Teacher Empowerment and China's Curriculum Reform:

To What Extent Do Teachers Feel Empowered by

Chinese Curriculum Reform?

—A Case Study Based on Dalian No. 24 Senior High School

by

XIAO WANG

B.A., Northeast Normal University, 2008
B.B.A., Northeast Normal University, 2008
LL.M., Northeast Normal University, 2013

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Abstract

This study examines the enactment of teacher empowerment in Dalian No. 24 Senior High School within the context of the current Chinese Curriculum Reform Movement (CRM). A review of current Chinese and American literature on teacher empowerment was given to provide a background to better understand specific issues that impact teacher empowerment. Additionally, a qualitative case study on this leading Chinese high school is presented with the aim of raising awareness of teacher empowerment involving Chinese curricular reform. Data collection included a literature review, semi-structured open-ended interviews and surveys. Face-to-face interviews and questionnaire surveys were conducted at Dalian No. 24 Senior High School.

Accordingly, this study aims to provide practical insights on issues affecting teacher empowerment as applicable to Dalian No. 24 Senior High School. Two additional purposes of the study are to build on the existing, but limited, research knowledge in this area and to provide avenues for future inquiry.

Results from this study highlight the benefits of teacher empowerment, including increased performance and productivity, improved teacher morale, and increased knowledge of subject matter and pedagogy. At Dalian No. 24 Senior High School, three key issues were discovered: first, most of the teacher participants hold a positive attitude towards teacher empowerment and the latest National Curriculum Reform (NCR); second, this school holds a supportive environment to teacher empowerment and teachers' professional development; and third, there are still drawbacks to implementing teacher

empowerment and the changes required by the NCR that the teachers and the school need

to address.

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To my parents

1 Introduction

Teacher empowerment is a critical issue in Chinese educational reform with profound cultural implications and urgent practical needs. As a way for teachers to have greater decision-making authority and to promote their own professional development, teacher empowerment encourages teachers to attain professional autonomy. When schools and teachers properly implement the new curriculum guidelines, it is hoped that teachers will be enabled to implement new teacher-driven pedagogies within the context of a government-mandated curriculum, and will also be able to become more involved in school affairs and decision-making processes.

This thesis argues that teacher empowerment is an essential component in education reform in China, and results from the following qualitative case study examine this at a local level. By drawing from research on the present teaching conditions in China, and adding additional localized qualitative research, this thesis seeks to highlight key issues in relation to the traditional hierarchy of power within this school, and discuss key problems that have arisen from the China's National Curriculum Reform's (NCR) mandate. Through comparative analysis with the United States' education reforms, this thesis also seeks to delineate practicable solutions to issues arising from a centralized authority and other obstacles to implementing curriculum reform.

Despite a new push toward teacher empowerment, China is still functioning under an

education system built upon traditional education methods. In China, the curriculum is dictated by the National Ministry of Education, the government department that regulates Chinese education, not by teachers or by school officials. The planning and designing of curricula are the responsibilities of the Ministry 'experts', most of whom have high academic qualifications but often no real teaching experience (Li, 2004). Consequently, schoolteachers are unable to act as the primary interpreters of education and providers of curriculum, their experience and knowledge being mostly disregarded or ignored. Therefore, it is important to re-examine teachers' roles within the context of education reform in light of new pedagogies in the classroom. And while Chen Yuting has argued that only top-down management can produce teacher empowerment, research shows that many other factors are complicit in education reform (Chen & Walsh, 2008).

Furthermore, due to longstanding traditional practice, a hierarchy of power is firmly entrenched in China's education system (Rong, 2005). The Ministry directs principals and principals then direct teachers. This top-down decision-making structure reinforces hierarchical relationships between educators and further constrains teacher empowerment (Cai, 2003).

To compound these issues, research on teacher empowerment has mainly been done with a generalized perspective rather than through in-depth studies. Therefore, a lack of information has constrained the potential of teacher empowerment and related reform efforts in China.

The following sections explore these issues in more detail:

1.1 Backgrounds

1.1.1 Timeline of China's National Curriculum Reform

In January of 1999, the Chinese National Ministry of Education (the "Ministry") issued an "Action Plan for Education Revitalization in the 21st Century" and announced that the Third National Education Work Conference would take place in June of that year. The Ministry subsequently organized education experts to begin preparing the Basic Education Curriculum Reform. In 2001, the Ministry issued a document entitled "Outline of Basic Education Curriculum Reform (Trial)". The Ministry also issued the "Experimental Plan for Curriculum Creation for Compulsory Education" in what was deemed the Experimental Districts. In addition, the Ministry issued new curriculum standards for the following 18 subjects in full-time Compulsory Education Schools: Chinese, math, English, Japanese, Russian, science (Grade 3 to 6), science (Grade 7 to 9), history, History and Society (1), History and Society (2), geography, physics, chemistry, biology, arts, music, painting and drawing, and physical education.

In 2003, after two years of trial and experimentation, the Ministry made changes to the following: curriculum implementation plans for the compulsory education years, curriculum standards of various subjects, the "Local Curriculum Management Guide", the "Schools Curriculum Management Guide", and exam reforms in elementary schools

and middle schools. All these changes were to increase teachers' participation in curriculum reform. (Fu, 2001)

In April of 2003, the Ministry issued a new curriculum plan for Chinese high schools and trial curriculum standards for the following 15 subjects: Chinese, English, Japanese, Russian, math, physics, chemistry, biology, history, geography, technical skills, art, music, painting and drawing, physical education and health. In September of 2004, the New Curriculum Plan for Chinese high schools came into effect. Curriculum targets, structural content, and curriculum categories of basic education were changed significantly (Ministry of Education, 2001).

A central aim to these changes is to create a new basic education curriculum that is consistent with the requirements of Quality Education (Ministry of Education, 2001). The goal would be achieved through redeveloping training methods for preparing students, promoting students to focus on practical abilities and encouraging students to be more creative (Ministry of Education, 2001). This is the most significant reform since 1949, in terms of the reform's potential impact on teachers and students and the efforts contributed by various parties. This reform purports to be based on the most modern ideas and theories of education.

1.1.2 Curriculum Reform, Teacher Empowerment and Teacher Professional Development

Since 1949, including the most recent NCR in 2001, China has conducted eight curriculum reforms in basic education, which include pre-primary education, primary education and secondary education mostly from the 7th grade onwards. During this period, Chinese curriculum reform, related to various modernization and post-modernization imperatives, served different goals including political, economic, scientific and technological development (Li & Xu, 2004).

The NRC intended to bring forward a series of fundamental changes to the entire Chinese curricular system, including changes to curriculum objectives, content, organization, teaching, and assessment. Compared with the former curriculum reforms, which purely focused on curriculum contents, the NCR emphasizes on the idea of student-centered curriculum. It aims to develop a sound system which will promote students' all-round development, teachers' professional development and effective curriculum evaluation system. There are six main components in the NCR, including curriculum system, curriculum management, curriculum evaluation, curriculum implementation, curriculum management and curriculum arrangement. The NCR Compendium, which was released in 2001, and came into effect in 2003, defined the following objectives as the new guidelines for classroom teaching (Ministry of Education, 2001):

- changing the teaching and learning focus from basic knowledge and skills to critical thinking, problem solving and creativity;

- changing teacher-centered teaching modes to more student-centered modes, with more emphases on student engagement and attitudes;

- applying learned content to real life contexts;

- cultivating a sense of social responsibility, sharing, cooperation and communication;

- establishing an assessment system that encourages both an all-round and individual development of students;

- promoting a greater variety of textbooks as well as diversified learning resources;

- implementing a three-level curriculum administration system that involves coordination and communication structures amongst and within national, provincial and school levels; and

- developing a systematic and sustained form of teachers' professional development.

In order to support teachers' professional development, the concept of "teacher empowerment" gained increasing popularity in the field of Chinese education during this period. In a search for the phrase "teacher empowerment" in the CNKI, China National Knowledge Infrastructure—one of the most authoritative and largest source of China-based information in the world, reflecting the latest developments in Chinese politics, economics, humanity and social science, science and technology—3515 results were found. Searching for "teacher empowerment" and "curriculum reform" in the CNKI,

2425 results were found, with the majority from universities and educational research institutions.

When the concept of "teacher empowerment" was introduced to China from Western countries for the first time in the early 2000's, its core idea conflicted with the dominant views on education and curriculum management. Until now, from the planning to the implementation level, education reform has operated within a strict top-down hierarchy while largely ignoring the perspectives of the teachers who are expected to implement the reforms (Guan & Meng, 2007).

The reason why "teacher empowerment" has recently had such a strong appeal in Chinese educational reform is that it addresses the fear of failure to achieve the Ministry's desired ends (Cao & Lu, 2006; Li, 2008). The literature notes that when teachers become leaders and executors rather than technicians, the education reforms will be realized (Muijs & Harris, 2003). A lack of teacher empowerment is regarded as one of the more serious deficiencies in the implementation of the current NCR effort (Wang, 2005).

In recent years, with the introduction of the concept of teacher professionalization as noted in the NCR, teacher empowerment has gained popularity as an essential factor in curriculum development and research as well as teacher development in China. Since the implementation of the Chinese NCR in 2001, words and concepts such as "teacher

empowerment," "teachers' rights," "curriculum power" and "teacher professionalization" have appeared more frequently in Chinese educational research literature (Cheng & Ma, 2008; Ding, 2001; Fu, 2001; Li, 2004; Li, 2008; Rong, 2005; Wang, 2005; Wang & Pan, 2000; Wu, 2006; Xu, 2004; Ye, 2001; Zhang, 2003; Zhang, 2005). This indicates a changing culture in education in China. However, there are still significant obstacles to effectively implement such reforms.

Research indicates that "Teacher empowerment" has been recognized as a key component to revitalizing education in developed Western countries (Short & Rineheat, 1992; Lawson & Harrison, 1990; Prawat, 1991; Wilson & Coolican, 1996; Lichtenstein, Mclauglin & Knudsen, 1992; Midgley & wood, 1993; Moye, Henkin & Egley, 2005; Melenyzer, 1990; Maeroff, 1998). Empowering teachers, getting them involved in the decision-making process for school affairs and the creation of curricula have positive effects, including improving independence of learning and professional knowledge and skills development, enabling teachers to participate in school wide decision-making.

Research points out that many teachers also believe their independence promotes their school's development, as a cultural institution as well as its academic reputation mainly due to the fact that teachers can tailor their instruction to bring out the better qualities of their students. In this sense, a higher quality educational system can be realized (Thornburg & Mungai, 2011). Where teacher empowerment is emphasized, especially when a school-based curriculum is implemented, Chinese teachers have

exercised more autonomy than ever to promising results (Lee et. al, 2011). Governmental and educational institutions now pay more attention to teachers' subjectivity in regards to educational practices and encourage teacher self-inquiry to increase the teachers' professional development. However, in an era of heightened requirements for teachers' professional capacity, China has not, in terms of full teacher development, met the requirement for its education goals on either theoretical or practical grounds (Guan & Meng, 2007).

The final target of the NCR is to promote the quality of students' learning as opposed to solely pursuing high exam scores as was formerly the case. Requirements for teachers are meant to change accordingly. A central aim of the NCR is to develop a systematic approach to teachers' professional development that responds to this shift (Ministry of Education, 2001). To fulfill this requirement, teachers need to be empowered to respond creatively to the NCR objectives. Although the phrase "teacher empowerment" does not appear in the official documents of the Ministry of Education, related interpretation documents and research on curriculum reform places much emphasis on it (Ding, 2001; Fu, 2001; Li, 2004; Li, 2008; Rong, 2005). This point is taken up in greater detail in the Literature Review section.

1.1.2.1 The Impact of the Emphasis of Final Exams on Teacher Empowerment

A major focus of traditional Chinese teaching is on examination skills training.

Because of this, classroom teaching is centered on the pursuit of high test scores. Education has become a process of teachers giving students extensive and repetitive exercises that mimic the final examination. A situation frequently occurring in a typical Chinese classroom is that teachers present the information, while students answer the questions in textbooks by memorizing, copying and endlessly practicing exam-like questions. In short, teachers are technicians more than curriculum interpreters. In such an education model, students have to face endless worksheets with countless exam preparation questions. The only way teachers assess the quality of learning is through the traditional paper-based examination, which has failed to encourage students to seek a complete understanding and practical application of the knowledge they are learning (Ma et. al, 2008). A consequence of this highly traditional and technical education model is that teachers feel disempowered and also lack incentives to be creative or innovative in the classroom. The ancient Greek scholar, Plutarch, once said that the mind is not a container to be filled up, but a torch to be lit. In this sense, learning resides with the learners.

The job of the teacher, then, is not to transfer knowledge, but to help the learners discover, organize and manage knowledge; to guide them rather than to mold them. In the NCR, teachers are asked to take more responsibility in this regard. In the NCR guidelines, teachers are asked to actively interact and seek mutual development with students; to respect students' individual differences, meet the demands of students' and scientifically

lead them to develop by themselves; to develop new mode of teaching in the class; to diversify evaluation method on students' achievements, etc. (Ministry of Education, 2001). From this perspective, the traditional education model is no longer sufficient to meet the new requirements outlined in the NCR guidelines. Even though the NCR requires changes to be made and more freedom to be given to teachers in terms of teaching styles, as well as protocols that imply greater classroom autonomy, the unrelenting pressure from examinations remains.

China's traditional approach to evaluation is a system rooted in a technical rational approach to education (Cui, 2000). The ultimate target of school education, for all practical purposes, is still to achieve high scores on college entrance examinations. This is the central irony of current NCR efforts: a future-oriented, quality education measured by antagonistic methods. When traditional methods are de-emphasized as the sole assessment of knowledge, teachers can be more empowered to explore comprehension, understanding, and creativity in their classroom (Wang & Pan, 2000).

1.1.2.2 The Impact of a Top-down Model on Teacher Empowerment

Besides traditional examinations, there is another problem that has constrained teacher empowerment. Essentially, China is still using a "top-down" model in its implementation of curricula; authorities and experts take control of designing the curriculum, while teachers are seen as the executors of their directives. Because of this

model, the content of school teaching is strictly controlled by the national education system. Therefore, the planning and designing of curriculum have been the responsibility of "experts", most of whom have little experience in the classroom (Li, 2004). Thus, teachers are not recognized as the dominant interpreters of curricula and their experience and knowledge is largely ignored in its design. To achieve substantial professional development and teaching professionalization within the context of the NCR, it is not enough for administrators to be the only decision-makers. The teacher's role in the NCR and professional development needs to be re-examined (Moore, 1997). When teachers play a greater role as leaders in both education reform and their own professional development, the potential of the current education reform efforts are more likely to be realized.

To establish and strengthen the position of teachers as dominant interpreters of the curricula in educational reform and in their own professional development there is a need for the following (Mcconnell, 1989)

- new initiatives to be taken by education administration and school leaders in terms of teachers' professional development;

- real support for teachers to question and challenge the status quo and hierarchical decision-making ;

- exposure to and acknowledgement of varied opinions on different educational values and attitudes; and

- keen insight to discover the underlying problems behind obstacles to teacher empowerment

1.2 Necessity of Teacher Empowerment

Since the information revolution began, and due to the technological changes in industrial structures, education has gained unprecedented attention by governments around the world (UNESCO, 1996). Education reform has become an important method for governments to maintain their own political and economic interests (Hu, 2009). In the past two decades, for example, the United States has undergone three education reforms. The first one mainly reflected the centralization of management, paying attention to the promotion of standards and improvement of teachers' content knowledge. The second one emphasized the empowerment of teachers and instituted school-based management reforms. The third one highlighted a comprehensive systematic school restructuring, the standards-based reform movement. This movement culminated, for example, in the "No Child Left Behind Act" at the beginning of the 21st century in the US.

The governments of the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Japan and other countries have developed similar curriculum standards documents, setting off a new round of basic education and curriculum reform (Zhong et al, 2001). During the implementation of their new curriculum, teachers' professional ability has become an important focus and more attention has been given to the process of teachers'

empowerment and professionalization. In the mid-1980s, the Holmes Group and the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession issued two reports: *Teachers for the 21st century* and *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future.* These two reports set off the so-called "second wave" of American education reform and focused on teachers' 'professionalization.' Specifically, they put more emphasis on the influence of a school's internal factors in regards to the improvement of educational quality through empowering teachers. As a result, teacher empowerment has become a central tenet to American education reform.

