The field of school leadership is in the early stages of understanding how school leaders’ values and behaviors are shaped by their cultural contexts. With over 60% of the world’s population residing in Asian countries, this timely book examines school leadership practices that expand our understanding of what transpires in non-Western societies. Examining a variety of indigenous Asian countries influenced by Confucian, Taoist, Buddhist, Hindu, and Islamic philosophies and traditions, the authors provide empirical evidence and practical illustrations of how these cultural perspectives shape school leaders’ expectations and actions. Readers will be enlightened by the variety of Asian cultures represented, from high-population, ethnically diverse countries to much smaller, homogeneous societies.

Bruce Barnett, Professor Emeritus, University of Texas at San Antonio (USA)

The field of educational leadership has been dominated by Western and especially Anglo-centric perspectives. But leadership operates in different and overlapping ways in the East compared to the West. This important book introduces readers to the unique contribution of Asian perspectives in educational leadership and leadership in general that don’t merely complement Western ones, but also challenge them in important ways. This is a book that will open minds in a way that is essential in an increasingly diverse world of global dimensions in education.

Andy Hargreaves, Professor, Boston College (USA), University of Ottawa (Canada)

The literature on school leadership has long been dominated by perspectives developed in the Western world, so this new book brings both challenges and complementary insights from a rich and diverse set of Asian cultural and spiritual values. Twenty-seven authors from eight Asian countries elaborate on approaches to leadership rooted in philosophical and religious traditions that include Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and Islam among others, thus broadening and enriching the literature as well as demonstrating a genius for harmony that is deeply Asian. The book will appeal to educational practitioners, researchers and a wider public.

Ruth Hayhoe, Professor, University of Toronto (Canada)
Educational Leadership and Asian Culture

Providing a window on educational leadership from an Asian cultural perspective, Liu and Thien’s edited collection describes how educational leadership is linked with national culture in the context of different Asian countries.

While much of the scholarship on this topic has been built on Western paradigms, this book examines the measurement of school leadership from a diverse lens by taking cultural context into account while examining educational leadership. Drawing on cross-cultural perspectives, the authors investigate the relationship between leadership for learning and societal culture, in addition to the relationship between leadership style and culture. The text provides a theoretical basis for understanding leadership in the context of Asian countries and offers practical suggestions for identifying effective and culturally sensitive leadership practices in similar cultural contexts.

This book is an excellent resource for graduate students, researchers in comparative education, educational practitioners looking to improve their education practices, and anyone interested in cultural leadership practices.

Dr. Peng Liu is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, Canada. His research interests include indigenous leadership cross cultures, effective leadership, higher education leadership, educational change, educational policy, principal/teacher professional development, and international and comparative education. He serves as an associate editor for *International Journal of Comparative Education and Development*.

Dr. Lei Mee Thien is an Associate Professor in School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia. Her areas of expertise are educational management and leadership, and school effectiveness research. She is an Associate Editor of *Asia Pacific Journal of Educators and Education*. 
Routledge Research in Educational Leadership

Books in this series:

**School Leadership for Democratic Education in South Africa**
Perspectives, Achievements and Future Challenges Post-Apartheid
*Edited by Tsediso Michael Makoelle, Thabo Makhalemele and Pierre du Plessis*

**Professionalisation of School Leadership**
Theoretical and Analytical Perspectives
*Jakob Ditlev Bøjæ, Lars Frode Frederiksen, Bjørn Ribers and Finn Wiedemann*

**Existential Crises in Educational Administration and Leadership**
Existential Anxiety and Loss of Meaning in the Gaze of Munch’s ‘The Scream’
*Edited by Eugenie A. Samier*

**Populism and Educational Leadership, Administration and Policy**
International Perspectives
*Edited by Peter Milley and Eugenie A. Samier*

**Empirical Understanding of School Leaders’ Ethical Judgements**
Applications of the Ethical Perspectives Instrument
*Ori Eyal and Izhak Berkovich*

**Culturally Sensitive Research Methods for Educational Administration and Leadership**
*Edited by Eugenie A. Samier and Eman S. ElKaleh*

**The Role of Leaders in Educational Decision-Making**
Examining Implementation Factors and Providing a Newfound Model
*Nancy Matthews*

