of Centralized Decentralization Strategy

The recent curriculum reform has been on-going for more than two decades. However, with the strategy of centralized decentralization, both the visible contradictions in curriculum management and invisible conflicts in curriculum philosophy have not been resolved, and even become the bottlenecks in promoting the reform efforts for meeting the needs of the rapidly changed Chinese society. In

curriculum management, local curriculum innovation is deeply struggling in the dilemma between top-down administrative control and the down-top implementation. In curriculum philosophy, local-based curriculum development is directly dealing with the contradiction of a holistic approach to essential-quality-oriented (EQO) education and single-dimensional evaluation standard—testing results. In coping with the division between responsibility and authority as well as contradictions and dilemmas associated with the division, the reform progress has been slowed down.

5.2.1 Visible Contradiction in Curriculum Management

In the current reform, the most obvious effort in reforming China's curriculum system reflects on changes in curriculum management. A three-level, hierarchical curriculum management system of state, province and school was introduced in the *Outline of Basic Education Curriculum Reform* (*Pilot*) issued by the MOE in 2001. According to the 2001 *Outline*, academically, the MOE works at the central level, setting up national curriculum; provincial education departments function at the lower level, implementing national curriculum in local conditions as well as laying out provincial curriculum; schools are allowed to develop school-based curriculum under the consideration of addressing diverse needs and interest of local students. In general, the school hours allocated to the national curriculum are suggested to be 80 to 84 percent of the total school hours (MOE, 2001a). Managerially, from the top to down, the MOE regulates and supervises nationwide curriculum activities; local education departments/bureaus direct curriculum-related work under their own jurisdictions;

school administrators and teachers implement curricula formulated at national, provincial and school levels. The superordinate exerts managerial control over the subordinate. The subordinate assumes the operating responsibility and reports to the superordinate.

Schools are the basic unit in Chinese education system and the most fundamental site for reform practices. In the current curriculum reform, Chinese schools are facing unprecedented challenges. In the policy climate of decentralizing educational provision and distribution, schools are now undertaking the work previously done at the higher level. It is the first time the central state allows input from schools in curriculum management. Meanwhile, schools are put at the front line to coordinate between education bureaucracy and real classrooms, as the institutions directly organizing teaching and learning. However, school administrators and teachers soon find they are positioned in a dilemmatic situation in this wave of education reform.

In the pre-reform era, a centrally imposed unitary curriculum was applied to every classroom across China. Curriculum management was through a top-down bureaucratic approach. The MOE unitarily regulated all aspects of teaching and learning in great detail, including teaching plans, textbooks, subject structure, instruction hours and evaluation methods. Local education departments/bureaus enforced the national curriculum and relevant policies to schools. School administrators and teachers had no choice of their own but obeyed the superordinate.

At that time, curriculum management at the local level was simplified into part of administrative management and the majority duty placed on school staffs' shoulders was merely following instructions from the education bureaucracy. In the current reform, curriculum management is now a comprehensive procedure of organizing all curriculum-related elements into an effective way and toward a specific goal, involving planning, executing, staffing, directing and monitoring curriculum design, instruction scheme, resource allocation and performance evaluation. In building the tri-level curriculum management system, school administrators and teachers are included and positioned at the bottom of the system. The expectation on the role of schools in curriculum management is shifting away from a passive adherent to the administrative bureaucracy of education to a relatively self-driven sector in curriculum matters. Seemingly, in the tri-level curriculum system, school autonomy is allowed and even encouraged. Flexibility in implementing national curriculum is treated as the key to delivering effective, equal education services. Meanwhile, innovations in local and school-based curricula are welcomed in classrooms to meet realistic needs of local students and communities. However, in exercising school autonomy, school administrators and educators soon find that the work on their shoulders is not as it seems.

On the one hand, school administrators and teachers have very few experiences in curriculum management, but they are plunged into the work of coordinating between national, local and school-based curricula that is completely new in Chinese

education. In the reform, school staff must take concrete steps to move from the idea of reform to the practice of reform. Educators in the school site, from principals to teachers as well as their support staff are bearing the most fundamental responsibility for bringing the reform policies into effect. However, the accessible resources for schools are quite limited, both financially and academically. The state has already reduced budgetary allocation to education since the 1980s. The gap left by the central state has to be filled by local money[15]. Under the requirement of the MOE, education administrative units at local levels and schools are supposed to raise a special fund for the curriculum reform (MOE, 2001b). Thus, the current situation is schools have to do more work previously done at the higher level, but receive less funding from the state. A national research conducted in 10 experimental areas of curriculum reform observed that lack of funding had already impeded the reform process in schools (Tang & Ma, 2002). At the same time, due to lacking expertise and experience of curriculum design, the pressure on local teachers has rapidly increased. In fact, in-service and pre-service training for teachers and principals haven't sufficiently met the immediate need of building a three-level curriculum system of national curriculum, local curriculum and school-based curriculum (Zhong, 2006). The work duties of

[15] According to the Statistical Communiques of China on Education Finance from the fiscal year of 2007 to 2009, the central government allocation to education comprised 8.9%, 11%, 12.7% of the total education expenditure, respectively. Local governments, education bureaucracy and school administrators must be creative in looking for alternative financial sources. The main sources include education surcharges levied on enterprises and individuals by local governments at each level, social contribution to education, funds from school-run enterprises and school fees paid by students.

school principals have expanded from maintaining routine administrative functions to managing curriculum matters, such as facilitating teachers' work, organizing curriculum resources, etc. The raised requirement and expectation on their work performance are burdened, but the scarcity of assistance and resources are realistic obstacles.

On the other hand, the national guideline for curriculum reform merely lays down what should be done by whom, but not how to do. At the national level, the *Outline of Basic Education Curriculum Reform* (*Pilot*) is the most detailed guideline for curriculum reform, composed of nine sections: curriculum reform goals, curriculum structure, curriculum standards, pedagogy process, textbook development and management, curriculum evaluation, curriculum management and curriculum reform organization and implementation. It is noteworthy that the guideline is broad in scope, but general in implementation steps. The most specific content regarding implementation is summarized to two concise principles: one is experimenting ideas before setting down; the other is democratic participation and scientific decision. Without further explanation, the two principles are seemingly open to a wide variety of local interpretation. It gives an appearance that the current reform intends to overcome the rigid conformity of the implementation of national policies. However, the actual openness to school autonomy is very limited considering the authority is still concentrated on the top.

The *Outline* repeatedly stresses that the MOE not only provides an overall plan, but controls over the entire process through the hierarchical education bureaucracy. What can be taught in classrooms in which way must be approved and supervised by the education administrative units. In this sense, the curriculum management at the school site mainly goes through a top-down bureaucratic approach. The tri-level curriculum management fails to make substantial changes in promoting flexibilities in connecting national policies with local conditions. A recent field-based research completed by Jocelyn Lai-ngok Wong (2006) proves this. Wong observed that both the principals and teachers appeared not to derive substantial benefits from the recent policy shift. In the interviews, the principals described their sense of powerlessness in curriculum matters, because they must follow the laws and regulations set by the top. Also, the teachers didn't become more engaged in curriculum matters, but experienced more anxiety as a result of their increased workloads. They did just what they had to do. Wong summarized that in most participant schools there was only minor input, or no input from members of school communities.

The division between authority and responsibility in curriculum management inevitably impedes the effectiveness of the reform process. Political scholar James Scott (1998) points out that state officials are removed from the society they are charged with governing. It is the case in China's curriculum management system. The MOE made all substantial decisions based on the information abstracted from statistics or other documents rather than the full reality. The provincial education

department frames a localized plan to facilitate the implementation of national policies. Even though both the MOE and its local agencies consult with curriculum experts, teachers, school principals and launch experiments before popularizing the policies, the officials in the education bureaucracy may be misled by their schematic knowledge about Chinese schools. As a result, the decision made at the higher level lags behind the realities in classrooms; simultaneously, the education bureaucracy lacks sufficient, precise information to make timely adjustments according to what actually happens in classrooms. The new curriculum management system is supposed to improve the situation. In the curriculum reform, school principals and teachers are coping with the existing and newly emerging issues that impact their daily work. Thus, the meaningful input from the first line of the reform could be valuable and imperative in improving the effectiveness. However, without necessary authority, in verifying degrees, school incentives in curriculum management are suppressed and local innovations in carrying out national policies are impeded. In this sense, the tri-level curriculum management system may become an empty idea rather than a practicing reality.

5.2.2 Invisible Conflict in Curriculum Philosophy

Besides the visible contradictions in reforming curriculum management, the split responsibility and authority causes deep problems in curriculum philosophy. These philosophical problems are worth attention, but they are often ignored. Curriculum philosophy refers to the most fundamental beliefs in curriculum

development which define the purpose of curriculum design and focus of curriculum practice. In the current curriculum reform, the most prominent transformation in curriculum philosophy is a shifting from utilitarian education to holistic education. Utilitarian philosophy morally justifies a right action based on its utility—the most good (Bentham, 1907, Mill, 1861). Utilitarian education embraces a narrow approach to the good of education—teaching and learning merely for a direct beneficial consequence. In contemporary China, on the utilitarian ground, the determining consideration of why and how education matters is on the usefulness of the outcome, economically, socially and politically. Since the initiation of Chinese economic reform, the economic function of education has been constantly highlighted. Testing is viewed as the main method in measuring the outcome of education. Holistic education rests on the philosophical assumption that there is an inseparable wholeness of the diverse elements that compose the inner world of the self and the intimate connection between the self and its external surroundings (Miller, 2007). Holistic education aims at equipping students to explore the world around and inside of them independently and thoughtfully. In contemporary China, holistic education is reified as a quest for inspiring all-round development of students in a life time, morally, intellectually and physically through cultivating a self-motivated love of learning and competence of learning.

5.2.2.1 Utilitarianism in Examination-oriented Education

The examination-oriented utilitarian education has long been deeply embedded in China. For over 1000, the imperial examination (科举) had been adopted to recruit bureaucrats for the empire under the direct supervision of the central authority. Theoretically, any male adult in China, regardless of his family pedigree and wealth, could be selected to be a state official by passing the imperial examination. There were numerous examples in Chinese history of intellectuals who successfully moved from low social status to political prominence through this channel. The impact of the examination system has already extended from the imperial official selection to Chinese culture and society in all aspects. Besides relative effectiveness and fairness at the technical level, the emperor's' favor on the examination system was mainly grounded on the social and political functions of the examination.

As early as in 206 BC, the Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty announced that Confucianism was the official state orthodoxy. Deeply involved with the dynastic regimes, Confucianism was propagandized as a very particular system of virtue ethics in orienting individual behaviors and interpersonal relationships on a daily base in Chinese society. In the imperial examination system initiated in 605 CE, Confucian classics was the exclusive content of the national examination and sophistication of Confucian philosophy was the critical criterion in selecting intellectual elites serving the state. Chinese studies scholar Xinzhong Yao (2000) points out that "Confucianism extended the boundaries of moral codes from individual matters to social and political areas, not only providing the state with an ideological format, but also equipping the

authority with the standards to judge behavior and thoughts" (p. 34). The school of Confucianism gained predominance over all other schools was never a historical coincident.