In the 1980s, China initiated education reforms in order to implement a quality-focused education. In 2001, a larger scale of basic education reform was launched in primary, secondary and senior high schools. This reform aimed to teach students "how to learn" not just "what to learn", gradually adjusting and reforming the current basic curriculum, structure and content. During the reconstruction of the curriculum, teachers' roles and teaching behaviors were expected to change accordingly. Teachers who used to be passive implementers of curriculum and teaching plans were expected to become teacher researchers, curriculum developers and knowledge facilitators. After the disappointing results of several failed Chinese curriculum reform efforts people realized that the new curricula did not fail because of unscientific plans; rather, the practice of curriculum reform has not really endured because it ignored teachers' status and professional autonomy in the classroom (Wang, 2005). Teachers should not only

participate in curriculum planning, selection and implementation, but also in curriculum construction and development. This would constitute an important aspect to teacher empowerment in China (Li & Duan, 2004).

However, under China's current education management and curriculum decision-making system, it seems unrealistic for teachers to develop curriculum fully and independently from other elements in the school system (Zhou, 2004). But based on teachers' theoretical knowledge and practical experience, this target can be achieved by teachers' appropriate adjustments and contributions to the overall curriculum planning processes.

To increase teachers' autonomy related to curriculum development, it is necessary to give teachers decision-making power based on the requirements of the NCR. In relation to the actual classroom practice and students' personal situations, teachers can create personalized practices, choose the form of teaching, and organize classroom activities that involve self-reflection and self-development goals. In this sense, in the implementation of the new curriculum, teacher empowerment becomes a prerequisite for realizing the NCR targets

1.3 Research Questions

This study intends to determine how teacher empowerment works in the context of the Chinese NCR and what advantages and drawbacks are. After researching literature

from both China and North America, four questions related to high school teachers'

empowerment in the Chinese NCR are raised in the course of this study which involves

forty-four teachers (ten teacher respondent interviews, two administrators respondents

interviews, and thirty-two teacher respondents surveys) in one school in Dalian:

1.   What is teacher empowerment, especially in the context of Chinese current

National Curriculum Reform?

2.   What are teachers' experiences and attitudes towards teacher empowerment and

Chinese current National Curriculum Reform?

3. What are the factors that influence teacher empowerment in the context of Chinese

current National Curriculum Reform?

4.   Is there a conflict between efforts to introduce teacher empowerment and the

current education system? If so, what is the nature and substance of this conflict from the

Chinese teachers' perspective?

The final three questions constitute the qualitative empirical inquiry undertaken in

this study.

1.4 Overview of Method

The research was conducted using a qualitative approach. Interviews with Dalian No.

24 Senior High School (Dalian No. 24) teachers (including ten teachers from different

grades and two administrators) comprised the main research methods. After composing

the original draft of interview questions, a pilot interview was completed to examine the feasibility of the questions for eliciting the necessary data. Appropriate adjustments (such as the adjustment of the interview questions and methods of carrying on the conversation) were made after the pilot study to make the interview questions and the interview process more relevant and valid. Subsequent interview transcripts were saved in a coded digital file for review. Data interpretations and conclusions were confirmed with respondents from whom the data were originally obtained (member checking), and followed after the transcriptions of interviews were completed. The analysis of the transcripts used the constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During the process of data analysis, the author recognized that the sample size of this research was too limited. Accordingly, fifty questionnaires based on interview questions were randomly issued within the school to give the author a more encompassing impression of teachers' experiences towards teacher empowerment and NCR of Dalian No. 24 Senior High School. Thirty-two completed responses were considered appropriate for providing additional background information for this study.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted at only one school in Dalian, China. Because of the limitation of the time and sample size, the results are not thorough or extensive enough for wider application. And while Dalian No. 24 is a leading school in its district, further testing and research needs to be done to allow a broader application of the outcomes.

Additionally, this study may be limited by respondents' preexisting attitudes toward teacher empowerment and the implementation of new teaching methods, thereby rendering some of the concepts in this study problematic. Teachers' lack of confidence, fear of failure and authoritative restrictions also may limit findings.

It is important to note some limitations on my subjectivity as a researcher. Without the grounded knowledge that comes from years of direct teaching experience, my insight into the ramifications of the teacher empowerment literature is limited. Additionally, my interpretations come from the viewpoint of a Chinese individual who came from an educational system that is highly streamlined to focus on knowledge, often at the expense of direct practical experience. While I am interested in the notion of "teacher empowerment", it should be noted that I have little direct experience as an educator. Therefore, my limited experience constrains my interpretation of teachers' perceptions. Bearing all this in mind, I have tried to faithfully represent teachers' perceptions in this thesis and hope that I have done justice to their work with the students at Dalian No. 24.

1.6 Thesis Outline

This paper consists of the following six chapters:

Chapter 1, Introduction, explains the features and origins of teacher empowerment and the aims and requirements of China's current NCR. It also discusses how the two issues interconnect. Research questions, methodology of study and limitations are

reviewed. Existing problems related to teacher empowerment in China and North America are also explored.

Chapter 2, Literature Review, addresses existing literature relating to teacher empowerment. Basic issues surrounding the subject and different perspectives are examined. Through this review, the author explores the Chinese New National Curriculum Reform to further understand the concept of teacher empowerment within the context of current Chinese educational practices. The characteristics, sources and composition of teacher empowerment are also discussed in this chapter. Further, the review outlines the external requirements and internal appeals from teachers, schools and national reforms of teacher empowerment. External requirements are outlined in the form of laws and curriculum requirements. Internal appeals arise from the natural relationship between teacher and curriculum. This includes a teacher's power over school affairs, decision-making and professional abilities.

Chapter 3, Methodology, provides an overview of the research method used in this study. This research was conducted using a qualitative study approach. Face-to-face interviews are the main method of data collection. Limitations of the study, methods of analysis, and categorizations are outlined, as well as contextual information about Dalian No. 24. Data are codified and analyzed according to the research questions. Questionnaires based on the interview questions were issued randomly to enhance the data. Records of the interview were kept for further clarification of interview content, and

transcripts were made accordingly. After finishing the transcription process, member checking was carried out.

Chapter 4, Analysis, Results and Discussion, outlines the study's results. It analyzes teachers' present experiences of teacher empowerment in Dalian No. 24. It identifies attitudes and values held about curriculum reform, as well as highlights problematics surrounding reform in Dalian No. 24. Additional aspects to teacher empowerment such as environment, awareness, attitudes and ability are detailed. Important topics for future consideration are highlighted throughout. Leadership, cultural issues, and government constraints are also discussed, as well as other crucial elements involved in the implementation of reform.

Chapter 5, Conclusions, reviews the main findings of the research, offering conclusions and suggestions. The conclusions are based on the research conducted at Dalian No. 24 and address the research questions. The nature and conditions for teacher empowerment will be summarized in this chapter. Key questions for further research are summarized and critical elements to the reform process are outlined. Teachers' rights and issues affecting their implementation are examined, as well as key relationships involved in the reform process.

2 Literature Review

This chapter reviews existing research on teacher empowerment. Originating in the United States around 1980, teacher empowerment is a relatively new concept to China, and it has been integral to the development of teacher education since the enactment of the NCR. Researchers have explored much in terms of the theory's breadth and depth. This chapter will focus on the concept of teacher empowerment, its meanings, practice and effects from both American and Chinese perspectives. Moreover, the Chinese traditional culture, political system and centralized management structure have meant that the curriculum management system can never be exactly the same as the United States' Historical analysis and reasonable suggestions that address this situation are also provided after reviewing the most recent Chinese literature.

2.1 Theoretical and Practical Significance

Theoretical research on teacher empowerment focuses on improving teachers' professional autonomy and explores how teachers can transfer their roles from passive curriculum implementers to active curriculum participants. Theoretical research also studies how the successful enactment of teacher empowerment will have a positive impact on students' all-round development, in addition to reforming schools' organizational culture and management systems.

Practical research on teacher empowerment focuses on the application of theoretical

knowledge and ideas in the classroom setting. This research identifies problems in current educational practices and attempts to provide practical answers. The practical application of teacher empowerment research involves the redistribution of schools' power over the administration of the curriculum, transformation of schools' organizational policy and systems, and the implementation and evaluation of teaching practices within the teaching profession. In *Does teacher empowerment affect the classroom?,* Louis and Marks (1997) confirmed that teacher empowerment has an influence on students' academic performance. In *Trouble In Paradise: teacher conflicts in shared decision making,* Weiss et al. (1992) discusses the challenge of teacher empowerment during the education process, suggesting it may cause increased conflict due to teachers' participation in decision making processes. Klecker and Loadman's (1996) research was based on the hypothesis that teacher empowerment would increase teachers' job satisfaction. In *Exploring the relationship between teacher empowerment and teacher job satisfaction,* they identify key elements, including teachers' salaries, promotion opportunities, challenges, job autonomy, working conditions, cooperation with colleagues and communication with students as measurements of teachers' job satisfaction. This research demonstrates that teacher empowerment has the potential to increase job satisfaction.

The author found that practical research on teacher empowerment is mainly focused on teacher empowerment's background, connotations, constitutional dimensions, and influencing factors among others. Through an analysis of the literature, the author

concluded that teacher empowerment is demonstrated to increase job satisfaction, as well as student performance. Teachers and administrators should address problematics involving the redistribution of power, and that key elements as discussed above, are critical in affecting teacher empowerment.

2.2 Teacher Empowerment

Wang Lishan asserted that empowerment can overcome teachers' mediocrity, effectively preventing the strict hierarchy of the Chinese education system and inspiring the creativity of teachers (Wang, 2005). In *From empowerment system to improvement of individual capacity (2009)*, Hu suggests teacher empowerment awakens a teacher's autonomy and in turn would reform the top-down education system in China. Some researchers focused on the influence of teacher empowerment in the classroom, such as Wu's *Empowering, energizing and constructing self-autonomy classroom: the value orientation of classroom teaching reform*. Some are dedicated to exploring teachers' participation in curriculum reform, such as Cheng and Ma's *Empowerment: guarantee of teacher's classroom participation*.

In Lawson and Harrison's (1990) article titled *Individual action planning in initial teacher training: empowerment or discipline?*, the authors came to the conclusion that teacher empowerment needs to enhance the teacher's rights in three areas: self-efficacy, critical autonomy and community. Here, self-efficacy refers to individuals' abilities to

solve difficult problems; critical autonomy refers to the ability to think independently; and community refers to the ability to collaborate in a group (Lawson & Harrison, 1990).

In 1992, Paula Short and James Rhinehart conducted a three year study on teacher empowerment in the context of western culture (Short & Rinehart, 1992). They concluded that there are six dimensions to teacher empowerment, including decision-making, professional development, status, self-efficacy, autonomy and impact. They outlined each dimension as follows: Decision making is regarded as the crux of teacher empowerment. Short and Rhinehart said teachers should have more rights and responsibilities to participate in allocating school budgets, holding teacher elections, designing curriculum plans, etc. Professional development means schools provide opportunities for teachers to continue their professional studies in order to improve their skills both at work and outside of work. Status implies teachers should have the right to be respected as professional persons. Self-efficacy means that teachers demonstrate the ability to help their students learn and are able to make tailored learning programs in order to implement effective teaching and learning activities. Autonomy means that teachers have their own areas of expertise and have control over how they interpret the curriculum, and impact means teachers feel their efforts will have an impact on the entire school development (Short & Rinehart, 1992). Through working with these six dimensions, better attention can be given to the reform and evaluation of teacher empowerment.

Teacher empowerment assumes the premise and guarantee of school-based curriculum development (Cheng & Ma, 2008). This can be examined through three aspects: First, compared with the uniform national curriculum development model that China previously used, is that teacher empowerment acts as a new way to improve teachers' professional authority and capability. This professional authority and capability is not imposed on teachers. Instead, they refer to the skills teachers already had but were constrained to use. The second aspect can be considered from the perspective of legality and legitimacy of teacher empowerment. Advocating on behalf of a teacher's professional status emphasizes empowerment and amplifies the power of teacher groups, enabling them to become more involved in a school's operation and development. The third aspect emphasizes the collaboration between teachers and other educators. It ensures teachers, in collaboration with, for example university faculty, have greater opportunity to control their educational resources in order to develop and influence their professional abilities (Li, 2004). Teacher empowerment inspires teachers to become more active in their professional development and the development of the curriculum. China's top-down decision-making model has the potential for reform through empowering teachers to act more autonomously. Lawson and Harrison (1990) and Short and Rinehart's research (1992) outlines factors influencing the implementation of teacher empowerment including self-efficacy, professional development, and decision-making. The factors mentioned above and the demonstrated results of teacher empowerment research outline critical areas for consideration in implementing and assessing teacher

empowerment reforms.

2.3 Development of Teacher Empowerment

According to the quantity and quality of research results on teacher empowerment, the researcher divided the development of teacher empowerment research into two periods: the embryotic period and the developing period.

2.3.1 The Embryotic Period (From Early 1980s to Early 1990s)

In 1986, Lightfoot published *On Goodness In School: Themes of empowerment*. It is the first systematic research on empowerment in the field of education. In the same year, Margaret Yonemura's (1986) *Reflection on teacher empowerment and teacher education* is the first research which uses teacher empowerment as the title of the article. In this period, there were the following two research features.

2.3.1.1 Lack of notable research achievement and in-depth study.

In this period, research results focusing on teacher empowerment is selective, approximately ten publications. The representative scholars are Lightfoot, Yonemura, Maeroff, Karant, Melenyzer and others. Maeroff (1989) thought

For a teacher, empowerment means—more than anything else—working in an environment in which the teacher acts as a professional and is treated as a professional… There are three guiding principles in this approach to

empowerment and they have to do with status, knowledge, and access to decision

making. (p. 53)

There were also scholars whose discourses looked at teacher empowerment from the

perspective of a school's management reforms. Karant (1989) investigated the

Midwestern High School, Suburban High School and Inner-City High school, and made

the conclusion that "expanding teachers' responsibilities in ways that give them

significant influence is the key to develop better schools (p. 29)."

From this research, the data only reflect education reform, especially teacher

education reform. They do not provide in-depth analysis on content or strategies for

teacher empowerment. However, these studies have begun to consciously pay attention to

teacher empowerment's impact on school education reform, promoting teacher

professional development, increasing teacher responsibility, and improving students'

scores. This lays some foundational work for subsequent teacher empowerment research.

2.3.1.2 Lack of systematic research and insufficient attention to teacher empowerment

In this period, the studies were generally carried out from the following perspective:

Through observation and interviews on several schools' empowerment status (including

teacher empowerment), Lightfoot (1986) thought "Empowerment refers to the

opportunities a person has for autonomy, responsibility, choice, and authority (p. 9)."

However, Lightfoot's study is not focused specifically on a teacher's individual empowerment, but school empowerment as a whole. In 1989, Brandt interviewed Lieberman. During the interview, Lieberman stated: "Teacher empowerment means empowering teachers to participate in group decisions, to have real decision-making roles in the school community… (p. 24)." Doris discussed teacher empowerment from the perspective of the administrator. He thought administrators should adapt their management strategy, fully trust teachers, and let teachers participate in decision-making about school affairs (Hu, 2009).

In brief, research on teacher empowerment in this period is more disparate and lacks a systematic approach. The focus of this research points out the administration's role and its involvement with teachers in implementing teacher empowerment reforms. With the steady implementation of education reform, as an important method of improving teachers' professional status and promoting teacher professional development, teacher empowerment has gained increased attention. This led to the gradual development of teacher empowerment research.

2.3.2 The Developing Period (Early 1990s to Present)

After the 1990s, teacher empowerment has occupied a significant position in education reform. Additionally, empowering teachers has become an important strategy in promoting teachers' professional growth. The Consortium for Policy Research in

Education, which is funded by the US Ministry of Education, published a series of reports about teacher empowerment. *Teacher empowerment and professional knowledge* and *Building school capacity for effective teacher empowerment: Applications to elementary schools with at-risk students,* which were published in 1991, indicated that research on teacher empowerment had entered a new period. In this period, research on teacher empowerment had the following features.

2.3.2.1. Abundant research accomplishments and diversity of research methods

After the 1990s, research achievements were increasingly prevalent and research methods were becoming more diversified. Not only educational scholars, but relevant government departments, professional academic associations, and university research institutions have also become involved in the research of teacher empowerment. (1) With US federal government funding and support, the Consortium for Policy Research in Education presented a series of teacher empowerment research reports. Among these reports, *Teacher empowerment and professional knowledge* and *building school capacity for effective teacher empowerment: Applications to elementary schools with at-risk students* were the representative ones. (2) Professional academic associations paid more attention to teacher empowerment. In 1992, 1993 and 1996, the American Educational Research Association presented *Teacher empowerment and school climate, job satisfaction* and *Empowerment among teacher leaders, reading recovery teachers, and regular classroom teachers* and *Exploring the relationship between teacher*

empowerment and teacher job satisfaction respectively on their annual meeting. (3) Also involved were university research institutions: Pennsylvania State University Education Management Research Center published *Dimensions of teacher empowerment* in 1992; in Tennessee, Memphis State University Education Policy Research Center released *Teacher empowerment in a professional development school collaborative: Pilot assessment* in the same year.