**Educational Leadership and Asian Culture**
Culturally Sensitive Leadership Practice
*Edited by Peng Liu and Lei Mee Thien*
Educational Leadership and Asian Culture
Culturally Sensitive Leadership Practice

Edited by Peng Liu and Lei Mee Thien
## Contents

*Foreword*  
*Preface*  
*About the Editors*  
*About the Contributors*

1. Benevolent Leadership in Chinese Turnaround Schools: A Confucius Perspective  
   Peng Liu, Huan Song, and Weiran Wu  
   1

2. Understanding the Perceptions of Malaysian Chinese School Heads on Their Instructional Leadership Roles: A Cultural Lens  
   Lei Mee Thien, Siau Hui Kho, and Chee Seng Tan  
   23

3. Understanding the Roles of Taoist Leadership in Transforming Chinese Higher Education Institutions  
   XiaoFei Chen, Song Liu, and Xiang Wang  
   43

   Waheed Hammad, Yara Yasser Hilal, and Khalasa Al-Harthi  
   62

5. Understanding School Leadership Practices in the Maldives: The Perspectives of Societal Culture  
   Ahmed Mohamed and Aminath Shafiya Adam  
   81

6. Instructional Leadership Practices in Primary Schools: A Malaysian Indian Culture Perspective  
   Donnie Adams and Ravadh Periasamy  
   100
Contents

7 The Introduction of New Public Management into School Leadership in Japan: Implications for Japanese Paternalistic Culture 117
MASAAKI KATSUNO

8 Connecting Culture and Social-Emotional Competencies: School Leaders in Azerbaijan 132
ELMINA KAZIMZADE, CATHRYN MAGNO, AND AZIN MIRZAEI

9 School Leadership and Indonesian Culture: Revealing the Local Knowledge Development in Post-New Order Indonesia 149
BAMBANG SUMINTONO, HASAN HARIRI, AND ERIKA SETYANTI KUSUMAPUTRI

10 Understanding Singaporean Educational Leadership: A Sociocultural Perspective 170
CHENG YONG TAN

11 “Are We Really that Different?”: A Rasch Investigation of Cultural Work Values of School Leaders, Middle Managers, and Teachers in Singapore 191
JONATHAN WEE PIN GOH, SIMON QING WEI LIM, AND SALLEH HAIRON

12 Conclusion 230
PENG LIU AND LEI MEE THIEN

Index 236
This book provides a welcome focus on educational leadership in Asia at a
time when interest in this field is growing rapidly in many Asian countries.
It provides a valuable example of the need to diversify theory and practice
away from its Anglo/American roots. The dominant theories in the field,
notably transformational, instructional, and distributed leadership, were de-
developed, researched, and polished by Western scholars, predominantly within
global North contexts. Subsequently, they have been applied in Asia, often
by scholars exposed to Western ideas as doctoral students or in partnership
with international academics. This application of theories, away from their
geographical starting points, can be seen as an example of ‘policy borrowing’,
with researchers and policy makers seeking solutions to problems, based on
the assumption that they appear to have worked elsewhere. Malaysia provides
a striking example of this reliance on imported theory, with the Ministry of
Education Malaysia (2013) strongly advocating instructional and distributed
leadership. However, here and elsewhere, when these theories are applied in
policy statements, and in schools, they are quite different from what is as-
sumed by their Western founders. A good example is distributed leadership,
presented as an emergent construct in the West, but reinvented as allocative in
centralised Asian contexts, where it appears to be little different from delega-
tion (Bush & Ng, 2019).

The editors of this book explore this phenomenon through a cultural
lens, recognising that global North theories may not be able to explain edu-
cational phenomena in Asia, which are often influenced by Confucian herit-
age. It features 11 chapters focusing on theory and practice in eight Asian
countries. These provide valuable contributions to our understanding of
how leadership plays out in these contexts and offers insights that high-
light cross-cultural differences, as well as commonalities, demonstrating that
there is no single unified approach to leadership in this diverse continent. I
hope and expect that this volume will contribute to widening and deepening
understanding of the great importance of context in developing and apply-
ing theory.
x  Foreword

Note

1 Professor of Educational Leadership at the University of Nottingham and President of the British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society (BELMAS).