Li (rite, 礼) is the core virtue of Confucian philosophy. The Confucian "li" moves beyond the religious ceremonies in the Western conception of rites to an entire system of settled social interrelations between individuals as well as between individuals and their contexts. Socially, "li" infused all Chinese people with an idea of submitting to hierarchism and authority. As the universal moral principles for the individual, "li" was associated with self-restraint and self-discipline achieved through his/her appropriate behaviors and obedience to social norms. As the basis of a stable society, "li" strictly defined social orders in a hierarchical way and stressed the proper place of each individual in this structure. Politically, "li" legitimated the absolute authority of the state sovereign and maintained a unified, enduring state polity of China for over two thousand years. The emperor ruled the nation through his huge administrative bureaucracy composed of intellectual elites. The individual's obedience to the authority in a family was politicalized into the subordination to his supervisor in the state system and the loyalty to the emperor.

The uniformity of the content and format of the imperial examination served to strengthen the ideological consensus on Confucian values and normalized the idea of

hierarchism and conformity in imperial China[16]. In selecting local Confucian elites to be state officials, the dynastic regimes overtly rewarded those who succeeded in the examination system with high-ranked social status, wealth and glory. Besides the examination taker, his extended family both intergenerationally and intragentrationally would greatly benefit from the state appointment. In this sense, the examination system became the most practicable channel of upward social mobility in the Imperial China since AD 605. Linking examination performance with access to upward social mobility, the initiative of learning was encouraged. Consequently, education was valued by the entire society and the dynastic regimes. In Imperial China, following the tradition originating from Confucius, the vast majority of private schools （sishu, 私塾）were financed by tuitions from students' families. These schools served the needs of basic literacy and prepared youth for higher learning (Deng, 1997). The public schools (guanxue, 官学） were run by the central government and its local agencies. In order to cultivate the most talented youth to be officialdom, curriculum for public schools was unified and geared to the imperial examination. With the best resources and direct connection with the central state, being enrolled in the state schools was viewed as the key stepping-stone to further success in the examination. In the climate of educating youth for state officialdom, schooling in imperial China had a strong color of utilitarianism that associated the

[16] Chinese historians often refer to the period from the beginning of Qin Dynasty in 221 BC to the fall of Qing Dynasty in AD 1912 as imperial period of China. In the over two thousand years, the dynastic regimes dedicated to build a unitary nation under the ruling of the emperors (Fan, 1995, Jian, 1979).

purpose of schooling directly with the social and political benefits of education both for individuals and the state. Education in contemporary China has never completely shaken off its history.

The imperial examination was abolished in 1905 by the Qing Dynasty, but the utilitarian idea of teaching and learning to test has never ended in China. The utilitarian education in contemporary China takes the shape of examination-oriented education. Reform attempts have been varied since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. However, as Australia scholar Belinda Dello-lacovo (2009) points out that China's intense focus on examination-oriented education "has proven remarkably resilient, bouncing back with renewed vigor after each assault in contemporary China" (p. 242). After the death of Mao in 1976, the most influential step in reconstructing Chinese education was the restoration of the national college entrance examination in 1977 that had been discontinued by the Great Cultural Revolution for ten years. The enrollment procedure was unified on a nationwide basis. The MOE allotted total quotas of college seats to each province, and the numbers of seats in an individual college to be assigned to each province throughout the country were also fixed centrally in advance[17]. Then, the MOE gave the examination papers to examinees throughout the country on the same days, at the same hours and in the

[17] For example, Guangxi Province was allotted 7, 448 college seats in 1979. The total of 7, 448 seats consisted of 991 places in key-point universities throughout the country, 947 places in ordinary institutions of higher education outside the province and 5,510 places in those within the province (Pepper, 1980).

same sequence. The admission decision was dependent on the result of this annual examination. The admission to higher education was highly competitive (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 National College Entrance Examination:

Candidates and Successful Entrants[18] (MOE, 1977-1984)

Year	Candidates	Successful Entrants	Enrollment Rate
1977	5,700,000	270,000	4.87%
1978	6,100,000	402,000	6.70%
1979	4,684,000	275,000	5.87%
1980	3,320,000	282,130	8.49%
1981	2,589,000	278,777	10.76%
1982	1,860,000	315,000	16.93%
1983	1,670,000	390,000	23.35%
1984	1,643,000	480,000	29.27%

The restoration of the nation-wide university entrance examination opened a prelude to the establishment of the key-point school system at all levels. In 1978, the

[18] In the year 1977 and 1978, any Chinese youths who were under 30 and had a high school diploma or the equivalent were eligible to take the college entrance examination. However, in the following years, the eligibility requirements to the seats of the college entrance examination were narrowing prospective examination takers to an increasingly uniform pool of fresh high school graduates without prior employment experience (Pepper, 1980a). In 1977, only 20% to 30% of the examination takers were fresh higher school graduates of that year. In 1978, the proportion increased to 50%. In 1979, the preferred maximum age limits was reduced to 25 and employed staff were not encouraged to attend the college entrance examination (Pepper, 1980b).

State Council announced a list of 88 national key-point universities and colleges. These key-point universities and colleges were heavily supported by the central state in funds, personnel and other resources. In the same year, the MOE authorized and ran around 20 schools across the country as national key point primary schools and secondary schools. In the next few years, local education bureaus from the provincial to county level ran key schools in their respective jurisdictions. The designation of selected educational institutions as “key points”, without a doubt, had the effect of resurrecting an educational pyramid in China (Epstein, 1987).

In the post-Mao era, the key-point school system was deliberately elitist in that it channeled the best students into the best schools (Pepper, 1980). Meanwhile, the key-point school system was featured by its urban-based focus. By 1981, there were 5,271 key-point primary schools, accounting for 0.6% of all Chinese primary schools and 4,016 key-point secondary schools, accounting for 3.8% of all Chinese secondary schools (Liu, 1993). A survey on the key-point secondary schools in 13 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions in 1982 showed an unbalanced proportion between urban and rural education. Among a total of 348 key-point secondary schools involved in the survey, nearly 70% were urban schools, 28% were township schools and 2% were rural schools. Seven out of the thirteen administrative divisions at the provincial level had no rural key-point schools (Yuan, 1999).

In general, at every level from elementary to higher education, those key-point schools received the most funding from the state, recruited the best students and had

the highest quality teaching staffs. Thus, they constituted a direct conduit through which students reached the pinnacle of elite education—colleges and universities. Ultimately, the benefits of the elite education cumulated at an urban-based, state-assigned job (Rosen, 1985). In the middle 1970s, youth unemployment and underemployment remained a serious social problem in urban China[19]. Only college and university graduates were guaranteed permanently secured positions in the state sector with a steady income. Most of those who were left behind by the elite education stayed at home or entered the low-grade labor market associated with non-guaranteed payment and lack of welfare security.

In pre-reform China, being excluded from the state job allocation system, these school leavers[20] had much fewer chances of upward social mobility than college graduates. In this sense, the high expectation of gaining entrance to elite education was primarily driven by the realistic benefits of elite education. For the student, elite education was related to a secured job in the state sector and privileges associated

[19] In the late 1970s, urban unemployment reached a crisis proportion. Unemployment at that time was estimated to be about 9 percent of the urban labor force and underemployment had probably reached between 10 percent and 30 percent of the total national population of working age (Harding, 1987). A large number of rusticated youth who had been exiled to the countryside under the policy of "send-youth-to-countryside" from 1968 to 1978 returned to their home cities. These returnees and new school leavers composed a massive influx of unemployed urban population. However, the available positions were limited due to the shrinking of Chinese economy in the Great Cultural Revolution (MacFarquhar & Fairbank, 1977). Thus, a secured job in the state sector became highly competitive.

[20] School leavers in this chapter refer to school graduates and drop-outs.

with the job. For schools, sending more students to key-point schools at a higher level was linked with more funding and better personnel resources. For the state, the small elite sector of Chinese education produced scientists and engineers to meet the ambitious national goal of economic modernization. The utilitarian education became a dominant discourse in China again.

The primary determination for the entrance to the key-point schools was exclusively based on academic performance. The examination-bound assessment method was used as the sole criterion in measuring students' academic performance and ability. Meanwhile, the school quality was also evaluated on the basis of the annual entrance examination. Those that produced a high percentage of students who gained entrance to key point schools had the possibility of being authorized as key-point schools. In the high-stakes environment, students, teachers and school administrators were bearing increased pressure from the undue emphasis on testing. For students, to climb up the education ladder for a secured job in the state sector, the only channel was to be the best student in the best schools at each level. The critical standard in evaluating "what the best is" was based on examination results. Teachers' work performance was significantly measured and rewarded by students' test score gains. School principals were expected to build school publicity through raising the proportion of graduates who were admitted to key-point schools. The high-pressure competition for privileged elite education resulted in an intense incentive of teaching to the test.

Education was revalued by Chinese society after the Great Cultural Revolution decade (1966-1976) which brought Chinese education to a virtual halt. While teachers and parents applied testing pressure to students to compete for the limited access to elite education at young ages, they also boosted up a prevailing social trend toward examination-oriented utilitarian education. An often-ignored fact is that this trend was directly derived from the central state's advocacy and insistence on the meritocratic education and economic function of education. After the death of Mao in 1976, education for economic modernization was assigned special significance in China.

In restoring Chinese society from the chaos of the Great Cultural Revolution, the central state was dedicated to reconstructing Chinese economy and closing the scientific and technological gap between China and more developed countries. The core figure in the Chinese Communist Party in the post-Mao era, Deng Xiaoping (1983) repeatedly emphasizes that science and technology constitute a primary productive force and education is the foundation to the achievement of socialist modernization. Unprecedentedly, the focus has been placed on the role of education in improving the economic power of China while downgrading the political function of education since the late 1970s. Due to the contradiction between the limited educational resources and increased need of highly-trained professionals for economic development, the problem of quality versus quantity in Chinese education emerged.

In the Great Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), Chinese education was featured by its strong egalitarian color. Maoist China put particular emphasis on "equality". Concretely, it referred to closing the disparity between urban and rural development and removing the hierarchy in status of mental and manual labors (Chen, 1980). Motivated by the ideal of education equality, providing universal primary education and expanding secondary enrollment became the goal of education in Maoist China. Despite the large increase in the number of schools, the state fund for schooling remained low and the length of schooling was shortened (Rosen, 1985). The massive expansion of schooling was at the cost of cutting off the elite sector at the top of the educational pyramid of China (Han, 2001). Meanwhile, in implementing Mao's idea of combining manual labor with mental studies, local workers or peasants were invited to teach classes about hands-on work. The enlarged role of these non-professionals in schooling diminished the status and influence of professional educators in schools. The respect to educators and the value of education were completely challenged. Anti-intellectualism pervaded in China. In 1968, all schools across the country were suspended, while moving teachers to manual labor and rusticating the urban youth to the countryside. The most serious negative consequence of these efforts was a decline in the quality of education (Shirk, 1979).

At the same time, the Great Cultural Revolution drove the Chinese economy into a depth of collapse from 1966 to 1976. In the late 1970s, China couldn't afford enormous funds to reconstruct the Chinese education system at all levels and in all

aspects equally. In 1977, Vice-premier Fang Yi announced that the state had decided to increase budgetary allocation to science and education, "because…we cannot do everything all at once. We must give priority to building and improving major research institutes and schools of higher education in accordance with what was necessary and possible" (p. 15). To put it simply, in post-Mao era, China gave the priority to higher education under the consideration of concentrating educational investment on the training of high-level scientific and technical expertise[21]. This explicitly sanctioned an essentially bifurcated school system, with a small elite sector to train first-class scientists and engineers alongside a large mass sector that was to provide basic educational skills, with the possibility of vocational training for the majority (Rosen, 1985).