As an increasing number of stakeholders participated in teacher empowerment research during this period, we see developments in research methodology as well as an increased awareness of teacher empowerment on several levels of academia and government.

2.3.2.2. More systematic research contents

In this period, research on teacher empowerment no longer stayed in discussion about its concept and significance. They were more systematic, mainly as follows:

(1) Exploring the dimensions of teacher empowerment. Short (1992) divided teacher empowerment into six dimensions, including "Involvement in decision making, teacher impact, teacher status, autonomy, opportunities for professional development, and teacher self-efficacy (Short, 1992, p8)". Through literature review, Klecker and Loadman (1998) concluded that improvement of teacher empowerment required teachers' personal abilities, including responsibility,

leadership skill, curriculum designing, cooperation, decision-making abilities, influence, professional development, expertise, self-efficacy, self-esteem, status and guidance capacities.

(2) Exploring basic knowledge of teacher empowerment. Through field research and literature study, Lichtenstein (1991) thought decentralization or enhancing teachers' power cannot guarantee teacher empowerment. Teachers' professional knowledge was the key of ensuring teacher empowerment. He divided professional knowledge related to teacher empowerment into knowledge of professional community, knowledge of education policy and knowledge of subject area. Meanwhile, this report also explored the value of professional knowledge to teacher empowerment.

(3) Exploring internal reasons for teacher empowerment. Some scholars researched teacher empowerment from teachers' job satisfaction, self-efficacy and self-participation in decision-making and other internal factors. These scholars believed that the higher the teachers' job satisfaction, the more power they gained. It was significantly positively correlated (Klecker & Loadman, 1996).

(4) Exploring the relationship between teacher empowerment and external environment. Research related to this point was more plentiful than the others. These studies mainly focused on the relationship between teacher empowerment

and the principal, the relationship between teacher empowerment and the school environment, and the relationship between teacher empowerment and school reform and so on. These studies proceeded from elements including system, schools, and administrators especially principals. Their target was to create favorable conditions for teacher empowerment from external elements.

During this period different dimensions of teacher empowerment are explored, including professional development, knowledge of curriculum, curriculum development as well as internal and external factors influencing teacher empowerment. This increased depth of study was vital in moving teacher empowerment research towards more practicable implementation strategies.

2.4 Influencing Factors on Teacher Empowerment

In *Teacher empowerment and professional knowledge*, Lichtenstein (1992) proposed the following to achieve the target ability of empowerment: establishing a higher admission standard for becoming a teacher, mobilizing the enthusiasm of teachers and promoting improvement of teachers' professional knowledge. If teachers' professional nature and autonomy are denied, their development as professionals is severely constrained.

One of the most systematic analyses in an Eastern context of teacher empowerment is by Wan, in his book titled *Teacher Empowerment: concepts, strategies, and implications*

for schools in Hong Kong. He discussed empowerment from three perspectives: teachers, administrators, and schools. From a teacher's perspective, Wan states that more attention should be paid to factors relevant to individuals, including psychological empowerment, motivation, professionalization and trust. From an administrator's perspective, visionary leadership and spirit should be considered. Finally, from a school's perspective, emphasis should be placed on school culture and organization (Wan, 2005).

Additional factors that will influence teacher empowerment include teachers' inquiry skills, challenging of cultural norms, interpersonal communication ability, collective strength and leadership (Wan, 2005). The additional refinement of standards of professionalism and consideration of such factors as teachers' psychological states shows a more nuanced approach to teacher empowerment research.

2.4.1 Teachers' Job Satisfaction

In *Modeling Teacher Empowerment: The role of job satisfaction*, Zembylas and Papanastasiou (2005) researched the relationship between teachers' job satisfaction and teacher empowerment from dimensions including teachers' professional growth, decision-making, promotion, and status. Research shows that teachers' job satisfaction is strictly correlated with teachers' professional growth, status and other school work and life. It shows a positive correlation between teachers' job satisfaction, which means the more satisfied teachers are, the more power they gained.

Pearson and Moomaw's research involves influences of teachers' job satisfaction on teacher empowerment. In *The relationship between teacher autonomy and stress, work satisfaction, empowerment, and professionalism*, relationships between teachers' autonomy, stress, job satisfaction, teacher empowerment and teachers' professional growth are analyzed. The research shows that teacher empowerment has influences on teachers' job satisfaction, autonomy and professional development. According to the research, teachers' job satisfaction, autonomy and professional development are demonstrated as important considerations in implementing teacher empowerment strategies.

2.4.2 Decision-making

The positive outcomes of teacher empowerment strategies are slowly proving themselves. Research clearly shows that increasing the teacher's decision-making ability will increase the teacher's interest in teaching, reduce the alienation between teacher and students, and enhance the teacher's self-esteem (White, 1992). In *Teacher empowerment and the implementation of school-based reform*, Heck and Brandon (1995) found that the teacher's participation in decision-making improves teachers' sense of responsibility and contributes to better educational reforms at the school level. A more comprehensive summary of this aspect is given by Wan (Wan, 2005), whose research showed that when teachers had more control over decision-making, such as teaching method choices and school management, there are four positive effects:

1. A more effective and reasonable strategy will be produced for the development of the school as a whole.

2. Teachers' professional ownership is enhanced.

3. Teachers' morale and enthusiasm for school organization are maintained. and

4. Different voices will be presented through democratic decision-making process and therefore obtain a higher degree of social recognition of the teaching profession.

Other scholars, such as Muijs and Harris (2003) found that getting teachers involved in decision-making not only establishes a better school culture, but also improves the relationship between a school's organizational structure and teaching activities.

For administrators, sharing the decision-making power is potentially a win-win situation (Rong, 2005). Administrators share power with teachers, while teachers make contributions to school operations and curriculum development. In this case, the question is not whether teachers should get involved, but how can they be involved and to what extent.

Additionally, according to George Beecham (1989), teachers' roles in curriculum decision-making processes are increasingly important. Beecham divided the people involved into four categories: professionals, teachers, professional staff and non-professional citizens. Students were later added as a fifth category. In these five

categories, teachers are the most important because they are working at the forefront of curriculum reform. They are not only the interpreters of education policies, but are also the intermediary of education content. Therefore, they have a decisive impact on curriculum reform and play the most important role in curriculum decision-making (Beecham, 1989).

Along with researching schools' decision-making processes, Victor Vroom and Phillip Yetton (1973) said it was important to combine teachers' decision-making power with their schools' curriculum reforms. Vroom and Yetton proposed a participatory decision-making model to decide the extent of teachers' involvement. Further, Vroom and Yetton determined that the importance of decisions and teachers' expertise should both be considered when deciding their involvement level. They also found that experts and administrators do not always have enough experience and expertise. Therefore, professional teachers should be considered to be involved. However, when the outcomes of some decisions are integral to teachers' lives, or when there is a conflict of interest, for example the promotion and hiring of teachers, they might not be in the best position to make these decisions. Therefore, an 'arms-length' decision should be made, typically by administrators. Vroom and Yetton's research not only reveals the necessity of teachers' involvement in decision-making, but also details the various situations and constraints that exist in implementing decision-making. Their work shows that teachers' involvement in decision-making is not as simple as it appears. It depends on the content, the teacher's

professional ability and specific arrangement of school curricula.

Decision-making is an integral component in teacher empowerment. The research shows that integrating teachers into decision-making processes surrounding curriculum development, school culture, and administration has many positive effects, including better morale and an increased sense of professionalism. By working together with teachers, research has shown that administrators will often fare better and the school environment is improved.

2.4.3 Teachers' Roles in Curriculum Development

Teachers' roles in curriculum development determine the extent to which teachers should be empowered and the type of power that they should have. Depending on a teacher's role, different types of power can be acquired. Therefore, a question that follows is what roles are teachers playing in curriculum reform?

Teachers' participation in curriculum reform leads to teachers' involvement in curriculum development. Teachers' roles are turned from being bystanders to participants in curriculum. Kathryn Whitaker and Monte Moses (1990) thought teacher empowerment meant giving more rights to teachers, allowing them to make decisions about their work and professional development. Glenn (1990) believed that teachers should take more responsibility in decision-making related to teaching philosophy, methodology, content and scheduling arrangements. Romanish (1992) asserted that teacher empowerment

means teachers should have professional autonomy and the opportunity to use their knowledge. Lawrence Stenhouse proposed the famous notion of "teacher as researcher." He once said, "It is teachers who, in the end, will change the world of the school by understanding it" (Stenhouse, 1975, p208). From his perspective, the knowledge created by teachers in the curriculum process is essential. Therefore, it allows the intervention of personal judgments. The model he proposed reflected the in-depth integration of teachers and curriculum, which benefited teachers' professional development. Connelly and Ben-Peretz (1980) reflected on the failure of post-structuralist curriculum reform and put forward their dissatisfaction in relying on experts instead of teachers during the curriculum reform process. They thought teachers should have direct access to teaching materials and research in schools. For teachers, this research is a significant activity of their professional development. Introduction of new programs, syllabi, textbooks and research results can provide opportunities for teachers' professional development by letting them adapt to new disciplines and dispositions in the new curriculum. More importantly, teachers were willing to be part of this research.

Michael Fullan (2011) attaches great importance to teachers' roles in curriculum reform. In his book *Change leader: Learning to do what matters most*, he points out that everyone can be the impetus of change, not just experts. He also believes that absolute centralization or decentralization cannot achieve the success of curriculum reform. Top-down and bottom-up strategies should be combined. These scholars thought that

teachers' participation in curriculum creation could accelerate teachers' awareness of teacher empowerment.

William A. Reid (1979), a British scholar, described teachers' roles in terms of systematology. According to Reid, teachers are the executors of curricula and the intermediaries for transferring curriculum plans into effect. In such a system, teachers are responsible for the design and interpretation of curriculum. From a radical perspective, teachers are the embodiment of hegemony and the reproducers of social relationships. From the existential perspective, teachers are the facilitators of individual growth. Somewhere between these two extremes, qualified teachers can figure out the imperfection of regular curricula and make adjustments to arouse students' interests. During curriculum implementation, teachers have unique power to determine whether the conversion of a curriculum system to actual practice is successful or not. This means teachers are the mediators of imagination and power between formal curriculum and students' needs, desire and tendencies in relation to the actualized curriculum in the classroom (Reid, 1979).

In *The reflective roles of classroom teachers*, Mclntyre and O'Hair (1996) provide a comprehensive overview of teachers' roles as curriculum executors. They believe that teachers are playing the roles of organizers, communicators, inspirers, managers, innovators and consultants during teaching periods all of which contribute to their empowerment. These roles require teachers to have both political and legal roles.

Teachers have to regard the school as a complex system where they need to have both a spirit of reflection and one of criticism. To become effective leaders they need to take increasingly more responsibility during the process of managing the curriculum.

Through the study of different roles of the teacher in teacher empowerment strategies, data have indicated that teachers should take more responsibility in the creation of curricula, moving from passive implementers to active executors of the curriculum. These changes suggested above demonstrate effective approaches to improve teacher empowerment.

2.4.4 Teachers' Professional Development

The outcomes of teacher empowerment are fundamentally linked to teachers' professional development. While school-based curriculum empowers teachers, it also provides an unprecedented opportunity for teachers' professional development.

In *Teacher empowerment and professional knowledge*, Lichtenstein et al (1992) pointed out that the most effective way of developing teachers' professional knowledge is teachers' self-empowerment. Teachers' professional development can promote teacher empowerment because it allows teachers to have the ability to be able to actively participate, share, control and influence a variety of school events. Therefore, teachers should find their own professional development activities and continue to enrich their professional knowledge and skills in order to have the ability to deal with school affairs

and to be empowered. In *Empowering teachers through professional development,* Murray (2010) discussed the impact of teacher professional development on teacher empowerment. She emphasized the most effective way of teacher professional development is teachers' self-empowerment. Hicks and DeWalt (2006) expounded in *Teacher empowerment in the decision making process* that teacher empowerment should be regarded as part of school management. It is indispensable during the process of decision-making. Teachers should be more involved in making decisions in order to better accomplish their duties.

Gang Ding (2011) said that a teacher's professional development is the main reason for school-based curriculum development. A teacher's professional development relies on career training, partnership, resource support, students' participation and a collaborative school culture. These five aspects constitute and promote a dynamic development model for teachers' professional development. For example, in *Teacher Empowerment: The discourse, meanings and social actions of the teacher*, through observing forty teachers who felt empowered, Melenyzer (1990) found that the so-called "sense of empowerment" translated into teachers having a sense of autonomy, confidence and the ability to decide their own professional performance and opportunities. Through these practices, teachers discover real empowerment and therefore the level of teachers' professional development is raised accordingly.

In *The Empowerment of Teachers: Overcoming the crisis of confidence*, Maeroff

(1998) said that these two concepts of "teacher empowerment" and "teacher professionalization" emphasize greater respect for teachers' professional development by improving teachers' working conditions. By improving teachers' work satisfaction, the pressure from work will be lowered and professional development will be strengthened. Li (2008) pointed out in *Empowerment and professional growth of primary and secondary school teachers* that teacher empowerment enhances teachers' career satisfaction, contributes to the formation of professional academic organizations and creates a harmonious culture of education. As such, teachers' empowerment is an important element in their active engagement in curriculum at the school.

By improving their professional ability, seeking individualized professional development activities and developing better decision-making strategies, teacher empowerment can be better realized. As teachers develop professionally, research shows that teachers become more empowered.

2.4.5 School and Organizational Culture

Lightfoot (1986) pointed out that teachers' development comes from parents and organizations respectfully, both of which impact teacher empowerment. In *Why "professionalizing" teaching is not enough?*, Firestone (1993) discussed teachers' importance in schools. He suggests that teachers' participation in school decision-making, attending training courses, gaining respect, raising treatment and improving working

conditions will have positive influences on teacher empowerment. He pointed out that creating a good environment will be helpful for constructing teachers' self-autonomy, in order to influence teacher empowerment. Traditional school structures with a rigid hierarchy will hinder the development of teachers' self-autonomy. Bogler and Somech (2005) discussed the relationships amongst teacher empowerment, organizational promise and organizational citizenship behavior. In *Correlations between perceived teacher empowerment and perceived sense of teacher self-efficiency*, Hemric and Shellman (2010) confirmed from their study that providing teachers with good working conditions and creating reliant, professionalized and cooperative environments are necessary to promote teachers' self-efficacy. In *Teacher empowerment and collaboration enhances student engagement in data-driven environments*, Pollak (2009) indicated that schools could promote teacher empowerment by cooperation, which will also improve students' performance. Chinese scholar Cao and Lu (2006) in *Teacher empowerment: Connotation, significance and strategies* suggested that elementary, high school and universities should cooperate to promote teachers' professional development and teacher empowerment. Li and Chang (2006) discussed teacher empowerment's background, content, method and constructing of the environment in *Teacher empowerment in America*, which is valuable for supporting and enabling greater teacher autonomy. The relationship between a school's organizational culture and teacher empowerment cannot be ignored. Research has shown that a supportive school environment more effectively engages teacher empowerment strategies and increases their self-efficacy.

2.4.6 School Curriculum Leadership and Teacher Empowerment

Teacher empowerment requires interactive efforts between curriculum leaders and teachers. Concerns about curriculum leaders' and teachers' professional involvement, decision-making and development are explored in this section. Objective elements that may influence teachers and leaders are also considered.

According to Lambert (2005), curriculum leadership should have the following guidelines: First, it should be a group rather than an individual (e.g., principal) endeavor. She said that everyone in this group could have the potential and power to be a leader. Second, all members in this group should learn to work together to construct knowledge. Third, redistribution of power and authority can be assured and responsibilities of learning, objectives and actions can be shared (Xu, 2004). Therefore, in this sense, curriculum leadership is no longer just the domain of principals and administrators. Teachers also have the opportunity to participate in leading curriculum development (Li & Duan, 2004), thereby increasing their empowerment.

School curriculum leadership also requires the participation of teachers. Without teacher leadership both at the school and in the classroom, school reforms and improvements cannot be completed. It has been a long time since teachers took part in and occupied certain key positions in curriculum leadership in China. To some extent, schools need teachers to lead the curriculum reform. Empowered teachers are necessary

for collaborative models in curriculum management, and among these teachers, outstanding ones need to be encouraged to become leaders within the Chinese context (Huang & Zhu, 2005).