References


Since 1800, the study of leadership has been dominated by a European-centred perspective. Over the years, leadership theories have had different focuses such as traits school of leadership, a behavioural school of leadership, a contingency school of leadership, a relational school of research, an information-processing school of leadership, and new leadership schools – Neocharismatic/Transformational/Visionary (Antonakis et al., 2004). However, it remains arguable that the leadership theories established in a European context might not be able to fully explain the education phenomena in other countries. Specifically, in terms of educational leadership development, in a Confucian cultural context, for example, self-nurturing is highly regarded as a universal way to be a great leader, but this phenomenon is not easily identified in the Western leadership literature.

In fact, there has been a pressing call for further exploration of education administration leadership from a cultural perspective over decades (Bush & Qiang, 2000; Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Fisher, 2021; Hallinger, 1995; Hallinger & Leithwood, 1996). Notwithstanding this, comprehensive empirical studies into how local culture impacts educational leadership in culturally diverse societies are limited in the literature (Fisher, 2021). Specifically, there has been a lack of scholarly investigation into educational leadership from an Asian cultural perspective, even though Asian countries have diverse cultures and various understandings of leadership. For instance, Chinese leadership is inseparable from a mixture of Confucian Heritage Culture, Daoism, Sun Zi’s thought, and Buddhism (Liu, 2016). For a multicultural and multiracial country such as Malaysia, a Malaysian culture composed of diverse ethnic characteristics has uniquely shaped Malaysian leadership. Malaysian leaders are characterised as people who strongly believe cordial and harmonious relationships with others are important and have a strong sense of social sensitivity (Thien et al., 2022). The richness of Asian indigenous culture has inspired this book to explore how educational leadership is expressed in an Asian cultural context and contributes to the theoretical development of educational leadership across a diversity of Indigenous Asian cultures.

This book has both theoretical and practical significance that can enrich the educational management and leadership literature. First, the empirical findings
offer the perspectives of effective leadership from local societal cultural perspectives, which provide new insights that may inform change in educational practice. In essence, it paves the way for further studies on the relationship between educational leadership and culture. Furthermore, this book complements the dominant cultural analytical framework, that of Geert Hofstede. It shows that Indigenous Asian cultural values provide new perspectives and a better understanding of the leadership practices in Asian countries’ cultural contexts, while respecting the great contribution of European civilisation. It is hoped this book will serve as a valuable resource that could benefit academics, researchers, policymakers, school leaders, and postgraduate students.

This book consists of 12 chapters contributed by 27 authors from eight Asian countries. In Chapter 1, Peng Liu, Huan Song, and Weiran Wu explore how benevolent leadership can work effectively in Chinese turnaround schools in Mainland China. The authors elaborate on the point that Chinese principals have their own conceptualisation of benevolent leadership with significant and culturally specific elements. The study provides theoretical and practical implications for enhancing principal leadership practices in a Confucian heritage society.

In Chapter 2, Lei Mee Thien, Siaw Hui Kho, and Chee Seng Tan explore the perceptions of Malaysian Chinese primary school heads on their instructional leadership roles from a multicultural lens composed of Chinese, Malaysian, and British culture. The authors highlight the way in which Malaysian-based national values of developing racial harmony and inclusiveness have played an essential role for the Chinese school heads in managing instructional programmes.

In Chapter 3, Xiaofei Chen, Song Liu, and Xiang Wang explore the conceptualisation of Taoist leadership and identify its main element: The nature of Tao as a basic value, Wu Wei as a principle, the virtue of leaders, and the balance in Taoist leadership. The qualitative interviews results indicated that Taoist leadership could protect the academic interests of scholars, create harmonious working conditions, and enhance the academic leader’s ability to formulate effective strategies for the development of a university.

The fourth chapter, by Waheed Hammad, Yara Yasser Hilal, and Khalsa Al-Harthi, explores the conceptions of Omani school principals regarding effective school leadership. The authors underscore the point that the conceptualisations of principal leadership can be understood within the conceptual tools of Islam and tribalism and the centralised educational system in Oman. The findings expand our understanding of how cultural context influences effective school leadership in an Islamic society.