The national goal of Four Modernizations promoted intellectual meritocracy and strengthened the economic function of Chinese education. In fact, it is the economic imperative that rationalized the meritocratic education in China. As economist Clark Kerr (1979) observes, the elite group of selected talents necessary for economic modernization in China was the skilled personnel, including scientists, technicians, teachers and the like:

[21] Among the 88 national key-point universities and colleges authorized by the State Council, 53 had the tradition of particularly focusing on scientific, engineering and technological education (MOE, 1978). Chinese scholar Yuan Zhenguo (1999) conducted research in 348 key point secondary schools in 13 provinces and autonomous regions in 1982. He observed these key-point schools put much more emphasis on science and engineering education.

> Their merit mainly lied in mastering the intellectual content of science and technology. Only those most talented received the training that can lead to technological mastery; only the most competent academically were prepared to become the most productive economically". (p. 749)

The egregious highlight of the meritocratic myth in Chinese education further strengthened economic utilitarianism in Chinese schools at the state level, especially after the initiation of economic reform in 1979.

The decision to concentrate the state's educational resources to a few key schools in 1978 was largely based on the consideration of producing maximum economic returns in the shortest time (Pepper, 1980). In the logic of economic utilitarianism, it was the most effective and rational strategy in promoting the nation's mastery of science and technology for economic modernity. Economic modernization relied on a group of intellectual elites who were educated in the meritocratic education system; schooling should sort these elites out from the masses and train them intensively. In stressing education development must be in line with economic development, education for economic efficiency gained overwhelming advocacy in China. Not surprisingly, the function of education was reduced to serving economic growth and producing proper human resources.

In applying a strictly centralized national policy to Chinese schools, the central state easily conceived a national consensus on what model of education was most needed in China. Suzanne Pepper (1996) describes the Chinese school system in

detail: schools were standardized, named and graded by national regulation and resources concentrated in a few designated key schools to be promoted as models of education quality (1996). Following the lead, the curriculum philosophy was oriented toward meritocratic education for economic modernization. Under the name of exerting centralized quality control, once again, there was national regulation about what to teach and how to teach after the late 1970s. Susan Shirk (1979) observes that the MOE prescribed a uniform national curriculum, including teaching plans, syllabi for each subject and teaching materials. Local education departments/bureaus and schools were stripped of flexibility in integrating the national curriculum into their particular local circumstances. The training in the elite sector and mass sector was differentiated but appropriate to students' future role in Chinese economy. Testing became the most-often-used tool in placing students in the bifurcated school system according to their intellectual ability.

"Right from the start however, the multiple flaws of this system were widely criticized across society" (Dello-lacovo, 2009, p. 241). The accumulated criticism concentrates on the over-intensive focus on the examination-centered curriculum philosophy: the pedagogical style relied on rote memorization lectures; the teaching content was based on the single set of textbooks assigned by the MOE; textbook knowledge was disconnected with practical life; students were weighted down by excessive pressure of high-stakes tests (Pepper, 1996, Thogerson, 1990). In short, as teaching was geared by examinations, all around development of students was ignored

in the undue emphasis on testing achievement and the significance of schooling was narrowed to training human resources needed in economic development.

5.2.2.2 Examination-oriented education vs Quality-oriented Education

Since the 1990s, the essential-qualities-oriented (EQO) education (素质教育) has been boosted up to be the dominant trend in the current curriculum reform. In 1994, at the National Conference of Education, the EQO education was introduced introduced as a solution to solve problems in Chinese education in the turning of century. In 1996, the MOE publicized the successful experience of the EQO education in Hunan province to the country. At the end of 1998, the MOE issued the 2003-2007 *Action Scheme for Invigorating Chinese Education Towards the 21st Century* (《面向21世纪中国教育振兴计划》), initiating the Trans-century EQO Education Project in China to improve the quality of Chinese people. In 1999, the State Council issued *Decision on Furthering Education Reform and Promoting EQO Education* (《关于深化教育改革全面推进素质教育的决定》) and claimed that the EQO education should be implemented in all educational sectors.

The MOE (1997) defines the EQO education as oriented by the most fundamental principle of improving the quality of the nation. It is a state policy of education based on the *Education Law*, serving the long-term development of the Chinese educatees and Chinese society. In order to enhance the basic quality of all students at all aspects, the EQO education places the focus on the competences of the educatees and the development of the educatees–morally, intellectually and physically. The MOE stresses the imperative of transforming from the examination-centered

education to EQO education. In implementing the EQO education, Chinese schools are expected to train high-quality human resources for the demands newly emerging in the transformation from the planning economy to market economy as well as the competitions of comprehensive national power in the global world.

In 1999, the Trans-century EQO education Project (跨世纪素质教育工程) was listed as the important component of the *Action Scheme for Invigorating Education in the 21st Century* (《面向 21 世纪教育振兴行动计划》). The *Action Scheme* entails the curriculum reform in the primary and secondary education:

> by the year 2000 a framework and standards of basic education curricula will have taken preliminary shape and progress will have made in reforming the content and methods of teaching, promoting a new evaluation system, in-service training for teachers, and launching experiments on new school curricula. It is envisaged that on the basis of experiments extending over ten years or so, we will be enabled to implement a new system of basic education curricula and teaching materials for the 21st century throughout the country.

To put the blueprint laid out in the *Action Scheme* into effect, in 2001, the MOE issued the *Outline of Basic Education Curriculum Reform* (*Pilot*) after consulting with educational experts and gaining experiences from pilot studies in some regions. This *Outline* clearly points out that the purpose of the reform

is to build a new curriculum system in accordance with the principle of EQO education. The concrete objectives are:

1) To cultivate a learning-centered attitude for students, integrating the process of acquiring textbook knowledge into the process of building a positive value system and ability to learn;
2) To establish a balanced, integrative course structure, in setting up a consistent subject and instruction hour arrangement from primary to secondary education. In addition, comprehensive courses[22] are encouraged to meet the diverse needs of local areas and students.
3) To enhance the connection between curriculum content and practice. To stimulate students' interest of learning and prepare them for lifelong learning.
4) To involve students in the learning process actively and foster their ability to acquire new knowledge, collect information, analyze and solve problems, communicate and cooperate with others.

[22] According to the *Outline of Basic Education Curriculum Reform* issued in 2001 by the MOE, the comprehensive course refers to a course that combines two or more subjects and studies their interrelationship. For example, Science is a comprehensive course that could include Physics, Chemistry, Geology, ect. Comprehensive courses are given a central place in primary schools, but the ratio of comprehensive courses in the total instruction hours gradually decreases in secondary education.

5) To use academic assessment as a tool in promoting the development of students and enhancing the pedagogical practices of teachers.
6) To build a three-level curriculum management system of the state, localities and schools in order to improve the adaptability of school curriculum in local areas and for local students.

The overarching philosophy guiding the current curriculum reform is explicitly reflected in the six objectives. The reform intends to initiate a significant transformation from the examination-oriented curriculum to a learning-centered holistic one. As never before, the reform is much more concerned about students' interests and all-around development. Students are not treated as passive receivers of book knowledge, but rather active explorers of facts and theories. According to the *2001 Outline*, academic ability is not simply associated with the superficial acquisition of theories and skills, but includes the abilities of lifelong learning and independent thinking. Correspondingly, teaching is to stimulate students' motivation to learn and cultivate their competences of real life problem solving. Teachers are expected to encourage students to participate in exploring and experiencing realities and interactively cooperate with others in the learning process. Text-based instructional materials are the important content in the classroom, but a wide range of resources in and out schools could be used. In addition, the new evaluation system no

longer attempts to identify and select high-scored students, but to assess the progress of learning and quality of teaching.

Embracing the philosophy of holistic development of students, the curriculum reform is to rectify the narrowed utilitarian view of what school education is and what school education is for. Teaching to testing and learning for testing are not the ultimate goals of schooling. The learning-driven approach in the EQO education requires the curriculum design take the learner's perspectives into account and prepare the learner for living outside the classroom. As a result, the new curriculum system as a whole should be more open to diversity and heterogeneity, covering distinct learning environments and varied experiences of learners. Also, the trend of a relaxed centralized control over the Chinese school curriculum is supposed to emerge in the current reform with the establishment of the three-level curriculum management system to tolerate more local inputs. However, after a decade, to what extent the curriculum reform has changed the orientation of schooling in China is uncertain.

Theoretically, in implementing the EQO education, a set of centrally unified national standard is not suitable for every classroom and the standardized testing is not appropriate in evaluating the development of individual learners. A shifting from examination-oriented utilitarian education to quality-oriented holistic education is supposed to be an irreversible trend in China. However, the way to achieve the goals of the EQO education in China is long and inexplicit. Rote learning and examinations

still dominate Chinese classrooms. A 2005 report on the EQO education in Jiangsu province points out that the examination-oriented education was deeply rooted in the school culture and the value of that type of education was twisting the goals of the curriculum reform. According to the report, the majority of the curriculum resources at all levels concentrated on the subjects required in the entrance examinations to secondary schools and higher education. Schools even cut back non-examined subjects or put on extra class hours for teaching to the test. If school would not provide such courses, parents would send their children to after-school tutoring or cram classes (Peng, 2005). According to *Report on Development of Shanghai Children and Adolescents* (2011), over two thirds of Shanghai students were attending cram classes or after-class tutoring programs. Both Jiangsu and Shanghai are two of the most educationally advanced regions in China and the earliest pilot areas in implementing the EQO education.

In response to criticism on the examination-oriented curriculum philosophy, the central state does take real reform efforts. The amended *Compulsory Law* (2006) annuls the key school system. In the same year, the MOE issued the *Guidance on Implementing Compulsory Law and Further Regulating the Operation of Compulsory Education Schools* (《关于贯彻《义务教育法》进一步规范义务教育办学行为的若干意见》) to release students and teachers from the workload and pressure of the examination-oriented education. The 2006 *Guidance* abolishes the entrance examination to secondary schools instead of the entering-school-nearby policy, bans

tracking students into academic ability-based classes, and prohibits raking students and schools based on test scores. However, the enforcement of the administrative directive remains insufficient and erratic. The burden of homework and after school tutoring increased on students in the past 10 years. Sun yunxiao (2010), Vice Director of the China Youth and Children Research Center (中国青少年研究中心) points out that latest research shows that from 1999 to 2010, the daily sleeping time of Chinese primary and middle students was continually reduced due to the increased homework burden. Sleeping deficiency became a nationwide common issue for Chinese students. Among the 5000 student participants from 184 schools in 10 provinces, 80% showed sleeping deficiencies on weekdays and 70% had the problem at weekends. The homework burden was a direct result from the pressure of the high-stakes testing.