Through research and observation of school teaching groups, Chinese scholars discovered a correlation between a school's curriculum leadership and teachers' professional development. Whenever curriculum leadership increases, the influence of teachers' professional development increases (Lin & He, 2005). Therefore, curriculum leadership significantly influences teachers' professional development. School leaders must integrate the process of curriculum development with teachers' professional development in order to promote and support their curriculum leadership potential.

2.4.7 Support from School Leaders

It is not just enough for teachers to have the power to participate in curriculum leadership. Support of school leaders is also needed, including the external support of resources and environmental factors, and internal support of the teacher's psychological development and security. Such environmental supports include an open and supportive school atmosphere, opportunities for teachers to have collective engagement, building of moral dispositions among teachers, group communication and cooperation. Concerns about teachers' psychological conditions include teachers' pressure, emotions and concerns (Yu, 2006). There are at least five resources necessary to support teachers: an

orderly environment, the support of administration, adequate material conditions, adequate teaching resources and a reasonable workload (Yu, 2006). There are also scholars who pointed out that in order to make sure teachers get involved in curriculum leadership, power should be given to them so that they can diversify their roles in school settings (Xu, 2004).

In *Principals' Efforts to Empower Teachers: Effects on teacher motivation and job satisfaction and stress*, Davis and Wilson (2000) researched the principal's influences on teacher empowerment. The influences are mainly on teachers' job motivation, job satisfaction and working pressure. They emphasized that the principal should build a shared responsibility and open atmosphere in order to create a positive working relationship. In Ren's (2010) book *Teachers professional development and principal's role*, he analyzed the principal's role and efforts on teachers' professional leadership development, teachers' professional development support, and school's cultural construction in terms of the working and learning atmosphere.

Environmental support should come from school leaders. Provisions for an open atmosphere, adequate materials and a reasonable workload should be kept in mind in empowering teachers. The relationship between school leaders and teachers' needs must be addressed to adequately ensure teachers grow and are empowered professionally.

2.5 Curriculum Development and Teacher Empowerment

Scholars argue curriculum development should no longer be the privilege of government appointed curriculum experts. In terms of the NCR, teachers are meant to become one of the main forces of curriculum development. In terms of school-based curriculum development, it is usually decided by principals and teachers, and involves parents and students (Cui, 2001). Within the content of school-based curriculum development as articulated in the NCR, course selection, curriculum adaptation, integration and development are all carried out by teachers as the driving force behind reform in this process, where teachers are not only executors but also researchers (Fu, 2001).

However, the relationship between teacher empowerment and curriculum development was not fully realized until the educational reform failure in the United States in the 1960's. Below, various experts and their research on curriculum development are reviewed.

In scholar Ralph W. Tyler's classic curriculum model, he highlights the importance of experts in the process of curriculum design. Textbooks are normally prepared by experts, which reflect experts' attitudes towards the subject. Similarly, schools programs are also meant to be prepared by experts and reflect experts' points of view as to what education objectives should be (Tyler, 1969). According to the training methods and

content, Tyler said that if these experts were familiar with the areas of their own subjects they should be able to point out what contribution these subjects could make to the public good (Tyler, 1969). However, Schwab asserted a different attitude on expert-lead curriculum. He had a profound reflection on the failure of the structure of the disciplines reform in the United States in the 1960s, which bears much similarity to the current problems faced in Chinese educational reform. Schwab thought this reform was completely designed by the experts in each subject without reflecting the thoughts of teachers. Therefore, he criticized the traditional curriculum development model, represented as the "Tyler Principle." As a result, Schwab proposed his "practical curriculum" concept. He defined the disciplines, learners, environment and teachers as the four elements of the curriculum and highlighted the role of teachers in the curriculum. Schwab thought one of the primary causes of the curriculum reform's failure was the fact that the new curriculum, which was designed by experts, did not consider the understanding and acceptance of teachers. Thus, he believed that there should be a team to develop the curriculum collaboratively. This team should include curriculum experts, scholars, principals, teachers, students, parents and community representatives. Schwab's practice and theories about the teacher's responsibility for curriculum development places teachers in a significant position in the curriculum development process (Schwab, 1970). The concept of teacher empowerment was highlighted to give teachers more power, which is also what the Chinese NCR is currently attempting.

The curriculum implementation process is the 'show time' for teachers to demonstrate their power as curriculum practitioners. Snyder (1992), in a characterization of curriculum reform over the years, categorized the involvement of teachers in curriculum implementation into three kinds: loyal orientation, adaption orientation and creation orientation. Loyal orientation pursues a modernist thought process, which takes curriculum as a determined program. In this approach, curriculum implementation is adherence to an already existing plan, and teachers have no right to modify it. The other two confirm the rationality of teachers' adjusting curriculum plans during curriculum implementation. The 1960s' curriculum reform in the United States took the loyal orientation route, which is similar to what is currently happening in China. This form of curriculum implementation made teachers the consumers of curriculum. They had no rights to challenge the curriculum programs. Therefore, the failure of that curriculum reform was likely. From developing an understanding of the modern curriculum research paradigm, curriculum implementation is increasingly being considered as the process of constructing knowledge between teachers and students. Teachers' interpretation, adjustment and creation of curriculum demand more attention in this regard.

In reference to a curriculum's mode of existence, Elliot Eisner thought curriculum could be divided into three categories: explicit curriculum, implicit curriculum and null curriculum (Eisner & Vallance, 1974). Implicit curriculum refers to the practices and procedures that are not standardized and need to be guided. The null curriculum refers to

those elements that are neglected and that are outside the formal curriculum. According to Eisner, implicit and null curriculums must be selectively incorporated into curriculum implementation by teachers. Eisner said that if teachers are not actively engaged in the construction and creation of curriculum content, students have to focus on a pre-packaged curriculum, which can constrain the development of students because insufficient attention is given to the implicit and null curricula.

Moving from consumers of curricula to developers of curricula is a vital change involved in empowering teachers. Research suggests that collaborative curriculum development improves teachers' sense of empowerment and improves their professionalism. By actively participating in curriculum development, teachers are better able to meet the needs of the student, as they are better able to implement implicit and null curricula. Teacher empowerment, it is suggested, must include teachers' active participation in curriculum development.

2.6 Further Issues of Research on Teacher Empowerment

The foregoing review discussed the opinions of various North American and Chinese scholars with respect to teacher empowerment. However, some insufficiencies in terms of research outcomes should also be noted.

2.6.1 Theoretical Research More Than Empirical Research

Since the mid-20th century, scholars in China have been quite concerned about the curriculum reform and teacher empowerment. In-depth research covering teachers' participation in curriculum reform, teachers' contribution to school-based development, teachers' participation in school leadership, and teachers' power in curriculum practices have been carried out. A number of related theories have been proposed accordingly. However, compared to the plentiful research of conceptual areas, practical research is sadly lacking in the context of Chinese educational reform. Due to the differences in concepts of culture and education systems, most North America scholars base their research on practice settings. However, their reference value and usefulness are limited in light of the variables affecting the current Chinese education system, for example the Chinese traditional education system and culture, etc.

2.6.2 Macro Research More Than Micro Research

Most research on teacher empowerment in China focuses on the relationship between teacher empowerment values and significance, as well as other curriculum issues. However, issues rarely mentioned are teacher empowerment during practice, evaluation, and curriculum design. Due to this lack of research, teachers might understand the concept of teacher empowerment at a theoretical level, but they do not know how to use it or employ it in practice (Liu, 2006).

2.7 Summary

Through the literature review, I examined the history and context of teacher empowerment, especially in the context of Chinese current National Curriculum Reform. The requirements of the NCR and complications from Chinese traditional practices provided a unique context for researching teacher empowerment. In light of China's top-down structure for the education system and complications from the traditional teaching-learning relationship, the NCR requires teachers to take actions to have professional autonomy and find new ways to improve teachers' professional authority and capability. I also researched how the concept and exercise of teacher empowerment developed in both the US and China. Other than the above issues, influences upon teacher empowerment are also examined. I also looked into how teacher empowerment is reflected in its actual implementation, hoping to connect with the research I am going to carry on in Dalian No. 24.

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This qualitative study followed an inductive strategy, due to its continuous and simultaneous collection and processing of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This case study was conducted in Dalian No. 24 Senior High School. Data about teacher empowerment was collected from several teachers and administrators within this school. This information was then analyzed in order to provide a qualitative basis for understanding teacher empowerment in Dalian No. 24. On that basis, a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the practice of teacher empowerment based on teacher interviews and surveys was undertaken. At this point, it is important to note the limitations of the data in its applicability, due to sample size. While some knowledge may be extrapolated and applied to similar schools or situations, it is hoped that the questions raised in this study contribute to the practical implications and future research on teacher empowerment in a Chinese context.

3.2 Data and Methods

3.2.1 The Interviews

The face-to-face interview is the main data collection method. After composing the original draft of interview questions, a pilot interview was conducted to examine the

feasibility and appropriateness of the questions. Necessary adjustments to the interview questions and methods of conversation were made after the pilot interview. Interview transcripts were saved in a digital file for review. Member checking was performed after transcription to allow respondents to clarify answers provided during the interviews.

The researcher interviewed twelve staff members individually for no more than 45 minutes. Respondents were presented with the possibility of one additional 20-minute follow-up interview only if any information needed to be clarified. Data collection procedures were approved by UBC's Ethical Review Board and advanced consent to conduct this research was obtained from each respondent. Respondents had the choice to end the interview at any time. However, all the respondents completed full interviews.

Data collection spanned a length of 20 days and took place within the buildings and areas of the Dalian No. 24 campus. During this time, data was collected, coded, conceptually organized and an initial analysis was conducted. The interviews were held during teachers' breaks, before the teacher's class, after class, and after the teacher's work. At the researcher's request, the interviews were conducted in the teachers' own office partition when only few teachers were in the office. Confidentiality was ensured and a safe interview environment was created. All the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, and a copy of the interview schedule is in Appendix A. An excerpt of an interview transcript is contained in Appendix B.

3.2.2 The Follow-up Questionnaire Survey

During the process of data analysis, the author hoped to add an additional frame of reference to teacher empowerment conditions within Dalian No. 24. Therefore, a follow-up survey based on the interview questions was distributed randomly to additional fifty teachers from different teaching groups, grades and backgrounds. This survey was anonymous with only information on grades and teaching groups provided. There were fifty questionnaires distributed, and thirty-two completed responses were collected. Questionnaires with incomplete responses or single words were excluded from the analysis.

3.3 The Case Study

With the desire to derive an in-depth understanding of teacher empowerment, this case was conducted within the context of Dalian No. 24 with 44 teacher respondents including 10 teachers and 2 administrators from the interview and 32 teachers from the survey. Research questions were designed within the context of Dalian No. 24. It used a nonprobability sampling method for the interview with a random sampling process for the survey. During the data collection, open-ended interviews were the main method, while the survey and literature reviewing were used as a backdrop to the case study. In the analyzing process, the author arranged the case study around specific themes and issues to get the understanding of each respondent's experiences in this school.

3.4 Context

This case study was conducted at Dalian No. 24 located in Dalian, China. Dalian No. 24's principal and teachers are knowledgeable and supportive of current NCR and the school has begun to acknowledge these reforms. Also, Dalian No. 24 was chosen due to a friendly preexisting relationship between the lead researcher and the principal who enabled access to a suitable school context in China. The researcher is a graduate from Dalian No. 24. Additionally, Dalian No. 24 only admits the top 15 percent of students who apply. In that case, teachers recruited by this school are well trained and undergo high expectations from the school and the public. The students also have high understanding capability that can reflect the results of the reform quickly. Therefore, this made the school an ideal location to explore teacher empowerment as it was conceived in relation to the NCR in China.

Dalian No. 24 was established in 1949 and is located in the downtown area of Dalian, China. There are 56 senior high schools and 60,893 students in the Dalian area. Dalian No. 24 is seen as a leader among them. It was established as the Key senior high school of Liaoning Province in 1962 and rated as the Beacon senior high school in Liaoning Province in 2004. Students are required to take an entrance examination held by the Dalian Education Bureau to gain admission to Dalian's senior middle school. Students are admitted to their senior high school depending on their scores. The school has three grades, 10, 11 and 12. There are 34 classes, 133 teachers and 1,620 students. The school

arranges students into different levels in terms of academic ability based on periodic

examinations. To provide a physical sense of the school, three photographs are provided

below (Figure 3.1, Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.3)

Figure 1 Aerial view of Dalian No. 24 Senior High School

Figure 2 An Office Building of Dalian No. 24 Senior High School

Figure 3 Classroom Setting in Dalian No. 24 Senior High School

3.5 Research Participants

3.5.1 Interview Participants

The interview participants consist of ten teachers and two administrators from Dalian No. 24 Senior High School. The teachers were chosen to represent different genders, teaching experiences, and teaching grades. (see Table 1.1). Their teaching experience ranges from half a year to more than 20 years. The researcher grouped the teachers into four categories according to their years of seniority, PI (no more than 3 years), PII (4-6 years), PIII (7-9 years), and PIV (10 or more years). The two administrators are the principal and the dean of the teaching affairs office, and both are male.

The sampling process was dependent upon the accessibility, resources and layout of Dalian No. 24's campus. The researcher talked with the administrator who is in charge of teaching activities and was introduced to twenty teachers with different teaching grades and years' experience. Subsequently, the researcher chose from these teachers to make sure the twelve participants' backgrounds varied from each other and as well represented different career periods.

The following table presents the interviewees categorized by gender, grade, years teaching experience, and position:

Table 1 Interviewees' Information

Interviewee	Gender	Grade	Teaching experience	Position
Zhang	M	12	10	Teacher
Sun	F	12	23	Teacher
Wang	M	12	7	Teacher
Zhou	F	11	7	Teacher
Zhao	F	11	4	Teacher
Li	M	11	20	Teacher
Zheng	M	11	5	Teacher
Chen	F	10	2	Teacher
Liu	F	10	1	Teacher
Wu	F	10	0.5	Teacher
Huang	M	NA	NA	Principal
Tian	M	NA	NA	Dean in charge of teaching affairs

3.5.2 Survey Participants

Survey participants consist of thirty-two teachers from different teaching groups, grades and backgrounds. The survey was randomly distributed to 50 teachers chosen from the 121 remaining teachers (i.e. the sample did not include the original 12 interview participants) in Dalian No. 24. There were thirty-two completed questionnaires collected. Due to the anonymity asked of these participants, only their teaching groups and grades were recorded. These participants are six teachers from the Grade ten Chinese teaching and researching group (TRG), two teachers from the Grade ten History TRG, two teachers from the Grade ten Physical TRG, four teachers from the Grade eleven Mathematics TRG, five teachers from the Grade eleven English TRG, one teacher from the Grade eleven Biology TRG, five teachers from the Grade twelve Chinese TRG, four teachers from the Grade twelve Mathematics TRG and three teachers from the Grade twelve Physics TRG. Collected questionnaires with single words or perfunctory answers were disregarded.

3.6 The Pilot Interview

The Chinese NCR was launched in 2001. However, few publications in English are related to this area. After reviewing literature in both English and Chinese contexts, a draft of interview questions was constructed. In December of 2012, a pilot study was conducted at UBC in which a Chinese mathematics teacher with 6 years teaching

experience in a Chinese senior high school was interviewed.

The pilot study was driven by two questions: "What do teachers think about the current national curriculum reform?" and "Are teachers empowered or not after the implementation of curriculum reform?" It examined general questions such as teachers' understanding of the reform and students' change of performance during the reform. Others were, "To what extent are teachers empowered?", "How are school leaders implementing teacher empowerment and reform?", and "What are teachers' responses to actions of the administration?" After analyzing the records, more detailed questions were added to the interview outline and adjustments to other questions were made accordingly. The final interview schedule used in the research can be found in Appendix A.

3.7 Data Collection

Prior to individual interviews, each teacher was provided with a list of the interview questions. Data were collected by digitally recording interviews, with additional notes transcribed by hand. Interview outline was developed around the research questions before the interview. The order and the way the questions were asked was based upon how the information emerged as well as contextual factors during the interviews. Generally, the interviews began with a few questions eliciting general information. Then open-ended questions on teacher empowerment and the new NCR followed. The interview questions elicited varied responses. Some teachers discussed aspects of teacher

empowerment for ten minutes, while some teachers issued single word responses to questions that they didn't want to talk about or were not interested in.

All interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim and saved in a coded digital file for detailed analysis. Only the researcher and the research supervisor have access to the original records. The file will be deleted in five years after the research is finished. Member checking followed after the transcription was completed in order to verify or clarify their responses to the questions. Two follow-up interviews were conducted with two separate teachers when the researcher needed more information from the interviewees.