Embedded in the Islamic culture and post-colonial influences, in Chapter 5, Ahmed Mohamed and Aminath Shafiya Adam explore the influence of societal culture on the leadership practices of school leaders in the Maldives. This phenomenological study revealed that the school leadership practices were influenced by the Maldivian society with a high power-distance, low future orientation, high uncertainty avoidance, high performance orientation, and high gender egalitarianism.
In Chapter 6, Donnie Adams and Ravadhi Periasamy report the essential characteristics of headteachers’ instructional leadership practices and illuminate how headteachers’ instructional leadership practices are influenced by the Indian culture of Tamil vernacular primary schools in Malaysia. The authors have highlighted the practical implications of the study for refining principal preparation programmes and informing future school improvement designs and plans in Malaysia’s multicultural society.

In Chapter 7, Masaaki Katsuno discusses the infusion of new public management on school management and leadership in Japan, helping us to understand the resistance from Japanese culture during the implementation of new public management in the Japanese education sector. This study ascertained that paternalistic elements in Japanese culture (tate shakai) enabled headteachers to manage and lead teachers through personal and emotional ties without resorting to mandates.

In Chapter 8, Elmina Kazimzade, Cathryn Magno, and Azin Mirzaei explore the social-emotional leadership practices of school leaders in an Azerbaijani collectivist cultural context with a special focus on family relationships, age, and gender. This chapter explains that the empathic leadership of Azerbaijani school leaders is rooted in family-oriented social models and concludes that social-emotional leadership in Azerbaijan is solidly anchored in these cultural characteristics.

In Chapter 9, Bambang Sumintono, Hasan Hariri, and Erika Setyanti Kusumaputri present a systematic review of Indonesian knowledge development in Educational Leadership, Administration and Management (ELAM) which reflects limited studies associated with Indonesian culture and school leadership. The review calls for more future empirical studies to connect educational leadership theoretical-based studies cooperated with local culture in Indonesian schools. Similarly, in Chapter 10, Cheng Yong Tan provides a comprehensive review of Singaporean educational leadership research. The review demonstrates that different values affecting school leadership are not essentially consistent, thus paving the way for researchers to inspect the foundations leading to of tension within school leadership.

In Chapter 11, Jonathan Wee Pin Goh, Simon Qing Wei Lim, and Salleh Hairon investigate cultural work values of school leaders, middle managers, and teachers in Singapore using a Rasch analysis. The authors used the cultural work values framework from Hofstede’s seminal work as a basis to explicate the nuances of leadership practices in Singapore schools. They have further suggested more nuanced approaches to research are needed to study how cultural work values may continue to affect leadership practices. Finally, the editors – Peng Liu and Lei Mee Thien – provide a chapter of Conclusion containing a recapitulation of the 11 chapters and suggestions for future studies.

Overall, the book chapters have provided a wide range of topics in educational leadership from an Asian cultural perspective, covering eight Asian countries. These chapters would benefit not only education practitioners and
researchers but also postgraduate students as well as the local and international academic stakeholders. Besides, it is hoped that this book will inspire scholars and researchers to conduct further exploration of educational leadership from a cultural perspective in future.

References


About the Editors

**Peng Liu** is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba, Canada. He earned his doctorate degree from OISE/University of Toronto, Canada. His research interests include Indigenous leadership cross cultures, effective leadership, cross-culture leadership, turnaround leadership, turnaround school improvement, turnaround school policy, principal/teacher professional development, and large-scale education reform. He is currently a Director of the International Institute for Educational Leadership and Development in Jilin International Studies University. He has published articles in refereed journals including *Educational Management, Administration & Leadership*, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, and *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*. His most recent book entitled *Transforming Turnaround Schools in China: Approaches, Challenges and Achievements* is published by Springer in 2021.

**Lei Mee Thien** is an Associate Professor in the School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia. Her areas of expertise are educational management and leadership, and partial least squares structural equation modelling. She is the Adjunct Professor in Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia and Professorial Chairholder in the Polytechnic University of Philippines. She is currently a Deputy Director of the International Institute for Educational Leadership and Development in Jilin International Studies University. She has published articles in refereed journals including *Educational Management, Administration & Leadership* and *Studies in Educational Evaluation*. She involves in research projects with Erasmus + Program of the European Union, ASEAN University Network, Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (NEQMAP), and Higher Education Leadership Academic (AKEPT) Malaysia.
About the Contributors

**Aminath Shafiya Adam** completed her doctorate degree at The University of Waikato, New Zealand in 2015. With her teacher education experience of 15 years, currently she works as an Assistant Professor at the Maldives National University. Her role involves teaching, supervising postgraduate students and managing research projects. She is also actively involved in writing for publications both in international and local peer-reviewed journals. Her current research projects include student online learning engagement, principalship and professional learning, and leadership and culture.