Suzanne Pepper (1996), an American scholar with a long-standing interest in Chinese education, frankly expresses her concerns on the unresolved dilemmas of Chinese education reform in the 20th century: "There was a critical consensus of the education system of the time but the attitude of Chinese educators was deeply ambivalent. They paid lip service to ideals critical of the regular system while doing completely the opposite in practice" (p. 104). It is still the case in the current curriculum reform. After over two decades of reform, the few progresses toward EQO education are slow and remain unclear. Chinese schooling is struggling between the ideal of students' all around development and realistic pressure of teaching to the test. Australian Scholar Dello-lacovo (2009) points out that "one of the most perplexing

aspects of the EQO education discourse is the apparent widespread support for the ideal in theory coupled with widespread resistance in practice" (p.248). This ambivalence does make the EQO education in the Chinese curriculum reform an "empty talk". The curriculum reform centered on EQO education hasn't significantly reduced or eliminated utilitarianism in Chinese curriculum system. However, more importantly, what causes the ambivalence?

The external obstacles in implementing the EQO education are visible: the lack of funding, the scarcity of curriculum resources and the shortage of experienced teachers definitely hold back the reform progress (Feng, 2006; Dello-lacovo, 2009; Zhong, 2006). However, in a top-down reform, the state's position in the reform and its strategy in advancing the reform should never been ignored. The current curriculum reform is led by the centrally imposed directives and moving toward the goals set at the top. Even though there is somewhat loosened control over curriculum development and management in order to promote the EQO education, the central state still retains its absolute authority in deciding what and how to do, but leaves the heavy workload on the shoulders of local education bureaucracy and educators. In this sense, the split between authority and responsibility in centralized decentralization is acutely hampering the reform process.

The EQO education has quickly become the spotlight in the current curriculum reform. There is a consensus from the central state to local educators at the front-line that it is imperative to shift Chinese schooling from the examination-oriented to the

quality-oriented in the turning of the century. However, the central state's actual attitude remains somewhat ambiguous and even ambivalent. In the 2008 National Development Conference of Primary and Secondary School Principals, attending principals described their situation: on the one hand, as educators, they advocated that Chinese schooling should be oriented toward children's all-around competences and life-long development; on the other hand, as school heads, their work had to be centered on the rate of entering upgrade schools which was based on the high-stakes testing. The pressure was from the parents and communities' high expectation of preparing their children to win the competitions in the entrance examinations (Zhang, 2008). Director of Education Department of Yunnan Province, Luo Chongmin (2010) replied in an interview that the EQO education was empty talk, unless the college entrance examination system was reformed. In the top-down curriculum reform, the central state hasn't demonstrated real commitment to significantly reform the entrance examination system even though it has repeatedly announced that the priority is given to the EQO education.

The assessment method is always at the heart of the current curriculum reform but also the battleground of tensions. In fact, the entrance examination at each level of Chinese education system is caught in the crossfire. The advocacy of the entrance examination in China is usually based on the consideration that standardized testing would be open, fair and impartial, highly comparable, as well as low cost and less time-consuming (Liu, 1997&2000). However, public criticism is accumulating. Under

the heavy pressure of excessive homework and high-stakes testing, teaching relies on the pedagogy of rote memorization and learning is a passive process of acquiring textbook knowledge. The EQO education was introduced by the central state as the rectification to fix the problems of the examination-oriented education. Seemingly, there is a strong urge at the state level to implement the EQO education in China. Why does the central state's real effort to reform the examination-bounded assessment still remain conservative?

As demonstrated in Chapter 4, a unified national curriculum could indoctrinate whoever involved in the system with an idea of national standards and normalize a centrally imposed conformity in social discourses. Meanwhile, the politically screened curriculum knowledge creates a lived hegemony that redefines the meaning of realities based on the dominant group's culture. In this sense, schooling could be used as a socio-political device in maintaining the existing governing structure. School curriculum is the last field that the central state is willing to decentralize. Currently, in deconcentrating responsibility for education finance and administration down to the local level, the central state does somewhat reduce constraints on how the work is done by the local education bureaucracy and schools. Correspondingly, the current curriculum system opens doors to local input and encourages innovations in integrating the EQO education into a particular local circumstance. The EQO education upholds child-centered approach to learning[23] and the current curriculum

[23] Child-centered education places the focus on children's need and interest in the learning process. John Dewey is one of the theorists who build philosophical basis of child-centered approach to

philosophy embraces diversity and heterogeneity. However, for the central state, the most imperative issue is to avoid the loss of its control over school curriculum in the reform process. In order to strengthen uniformity in socio-political discourses and maintain conformity with national policies, the central state must find a way to stabilize its absolute authority over the curriculum system. Retaining the examination bounded assessment system, the central state actually applies an accountability-based evaluation procedure to exert a centralized control over what kind of education is needed and what kind of students is qualified. Maduas, Raczeck & Clarke (1997) writes,

> Both standardized testing and authentic assessments used as instruments of public policy confer, on those who control them, real power over the actions of teachers, students and administrators; real power over the curriculum; real power over what is taught and learned, and how materials is taught and learned. (p. 8)

The crucial point here is the assessment method in education is not simply about how to measure academic achievement and quality of schooling, but also about who holds the real authority over the entire curriculum system.

---

education. Dewey (1902) argues that "we must take our stand with the child and our departure from him. It is he and not the subject-matter which determines both quality and quantity of learning" (p. 108).

The central state of China is unwilling to decentralize its authority over the examination system. Apparently, the central state encourages quality-oriented holistic education. However, relying on the high-stakes testing, the examination-bounded assessment method functions as the most powerful hidden hand setting up limits of local input in curriculum development and ensuring the overall homogeneity of Chinese curriculum system. The situation becomes dilemmatic that whatever local innovation could be done, the examination-bounded assessment has the final say. Thus, on the one hand, students, parents, teachers and school principals overtly criticize the abuse of the examinations; on the other hand they are completely motivated by the curriculum philosophy of teaching to the test, even though they are directly dealing with the problems of the examination-bounded assessment on the daily basis.

5.3 Enduring Dilemma in Chinese Schooling

The current curriculum reform is an on-going attempt to cope with deep problems in China's curriculum system. The goal set up in the reform is to adjust the curriculum system to meet the needs of all-around development of Chinese students and integrate the development of Chinese education with the developments of the nation as a whole. However, the strategy of centralized decentralization deliberately creates the split between authority and responsibility that is impeding the reform progress toward these goals. Seemingly, the superficial decentralization in the form of deconcentrating work/responsibility down to lower levels welcomes local inputs in rebuilding a more inclusive curriculum system. However, holding the authority at the

top of the state, local education bureaucracy and schools hardly contribute to the three-level curriculum management system in a meaningful way. In a similar vein, the transformation from examination-oriented utilitarian education to the quality-oriented holistic education is also hampered by the central state's ambiguous stance in reforming the evaluation and selection system based on high-stakes testing.

Apparently, the paradoxical mixture of centralization and decentralization causes bottlenecks in the reform process. In fact, the crux of the unresolved problems in the curriculum reform is not simply about how to govern a curriculum system at the technological level. The inherent impediment to construct a balanced central-local relation in China's curriculum system comes from an enduring value dilemma regarding the purpose of schooling in socialist Chinese context. Since 1949, Chinese curriculum system has already experienced waves of top-down reforms. The policies shift from Mao's egalitarian education to Deng's elitist education and then to today's EQO education. However, what has never changed is that the motives and objectives of the oscillating curriculum policies are driven by the national goals in different historical moments.

In Maoist China (1949-1976), the most urgent mission of this newly established regime was to consolidate the ruling status of the Chinese Community Party and restore the country from decades of ruins left by wars. Thus, Mao insists that education must "serve the politics of the proletariat and be combined with productive laboring (Mao, 1957 & 1958). To substantially expand education access

for children from peasant and working-class families, Mao's concept of egalitarian education set into motion and led to a rapid quantitative expansion of schooling at all levels until the Great Cultural Revolution brought a halt in Chinese education. In order to indoctrinate unitary socialist beliefs to younger generations of China, academic content in school curriculum was overwhelmed by political and ideological content across the county (Tsang, 2001, Chen, 1980). In Deng's era, Deng emphasizes that education must be in line with national economic development (Deng, 1978/1983). Following the lead of Deng, China concentrated the best resources on the most talented students in the elitist sector. The purpose was to foster the most needed professions for the transformation in Chinese economy and economic growth in the shortest period. Scientific and technical knowledge was treated as the most prominent in school curriculum. In the turning of the century, Jiang Zeming (1998), the core of the third generation of Communist Party of China leaders, claims that knowledge economy[24] has been dramatically changing the economic and social life of the world. The competitions between nations are the competitions between human resources in nature. Thus, the future of China in international competitions all depends on

[24] The concept of the knowledge economy refers to a knowledge-based economic system. It emphasizes that knowledge has become the most important factor in economic development. The concept can be traced to 1960s. Theodore Schultz (1961) points out that people are an important part of the wealth of nations. Gary Becker (1964) asserts that economic growth now depends on the knowledge, information, ideas, skills and health of the work force. Investments in education could improve human capital which would contribute to economic growth. Peter Drucker (1993) argues that knowledge rather than ownership of capital generates new wealth and that power is shifting from owner and massagers of capital to knowledge workers.

educational development and innovations in science and technology. Chinese schools now become the front line in worldwide economic competitions. Curriculum reform becomes imperative to cultivate students' practicing and creative skills for challenges in the economic globalization process.

The oscillating curriculum policies in post-1949 China are evidence to a fact that the state is playing a dominant role in Chinese education. It is the central state that decides the strength, direction and content of the curriculum reforms. The top-down initiation of the education reforms are based on the demands of national development at a particular historical moment rather than consideration of real needs of education itself. In this sense, schooling as a social institution in China has not been treated as an autonomous social agency in educating younger generations and interacting with social changes, but as a manipulated social institution tied to state apparatus. It is noteworthy that utilitarianism is deeply imbedded in Chinese education philosophy. Linking education with national development, the value of education in China is reduced to its functions in achieving either political stability or economic growth. Currently, the emphasis is placed on the economic and social benefits brought about by educational development in the global competitions of national power.

Grounded in utilitarian conceptions of schooling, the current reform rhetoric, particularly that of deconcentrated curriculum development but nationalized curriculum standards creates a narrow problem/solution frame focusing almost

exclusively on the efficiency and outcomes of schooling. The central state makes its standpoint in the curriculum reform clear that what matters is not schooling itself, but the result of schooling. In the state directives, the purpose of schooling in China is interpreted as training students to be useful human resources in improving the competitiveness of the nation in the global world. Zhou Ji (2004), former Minister of Education, states in his speech to launch the *2003-2007 Action Plan for Invigorating Education* (《2003-2007》教育振兴计划) that education is playing a fundamental role in changing the heave pressure of a population of over 1.3 billion into a rich pool of human resource for a sustainable development of Chinese society and socialistic market economy in the era of knowledge economy and economic globalization. Relying on the never-loosened centralized control, the top-down approach ensures that the all reform efforts at each level are on the right path and toward the consistent direction. Thus, a utilitarian perspective of schooling is dominant over the ethos of Chinese education.