Fifty questionnaires based on the interview questions were also distributed to teachers from different backgrounds within this school to provide the author with more information about teacher empowerment in this school. All of the questionnaires were returned but eighteen of them were either incomplete or had only very perfunctory responses. The data analysis is based on the 12 interviewees and 32 questionnaires.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data was organized into each of the four corresponding research questions within the context of Dalian No. 24.

1. What is teacher empowerment, especially in the context of Chinese current National Curriculum Reform?

2.   What are teachers' experiences and attitudes towards teacher empowerment and Chinese current National Curriculum Reform?

3. What are the factors that influence teacher empowerment in the context of Chinese current National Curriculum Reform?

4.   Is there a conflict between efforts to introduce teacher empowerment and the current education system? If so, what is the nature and substance of this conflict from the Chinese teachers' perspective?

Interview data was then analyzed according to the grouping that follows: Teachers were categorized into group A, with three sub-groups (1, 2, and 3) according to their grades. The administrators were categorized into group B. Their responses were compared and analyzed to show how people in different roles view the same issues (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Lincoln and Guba's constant comparative method was used to move raw data into categorized results with specific themes that relate to the research questions. The results of the analysis are theoretically grounded and guided by chapter two's literature review (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

An analysis of teacher experience and individual understanding of curriculum reform and teacher empowerment was then conducted. Data was also analyzed within the context of Huberman's teacher's career cycle (Huberman, 1989). Ten interview teacher

respondents were categorized into four groups based on Huberman's career cycles theory. Their claims were then compared and analyzed. The categorized analysis aimed to compare teachers in different teaching periods.

The survey respondents' (i.e. the 32 teachers) questionnaires were used as background information during the analyzing process. During the data analysis, the author read through all the 32 completed questionnaires and categorized them into two groups—teachers with positive attitudes and those with negative attitudes toward teacher empowerment and the NCR. The data was then be used as supporting evidence during the analysis of the interview to provide a stronger argument. It was also analyzed and compared within the groups, in order to find out reason for the different attitudes. The results are presented in Chapter Four.

4 Findings

4.1 Introduction

This study aimed to evaluate teachers' and administrators' current views towards teacher empowerment within the context of the China's current National Curriculum Reform (NCR). Data collected during this study identified some behavioral attitudes teachers held toward teacher empowerment, while addressing the need for educational outreach programs aimed to inform teachers about reform issues. Two additional important purposes of the study were to build on the existing, but limited, research in this area and to provide avenues for future inquiry.

Results from this study highlight benefits of teacher empowerment, but also expose problems that constrain the reforms. This study assessed important aspects of teacher empowerment, including increased performance and productivity, improved teacher morale, increased knowledge of subject matter and pedagogy, and ultimately, higher student motivation and achievement from teachers and administrators. The author also found that teachers' acceptance and attitudes towards teacher empowerment and NCR were largely influenced by the school's policies and attitudes towards these issues. In short, data were analyzed in an effort to provide practical answers to the issues that exist within Dalian No. 24, and similar schools, as well as to outline important questions for further study.

To this effect, data were organized into groups that corresponded to the research questions outlined in chapter one. In an effort to determine the degree to which teachers are involved in the curriculum creation process, ten teachers and two administrators from Dalian No. 24 were interviewed. Although they hold administrative positions, both administrators still regard themselves as teachers and therefore in this study their responses will be considered in that context. Another thirty-two teachers with different backgrounds were also surveyed to provide a broader vision of the environment of teacher empowerment in this school.

The data presented in this chapter include transcripts of the interviews with each of the ten teachers and two administrators and questionnaires information from thirty-two teachers. Two separate follow-up interviews with two teachers were conducted for clarification purposes. School and classroom settings were photographed and field notes were taken during the interviews. Findings are examined in detail throughout this chapter. Supplementary data from the survey was used as reference information to provide more reliability of the analysis and conclusion.

4.2 Data Analysis

Results were analyzed within the context of the Chinese NCR. Since the NCR requires the decentralization of decision-making power from the school to teachers (Ministry of Education, 2001), it was necessary to raise the question of whether teachers

felt empowered enough to explore new teaching resources, design personal curriculum plans, and shift their teaching focus from traditional exam-oriented knowledge to critical thinking, problem solving and creativity in the classroom (Ministry of Education, 2001). By examining each teacher's use of their curriculum interpretation power, this study was able to gauge each teacher's willingness and awareness of their ability to use this power or not. It is important to note that just because the NCR requires teachers to have the power to interpret the curriculum does not mean teachers exercise this power. To what degree they exercise it depends, in part, on each teacher's professional judgment of what to teach and how to teach. Other factors, such as the administrator's willingness to share power, are also significant.

Furthermore, the concept of teachers' professional judgment emerged from the analysis and provided an additional perspective to review teacher empowerment. Once recognized as an analytical concept, teachers' professional judgment was erected as a fundamental category in which to review the data from this study. Teachers use their professional judgment relevant to their roles and responsibilities.

This study determined that one way to assess the level of teacher empowerment in Dalian No. 24 was to evaluate each interview respondent's professional judgment. This is because professional judgment highlights the way individual teachers choose to become involved in their school's educational process and interpretation of curriculum, their involvement being reflective of their empowerment. Therefore, there is an intrinsic link

between professional judgment and teacher empowerment.

In order to evaluate professional judgment, interview data were sorted into two categories: school-affairs decision-making power (SA) and their ability to interpret the curriculum, or curriculum power (CP). School-affairs decision-making power is defined as the active participation of teachers in the organization of school activities, time-table arrangements and students' daily affairs. Curriculum power is the active participation of teachers in the creation, implementation and evaluation of student curricula.

The interviews show that among the twelve respondents, the administrators valued school-affairs decision-making power, while the ten teachers were more concerned with curriculum power. This information suggests that administrators feel empowered when they take control of the school as a whole, while teachers feel empowered when they take control of their own curricula. It is important to note that this study originally began with twelve respondents. And while the data set is limited in its applicability beyond Dalian No. 24, it raises important issues that deserve further study.

The interviews revealed how these administrators and teachers view teacher empowerment differently. Both administrators responded that they felt teacher empowerment would be greater with teachers who actively seek promotion and that they would become more involved in school affairs decision-making. They felt teachers should give more value to school-affairs decision-making in order to become leaders of

the district, school and classroom. The teacher responses contradicted the administration's by saying they felt empowered and would become leaders when they are involved in the creation, implementation and evaluation of curricula.

Additionally, the researcher found that teachers' curriculum creation power is directly related to their power to implement the curriculum. These results indicate a positive correlation between respondents' effectiveness with a curriculum they designed and their daily teaching practice. This correlation directly impacts their implementation of curriculum reforms. Among respondents, the more experience a teacher had, the more effective their curriculum implementation was, making their curriculum implementation power greater. Experience and ability to implement curriculum reform were seen to be positively correlated.

4.2.1 Teacher Empowerment through School-affairs Decision-making

Teachers' school-affairs decision-making power (SA) includes selecting textbooks, creating and implementing school activities, arranging school facilities and assisting with students' daily affairs. Involving teachers in SA increases confidence and heightens their sense of belonging to the school (Hicks & DeWalt, 2006). In this way, teachers believe that their ideas, feelings and suggestions are valuable to the development of the school. As a result, they actively participate in the SA process and become motivated to pursue professional development. Many respondents felt that suggestions given by teachers

about how to interpret the curriculum are much easier to accept than those from administrators, which ultimately lead to improved teachers' curriculum decision-making power, self-efficacy and curriculum evaluation power.

Respondents revealed that in Dalian No. 24 the current condition of accepting teacher involvement in the school-affair decision-making process is very optimistic. They indicated that school leaders are open to accept teachers' ideas when they are good for the development of the school and students in the eyes of the administrators.

Dean Tian explains that teachers' input is valued within school-affairs decision-making. According to Tian, "Nowadays, although the pressure of teachers is great in all aspects, teachers are willing to make comments on the school's arrangement. After suggestions are proposed, administrators have to listen as they rely on teachers to teach."

Another respondent, teacher Zhou, said, "Because teaching contents of each grade are closely linked, principals pay a lot of attention to teachers' suggestions. For example, if a textbook is criticized by a lot of teachers, the principal will consider changing the textbook."

This study also found that teachers who are pursuing promotions into administrative positions were more enthusiastic about participating in school-affairs decision-making than teachers who were not interested in these promotional positions.

This is also evidenced in Zhang's response:

> The more my suggestions are taken by school leaders, the more willing I am to invest myself in the school. After teaching for ten years, remaining in this position cannot fulfill all of my career pursuits. I'm now moving onto other things, such as taking some responsibilities for curriculum planning and evaluation. The more I work on this, the more opportunities I get. I cannot remain solely a teacher for my whole career, and this is a chance for me to get ahead.

However, teachers' school-affairs decision-making power is not always used well by all teachers even though the opportunity exists. According to Dean Tian, some teachers are not interested in having this power.

> In our school, we have a general meeting for teachers periodically. Normally it is held weekly within the teaching group and monthly within the school. Although most teachers cherish the opportunity to express their ideas towards the development of the school, some teachers just don't care. They don't even show up to the meeting. This delays some of our work. Another situation is some teachers' suggestions are creative enough, but they are not realistic to put into action. We have to find ways to reject these suggestions while not hurting their feelings at the same time.

Chen, a teacher respondent, said that:

I don't have the extra attention to make contributions to the development of our school other than being a good teacher. I'm a new teacher here, all I care about is how to be a good teacher and how to finish the entire curriculum plan that the school gives me. If I put too much effort into participating in the planning activities, that'll be much too pressure on me. I can't handle that.

Another teacher respondent, Liu, who is also a new teacher, disagreed with Chen:

As a new teacher who has just graduated from school, I am quite interested in participating in school planning activities. I used to be a student leader when I was in the university. Now I am the leader of sports in our education group. I find it particularly enjoyable when I am organizing activities.

Of the above two teachers, Liu is more empowered than Chen in terms of SA. As we can see, Liu takes more initiative to participate in SA actives. Therefore, it may be implied that SA power is more beneficial to those teachers who have resources or talents or are pursuing administrative positions. This is also reflected by Dean Tian, who is the administrator in charge of teaching affairs. He said that for the twenty years of his teaching, he has had great enthusiasm for school affairs. He was the group leader of the mathematics teaching group, and the leader of the teachers' union. When the author asked which one he values more, the SA or the CP? He said it is obvious that teachers' basic task is teaching, therefore, there is no reason to reject the importance of CP. But for

himself, SA is more important because his talent is better served in administration than in teaching. He said: "although I am a good teacher, I'm not the most talented one. I can't be an excellent teacher. But I'm good at dealing with school affairs. I can always make excellent plans for school affairs. Becoming an administrator was the target I set for myself after two years of teaching, and this is why I put so much energy on school activities." However, forcing teachers to become involved in SA when they don't want to may have a negative effect, making those teachers feel less empowered, because these teachers become overwhelmed and resentful toward the additional work, the original purpose of raising teacher empowerment being lost.

4.2.2 Empower Teachers by Giving Curriculum Power

As stated earlier, most teachers at Dalian No. 24 feel more empowered when they have curriculum power. Curriculum power provides an opportunity for teachers to interpret the curriculum in terms of "what to teach" and "how to teach". It aims to improve teachers' professional status in educational planning and develop teachers' curriculum knowledge in order to improve the quality of education for students.

In order to assess teacher empowerment, curriculum power was broken down into creation power and implementation power in this research. It was analyzed within the context of professional judgment.

4.2.2.1 Curriculum Creation Power

Curriculum creation power is a subset of curriculum power and a component of teacher empowerment. It is one of the basic requirements of the NCR (Ministry of Education, 2001; Zhong et al, 2001).It includes two elements: the design of curricula according to the national curriculum plans, and the revision of teaching methods based on preexisting curriculum plans.

When teachers have high creation power, they feel more empowered. The results of this study demonstrated that each teacher was aware they possessed the ability and freedom to design their own curriculum plans. However, the degree of innovation varied based on teachers' attitudes towards the NCR requirements. Respondents who were new teachers were more willing to make changes to their original teaching plans in order to increase the quality of education and consequently felt more empowered. Teachers with more experience were less willing to innovate and were more concerned with achieving high marks on the College Entrance Exams (CEE) and subsequently, in terms of the definition of empowerment used in the study were less empowered. It seems intuitive that this would be the case, as the more experienced teachers excelled according to their ability to achieve high marks; however, more data is need to substantiate these indications, which are worthy of future study.

Despite these indications, even though the younger teachers felt more empowered,

their ability to interpret the curriculum is constrained by China's curriculum assessment regime. Because curriculum evaluation lacks substantive reforms, teachers aren't able to incorporate much creativity into their lesson plans without sacrificing the state mandated requirements for the College Entrance Exams (CEE). Six of twelve interview respondents, including the principal, viewed the success of the curriculum reform as dependent on and strongly linked to the CEE requirements.

According to Principal Huang:

Although high school curriculum reform has been carried out for seven years, the College Entrance Examination is still ruling the educational mandate. The direction of the CEE reform is unclear; the burden on students is still too heavy. The delayed introduction of the CEE plans caused the biggest confusion to this curriculum reform for teachers. On top of being responsible for students' success on the CEE, teachers were given additional materials to teach, resulting in an increased student workload and homework. Therefore, the burden on students actually increased after the reform.

This is also supported by teacher respondent Wang:

What you have been taught when you were at high school is still the same today, without any changes…every teacher who taught grade 12 teaches by following the exam outline. They only teach what it requires. Students therefore have

limited time to study. If the teacher is teaching some content not required by the CEE, students think the teacher is wasting their time. The teaching schedule within the same grade should be consistent. If you are engaging in innovation, the teaching schedule is difficult to maintain.

Moreover, research also shows that the exercising of curriculum creation power varies by teachers' attitudes towards the original curriculum, teaching experiences and ability to accomplish curriculum plans. As noted above, this study's results show that novice teacher respondents were more willing to use curriculum creation power, while veteran teacher respondents were less willing to do so. This is evidenced by respondent Wu, a new teacher with only half a year of experience:

I don't want to teach like my childhood teachers. They just taught us according to the textbooks. The amount of knowledge provided by them was too limited and had no variety. When taught in this way, students do not like the classes in the long run and teachers feel tired of them too. During my lesson planning, I searched the Internet to access the relevant information to supplement the teaching content. Students like the way I teach and so do I.

Interestingly, teachers with more experience no longer consider the completion of teaching tasks as the only target. They have enough teaching experience and ability to control any chaos triggered by innovation. Through innovation, these experienced

teachers are capable of forming personalized teaching styles and have the ability to improve their individual teaching methods. Unfortunately, data from this study revealed that although experienced teachers are more capable of curriculum creation, they are less willing to do so than newer teachers. Note teacher respondent Sun, who has 23 years of teaching experience;

I don't know why I should make changes to my curriculum plans. I have already taught for twenty years, my students have great scores and can go to excellent universities. I feel if I change my teaching methods, there will be an influence on their scores. Therefore, I don't want to do so.

Again, for teachers such as Sun, the emphasis is on obtaining high test scores over the NCR mandate of quality education.

4.2.2.2 Curriculum Implementation Power

Curriculum implementation power is the strongest component of teacher empowerment. It is decided by the effectiveness of curriculum plans teachers design and teachers' teaching ability and experience. Throughout this study, no matter how many years a teacher has taught, each teacher was capable of inserting his or her individual curriculum design into practice. Respondent Wang, a teacher with seven years of experience, states: "How to teach is a teacher's own work. In the class, teachers are the leaders. We can teach however and whatever we want. This is the greatest power I have."

However, just because these teachers are capable of curriculum implementation power does not mean they can actually fulfill this power. Findings from this study indicate that curriculum implementation power is dependent upon both curriculum creation power and the demands of the CEE. Therefore, there is a correspondence between the lack of teacher empowerment, teachers' ambitions and the university entrance exam. These ambitions include high student marks on the CEE, to grant a stable income and/or promotion to teaching the graduating class. Data from this study indicates that although many respondents think they have curriculum implementation power, they are actually still operating within the constraints of their ambitions, making them less empowered. This interesting point deserves future inquiry.

Although teachers with less experience accept change with more ease, as in the case of curriculum creation power, they are the group that is most limited in implementing these changes. During the data analysis, the author found that young teachers have the most difficulty with curriculum implementation due to their lack of teaching experience and thereby lack the ability to fully implement their plans. According to teacher respondent Liu:

When I first started teaching, I wanted desperately to get familiar with all the textbooks and knowledge points in case I forgot something in the class. All I want is to complete the teaching task. As allowed by the NCR, I have the opportunity to make my own curriculum plans. I have tried a lot of new methods,

after all, young people have a lot of new ideas, but in practice, I found myself unable to keep up with the teaching tasks. And now my teaching methods mimic those of veteran teachers.