**Donnie Adams** is currently the Chair of Centre for Research in International and Comparative Education (CRICE) and a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Education, Universiti Malaya. He was recently awarded the Emerald Young Researcher Award 2021 by Emerald Publishing. He is Editor-in-Chief for the *International Online Journal of Educational Leadership* (IOJEL) and Editor for *Cogent Education*. He is actively involved in research towards the area of inclusive school leadership and school-wide reformation of inclusive education agenda in Malaysia. He has led research projects with The British Council, ETH Zürich, The HEAD Foundation, UNICEF, Asian Universities Alliance, and Teach for Malaysia.

**Khalsa Al-Harthi** works in the Ministry of Education, Muscat, Oman. She holds a PhD in educational leadership from Sultan Qaboos University. Her main research interests are educational leadership and teacher professional learning.

**Xiaofei Chen** works in the Institute of Comparative Education, South China Normal University. She was awarded with a PhD degree in Education by Beijing Normal University, where her research focuses on comparative education, higher education, and the history of education. Currently she is studying the educational exchanges between China and the West Countries and how China deal with the internationalisation and nationality of education under the background of global integration.

**Jonathan Wee Pin Goh** is an Associate Professor with the Policy and Leadership Studies Academic Group at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University. Jonathan obtained a PhD (with Distinction) from...
the University of Western Australia in 2001. He teaches research methodology, educational measurement, and school leadership in various professional and graduate programmes. Jonathan has also led a large-scale government-funded research on baseline study of educational leadership in Singapore, and a programmatic research (involving four separate but interrelated studies) on impact of educational leadership on teacher and organisational outcomes, and student learning and development.

Salleh Hairon is Associate Professor at the Policy, Curriculum and Leadership Studies Academic Group at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He received his PhD from the University of Bath and MA in School Effectiveness and School Improvement from the University of London, Institute of Education. He teaches in undergraduate, postgraduate, and in-service courses relating to teacher and leadership education and preparation. His research focus is on school leadership for teacher learning in communities, which includes distributed leadership, teacher leadership, professional learning communities, action research, and professional development.

Waheed Hammad is Associate Professor of Educational Administration and Leadership in the College of Education at Sultan Qaboos University (Oman) and Damietta University (Egypt). He received his PhD. from the University of East Anglia, UK. He is a member of the British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society (BELMAS), and the Gulf Comparative Education Society (GCES). His research interests include educational administration and leadership, instructional supervision, leadership preparation, and teachers and principals’ professional development. His international publication outlets include Educational Administration Quarterly, Educational Management, Administration & Leadership; School Leadership & Management; International Journal of Leadership in Education; and Compare.

Hasan Hariri is a PhD graduate in Management, School of Business, James Cook University, Australia, and is currently working as a lecturer at Teacher Training and Education Faculty, Universitas Lampung, Bandar Lampung, Indonesia. His current research interests include educational leadership and educational management.

Yara Yasser Hilal is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Educational Foundations and Administration (DEFA) at the College of Education at Sultan Qaboos University in Muscat. She holds a PhD in Education from the University of Leicester, UK, and a Master’s degree in Educational Leadership from McGill University, Canada. She is currently a member of the British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society (BELMAS). Her areas of research are school-based improvement, the role of school leadership in sustainable change, teachers’ and principals’ continuous professional learning, and critical and cultural approaches to leadership.
Masaaki Katsuno is a Professor in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Tokyo, Japan. His research interests include the enactment of education policies at the school site; policies related to school management and leadership. He is an author of *Teacher Evaluation Policies and Practices in Japan: How Performativity Works in Schools* published by Routledge in 2016. He is a co-editor (with Yuto Kitramura and Toshiyuki Omomo) of *Education in Japan: A Comprehensive Analysis of Education Reform and Practices* published by Springer in 2019.