Meanwhile, utilitarianism can be found in the majority of China's educational officials, many of its school principals, teachers and its students. Local education sectors are required to carry out the national policy without much dissension. While doing the work assigned by the central state through the bureaucracy channel, local education officials and school educators acknowledge that their role in the reform is to share the workload burden previously on the shoulder of the central state, but not the policy-making authority. There is no space for them to think about the issues in

the curriculum reform critically or develop their own autonomy in making meaningful changes to the system. In the reform process, these education officials and educators just do what they are told to do. They know an unspoken truth quite well that innovations are welcomed; however, innovations not only increase their workload, but also distract their energy and time from teaching to the test. Their work performance is still evaluated and rewarded on the rate of the graduates who are admitted to reputable schools at higher levels. Thus, preparing students to survive and succeed in the testing system is seen as the most important mission. Not surprising, local input in the tri-level curriculum management system is limited and significant efforts to promote the EQO education move slowly. Meanwhile, the utilitarian ethos in the school system has already become a prevailing social discourse. A school diploma is viewed as the stepping-stone for a desired job. Chinese parents push their children to work hard for high-stakes testing. Students compete in entrance examinations at each level for their future career. Focusing exclusively on the utility of schooling, learning is not for its own sake, but a means to gain practical skills needed in the job market.

Undoubtedly, utilitarianism stifles schooling and prevents it from embracing its true identity. More noticeably, utilitarianism could build a barrier to achieve inclusivity within Chinese education. The motive based on the usefulness of education justifies the pursuit for the maximized profit by investing in education that places the emphasis on the efficiency and cost-benefit. Due to limited educational resources in China, quality education is highly competitive. The urge for a prospering China in

global, knowledge-based economy rationalizes the choice of concentrating education resources for the most talented ones. However, as economist Clark Kerr (1978) points out that class privilege can be minimized but education differentiation cannot be avoided in China. Those who gain more access to better education could become a privileged "new class" in China. Such a trend would keep enlarging the gaps between elite education and mass education, between urban students and rural students, between students from rich families and students from low-income families. Andrew Kipnis (2001) concluded from his research in Zouping County in Shandong Province that there were increased rural/urban equality issues with the curriculum reform. Passing the entrance examinations is the only channel for students to gain access to quality education and decent urban jobs in the future. Kipnis finds that in the curriculum reform the rural schools in Zouping devoted extra school hours on the core exam subjects (such as Maths and Chinese) and were less likely to have activity courses such as computer technologies, speaking English or creativity classes during their mandated instruction hours, as most rural schools simply had no resources to hold such classes. Rural students were still intensively dedicated to rote learning as all teachers were prepared in that way and little equipment was necessary. A rural teacher expressed his concerned that the reform toward EQO education could eventually reduce the opportunities of these rural students and even put them at a disadvantage.

Among Chinese students, parents, educators and scholars, there is a strong call for rebuilding an open curriculum system to meet diverse needs of individual students

and communities and significantly contribute to children's all-around development in lifelong term. The state does officially announce that the current reform is a movement toward this idealized goal through jointly working with local sectors in curriculum management and development, but the strategy of a centralized decentralization only scratches the surface of the problem-solving. Without a completely rethinking of the utilitarian purpose of schooling, the reform will continue to confront enduring dilemmas regarding educating for economic efficiency versus educating for social equality, educating for consolidating ideological consensus versus educating for cultivating independent, critical ways of thinking and educating for realizing one's potential for the good of all versus education for present interest.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

I started this study with the purpose to critically reflect on changes in Chinese curriculum governance after 1986. Through a socio-philosophical approach, this study not only investigates authority-sharing issues emerging in the reform process, but also connects these issues with the most fundamental value orientation of Chinese education with regard to the aim of education.

First of all, this study describes the historical and contemporary backgrounds of current curriculum reform in China. Chinese education has undergone spectacular development and substantial reforms since 1949. In Maoist China (1949-1976), Chinese schools were centrally funded and administered by the state. Chinese curriculum system featured a set of unified standards imposed by the central state. However, the rigidly centralized governance over schooling in China resulted in inefficiency and ineffectiveness in carrying out national education policies, due to lack of plasticity and adaptability. Meanwhile, the cost to maintain such a highly centralized education system became an unaffordable fiscal burden, especially after a decade of the Great Cultural Revolution that caused severe social chaos and economic collapse. The central state has to encourage local governments and education institutions to search for alternative financial sources and transfer some administration work down to the local level. The changed central-local relation in education finance and administration inevitably leads to a series of substantial adjustments in China's curriculum system. The criticism concentrates on the narrowness and rigidity of the

unified national curriculum which excluded local diversities and individual needs. At the same time, the accelerated globalization process not only nurtures interconnection among states but also provides more opportunities for joint work between the local and global. In this climate, decentralization has become a reform strategy widely adopted by many countries. The current curriculum reform in China is not immune from the global trend of education decentralization. To a great degree, the current curriculum reform is not a proactive approach to enhance China's curriculum system, but more like a reactive response to new issues arising from Chinese economic reform and global trend of decentralizing education services.

Secondly, this study analyzes concrete content of current curriculum reform and demonstrates the apparently loosened control over Chinese curriculum system. The top-down Chinese curriculum reform initiated in 1986 is not a simple readjustment in the content of schooling or replacement of textbooks, but an attempt to fundamentally reconstruct China's curriculum system in a transitional period. Different from previous practices in which the national curriculum was designed by the central state alone and carried out by the localities. This time, the central state encourages local innovation and participation, working with local education authorities, schools and other social sectors. To accommodate local diversities, the new system is composed of national curriculum, local curriculum and school-based curriculum. The emphasis on the EQO education takes individual students' all-around development into account. These reform efforts create an illusion that the central state is loosening its control

over Chinese curriculum system. However, with a long history of highly centralized control over major sectors in the state, the central-local relation in China's curriculum system is much more complex that it seems.

Thirdly, this study clarifies the ambiguity in defining decentralization based on Mark Hanson's theory and reexamines changes in Chinese curriculum governance using this conceptual framework. In Mark Hanson's (1989a, 1989b, 2000 & 2006) conceptual framework of education decentralization, it is important to investigate whether changes in an education system have been accompanied with a shift of real authority in the decision-making process. Even though the reform has been made for over two decades, the authority of the central state still prevails across China's curriculum system. In essence, the efforts to diversify China's curriculum system are implemented in a uniform manner determined by the central state. While transferring work to the local level, the central state has actually strengthened its authority over school curriculum system. On the one hand, the central state concentrates on education legislation, laying down national guidelines and overall plans to regulate all aspects of schooling in China. On the other hand, a highly structured supervision system is restored to ensure all efforts in reforming Chinese curriculum system are on the right track. With little support for local autonomy in decision-making process, local education bureaucracies and schools rely on the instructions from the hierarchy above to do the work. Certainly, centrality is still heavily weighted by the state in governing Chinese curriculum system. In this sense, the decentralization reform in

China's curriculum system remains superficial, taking the shape of deconcentration. More exactly, the top-down curriculum reform is a process toward centralized decentralization.

Fourthly, to explain why the central state is unwilling to transfer its authority over school curriculum to the local level, this study demonstrates the particular social and political functions of school curriculum through the theoretical lens offered by Michel Foucault and Raymond Williams. Foucault (1975) describes schools as disciplinary institutions which not only train docile bodies but also produce submissive minds. In contemporary context, a unified curriculum system implies constant subjections and obedience to social norms, and thus it is part of the disciplinary mechanism in exerting control over social members and social discourse. In the case of Chinese curriculum reform, diversities in "knowledge" are assumed to be a threat to a consensus culture and ultimately destabilize a homogenous society. There is always a strong need of a social filter to resolve diverse discourse into a set of unified social meanings. Relying on the control over school curriculum, the central state normalizes its authority in daily schooling and eventually builds a consensus on social discourse through imposing national curriculum standards and requirement.

In contemporary education systems, national curriculum represents an assembly of official knowledge that is legislated by the state power and considered the most prestigious knowledge in a national context. However, the legislation process is also a political screening process, involving power relations. In

manipulating knowledge we exert power and in exerting power we manipulate knowledge. Raymond Williams (1973) emphasizes that education is involved in a continual making and remaking of an effective dominant culture and educational institutions are the main agencies in distributing dominant culture. In reality, the dominant group not only sets up limits on the selection process in formulating school curriculum, but also exerts pressure on the organization and distribution of school curriculum. The political purpose is to indoctrinate the dominant culture to young generations and reinforce existing power relations. The Chinese curriculum is not an exception.

Finally, the dissertation analyzes the apparent bottlenecks and deep value dilemmas which impede current Chinese curriculum reform efforts to achieve its goal of building a more inclusive curriculum system in China. To cope with problems in Chinese schooling, the strategy of centralized decentralization is adopted to avoid the loss of control over school curriculum in this transitional period. This superficial decentralization merely involves a transferring of work/responsibility, but not the real authority. In the process, the split between authority and responsibility becomes inevitable and even causes bottlenecks in building a more inclusive curriculum system in China. In fact, both centralization and decentralization may be useful governing technologies in balancing central-local relations in the education sector and coordinating between the national goals of education set by the state and the realities in local classrooms. What is really at issue is how to construct an evolving

relationship between the state and education. The crux of the problematic state-education relationship in Chinese curriculum reform is the utilitarian view of schooling, which puts undue emphasis on economic or social benefits brought about by education.

Since the 1949, the central state under the direct leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCPCC) has played a dominant role in Chinese education. As Mun Tsang (2000) summarizes,

> the party leaders fought over alternative goals and approaches to national development, and as the education system served as a reactive vehicle for realizing the party's development objectives rather than an autonomous institution for social changes, educators, parents, and student have been unwilling caught in cycles of heart-wrenching dislocations and adjustments…Policy shifts in education reflect shifts in power and development perspective among party factions. (p. 23)

Viewing Chinese schooling as a manipulated social device under the control of the central state, to what extent and to what direction the reform efforts in Chinese curriculum highly depends on the extent of critically rethinking the utilitarianism view of Chinese schooling at the cultural level.

At the institutional level, structural adjustment in central-local relations in Chinese curriculum reform can't continue without political reform. In a nation as large as China, how to achieve social stability with fast economic growth is the top

issue for the Chinese Communist Party, the supreme political leader of China. Deng (1989) points out that stability is an overwhelming issue in China: without a stable environment, we cannot achieve any goals and we would even ruin what we have achieved. Follow Deng's lead, the polity system in China consistently focuses on building a disciplined society which is characterized by its uniformity and conformity. However, the rapidly expanded economy brings more complicated social issues. To build a harmonious society, the policy-makers at the state level have to cope with the challenges from below and deal with the dilemmas originated from the unbalanced central-local relations while seeking social stability. Without a structural adjustment in authority-sharing arrangement at the state level, it is difficult to resolve the split between responsibility and authority in the education sector in a meaningful way.

The relationship between state and education has never been single-dimensional. Political reform can also benefit from changes in Chinese education. Since the late 1970s, the monopolistic domination of the state apparatus has been loosening somewhat. Chinese society is experiencing dramatic changes in the reform era in terms of transformations in Chinese economy and an accelerated process of integrating into the global world. The reduced role of the central state in public services has become a discernable trend in China. In the current curriculum reform, the changed curriculum management system and the emphasis on the EQO education certainly stimulate further demands of further reform Chinese schooling. In doing more work based on local resources, educators not only face unprecedented

challenges, but also gain opportunities to learn from their own experiences. Local education autonomy may grow and spread in the process. More importantly, a participative perspective can be cultivated in the process. Thus, it is likely that the consensus on what kind of curriculum system is needed in China may not be solely defined by the central state, but an inclusive reconciliation between diverse standpoints and needs of the center, local communities, and individual students. Through this, local input may contribute to the formulation of national policies in a meaningful way and national policies may embrace more flexibility to deliver maximum effectiveness and efficiency in promoting Chinese education.