Moreover, due to the difficulties in implementing NCR changes, some required curriculum plans cannot be fully put into practice. Note respondent Wu:

Students today have flexible minds and a wide range of knowledge. Sometimes because I may not have complete knowledge on certain points, when students ask questions, I have to spend too much time to explain. I have to brainstorm quickly at the same time. This delays teaching activity and my ability to deliver required content. Sometimes students lose focus. I have to maintain classroom order at all times. This becomes a waste of my time as well.

According to Zhou:

I felt if I taught in old ways, I can only follow the steps of old teachers. It is too difficult to go beyond them. The new national curriculum reform offers me an opportunity to stand out. I am trying to teach with the method advocated by the new national curriculum reform. However, I found plenty of problems. For example, if you want to fully embody students' autonomy, most of my classes will not be finished on time.

Observations at Dalian No. 24 indicate that experienced teachers have high

implementation power, but low creation power. This is probably because experienced teachers tend to develop their teaching methods to achieve high exam marks, not high quality education. Their understanding and mastery of curriculum content, teaching processes and students' learning characteristics is extensive. Thus, their curriculum creation might be more practicable than that of novice teachers. Moreover, they are better able to put their designs into practice. Even when the thought of teaching high scoring students may deviate from their expectation, they also have the ability to achieve the teaching targets by encouraging students' creativity. They can teach more skillfully. In this sense, they have the power to change but are often unwilling to deviate from the fixed-teaching model. This study raises this contention as notable.

4.2.3 Interpretation of Empowerment in terms of Teachers' Experience

While analyzing the data, it became apparent that teachers' attitudes towards teacher empowerment are also influenced by their teaching experience. Therefore, data were also examined within the context of Huberman's teacher's career cycle (Huberman, 1989). Huberman's teacher's career cycle states that every teacher is in one of four periods in their careers. Huberman called these four periods PI, PII, PIII or PIV.

All ten interview teacher respondents (excluding the principal and the administrator) in this study were classified as PI, PII, PIII or PIV (See Table 4.1). Their responses were then comparatively analyzed. According to Huberman's research, teacher empowerment

ranks highest in the second and third periods (Huberman, 1989). Some argue this is because newer but not novice teachers are more accepting of change and haven't been influenced by older teaching styles. Others contend that younger teachers are more technologically adept and can more easily work with concepts introduced by the NCR, therefore making them more empowered.

Table 2 Huberman's Teacher Career Cycle

Periods		Names	Features
PI	(0-3 years) -Novice teachers	Wu, Li, Chen	The first period (P1) is the starting period of teaching profession. In this period, teachers tend to worry about being academically qualified. However, they usually possess a high level of passion.
PII	(4-6 years) -Mid-career teachers— intermediate period.	Zhao, Zheng	The second period (PII) is known as the stable period. Teachers in this period have a firm understanding of teaching methods. They focus less on personal qualifications and more on teaching activities.
PIII	(7-9 years) -Mid-career teachers—intermediate period but with increased abilities.	Zhou, Wang	The third period (PIII) is a period of experiment and change. Teachers in this period begin to personalize teaching methods and to seek new ideas and challenges.
PIV	(10 years and above) -experienced teachers	Zhang, Sun, Li	The fourth period (PIV) is the calming and estrangement period. Teachers can easily complete teaching tasks with more confidence. However, having gradually realized their career goals, teachers' ambition is lower.

Although PI teachers are less experienced, many PI respondents felt that they held more freedom in choosing methods of curriculum development and curriculum activities. PI respondent Wu said, "I feel different when I am a teacher. I can decide what to teach and how to teach. Unlike when I was a student, I had no choice but to listen to the teachers."

PIV respondents have more professional experience and have consequently accumulated a large number of useful curriculum resources through past teaching activities. PIV respondents felt teaching now was easier than when they started. According to Sun, who is a PIV respondent with 23 years' experience:

I have been teaching for twenty years. I have bought a lot of reference books. Only a few of them are used in daily teaching activities. It is pretty easy for me to teach nowadays. I only need to sort and utilize the methods and content I used before.

Although, as evidenced above, PIV respondents feel developmentally stable in their teaching methods, these teachers are limited by their already established teaching methods with individually familiar content and activities, which are rooted in the traditional Chinese education system, largely ignoring any new curriculum concepts. According to another PIV respondent, Li, a teacher with twenty years seniority, "Why should we develop new curriculum resources? It is enough to teach what the textbook said. I haven't heard about [teacher empowerment] before."

Note another PIV respondent, Zhang, a teacher with ten years' experience who is unsatisfied with the NCR:

I just got familiar with the contents of grade twelve, with more confidence to teach students better. The new curriculum rewrites the textbooks. A new curriculum standard is also released. I feel the new design of curriculum content varies greatly with the previous one. I have to add many things in order to enable the students to understand the new content. In this case, a lot of materials I prepared before are useless now. I can only use a limited amount of former materials alongside the new ones. This doesn't work too well.

Results from the interviews show that, five out of the ten teachers were not satisfied with the new curriculum design, most of whom are PIII and PIV teachers. Three out of ten thought it was useful, but requires too much work and increases their workloads. Finally, only two out of ten teachers were satisfied and totally supportive of the new standard. Data suggests that in terms of exercising curriculum power, teachers in PII, PIII and PIV have significantly higher power than those in PI. History shows (Hemric et al, 2010) that teacher empowerment is best utilized by competent teachers, who are capable of paying more attention to the extra power, specifically the power inherent in the curriculum reform movement. Teachers in PI are still trying to establish themselves in their profession and are preoccupied with completing basic teaching tasks. Many do not have the spare time or energy to consider the possibilities of the extra teaching power.

Unfortunately, if these young teachers do want to fight for some power, their words do not carry much weight. And as the results suggest, in the short term, they may give up and gradually lose their desire for power. Although PIV respondents were the most unwilling to change teaching concepts, research data indicate that PIV teachers hold the most power in implementing the new methods. They also have the capability to use this power since many PIV teachers hold important positions in schools, such as teaching graduating classes. This study then suggests that if PIV teachers would accept these teaching reforms, they could be recognized more easily by schools and teacher empowerment could be exemplified by them to other less experienced teachers.

4.2.4 Factors Influencing Teachers Empowerment

This study found that the following factors influence teacher empowerment: administration, teachers, student evaluation, social culture and teachers' income and promotions. These factors will be explored individually in detail below.

4.2.4.1 Administration's effects on teacher empowerment

4.2.4.1.1 Principal's leadership ability and awareness of curriculum power.

The study suggests that the incorporation of teacher empowerment into a school is contingent upon the principal's working style. Because teacher empowerment can change a school's curriculum and decision-making culture, it is important that a school's principal be open to new ideas and allow for teachers to become more involved in school

affairs.

According to data from all 12 respondents, Principal Huang's working style is democratic and encourages free expression for the sake of the school's, teachers' and students' development. According to Principal Huang:

I never restrict teachers' power. I fully encourage teachers to develop in their subjects to become professional teachers. I also encourage teachers to innovate, but it should be reasonable, in order to be leaders in the subject.

Principal Huang holds regular teaching conferences and teachers' congresses to hear suggestions and to discuss issues related to school and curriculum development. According to Wang:

Teaching seminars are regularly held within different subjects to discuss recent teaching problems. Sometimes debate is fierce, but we basically can achieve a consensus. An assembly of teachers is held annually. Opinions can be expressed at that time as well. The principal will respond to the suggestions and questions after a period of time, which is good enough for us.

Principal Huang's democratic working style allows teachers to improve their teaching methods and is conducive to addressing teachers' concerns. In addition, Principal Huang continually improves his professional ability, participating in a variety of training and learning activities. Through this exchange of ideas and learning, his

knowledge of educational theory and knowledge of reform improves. This ultimately helps teachers become more empowered, because he is aware of and knowledgeable about the importance of teacher empowerment. From the observations in this study, it appears that an amenable principal greatly enhances reform efforts.

As explored above, a principal's educational theory, management style and curriculum leadership influences teacher empowerment. When a principal has a clear understanding of curriculum power he or she is able to pay more attention to the issue of teacher empowerment. Similarly, when a principal has strong leadership skills he or she will be better able to empower teachers. With poor leadership, the principal is unable to guide the new environment. By consequence, teacher empowerment can be misdirected or misused. This idea is reflected by Principal Huang:

Since the beginning of the NCR, almost every teacher is required to be given more power. It seems to be a 'fashion' within the school. But it is limited in its specificity. Teachers actually do not know what to do, neither do the administrators. After several seminars held by the Ministry of Education and discussions with other schools' principals, I realize they need my guidance to use their power. I organized several discussion meetings for every grade's education groups, and I attended them all. I listened to their concerns and gave them my understanding of this issue [of teacher empowerment]. It worked pretty well. But at the same time, the school's administrator groups and I have to make certain

constraining rules in order to make sure this power is not abused. For example, teachers have the right to make their own curriculum plans. But at the same time, it doesn't mean they can teach whatever they want. They can extend the knowledge in the textbook, but it has to be related to the examination guidance. Therefore, the learning progression can be ensured.

4.2.4.1.2 The support of school conditions

The impact of a school's condition on teacher empowerment is mainly reflected in three areas: funding, time, and systemic issues (Wang & Pan, 2000). Funding refers to the economic guarantee behind the exercise of teacher empowerment, such as school construction and funding for teachers' further learning. Without enough funding, the exercise of teacher empowerment is limited. With respect to time, teachers should be given time to do activities outside of teaching. Systemic issues refer to the structure imposed to support teacher empowerment. When there is limited structure in place, teacher empowerment is also limited. With these elements, teachers would have more opportunities for additional training. As well, they would have more time to focus on other activities beyond teaching to the CEE.

According to the data, Dalian No. 24's current standing, reflected in a school's funding, time and system, is not ideal. As respondent Wang, a teacher with seven years seniority stated, "The school also did some activities according to the NCR at the

beginning of reform. However, it didn't have a specific method. After a long time, teachers were no longer interested in it."

The impressions from this study indicate that in Dalian No. 24 most teachers are too busy with daily work, which doesn't allow them time to attend to school affairs, curriculum resources or research. Various kinds of structures are not sound or not in place, such as how to guarantee teachers gain power and how to support and lead the enactment of teacher empowerment. These imperfect structures cannot guarantee teacher empowerment for teachers. Even when teachers are increasingly empowered, the empowerment may be difficult to maintain.

4.2.4.2 Teachers' effects on teacher empowerment

4.2.4.2.1 Teachers' understanding of teacher empowerment

This study suggests that teachers' understanding of teacher empowerment corresponds with the amount to which schools incorporate its elements. Data affirm that most respondents were able to recognize the importance of teacher empowerment.

Table 3 Understanding of Teacher Empowerment

Name	Indifferent	Understand but not important	Understand and is important
Zhang			√
Sun		√	
Wang		√	
Zhou			√
Zhao	√		
Li	√	√	
Zheng	√		
Chen		√	
Liu			√
Wu			√
Huang			√
Tian			√

The above table shows the twelve participants' understanding of teacher empowerment. In this small sample, it is clear that work still needs to be done to raise awareness about the importance of teacher empowerment. On this basis, giving teachers power, support and guidance can effectively improve the capacity and efficiency of teacher empowerment at Dalian No. 24.

4.2.4.2.2 Awareness of power

This study examined respondents' awareness of power. Awareness of power is

defined as teachers' understanding, maintenance and exercise of empowerment. Therefore, this study gauged teacher empowerment by assessing respondents' awareness levels of teacher empowerment. Findings indicate that if respondents were unaware of teacher empowerment, then they were unaware of the power they could exercise over the curriculum and in the school. Consequently, these same respondents did not understand the importance of teacher empowerment for both teachers and students and ultimately the concept of teacher empowerment for them was meaningless.

Respondent Chen, who is the second year teacher, explained:

> I don't know if I'm empowered or not. The only thing I do every day is teach. My central aim is to be a good teacher. Therefore, I teach whatever the textbook and examinations require me to teach. I can control my own class and make my own teaching plan, so in this sense, I'm empowered; but I have to follow the curriculum progress with other teachers, and thus, I'm not empowered, if that's what you mean.

From this statement, it is clear that Chen does not understand the power the school gives her, even if she believes she is the authority within the classroom. The author believes that the reason why some teachers are satisfied with their existing power is that they don't fully understand the connotations and functions of teacher empowerment. They often conflate the power they have in class with teacher empowerment. This also

explains why teachers' curriculum activities are often confined to their own classroom without the awareness of other curriculums' activities. Again, this factor is important to the discussion on teacher empowerment.

4.2.4.2.3 Curriculum ability

Teachers' curriculum ability is a fundamental component of teacher empowerment. Teachers with low abilities have more difficulty operating and fully exercising their power. Without sound understanding of empowering teachers, the NCR's mandate to decentralize decision-making authority and thus teacher empowerment is unlikely to be successful. This is because teachers will continue to teach state mandated information instead of pursuing what is best for their classrooms, reinforcing the status quo.

Principal Huang affirms these sentiments:

Most school affairs are made with the participation of experienced and capable teachers. For the others, even if the school lets them in, there will be limited amount of valuable suggestions contributed by them. At the beginning of curriculum reform, the school tried to implement the NCR's ideas and to empower teachers. However, most teachers didn't know how to use the new power. The school cannot to do that anymore. The school encouraged teachers to carry out creative teaching, but most teachers just pay attention to the innovation of methods, without considering the new teaching priorities. The quality of

instruction declined as a result. In addition, the school encouraged teachers to carry out school-based teaching, research, and writing of research papers. Many teachers had difficulty in starting. Some of them just downloaded research papers from the Internet. The teachers also wanted to have open-structured classes. However, when the class was 'open' disorder ensued. They could not achieve the teaching target. Teachers had to praise the new curriculum on the one hand, and follow the traditional way of teaching on the other hand.

According to Principal Huang's statement, teachers' curriculum ability has gained attention in the school. Teachers are encouraged to take actions, such as researching and writing research papers to improve their abilities. Doing more research activities during the teaching process, which is one way to encourage teachers to pursue improvement in their curriculum ability, already benefits their promotion and performance. In this way, teachers are more motivated to improve their professional ability.

4.2.4.3 Social and cultural traditions

 Data collected from respondents found that conflicts between the reforms and China's cultural traditions interfere with teacher empowerment. The way these cultural traditions constrain reform is profoundly impactful in this study. According to respondents, the way teachers, students and parents view education is habituated to the traditional way of doing things, namely, passive compliance. The teacher empowerment

that comes with NCR reforms challenges this habitual thought process. Teacher respondent Wang's statement reflects this:

I am just arranging the class according to the school's agenda. All I need to worry about is how to have a wonderful class. Other than that, I don't need to worry about anything. It has always been like this. We all feel normal. I think the others should have the same attitude as me.

4.2.4.4 Teachers' income and promotions

Through analyzing the interviews, this study found a correspondence between teacher empowerment and teachers' income and promotions. Teachers whose students excel are promoted as leaders of their education groups. Consequently, they have more influence over curriculum planning and teaching methodology and have the opportunity to teach the graduating grade levels. A major incentive to teach graduating classes is bonuses teachers receive when their students receive excellent results in the College Entrance Exam (CEE) referred to as 'incentive money'. The teachers with better results achieve higher incomes. Hence, powerful incentives that contradict teacher empowerment are in place. According to Zhang, a teacher respondent:

Teachers who teach graduating classes have a higher average income than those that teacher grade 10 or 11. If the College Entrance Examination scores are particularly good that year, the head teachers will have large bonuses. If students

are admitted to several famous universities, bonuses are even higher. Therefore, most graduating class teachers want to be head teachers, especially those working in elite classes. But it is not up to teachers to decide who can be the head teacher. It is the school that makes the decision.

In addition to teaching graduating classes in pursuit of more money, this study reveals that many teachers also conduct private tutorials after school. The better the reputation a teacher has the more students attend their tutorials and the higher their tutorial fees are. This can be interpreted to mean that these teachers choose to pursue curriculum power due to their desire of pursuing a higher salary.

Therefore, this study found that teachers who received higher incomes by teaching graduating classes and tutorials valued curriculum power over school-affairs decision-making power. However, as stated earlier by the author, teachers in this position rigidly stick to the set curriculum to ensure good results and therefore do not experiment with new ideas or approaches. Therefore, they are less likely to accept teacher empowerment.