Elmina Kazimzade is a Professor in the Department of Social Sciences and Psychology at Baku State University. Professor Kazimzade teaches several courses such as Gender Psychology, Leadership for Social-Emotional Learning, and Educational Psychology within joint-degree international graduate programmes. Her research is placed in the field of Educational Psychology, with a special focus on school leadership development, social-emotional learning, and gender-responsive education. Her recent publications include *Factors influencing instructional leadership capacity in Baku, Azerbaijan* (2020) and *Learning through leadership: Capturing practice architectures* (2022).

Siaw Hui Kho is a SISC+, an instructional coach position based in Kuching District Education Office, Sarawak, Malaysia. In 2019, she obtained her PhD in Professional and Teacher Education from Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang. Her current research interests include Instructional Coaching and Leadership and Teacher Professional Development.

Erika Setyanti Kusumaputri is a senior lecturer at Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universitas Islam Negri (UIN) Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta. Her research focus is on industrial and organisational psychology, educational leadership, and organisational change. Erika is also active as an assessor of workplace assessment at BNSP and reviewer for Indonesian endowment fund for education (LPDP).

Simon Qing Wei Lim is a PhD candidate with the Policy, Curriculum and Leadership Academic Group and is a research staff at National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He holds a Master’s degree of Education specialising in Leadership, Policy, and Change. His research interests are in the areas of school leadership practices, values-related study including cultural work values and human values, and instrument development using Rasch analysis psychometric techniques. Simon was involved in large-scale programmatic research on school leadership and is currently working on a longitudinal study that investigates students’ well-being and their educational transitions.

Song Liu is a PhD student from the Institute of International and Comparative Education at Beijing Normal University. His research interests include international and comparative education, higher education leadership, education and culture in China, and higher education internationalisation.
Cathryn Magno is a Professor in the Department of Education Sciences at the University of Fribourg where she teaches seminars related to international and comparative education and education theory. Her research, projects, and publications focus on educational leadership, gender and health, migration, and human rights. Her recent educational leadership-related works include Learning through leadership: Capturing practice architectures (2022), Education practice in Switzerland: Searching for diversity-engaged school leadership (2022), and the open-source Comparative Educational Leadership Lab (www.compedleadershiplab.com).

Azin Mirzaei is a psychology student at Baku State University. He holds a diploma in experimental science including a certificate of pre-University BA programme in Iran.

Ahmed Mohamed is an Assistant Professor at Faculty of Education, The Maldives National University (MNU). He previously worked as a principal of public schools in the Maldives. His research interests are educational leadership and management, educational policy, teacher professional learning and development, principal professional learning community, inclusive education, organisational culture, bibliometric and validation studies. He has been actively engaged in research, publications, and consultancy in various projects. He was the founding president of Principals’ Association of Maldives (PAM).

Ravadhi Periasamy is a senior teacher (with more than 30 years of teaching experience) in one of the government secondary schools. She obtained her PhD in Educational Leadership from University Malaya in 2021. Her expertise is in women leadership. She completed the National Professional Qualification for Educational Leaders in 2012 and had been an Assistant Principal for Co-curriculum. She has co-authored a few journals and book chapters with her supervisor, Dr. Donnie Adams.

Huan Song is a Professor and Director of Institute of Teacher Education of Beijing Normal University. His research interests include teacher education, teacher professional development, curriculum reform, educational anthropology, and action research. He earned his doctorate degree from Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). He has published articles in peer-reviewed journals including Teachers and Teaching and Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education. He is the editor of journals including Frontiers of Education in China and Quality Assurance in Education. His most recent book entitled Envisioning Teaching and Learning of Teachers for Excellence and Equity in Education is published by Springer in 2021.

Bambang Sumintono is a lecturer at Faculty of Education, Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia, Depok, West Java, Indonesia. His research interest is in educational leadership and policy, and educational assessment. He is active in dissemination of Rasch model measurement in research in
Indonesia. Bambang is also an editorial board member for two journals: *School Leadership and Management* and *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*.