This dissertation makes a critique on the current curriculum reform in China. However, the study should not be read as a rejection to the efforts of reconstructing China's curriculum system. Rather, it should be read as a rethinking of the reform and a critique to the problematic strategy in the process. Any reform is a continuing cycle of deconstruction and reconstruction. It is also a cycle of critique and improvement. The ultimate outcome of a reform may be ambiguous, but the urge to consistently question what we take for granted never goes away. This study is meant to open up new discussion on possible solutions in further reforming Chinese curriculum reform.

References

Apple, M., (1990). *Ideology and curriculum*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Apple, M., (1993*). Official knowledge: Democratic education in a conservative age.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Apple, M., (1996). *Cultural politics and education.* New York, NY: Teachers college, Columbia University.

Apple, M., (2003). *The state and the politics of education.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Aristotle, (1924). *Metaphysics*. (W.D. Ross Trans). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Aristotle, (1986). *De Anima*. (H. Lawson-Tancred Trans.). New York, NY: Penguin Books.

Astiz, F., Wiseman, W., & Baker, D. (2002). Slouching towards decentralization: Consequences of globalization for curricular control in national education systems. *Comparative Education Review*, 46 (1), 66-88.

Barnett, D., (1967). *Cadres, bureaucracy, and political power in communist China*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Barnett, M., (2002). Historical sociology and constructivism: An estranged past, A federated future?. In S. Hobden and J. Hobson (Eds.) *Historical sociology of international relations*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Becker, G., (1964). *Human capital*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Bentham, J., (1907). *An introduction to the principles of morals and legislation.* Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.

Bernstein, B. (1990). *Class, codes and control: The structuring of pedagogical discourse* (Vol. 4). London: Routledge.

Benhabib, S., (1992). *Situating the self: Gender, community and postmodernism*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Berger, P & Luckmann, T., (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Garden city, NY: Anchor Books.

Bjork, C., (2006). Introduction. In C. Bjork (Ed.) *Educational decentralization: Asian experiences and conceptual contributions* (pp. 1-7). Dordrechi, Netherlands: Springer

Bergmann, M., Moor, J. & Nelson, J., (2009). *The logic book*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Bray, M., (2003). Control of education: Issues and tensions in centralization and decentralization. In R.F. Arnove & C.A. Torres (Eds.) *Comparative education: The dialectic of the global and the local*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Camillery, J. and Falk, J., (1992). *The end of sovereignty? The politics of shrinking and fragmenting world*. Brookfield, VT.: Edward Edgar.

CCPCC, (1990). The Proposal of Ten-year Project and the Eighth Five-year Plan. Beijing: China. (In Chinese)

Chan, R. & Wang, Y., (2009). Controlled decentralization: *Minban* education reform in China. *Journal of Comparative Social Welfare, 25*(1), 27-36.

Chen, K., (1980). Chinese education: Old and new, radical and reformed. *World Education Monograph Series*, No. 2. World Education Center, Connecticut University.

Clark, K., (1978). *Observations on the relations between education and work in the People's Republic of China*. Berkeley, CA: Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education.

Code, L., (1988). Experience, knowledge, and responsibility. In A. Garry & M. Pearsall (Ed.) *Women, knowledge and reality: Explorations in feminist philosophy* (pp. 157-172). New York, NY: Routledge.

Compulsory Education Law of People's Republic of China, (1986). Retrieved from http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_619/200606/15687.html. (In Chinese)

Conyer, D., (1984). Decentralization and development: A review of the literature. *Public Administration and Development*, 4(2), 186-97.

Cox, R. (2000). Political economy and world order: Problems of power and knowledge at the turn of the millennium. In R. Stubbs & G. Underhill (Eds.) *Political economy and the changing global order*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Currie, J. & Newson, J., (1998). Globalizing practices: Corporate managerialism, accountability, and privatization. In J. Currie and J. Newson (Eds), *Universities and globalization: Critical perspectives*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications.

Curtis, B., (1992). *True government by choice men? Inspection, education, and state formation in Canada West*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.

Decision on Unifying State Financial and Economic Works. The CCPCC & GAC, Exec. Order No. 3 (1950). *People's Daily*, Beijing China. (In Chinese)

Decision on Speeding up Development of Science and Technology. The CCPCC & State Council, Exec. Order 8 (1995). Retrieved from http://www.most.gov.cn/ztzl/jqzzcx/zzcxcxzzo/zzcxcxzz/zzcxgncxzz/t20051230_27321.htm. (In Chinese)

Decision on Reforming Chinese Educational System. The CCPCC & State Council, Exec. Order No.12 (1985). Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_177/200407/2482.html. (In Chinese)

Decision on Deepening Educational Reform and Promoting Essential-qualities-oriented Education. The CCPCC & State Council, Exec. Order No. 9 (1999). Retrieved from http://www.jyb.cn/info/jyzck/200602/t20060219_10716.html. (In Chinese)

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1972). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. London, UK: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Dello-lacovo, B., (2009). Curriculum reform and "quality education" in China: An overview. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 2009 (29), 241-249.

Deng, X., (1978/1983). Speech at the opening ceremony of National Science Conference. In CCPCC Literature Compilation Commission (Ed.) *Selected works of Deng Xiaoping* (Vol. 2) (pp. 85-100). Beijing: The People's Press. (In Chinese)

Deng, X., (1979/1983). Uphold the four cardinal principles. In CCPCC Literature Compilation Commission (Ed.) *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping* (Vols.2) (pp. 120-128). Beijing: The People's Press. (In Chinese)

Descartes, (1641/1984). *The philosophical writings of Descartes*. (J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff & D. Murdoch. Eds.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Dewey, J., (1902). *The school and society & The child and the curriculum*. New York, NY: Courier Dover Publications.

Dewey, J., (1916/1966). *Democracy and education*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Dewey, J., (1925/1981). Experience and nature. In J.A. Boydston (Ed.) *The latter works of John Dewey (1925-1953)* (Vol. 1). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Dewey, J., (1931/2008). Context and thought. In J. A. Boydston (Ed.) *The later works of John Dewey (1925-1953)* (Vol. 6). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Dewey, J., (1938/2008). Logic: The theory of inquiry. In J. A. Boydston (Ed.) *The latter works of John Dewey (1925-1953)* (Vol. 12). Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Drucker, P., (1993). The age of social transformation. *The Atlantic Monthly*, 274(5), 53-80.

Education Law of People's Republic of China. (1995). Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_619/200407/1316.html

Epstein, I., (1987). China's keypoint schools: A means for inclusion of the elite?. *East-West Education*, 11, (2), 29-41.

Ernest, P, (1998). *Social constructivism as a philosophy of mathematics*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Fan, W., (1995). *The history of China*. Beijing, China: The People's Press. (In Chinese)

Fang, Y., (1977). On China's science and education. *Peking Review*, 2 (Jan.), 13-16. (In Chinese)

Feng, D., (2006). China's recent curriculum reform: Progress and problems. *Planning and Changing*, 37 (1-2), 131-144.

Flynn, N., (1997). *Public sector management*. Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Foucault, M., (1975/1995). *Discipline and punishment: The birth of prison* (A. Sheridan Trans.). New York, NY: Radom Houses.

Foucault, M., (1978/1990). The *history of sexuality* (R. Hurley Trans). New York, NY: Random Houses.

Foucault, M., (1978/1991). Governmentality. In G. Burchell, C. Gordon and P. Miller (Ed.) *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality* (pp. 87-104). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Foucault, M., (1982). The subject and power. In H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow (Ed.) *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics* (pp. 208-228). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Fraser, N., (1989). *Unruly practices: Power, discourse, and gender in contemporary social theory*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Garrett, G. & Rodden, J., (2000, April). Globalization and decentralization. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association. April 27-30. Chicago. IL.

Gaynor, C., (1998). *Decentralization of education: Teacher management*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Gellner, E., (1959). *Words and things*. London, UK: Victor Collance Ltd.

Giddens, A., (1990). *The consequences of modernity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Gill, S., (2000). Knowledge, politics, and neo-liberal political economy. In R. Stubbs & G. Underhill (Eds.) *Political economy and the changing global order*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Globalization, (n.d.). In *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. Retrieved from http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/globalization/.

Gramsci, A., (1971). The intellectuals. In Q. Hoare & G. Smith (Ed.) *Selections from the prison notebooks* (J. Greenberg Trans.) (pp. 131-161). New York, NY: International Publishers.

Green, A., (1990). *Education and state formation: The rise of education system in England, France, and the USA*. New York, NY: St Martin's Press.

Govinda, R. (1997). *Decentralization of educational management: Experiences from South Asia*. Paris, French: International Institute for International Planning.

Han, D., (2001). Impact of the Cultural Revolution on rural education and economic development: The case of Jimo County. *Modern China*, 27 (1), 59-90.

Hanson, M., (1989a). Decentralization and regionalization in educational administration: Comparisons of Venezuela, Colombia and Spain. *Comparative Education*, 25(1), 41-55.

Hanson, M., (1989b). Education, administrative development and democracy in Spain. *International Journal of Educational Development, 9*(2), 127–138.

Hanson, M., (1996). *Educational administration and organizational behavior*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Hanson, E. M., (2000). Democratization and educational decentralization in Spain: A twenty year struggle for reform. In. World Bank, Education Reform and Management Team, Human Development Network-Education (Ed.) *Country*

Studies: Education reform and management publication series I. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Hanson, M, (2006). Strategies of educational decentralization: key questions and core issues. In In C. Bjork (Ed.) *Educational decentralization: Asian experience and conceptual contributions* (pp. 9-25). New York, NY: Routledge.

Haraway, D., (1988). Situated knowledge: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575-599.

Harding, H., (1987). *China's secondary revolution: reform after Mao*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.

Hawkins, J., (2006). Walking on three legs: centralization, decentralization and recentralization in Chinese education. In C. Bjork (Ed.) *Educational decentralization: Asian experiences and conceptual contributions* (pp. 27-41). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.

Held, D., (1991). Democracy, the nation-state and the global system. In D. Held (Ed.) *Political theory today* (pp. 197-236). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Held, D., McGrew, A., Goldblatt, D. & Perraton, J., (1999). *Global transformations: Politics, economics and culture*. Stanford: CA: Stanford University Press.

Hood, C, (1991). A public management for all seasons. *Public Administration*, 69, 3-19.

Huang, Y., (1996). Central-local relations in China during the reform era: The economic and institutional dimensions. *World Development*, 24(4), 655-672.

Hurley, P., (2008). *A concise introduction to logic*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Learning, Inc.