4.3 Teachers' Attitudes towards Teacher Empowerment and NCR

Throughout the interviews, the researcher found that teachers tend to have two distinct attitudes towards teacher empowerment under the NCR. One attitude is of low-acceptance and the other is of acceptance.

4.3.1 Attitude of Low-acceptance

Teachers with a low-acceptance attitude towards teacher empowerment and the NCR hold a negative attitude towards this movement. These teachers' curriculum ideas are almost exclusively textbook-based. The majority of textbooks from the NCR are completely new and revised. Thus the process of implementing the NCR is also one of implementing new textbooks. Therefore, a crucial problem teachers face in the NCR is how to adequately deliver the new materials and the new knowledge to students. For example, in the Dalian No. 24 Grade Ten Chinese TRG, a common response to NCR changes is that because there is more content, there isn't enough time to get through it. Additionally, students' acceptance is low. To finish the new material in limited time and ensure that students can keep up with the teaching schedule, conflict occurs. Thus, it raises the question "How have some teachers dealt with this issue?" First, class hours have been diverted from other subjects for example, computer technology or art, which are there to fulfill the NCR's requirement of subject diversity. In Dalian No. 24, most of these subjects do not have special teachers and are taught by teachers from other subjects, say Chinese teachers. Due to the constraints and pressures of the CEE these teachers will simply disregard the elective material and teach a Chinese class. Secondly, teachers are forced to speed up the teaching process. Texts which need four to five periods to cover adequately will be finished within one or two periods. Thirdly, teachers increase the amount of practice, as opposed to delivering new material. Time which is allocated to

teaching is diverted to practice. Students need to do a large amount of practice to consolidate the knowledge in the new texts. Fourth, teachers help students who have difficulty with the increased material. These teachers use their spare time to tutor students, often just to correct the misunderstandings or mistakes that come from the increased workload. In such ways, these teachers spend all their time outside of work teaching new knowledge, correcting assignments and tutoring students. These teachers do not have time to think about teacher empowerment or shoulder other responsibilities in the school.

Interestingly, these teachers are aware that the NCR allows them to make adjustments on which materials to teach. Not all the knowledge points need to be covered. When asked why they do not do this, Zhao, a teacher respondent with four years seniority said: "If I have taught every knowledge point, and let the students practice a lot, it is not my responsibility if he [the student] doesn't obtain high scores." Many such teachers are worried about the CEE. They think if they follow the requirement of the NCR, to teach selectively, when their selections deviate from the requirements of the CEE, students' text scores will be negatively impacted. In this respect, these teachers' attitudes toward NCR actually subvert the aims of teacher empowerment.

4.3.2 Attitude of Acceptance

In contrast to the above teachers, how do teachers with high acceptance react to the NCR? The NCR and its new textbook have brought them the same increased workload.

However, these teachers are not firmly grounded on the old textbooks. They treat the NCR changes in a more flexible way. When the new contents are too much to fit into class hours, their solution is to teach the most important knowledge points and to practice with choices. At the beginning of each term, these teachers will try to get familiar with the new materials. According to their own teaching experience and expertise, they make choices and formulate the key knowledge points and difficult areas. Through discussion with other teachers and experts, they make decisions about selecting or deleting materials as well as formulate their education strategy. They will also make practice plans catering to the new contents and discuss them with other teachers in the TRG. They select out the most effective exercises together to ensure the breadth and depth of these texts. When the researcher asked why they did this, it was gathered that they wanted to grasp the core contents of the new material without putting too much pressure on the students. One of the teachers said in the survey:

I think the new material has some merit. It can widen students' reading range. Most students can learn enough knowledge during their school time. Although there are too much new materials to cover adequately, we can comprise and combine them. For example, in the chapter we are teaching now, the main idea is to teach how to retell a story. Most of the texts in this chapter are quite similar. Therefore, we can synthesize similar knowledge points. Actually, we do not need to teach every text. If there are two texts that are similar to each other, the teacher

could list more exercises for the students to practice. If the teacher is stressed out, the students will overstrain themselves, too. In a word, it all depends on the teachers' understanding.

Moreover, in Dalian No. 24, according to Dean Tian, teachers in the upper grades will share their teaching plans as references for lower grade teachers. Effective methodologies that are commonly recognized by other teachers will be uploaded to the schools' question bank for sharing. The school will also provide training courses and lectures from experts to guide the teachers exploring the new material to make more effective lesson plans.

4.3.3 Differences between Low-acceptance and Acceptance

Through comparing the above two attitudes, we can find out the differences between these two kinds of teachers.

4.3.3.1 Pressure from Teacher Empowerment

The responsibility of preparation for the CEE is always the biggest pressure in teachers' daily work. Even in the teacher-proof curriculum, after teachers have lost their professional autonomy, they are still saddled with enormous pressure. They need to shoulder the pressure from the curriculum as well as make professional improvements. If the students score poorly, it is the teacher who shoulders this responsibility. Therefore, under the condition of teacher empowerment, teachers' responsibility increases

accordingly.

Accordingly, teachers who have an attitude of low-acceptance towards teacher empowerment can be forgiven. If the teacher gives up the power of adjusting to the new material given by the NCR, when the students' academic performance has problems, they can blame the new materials for leaving them too little time. They can also blame the examination when the range exceeds the teaching materials. Furthermore, they can blame the students for their low acceptance and understanding ability. The only part that will not be blamed is the teachers. They have completed all the required tasks in the new material, although every task is done in a hurry. "It is not my responsibility if he [the student] doesn't have good scores." Teachers such as this appear to be evading responsibility by giving up power. On the contrary, teachers with an attitude of acceptance are more willing to shoulder the responsibilities for students' performance and the development of curriculum reform. In that case, these teachers accept the concept of teacher empowerment much easier.

4.3.3.2 Different identities of teachers in relation to teacher empowerment

On the other hand, these two kinds of teachers have different professional identities when facing teacher empowerment and the NCR changes. Teachers with an attitude of low-acceptance recognize themselves as faithful executors of the new material, while the other teachers regard themselves as the adapters of the NCR and the new material. As

Zhou (2004) states, those teachers who recognized themselves as professionals and who do not feel uncomfortable with frequent change, will have the real autonomy of their profession. The NCR outlines the expectations of teachers clearly. It requires teachers to have professional autonomy to develop the new curriculum more in line with the needs of students' all-round development. Thus, why do teachers have different responses to this situation?

Teachers' expected role is dictated by external, social and even political systems. Teachers in different periods would vary a lot. In the "teacher-proof education" period, the teacher's role is solely an educator. They need only to pass the pre-designed curriculum content to students in a uniform method. However, with the current NCR, teachers are meant to be agents of curriculum, participating in the curriculum reform as experts. They cooperate with each other and share their identity within the group. One of the teachers said in the survey:

I have been in Dalian No. 24 for almost five years. My deepest impression is the cooperative atmosphere. For example, every month we have a demo class within our teaching and researching group. We used to have this kind of activity in my former school, but it was just perfunctory. It didn't help me a lot. After I came to No. 24, it greatly widened my horizon. I remember the first time I attended this kind of class. All the teachers, including the dean and the principal, listened carefully to the teacher who was giving the lecture. After the class, all the

teachers actively shared their in-depth comments. The quality and depth of their comments impressed me a lot. Although I didn't say anything at that time, I learnt a lot from it. Gradually I could share my ideas with other teachers. Now I can actively participate in these kinds of activities. I think my teaching career blossomed from it, which motivate me to be a better educator.

From this transcript we can see that this teacher holds an attitude of acceptance towards the NCR and is willing to take actions in this reform. The open and professional environment provided by No. 24 gives more opportunities and incentives for teachers to cooperate with others. Teachers' professional ideas generated after repeated reflection could be respected, accepted and recognized by their colleagues. This makes the teachers feel their participation is significant to the whole school, which will enhance teachers' self-identity as a professional educator. Therefore, they are more likely to have positive attitudes towards teacher empowerment and the NCR.

However, we should notice that the premise of being recognized by the school and teachers' ideas being recognized on a professional level is based on teachers' professional ability. At present, the knowledge has been updated quickly. Teachers' professional knowledge should not be narrowed but augmented every day. To some extent, the core of teachers' professional knowledge is the ability to continue learning and developing. The problems that the NCR brings to classroom education never appeared before, which cannot be solved by teachers' previous knowledge or experience. What should teachers

do? One way is to learn from practice, reflection and ongoing communication.

This kind of acceptance attitude can be easily found in teachers at Dalian No. 24. There is the case of Teacher G. She is a mathematics teacher from the Grade eleven TRG. She said in the survey that she is a young teacher with six years seniority. And other teachers in her TRG are senior teachers with extensive teaching experiences. "I have been in this group for only half a year. I always want to share something different with other group members. Some of them share their experiences, while others share solutions to particular problems. I will try to find some innovative ideas from the internet to try to make my ideas more appealing." Behind Teacher G's case is the process of learning. Through continuous learning and self-development, teachers can maintain their confidence when facing the challenges of NCR. But when the school does not encourage teachers to cooperate with others, teachers will tend to focus on their own work, without identifying themselves as researchers or innovators, but only as passive implementers of the curricula.

4.3.4 Responsibility of Teacher Empowerment and Teachers' Attitudes

Teacher empowerment makes people pay more attention to teachers' power and ability. However, in the current situation for teacher empowerment in the NCR, the increased responsibility is what holds teachers back. In this regard, the researcher wanted to ask if teachers are given more responsibility to exercise their power.

There is no doubt that in Dalian No. 24 most teachers began to shoulder the professional ability given by the NCR to make professional decisions. However, this does not mean the teachers do not have additional pressures. It is the school who shared these pressures with the teachers. But we still need to realize that the responsibility that the school shares is only a part of it. The majority of the responsibility is still on the shoulders of the teachers. However, teachers in the same school still have opposing attitudes towards teacher empowerment. To realize teacher empowerment fully, the relationship between teacher empowerment and responsibility should be balanced. Without too many pressures, teachers can identify themselves as the true professional educators and agents of curriculum reform. The school can create a professional atmosphere to empower teachers. With joint effort, the school, teachers and students can be the beneficiaries of curriculum reform.

4.4 Existing Problems in Teacher Empowerment

4.4.1 Teachers' Education Ability Should be Improved

Teachers' education ability refers to the initiative of participating in their school's curriculum affairs and curriculum practices in order to increase the students' educational experience. Teacher empowerment attempts to fundamentally guarantee teachers' education ability. Teachers under-qualified in their curriculum area cannot achieve this power. Misuse and abuse of power can also occur. This study confirmed the results of

existing research that says that at present high school teachers' curriculum knowledge needs to be improved for the following four reasons:

First, teachers' decision-making abilities surrounding the curriculum are weak. Some teachers have difficulty providing effective curriculum suggestions, even when they have been given the opportunity to participate in their curriculum decision-making process. Instead, these teachers parrot what other teachers have said or come up with unrealistic opinions. As evidence by Teacher M from the Grade ten History TRG:

This is the second year of my teaching. During these two years, I found that the knowledge or teaching method I learned from the school is not very practical in the teaching process. I was quite willing to show my enthusiasm when I started teaching. I came out with a lot of good ideas (at least I thought they were good ideas) to innovate the teaching method in our weekly group meeting. However, although our group leader encouraged me to say more about it, I found the senior teachers were not that interested in these ideas. And gradually, during the practice, I found those ideas were hard to implement, and may negatively influence my teaching process. I became quiet when the other teachers share their ideas and was more willing to take others' good ideas into my classroom. And I think this is a good shift. Learning from others makes me grow faster.

From Teacher M's experience, we can see that his enthusiasm for innovation was

very high at the beginning of his career. However, fellow teachers' experiences and attitudes influenced his enthusiasm and gradually he is more willing to take others' ideas instead of creating his own. This may be due to his lack of experience. But the influence of habits should not be ignored. Once this teacher forms a habit, he is less likely to innovate even when he becomes a senior teacher.

Second, curriculum development capacities of teachers, which are teachers' curriculum creation abilities, are also weak. The NCR encourages teachers to develop and make use of various curriculum resources in order to implement a personalized teaching method. However, many teachers do not use curriculum resources other than reference books. For example, Wang said: "Most of the resources prepared for my class are from the national textbooks, which is also the guideline for the College Entrance Examination. Although I also gather some resources from the Internet, it can only be used as an assistant tool, not the central one. I'm afraid if I use too many materials outside the textbooks, I may miss the exam points. Moreover, I don't think the resources I found are more effective for students' learning. The textbooks are designed by the experts, who are also the designer of the CEE after all." His idea is also supported by Principal Huang who said that some teachers solely seek to innovate. However, without scientific training and practice, the curriculum they designed interfered with the daily teaching tasks they should have accomplished. Therefore, the school encourages teachers to consider the teaching tasks more when creating their own curriculum.

Third, teachers' evaluation of students is limited by the CEE. The NCR requires teachers to use different kinds of evaluation methods, but many teachers are unable to utilize the new methods. For example, according to the interviews, many teachers do not understand a new implementation process called the 'growth record file', which catalogues and records a student's work in order to track progress. According to Sun, "I think the best way to evaluate students' performance is their scores. It is also the only evaluation method for CEE. Almost a year after the NCR came out, the school asked us to use the 'growth record file' to evaluate students' performance. Even today, I can't understand or see the benefit of it." Instead, many teachers at Dalian No. 24 only compile students' course transcripts, award records and final comprehensive quality reports in this file. By doing this, these teachers fail to analyze and understand information in the growth record file. Instead of using the opportunity to measure creativity and ability, students under teachers like the above continue to be evaluated only by recorded exam scores.

Fourth, teachers lack strong curriculum inquiry abilities. Due to the influence of old curriculum habits, personal ability, school culture, and limitations of time, high school teachers' awareness of curriculum inquiry is lacking. Many teachers have accumulated sufficient experience to practice, but don't take actions to enhance their foundational knowledge. Some of them are forced to do research activities, because it is related to their performance and for promotion. But this makes some teachers try to squeeze through, and

the research process does not make useful contributions to improve teachers' ability. The idea of "teachers as researchers" has already been affirmed by the state. However, under the current situation, many areas still need to be improved.

4.4.2 The Lack of Teacher Empowerment and Low Self-efficacy

This study's results indicate that, firstly, high school teachers have insufficient power in the selection of teaching materials and curriculum content. The situation of teaching solely based on textbooks and reference books still exists. This once again shows the shortage of teachers' curriculum development abilities. It also shows that teacher empowerment is limited within a certain range.

Secondly, teachers' abilities to participate in the school's curriculum decision-making process are low. They passively accept and obey the school's curriculum arrangement. Overall, the lack of power results in teachers' low self-efficacy. This may lead to two consequences: one is that even when they are encouraged to participate, they may lack the confidence to exercise it because they have been accustomed to working without power. Secondly, teachers may lose interest in curriculum power. The scheme of high school curriculum reform has put forward higher requirements for teachers, who shoulder an increased burden.

4.4.3 Teachers' Curriculum Creation Power is Facing Difficulties

The new high school curriculum reform is still in the experimental stage. It indicates

the direction in which China's high school education is heading. The NCR has established educational concepts, such as "quality education", and it attempts to fundamentally change the traditional examination-oriented education. The NCR made many changes based on the existing problems in high school education. Curriculum content is no longer comprised solely of subject oriented teaching. The skills of life-long learning are becoming the themes of student education.

However, the choice of curriculum content must emphasize the importance of selectivity in order to meet the different needs of students' development. With respect to curriculum implementation, old syllabi don't address individual students' learning processes. However, the NCR is committed to individual student development. Schools are beginning to offer introductory curriculum directions and manuals for elective courses. Students are beginning to be encouraged to explore their interests in order to achieve greater overall success in schools.

Additionally, the NCR requires schools to strengthen the creation of curriculum resources, make effective use of existing curriculum resources and to have a more personalized high school curriculum. The NCR also requires schools to use a comprehensive evaluation system that takes students' academic scores and growth record into consideration in order to give students greater developmental space. Schools must establish comprehensive and dynamic growth record books based on the evaluation principle of diversity. Schools must comprehensively use observations, communication,

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tests, exercises and self-evaluation to fully reflect students' growth.

The scheme of high school curriculum reform has put forward higher requirements for teachers. Results show that given the present state of teacher empowerment, it is difficult to achieve the curriculum reform's objectives. Teachers must be more empowered so they can adapt the curriculum's content, structure, implementation and evaluation. Many changes are new to teachers. They must move forward with caution. During this process, failure and disorder are inevitable. Therefore, sufficient power, especially curriculum creation power, must be given to teachers as well as allow them to make mistakes in the process. By doing this, schools stimulate teachers' active participation in curriculum reform. The CEE is considered the main cause for low curriculum creation, as discussed earlier in this paper. From here, the reform of CEE is the route that a school must take to improve its teachers' curriculum creation power.

4.4.4 Principals' Understandings of Teacher Empowerment Needs to be Further Improved.

Chinese education laws stipulate that a schools' principal is responsible for school teaching and administration management. Therefore, a principal's educational concepts and management methods play an extremely important role in teacher empowerment. As mentioned before, the current high school principals' working style is mostly democratic in Dalian No. 24. However, by his own admission, his understanding and attention to

teacher empowerment still needs to be improved.

A principals' lack of clear understandings of teacher empowerment results in the prolonged centralization of Chinese curriculum power. Most existing initiatives of teacher empowerment at Dalian No. 24 are limited but do touch the core issues. Principal Huang affirmed this concept. According to Huang, "It is not a good school without a high enrollment rate." From his perspective, recent teacher empowerment is a concern. He believes it is too much for teachers to undertake. If more power is given to the teachers, the situation would be hard to manage. The principal's view might be representative of other school administrators' views on teacher empowerment. The reasons vary, of course. For high schools, a high enrollment rate is important, as well the current teachers' abilities do not always warrant more power. Although teacher empowerment is still facing many difficulties in China, it is the general trend of education development. With the gradual promotion of curriculum reform, teachers will gain more power to better meet the needs of student development. Therefore, as an administrator of a school, the principal must plan ahead in ways to empower his teachers.

4.4.5 Teachers' Awareness of Collaboration Needs to be Further Improved

Many areas of teacher empowerment require collaboration between teachers, including curriculum development, policy making and evaluation. Several aspects of

teacher empowerment require teachers to exchange and share experiences and knowledge. However, some educational administrative departments force collaboration between high school teachers. This kind of man-made collaboration aims to manipulate teachers' working environments to fit the NCR mandate. It is superficial and through it the meaning of collaboration is lost.

The interview results show that teachers with different seniority have different views toward teacher empowerment. The interview results also show an effective lack of collaboration. According to the interviews, the high school teachers' most common form of collaboration is collective lesson preparation. Discussions mainly focus on content instead of methodology. Even such discussions are not occurring often. What happens most often is that new teachers simply copy old teachers' ideas and methods. This type of cooperation does not lead to innovation or creation. This lack of effective collaboration is one of the reasons why teacher empowerment is floundering.

4.5 Summary

This study exposed many problems that impact and constrain teacher empowerment. School affairs decision-making and curriculum power are two central elements in the implementation of teacher empowerment. The principal, school culture, teachers' attitudes towards teacher empowerment and the NCR, and social traditions are several key factors that influence teacher empowerment. In order to participate in curriculum

reform, teachers need to actively participate in school affairs and take initiative on achieving curriculum power in order to meet the challenges that accompany curriculum reform. To have better balance between curriculum reform and scores on the CEE, teachers should put more emphasis on their curriculum power. Although the NCR and teacher empowerment has much support by teachers in Dalian No. 24, it also needs more support culturally. The public's traditional attitude towards education and teaching needs to be changed. Otherwise the power given to teachers is limited and unlikely to be evidenced in practice, as testified by many interviewees. Teacher empowerment is only one part of the entire reform. Reasonably empowering teachers would be most advantageous when every part of the entire system shifts correspondingly.

5 Conclusions

5.1 A Review of This Study

This study explores how teacher empowerment is exercised and valued in Dalian No. 24 Senior High School, which takes a leading position in both education and performance in regards to the NCR. Specifically, it explores how teachers in this school react towards teacher empowerment and the NCR. Based on the data collected, the researcher found that teachers in Dalian No. 24 are not as empowered as one might expect. As a leading school in Dalian, No. 24 actively takes initiatives in regards to the National Education Reforms. In terms of teacher empowerment, it has also promoted a lot of policies to facilitate teacher empowerment. However, due to the traditional education system and the pressures of the CEE, the exercising of teacher empowerment is not where it could be.

The researcher also found that teachers in this school tend to have two different attitudes towards teacher empowerment and the NCR: one of acceptance and one of low-acceptance. In Dalian No. 24, teacher empowerment, which is advocated by the NCR, is more likely to be considered by the school for the purposes of improving the curriculum. The school lacks in considering the improvement of teachers' personal understanding towards the NCR, as well as individual difficulties faced by teachers during implementation. However, when teachers are empowered, their responsibility increases accordingly. Therefore, in the same school, teachers' identities are different

from each other's. This difference makes teachers take a different approach towards NCR. Teachers with a low acceptance of new ideas and responsibilities tend to be faithful to traditional teaching methods when implementing the new curriculum. They give up the power that the curriculum reform is designed to give them. These teachers are uncomfortable with the changes carried out by the NCR. From their perspectives, they could achieve excellent teaching results with their traditional teaching methods. However, except for students' exam scores, the NCR requires the teachers to focus on other tasks, such as cultivating students' self-learning abilities. This new focus makes the teachers feel troublesome to achieve the goals set out by the NCR, which leads to their reluctance to accept the NCR. On the contrary, teachers with a strong sense of responsibility and high level of acceptance of new ideas position themselves as the executors of curriculum reform. They take teacher empowerment as an opportunity to show their professional abilities and creativities. Some teachers are excited to seize this power and attempt to use their professional autonomy to make decisions with the power that the curriculum reform provides for them. By some teachers' own words, this empowerment movement gives them the sense of "pride and freedom" in their own profession. As a result, they are more willing to participate in the reform. In sum, this analysis of their experience of the NCR is primarily related to their attitudes towards rather than their feelings about the NCR.

To conclude, successful implementation of teacher empowerment requires several actions to be done by teachers, the school and also the Ministry. With respect to teachers

from Dalian No. 24, they should be more open-minded. More training and advanced learning about curriculum concepts, teaching methodologies and curriculum development require more attention from teachers. They should also not be afraid of taking on more responsibilities and should be more critical towards existing teaching materials as long as their professional abilities qualify them to accomplish this task. As pointed out by Ball and Cohen (1996), teachers are the primary deliverers of reform to the classroom. Therefore, their reactions and attitudes towards teacher empowerment and curriculum reform are significant to its success. However, after rounds of curricular reform, many teachers in Dalian No. 24 have tended to become more conservative and eventually give up their power. This area needs to be improved.

With respect to the school, it should support teachers in their professional status and in further training, as well as shoulder more responsibility in the education outcomes. The school should provide an atmosphere supportive of reform. This type of atmosphere will give more confidence to teachers to implement these reforms. The principal's management style influences teacher empowerment as well. Principal Huang's working style in Dalian No. 24 is mostly democratic. However, by his own admission, his understanding and attention to teacher empowerment still needs to be improved. He is not opposing teacher empowerment, but he thinks teachers should use this power to achieve high exam scores and high college enrollment rate. The pursuit of high exam scores still limits the implementation of teacher empowerment.

Moreover, we need to seek the solution from the reform itself, and to find the balance between teacher empowerment and teachers' responsibilities. Various methods are needed to promote teachers' professional development as well. The Ministry should issue more relevant reform policies to direct, regulate and support teacher empowerment. These measures could enable schools to support teacher empowerment and curriculum reform more effectively.

5.2 Conclusions

Teacher empowerment involves the expansion of teachers' professional roles in daily educational activities. While fulfilling the requirements of curriculum reform, teacher empowerment allows teachers to have rights and to exercise professional judgment about what and how to teach, focusing on the quality of education, not simply teaching to the test. Teacher empowerment has vital practical significance to the Chinese NCR. As the main enactors of teacher empowerment, educators have compelling obligations to shoulder this responsibility. At the same time, the nation, society, universities and parents should also join force to assist high schools in achieving this goal, and promoting teachers to have rights to use and to know how to use those rights. Properly empowered teachers can fully enjoy participating in school affairs decision-making as well as have the power of curriculum creation, curriculum implementation and student evaluation. These powers should not be deprived or restricted. Teachers should also continually develop their professional practice in order to improve

their knowledge of the curriculum and its resources. Knowing how to use these rights means that, with the objective of students' development, teachers can improve their professional abilities. Bearing in mind the multiple levels of development of the students, the curriculum should be decided by the productive and collaborative uses of various curriculum powers given to teachers.

Specifically, in terms of decision-making and teacher empowerment, teachers could actively participate in school affairs and become more willing to express their ideas. Teachers should strive to enhance their influence on school affairs and decision-making by constantly improving their professional ability.

In terms of curriculum development and teacher empowerment, teachers could develop more awareness of curriculum resource development. Teachers should attempt to enrich curriculum content and improve implementation processes by developing and utilizing new methodologies and varied curriculum resources. In terms of curriculum implementation and teacher empowerment, teachers could realize their ability to implement the curriculum subjectively by designing personalized curricula and implementing them creatively. In terms of curriculum creativity, teacher empowerment enables teachers to break through the limitation of textbooks. By combining their personal understanding of the curriculum and their own interpretations of the curriculum, teachers can encourage and guide students' creativity. In terms of student evaluation and teacher empowerment, teachers could objectively evaluate students through other ways

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besides the examination since teachers are the witness to students' development. To summarize, teachers must play an active role in the endowment and exercise of teacher empowerment with corresponding professional activities. School principals, as another crucial element in the implementation of reform, should carry out effective controls during implementation to manage conflicts in the best interests of the students.

People have always sought power. The fundamental reason is that power can help people obtain more freedom (Jiang, 2005). However, high school teachers' desire for empowerment is not as strong as one would expect, at least not in Dalian No. 24. This study and corresponding research show that there are at least three reasons for this: First, some teachers are indifferent to becoming empowered, mainly because their awareness of teacher empowerment has not yet been cultivated. They think that the curriculum implementation power is all they need to have. But curriculum implementation does not guarantee more power to teachers, who are at the lowest end of the traditional power distribution structure. They could be more active to find their own voices in the school decision-making and curriculum creation process. Second, because Chinese teachers' professional abilities are not as specialized as those of other professionals, such as doctors and lawyers, the nation and schools are hesitant to fully empower teachers. According to Lao's research, "[i]n China, compared with the profession of doctors and lawyers, the teacher's career has not realized specialization (Lao, 2008)." The traditional power distribution in China causes the power to decrease when it is passed down from the

national to local level and from schools to teachers. For example in Dalian No. 24, its administrators are afraid that teachers cannot handle the power properly. They limit the power that is supposed to be given to the teachers. Teachers are still constrained by their traditional roles. In fact, some teachers indeed do not know what the power is for. They might have inappropriate understanding and interpretation of the power given to them. Without professional abilities, the purely pursuing of empowerment will ignore the fundamental target of teacher empowerment, which is students' all-round development. Third, the overall environment for implementing teacher empowerment needs to be improved. At present, national investment in education and schools and principal leadership cannot guarantee the realization of teacher empowerment. Moreover, due to the traditional education system and the pressures of the CEE, the exercising of teacher empowerment is not where it should be. Key elements, such as education funding, technological hardware and software development, partnership of high school and universities and the principal's leadership, still need to be significantly improved. All these reforms are not without risks and benefits. During reforms, setbacks encountered by schools and teachers are inevitable, which is the cost of reform. Teachers cannot passively wait. Instead, they need to engage in the practice of teacher empowerment and to grasp the power by changing their perspectives.

Through the research, several critical elements were found that are significant to the realization of teacher empowerment: teachers' awareness of reform, the principal's

professional leadership, supportive school environment and the Ministry's support. All of these elements influence one another and should be considered together.

Depending on the degree of teachers' changes, Fullan believed that education reform should at least have three aspects of change, including new teaching materials, new education methods and new education concepts. Teachers may change in one or two aspects, but it is hard to change all three of them simultaneously, especially the education concept (Fullan, 2011). Whitehead said the essence of life needs to draw from the destruction of pre-existing order (Whitehead, 1938). Realization of teacher empowerment necessarily encounters a period of disorder. Teachers are encouraged to destroy their old habits in order to achieve breakthroughs and transcendence of the traditional paradigm. Moreover, the significance of the principal's role is not to be disregarded. Principals have to shoulder the responsibility of guiding teacher empowerment's gradual realization, based on the needs of schools' and teachers' development. Through the interviews and research, the author found that the principal's concept of education and management have a decisive impact on teachers' working attitudes and styles. If the principal has advanced educational concepts and a democratic management style, he is perceived to be charismatic to teachers and the cohesion of teachers strengthens. Otherwise, teachers will care much less about the school's affairs (Lin & He, 2005). Leading teacher empowerment relies on a principal's advanced concept of education and democratic management style. It also requires the principal to possess strong curriculum leadership.

To realize teacher empowerment, the principal's role cannot be ignored.

With the deepening of curriculum reform, the need for teacher empowerment has increased progressively. However, based on the current state of Chinese basic education, it is unrealistic to realize teacher empowerment in a short period of time. Teacher empowerment is no longer a simple slogan. It is of critical importance to integrate and coordinate all efforts from national government, local communities, schools, teachers and parents in order to guide, support and control over teacher empowerment.

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Appendix A: Interview Outline:

For teachers in Dalian No. 24 Senior High School:

Identify personal information including the subject they are teaching, how long they have engaged in teaching and how long they have taught the new curriculum (a little teaching history of the interviewees).

Combined with my auditing and observation, identify the changes they have made in their pedagogy in order to cope with the new curriculum mandates.

1. What do you think about the NCR? Does it bring any changes to your teaching work? If yes, how and why you have made changes?

2. How do you carry on your daily classes? How do you make the syllabus according to the requirement of NCR?

3. What degree of autonomy do you have in making the syllabus for your various classes? Can you give some details by using an example?

4. To what extent do you work with your colleagues in planning and designing course syllabus? What elements emerge from collaborative planning and what is primarily your own work?

5. To what extent are you involved in the school's decision-making process and at what level and in what aspects of the school's program?

6. To what extent do you think the school supports teacher creativity and

inventiveness? Can you give me any examples? Does the school have any programs to support your personal professional growth?

7. To what extent do you feel empowered as a teacher in your own classroom, in terms of making decisions about your own classroom responsibilities as a teacher? As a teacher in the school in terms of influencing school curriculum, school decision making, etc.? As a teacher in the region in terms of influencing regional policy and decision making, etc.?

8. To what extent has this empowerment been helped or hindered by the NCR efforts?

9. If you don't feel empowered, what is limiting you? Do you feel excluded from the school's decision making or do you not feel you have the autonomy to make your own class's syllabus? What are your suggestions and how do you want to make a change?

10. What does the school or region do to support your personal professional growth and development as a teacher? How does the school (administrators, directors, coordinators) help you with professional development? What new roles, if any, are you taking now in the school as a result of the NCR?

11. Overall, what effect do you think the NCR has had on your teaching practice and the outcomes of the students in your classroom? Can you give me any examples?

For administrators in Dalian No. 24 Senior High School:

Enquire some of their personal information.

Ask their understanding of the new curriculum

Examine their roles in implementing the new curriculum.

Ask their attitude about teacher's empowerment in the new curriculum reform, how they interact with teachers in helping them implement the new curriculum, and their understandings of empowerment as a professional development.

Appendix B: Sample of interview transcripts

Author: Do you pay attention to your own professional development?

Interviewee: Yes, I usually collect typical topics on the internet and download some good teaching case. If there is an opportunity of training, I usually actively participate in that.

Author: What is your motivation of your professional development?

Interviewee: For the development of students for sure. After the curriculum reform, the curriculum content changed greatly. Some of the contents are not required in the textbooks, but will be tested during examination. I have to add these knowledge points into my daily classroom teaching. If I only teach knowledge from textbooks, it cannot meet the requirement of examination. For example, in the textbook, students are only required to understand numden and use of factorization, while cross-method is not required. However, in the college entrance examination, the simplest way of solving quadratics is cross-method. The other two ways are the most complex solutions. Therefore, teachers should add more teaching resources during classroom teaching. Normally, I not only teach them the theory but also how to analyze it.

Author: Except for the needs of students' development, is there anything else can motivate your professional development?

Teacher: From another perspective, it is to meet my own needs. Teachers in the school are often compared with others, for example, whose class performance is good. Our bonuses are also directly linked with students' achievements. In addition, teachers with good performance are more valued by school administrators. The status in school is also relatively higher.

Author: How do you think of your school's current support of teacher professional development?

Teacher: It's hard to say. Teachers can't completely develop with their own ideas. We can only develop by the opportunity and method that the school provides. Sometimes the requirements from the school may conflict with the actual situation. We have no way of solving that. The school also has some practical difficulties. It cannot fully meet the needs of teacher development. In addition, in order to ensure the students' test scores, the school cannot allow teachers' free development.