James, W., (1907/1975). *Pragmatism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

James, W., (1910/1996). *Some problems of philosophy*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

James, W., (1912/1976). *Essays in radical empiricism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Jia, H. & Wang, M., (1994). Market and state: Changing central-local relations in China. In H. Jia & Z. Lin (Eds.) *Changing central-local relations in China* (pp. 35-66). Boulder, CO: Westview Press

Jia, H. & Wang, Lin, Z. (1994). Introduction. In H. Jia & Z. Lin (Eds.) *Changing central-local relations in China* (pp. 1-18). Boulder, CO: Westview Press

Jian, B., (1979). *The outline of Chinese history*. Beijing, China: The People's Press. (In Chinese)

Jiang, X., (1992). A discussion of our country's traditional social policy model and its transformation. *Sociological Studies*, 1 (1992), 1-3. (In Chinese),

Jiang, Z., (1998). The key to creation lies in human resources. In CCPCC Literature Compilation Commission (Ed.) *Selected Works of Jiang Zhemin* (Vol. 2) (pp. 132-138). Beijing: The People's Press. (In Chinese)

Jun, J. & Wright, D. (1996). *Globalization and decentralization: Institutional contexts, policy issue, and intergovernmental relations in Japan and United States*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Kipnis, A., (2001). The disturbing educational discipline of peasants. *The China Journal,* 46 (Jul.), 1-24.

Lai, M. & Lo, L., (2006). Decentralization and the development of vocational education in China. *China: An International Journal*. 4(2), 287-301.

Lardy, N., (1975). Centralization and decentralization in China's fiscal management. *The China Quarterly*, 61(Mar.), 25-60.

Lewis, O., & Teets, J., (2008). Chinese nationalism 1949-1980. In *Nations and nationalism in global Perspective: An encyclopedia of origins, development and contemporary transitions*. Oxford, UK: ABC-CLO.

Liu, Y., (Eds.). (1993). *Chinese education encyclopedia*. Hangzhou, China: Zhejiang Education Publishing House. (In Chinese)

Liu, H., (1997). Why should unified college entrance examinations be maintained? *Shanghai Higher Education Research*, 1996 (1), 34-56. (In Chinese)

Liu, H., (2000). Debates on the abolition of college entrance examinations and imperial examinations. *Higher Education Research*, 2000 (2), 23-34. (In Chinese)

Lun, N. K. & Chan, K. K., (2004). Towards centralization and decentralization in educational development in China: The case of Shanghai. In Mok Ka-Ho (Ed.)

Centralization and decentralization: Educational reforms and changing governance in Chinese societies (pp. 81-98). Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre.

Luo, C., (2010, Jul 2). EQO education is empty talk unless reforming college entrance examinations. *Xinhua Press*. Retrieved from http://www.yn.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2010-07/02/content_20229460.htm (In Chinese)

Lyotard, J., (1984). *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge*. (Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi Trans.). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Ma, X., (1949). Opening address to the first National Conference of Educational Work. In the MOE (ed.) *Compilation of educational documents, laws and regulations* (pp. 5-7). Beijing, China. (In Chinese)

Madaus, G.A., Raczek, A.E., and Clarke, M.M. (1997). The historical and policy foundations of the assessment movement. In A.L. Goodwin(Ed.) *Assessment for equity and inclusion: Embracing all our children* (pp. 1-34). London, UK: Routledge.

Major, J, (1989). *The land and people of China*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers.

Mak, G., (1998). Politics of curriculum: Changes in teacher education in China. *Education Journal*, 26(2), 345-360.

Mao, Z.. (1957, June 17). On correct handling contradictions within the people. *China Daily*, p. A1. (In Chinese)

Mao, Z. (1958/1992). *Mao Zedong's discussion on education*. Beijing, China: The People's Educational Publishing House. (In Chinese)

MarFarquhar, R. & Fairbank, J., (1991). *The Cambridge history of China* (Vol. 15, Part 2). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Meyer, J., (1980). The world polity and the authority of the nation-state. In A. Bergesen (Ed.), *Studies of the modern world-system* (pp. 109-137). New York, NY: Academic Press.

Meyer, J., Boli, J., & Ramirez, F., (1997). World society and the nation state. *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(1), 144-181.

MOE, (1977-1984). *Statistical communiqu é of Chinese education development*. Beijing: China. (In Chinese)

MOE, (1978). *Report on restoring and establishing national keypoint higher educational institution*. Beijing, China. (In Chinese)

MOE, (1988). *Curriculum scheme for compulsory education full-time primary and secondary schools*. Retrieved from http://www.pep.com.cn/rjs/rjgl/rjls/dsj/201012/t20101206_982039.htm. (In Chinese)

MOE, (1997). *Several suggestions about actively promoting essential-quality-oriented education in primary and middle schools*. Retrieved from http://library.usts.edu.cn/jygl/1/jcjyglflfg/1209.htm. (In Chinese)

MOE, (1998). *2003-2007 action scheme for invigorating education in the 21st century.* Retrieved from http://202.205.177.9/edoas/website18/70/info1226904382825770.htm. (In Chinese)

MOE, (2001a). *Experimental plan of compulsory education course structure*. Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_711/201006/xxgk_88602.html. (In Chinese)

MOE, (2001b). *National curriculum standards for compulsory education*. Retrieved from http://www.being.org.cn/ncs/index.htm. (In Chinese)

MOE, (2004, Dec 23). *Survey of the educational reform and development in China.* Retrieved from http://www.moe.edu.cn/english/basic_b.htm.

MOE, (2006). *Guidance on implementing Compulsory Law and further regulating the operation of compulsory education schools*. Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s3321/201001/xxgk_81811.html. (In Chinese)

MOE, MOF&NBS, (2007-2009). *Statistical communiqu éof education finance in China*. Beijing: China. (In Chinese)

MOE, (2007). *Statistical communiqué on the 2007 Chinese education development*. Retrieved from http://www.stats.edu.cn/tjfx/2008 年教育统计分析资料汇编.htm#_Toc21597000. (In Chinese)

MOE, (2010). *The responsibilities of the Ministry of Education*. Retrieved from http://www.moe.edu.cn/edoas/en/level3.jsp?tablename=1242696759653365&infoid=1248315621953691&title=The%20Responsibilities%20Of%20the%20Ministry%20of%20Education. (In Chinese)

Mok, Ka-Ho, (1997). Privatization or marketization: Education development in post-Mao China. *International Review of Education*, 43(5-6), 547-67.

Mok, K., (1997). Retreat of the state: Marketization of education in the Pearl River Delta. *Comparative Education Review*, 41(3), 260-276.

Mok, K. H. & Chan, D. (1998). Privatization or quasi-marketization. *International Review of Education*, 43 (5), 547-567.

Mok, K. H. & Chan, D. (2001). Educational development and the socialist market in Guangdong. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 21(1), 1-18.

Mok, K., (2001). From state control to governance: Decentralization and higher education in Guangdong, China. *International Review of Education*, 47 (1-2), 123-149.

Mok, K.H., (2005). Introduction. In K. H. Mok (Ed.) *Centralization and decentralization: Changing governance in education* (pp. 1-18). Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre.

Mok, K. H., (2004). Privatization or marketization: Educational development in post-Mao China. *International Review of Education*, 43(5-6), 547-567.

Mok, K. H., Wong, Y. C & Zhang, X, (2009). When marketization and privatization clash with socialist ideals: Educational inequality in urban China. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 29 (5), 505-512.

Mill, J., (1861/1998). *Utilitarianism*. R. Crisp (Ed.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Miller, J., (2007). *The holistic curriculum*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press Incorporated.

Murphree, M., (2000, May). *Boundaries and borders: The question of scale in the theory and practice of common property resource management*. Paper presented at the 8th Biennial Conference of the International Association for the Study of Common Property. Bloomington, Indiana.

Ngok, K., (2007). Chinese education policy in the context of decentralization and marketization: Evolution and implications. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 8(1), 142-157.

Ning, R., (2005). On China's education marketization policy. *US-China Education Review*, 2(11), 15-17.

Nodding, N., (1984). *Caring, a feminist approach to ethics and moral education.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Outline of Chinese Education Reform and Development. The CCPCC & State Council, Exec. Order No.3 (1993). Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_177/200407/2484.html. (In Chinese)

O'Brien, R., Goetz, A., Scholte, J. & Williams, M., (2000). *Contesting global governance: Multilateral economic institutions and global social movements*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press

Paul J. D. & Powell, W., (1991). Introduction. In J. Paul & W. Powell (Eds.) *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Paine, L., (1998). Making school modern: Paradoxes of educational reform. In A. Walder (Ed.) *Zouping in Transition: The process of reform in rural north China* (pp.205-238). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Peng, D., (1997). *Private education in modern China*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Peng, G., (2005). *Report on EQO education in Jiangsu*. Jiangsu, China: Jiangsu Education Research Institution. (In Chinese)

Pepper, S., (1980a). Education after Mao: Two steps forward, two steps back and begin again? *China Quarterly*, March, 1-65.

Pepper, S., (1980b). China's universities: New experiments in socialist democracy and administrative reform—A research report. *Modern China*, 8(2), 147-204.

Pepper, S. (1990). China's education reform in the 1980s: Policies, issues and historical perspectives. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Pepper, S (1996). *Radicalism and education reform in 20th-Century China: The search for an ideal model*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Peirce, C., (1878/2000). *The philosophy of Peirce: Selected writings* (J. Buchler Ed.). London, UK: Routledge.

Peirce, C., (1905/1998). What pragmatism is? In N. Houser (Ed.) *The essential Peirce: Selected philosophical writings (1983-1913)* (Vol. 2) (pp. 331-345). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Pierre, J, (2000). Introduction. In J. Pierre (Ed.) *Debating governance* (pp. 1-12). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Peter, G. (2000). Governance and comparative politics. In J. Pierre (Ed.) *Debating governance* (pp. 36-53). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Plato (1892), Meno. In *The dialogues of Plato* (Vol.2) (B. Jowett Trans). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Polanyi, K., (1944). *The great transformation: The political and economic origins of our time*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Research Association of China's Economic Reforms (1984). *New patterns of the economic system in China*. Beijing, China: The People's Press

Rhodes, R., (1997). *Understanding governance*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Rhoten, D., (1999). *Global local conditions of possibility: The case of education decentralization in Argentina*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA.

Rhoten, D., (2000). Education decentralization in Argentina: A global-local condition of possibility approach to state, market and society change. J*ournal of Education Policy*, 15(6), 593-601.

Robertson, R., (1992). *Globalisation: Social theory and global culture*. London, UK: Sage.

Rorty, R., (1979). *Philosophy and the mirror of nature*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Rosen, S., (1982). Obstacles to educational reform in China. *Modern China,* 8(1), 3-40.

Rosen, S., (1985). Recentralization, decentralization, and rationalization: Deng Xiaoping's bifurcated educational policy. *Modern China,* 11(3), 301-346.

Russell, B., (1910). Knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*. *New Series*, 11 (1910-1911), 108-28.

Salamon, L., (2002). Introduction. In A. Salamon (Ed.) *The tools of government: A guide to the new governance* (pp. 1-47). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Sassen, S., (2003). Globalization or denationalization? *Review of International Political Economy*, 10(1), 1-22.

Sbragia, A. (2000). Governance, the state, and the market: What is going on?. *Governance,* 13, 243-250.

Schneiderj, A., (2003). Decentralization: Conceptualization and measurement. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 38 (3), 32-56.

Schurmann, F., (1968). *Ideology and organization in communist China*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Scholte, J.. (1996). Beyond the buzzword: Towards a critical theory of globalization. In E. Kofman & G. Young (Eds.), *Globalization: Theory and practice* (pp. 43-57). London, UK: Pinter.

Scholte, J., (2005). *Globalization: A critical introduction*. New York, NY: St. Martin's.

Schultz, T., (1965). Investment in human capital. *American Economic Review*, 5 (1), 1-17.

James, S., (1998). *Seeing like a State: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Shanghai Adolescent Work Commission, (2011). *Report on Shanghai children and adolescents development*. Shanghai, China: Shanghai Adolescent Work Commission.

Shi, X. & Englert, P., (2008). Reform of teacher education in China. *Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy*, 34 (4), 347-359.

Shirk, S., (1979). Education reform and political backlash: Recent changes in Chinese education policy. *Comparative Education Review*, 23 (2), 183-217.

Shirk, S., (1993). *The political logic of economic reform in China*. Berkeley: CA: University of California.

Siegel, H., (1997). *Rationality redeemed? Further dialogues on an educational ideal*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Sklair, L., (1991). *Sociology of the global system*. New York, NY: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Spencer, H., (1861/1890). *Education: Intellectual, moral and physical*. Boston, MA: Willard Small Publisher.

Spring, J., (1998). *Education and the rise of the global economy*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Inc.

Story, J., (2000). The emerging world financial order and different forms of capitalism. In R. Stubbs & G. Underhill (Eds.) *Political economy and the changing global order* (pp. 129-140). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Sun, Y., (2010). *Report on development of Chinese adolescents from 1999 to 2010*. Beijing China: China Youth and Children Research Center. (In Chinese)

Sussman, L., (1989). *Power, the press and the technology of freedom*. New York, NY: Freedom House.

Tang, L. & Ma, Y., (2002). A survey on implementing new curriculum: Problems and obstacles. *Theory and Practice of Education*, 22 (7), 52-55. (In Chinese)

Taylor, S., Rizvi, F., Lingard, B. & Henry, M., (1997). *Educational policy and the politics of change.* London and New York: Routledge.

Teiwes, F, (1987). *The Cambridge history of China: The People's Republic of China, Part 1: The emergence of revolutionary China 1949-1965* (Vol 14, Part 1) Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Thayer-Bacon, B., (2000). *Transforming critical thinking: Constructive thinking*. New York: Teacher College Press.

Thayer-Bacon, B., (2003). *Relational "(e) pistemologies"*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing.

Tomlinson, J., (1999). *Globalization and culture*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Tsang, M., (1996). Financial reform of basic education in China. *Economic of Education Review*, 15 (4), 423-444.

Tsang, Mun, (2000). Education and national development in China since 1949: Oscillating policies and enduring dilemmas. In Lau C. M. & Shen J. (Ed.) *China Review* (pp. 1-26). Hong Kong: Chinese University Press.

Unger, J., (1982). *Education under Mao.* New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Wang, S. (1994). Control-local fiscal politics in China. In H. Jia & Z. Lin (Eds.) *Changing central-local relations in China* (pp. 91-112). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Weber, M., (1958). The three types of legitimate rule (H. Gerth, Trans.). *Berkeley Publications in Society and Institutions*, 4 (1), 1-11.

Weber, M., (1994). The profession and vocation of politics. In p. Lassman & R. Speirs (Ed.) *Weber: Political writings* (pp. 309-369). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press

Wertheimer, A., (1976). Is ordinary language analysis conservative? *Political Theory*, 4(4), 405-422.

Williams, R., (1973). Base and superstructure in Marxist cultural theory. *New Left Review*, I/82, 1-16.

Williams, R., (1977). *Marxism and literature*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Williams, R., (1989). *Resources of hope*. London: Verso.

Wong, J. L. (2006). Decentralization policy on school autonomy in Guangdong province of China. In C. Bjork (Ed.) *Educational decentralization: Asian experiences and conceptual contributions* (pp. 43-58). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.

World Bank, (2010). *Projects & Operations* [Data file]. Retrieved from http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/PROJECTS/0,,menuPK:115635~pagePK:64020917~piPK:64021009~theSitePK:40941,00.html

World Education Forum, (2000, April 26-28). *Dakar Framework for Action* Retrieved from http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001211/121147e.pdf.

Yao, X., (2000). *An introduction to Confucianism.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Yuan, Z., (1999). *Changes of Chinese education policy: A Case study on the relationship between equality and benefit in keypoint middle schools*. Guangzhou, China: Guangdong Education Publishing Education House. (In Chinese)

Yin, Q & White, G (1994). The marketization of Chinese higher education: A critical assessment. *Comparative Education*, 30 (3), 217-353.

Zajda, J., (2007). Introduction. In J. Zajda (Ed.) *Decentralisation and privatisation in education: The role of the state* (pp. 3-30). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.

Zha, Q., (2009). Diversification or homogenization: How governments and markets have combined to (re)shape Chinese higher education in its recent massification process. *Higher Education*, 58 (1), 41-58.

Zhang. A. & Zou, G., (1994). Foreign trade decentralization and its impact on central-local relations. In H. Jia & Z. Lin (Eds.) *Changing central-local relations in China* (pp. 153-178). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Zhang, D., (2008, Oct, 24). Primary and secondary school principals' confusion: Swaying between test-centered education and EQO education. *Zhejiang Daily*, p. 5. (In Chinese)

Zhao, S., (1994). China's central-local relationship: A historical perspective. In J. Hao & L. Zhimin (Ed.) *Changing central-local relations in China* (pp. 19-34). Boulder, Colo: *Westview Press.*

Zhong, Q., (2006). Curriculum reform in China: Challenges and reflections. *Frontiers of Education in China*, 1(3), 370-382.

Zhong, Q., Cui, Y. & Zhang, H. (2001). *For revival of Chinese nation, for every child's growth: Understanding the compendium for curriculum reform of basic education*. Shanghai, China: ECNU Press.

Zhou, J., (2004). Speech on implementing *the 2003-2007 action scheme for invigorating Chinese education*. Retrieved from http://202.205.177.9/news/2004_03/19_1.htm

Zhu, Y., (2008, Oct, 28). Education is expecting more freedom. *China Youth Daily*, p. 6. (In Chinese)

Appendices

Appendix 1

State Organs of People's Republic of China

- *Chinese Communist Party*: Ruling political party of the People's Republic of China
- *Chinese Communist Party Central Committee*: Highest leading body of the Chinese Community Party
- *Central Financial and Economic Commission*: Assumed responsibility for restoring the state's financial and economic system, replaced by the Financial and Economic Committee of the Government Administrative Council in Oct, 1949.
- *Government Administrative Council*: Highest administrative organ of the People's Republic of China, replaced by the State Council in 1954.
- *Ministry of Education*: Central executive agency of education under the State Council with broad control over the state's education system.
- *Ministry of Finance*: Central executive agency of finance under the State Council with broad control over the state's fiscal policy, economic regulations, government budget, etc.
- *National Development and Reform Commission*: Successor of the State Planning Commission, a macroeconomic management agency under the State Council with broad control over the state's economy.

- *National People's Congress*: Supreme organ of state power body and the sole legislative house in the People's Republic of China.
- *People's Republic of China*: Founded in Oct, 1949, under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party.
- *State Planning Commission*: Predecessor of the National Development and Reform Commission, the central macroeconomic management agency of centrally planned economy in China from 1952 to 1998.
- *State Council*: Synonym of the Central People's Government, formerly known as the Government Administrative Council from 1949 to 1954, the executive body of the highest state power and the supreme organ of state's administration of the People's Republic of China.

Appendix 2

Chinese Education Reforms since 1949

Time	Main Reform Efforts
1949-1957	● Nationalized all schools in China ● Fixed the structure of China's school system ● Centralized the planning and financing of Chinese education
1958-1965	● Built education theory based on Marxism and Leninism ● Focused on quantitative expansion of education ● Claimed education must serve the proletariat class
1966-1976	● Emphasized political and ideological education in school ● Adopted an admission policy primarily based political performance as well as family class-origins. ● Sent educated youth to the countryside ● Suspended schools to support the Great Cultural Revolution
1977-1984	● Reconstructed the Chinese school system ● Started to link education development with economic development ● Gave prominence to science and technology in school curriculum
1985-1992	● Initiated a structural reform in Chinese education ● Issued a series of laws and regulation regarding compulsory education, teachers, special education, etc. ● Encouraged a diversified fiscal system for Chinese education
1993-2002	● Deepened the education reform and introduced the Essential-Quality-Oriented education ● Started to marketize and privatize Chinese education ● Outlined the direction and framework of Chinese education in the 21ST Century.
2002-the present	● Further giving a priority to Essential-Quality-Oriented education ● Popularizing compulsory education in undeveloped areas ● Improving education equality

Appendix 3

Memorabilia of Chinese Curriculum Reforms

1950: The MOE issued the *Curriculum Standards of All Subjects for Secondary Schools* (*Draft*)

1951: The People's Education Press (PEP) published the first set of national textbooks.

1952: The MOE issued the *Temporary Provision of Primary Schools and Secondary Schools* and the *Primary School Teaching Plan*

1956: The MOE issued the *Primary School Teaching Syllabus* (All Subjects) and the *Secondary School Teaching Syllabus* (All Subjects); published the second set of national textbooks

1960: The PEP published the third set of national textbooks

1961: The PEP published the fourth set of national textbooks

(1966-1976 regular schooling halted)

1978: The MOE issued the new *Teaching Scheme for Full-time Primary and Secondary School* (Draft). The PEP published the fifth set of national textbooks

1981: The MOE issued the new *Teaching Scheme for 6-Year Key-Point Secondary School* and *Teaching Scheme for 5-year Primary School*

1982: The PEP published the sixth set of national textbooks

1986: The MOE issued the new *Teaching Syllabuses for Primary and Secondary Schools* (All Subjects)

1986: The CCPCC and State Council issued the *Compulsory Education Law of People's Republic of China*. The MOE encouraged diversified preparation and production of textbooks

1988: The MOE Issued the *Teaching Scheme for Nine-year Compulsory Education Full-time Primary and Middle Schools* (*Draft*). The PEP published the seventh set of national textbooks

1992: The MOE issued *Curriculum Scheme for Nine-year Compulsory Education Full-time Primary and Middle Schools* (amended based on the 1988 *Teaching Scheme*) and the new *Teaching Syllabuses for Nine-year Compulsory Education Full-time Primary and Middle Schools* (*All Subjects*)

1993: The CCPCC and State Council issued the *Outline of Chinese Education Reform and Development*.

1999: The CCPCC and State Council issued the *Decision on Deeping Educational Reform and Promoting Essential-Qualities-Oriented Education*. The MOE issued the *Action Scheme for Invigorating Education toward the 21st Century*.

2001: The MOE issued the *Outline of Basic Education Curriculum Reform* (Pilot).

2001: The MOE issued a set of *Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education Full-time Primary and Middle Schools*

2001: The MOE issued *Temporary Provision of Compiling and Approving Primary and Secondary School Textbooks*

2003: The MOE issued *2003-2007 Action Scheme for Invigorating Chinese Education*.

2010: The CCPCC and State Council issued the *Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development*.

VITA

Tingting Qi was born in Jiangsu Province, China and graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Chinese Language and Literature from Soochow University, China in 2000. She received her Master's degree in Comparative Literature and World Literature from Soochow University, China in 2003. Qi worked as an editor in Jiangsu Education Publishing House from 2003 to 2007. She began her pursuit of a Ph.D in Cultural Studies in Education at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in fall, 2007 and completed this degree in fall, 2011. Her research interests include cultural studies in education, social foundations in education, and international education.