**Chee Seng Tan** is a Senior Lecturer at History Section, School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). He obtained his doctorate in Chinese Studies (Chinese History) from the National University of Singapore in 2017 and both his MA (Southeast Asian History) and BA (Hons) from USM. He specialises in modern Chinese history and Overseas Chinese history. His articles have been published in scholarly journals and books (in Chinese, English, and Malay). He was a Visiting Student at the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica (2010 and 2011).

**Cheng Yong Tan** is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong. His research programme critically investigates how different sources of influence give rise to educational inequality and other complex issues that require comprehensive educational solutions in the form of educational policy, leadership, and practice. It adopts an ecological perspective encompassing three strands involving sociocultural, home, and school factors to unravel this complexity. He leverages a comprehensive suite of methodological approaches in his research, including multilevel modelling and latent class/profile analysis, and three-level meta-analysis and meta-ethnography for integrative reviews of quantitative and qualitative studies, respectively.

**Xiang Wang** is a supervisor in Guangdong AIB Polytechnic College which focuses on educational governance, traditional Chinese culture, and Confucianism.

**Weiran Wu** is a doctoral student in teacher education programme of Beijing Normal University. Her research interest includes teacher preparation, in-service teacher education, and U-G-S (University/Government/School) collaboration in teacher education.
1 Benevolent Leadership in Chinese Turnaround Schools

A Confucius Perspective

Peng Liu, Huan Song, and Weiran Wu

Introduction

In the Western literature, benevolent leadership has been defined as the process of creating a virtuous cycle of encouraging and initiating positive changes in organisations for the ‘common good’ (Bryson & Crosby, 1992). However, due to China’s unique cultural context, Chinese people have a different definition of benevolence. This conceptualisation has not been sufficiently explored in the Chinese educational context, particularly in the Chinese turnaround school context. Weymes (2004) once suggested that the Western vision of ideal organisations and leadership focuses more on individual rights and freedom, whereas Asian organisations are more family-like; there ‘a good leader is like a good father’ who is responsible for the employees’ development and then expects their obedience and loyalty. Consistent with Weymes’ statement, the concept of ‘benevolent leadership’ has been defined differently in Western and Eastern contexts.

Turnaround schools are a worldwide phenomenon in the education field (Liu, 2017). In the Chinese educational context, turnaround schools are also called weak schools. These terms mainly refer to schools with comparatively poor facilities, insubstantial management, insufficient assets, and low teaching quality (Guo, 2012, as cited in Liu, 2017). The literature has provided an understanding of the transformation of turnaround schools, but there has been a lack of sufficient exploration of how turnaround leaders transform their schools using benevolent leadership in the Chinese context. Due to the fragile conditions in Chinese low-performing schools, a leader who can demonstrate benevolence, constant support, selfless contribution, effective ability to building connection, and long-term vision is in demand in these schools. Therefore, it is urgent to explore how Chinese principals in low-performing schools can use benevolent leadership for effective transformation.

Also, in the Chinese cultural context, there has been a lack of sufficient research on the components of benevolent leadership, how benevolent leadership is developed, and how benevolent leaders transform turnaround schools.

DOI: 10.4324/9781003268055-1
These gaps led to four research questions that guided this study:

RQ1: How is benevolence defined in the Chinese turnaround school context?
RQ2: What are the main elements of benevolent leadership from Chinese turnaround school principals’ perspectives?
RQ3: How is benevolent leadership developed from Chinese turnaround school principals’ perspectives?
RQ4: How is benevolent leadership practised by Chinese turnaround school principals in the process of transforming turnaround schools?

**Literature Review**

This section provides a literature review on the topics of turnaround schools, benevolent leadership, and benevolent leadership in turnaround schools.

**Turnaround Schools**

Turnaround, a term used interchangeably with terms such as ‘takeover,’ ‘restructuring,’ ‘reconstitution,’ and ‘redesign’ can refer to the improvement and transformation of low-performing institutions. The discourse of ‘turnaround’ and some strategies for enacting it have been borrowed from the business field, especially the model of quickly turning around corporations that are in danger of bankruptcy (Walsh et al., 2004). In the educational arena, a school identified as being in need of ‘turnaround’ is one in which significant improvement in school achievement is required (Leithwood & Strauss, 2008). Calkins and his associates (2007) emphasised that school turnaround should involve dramatic, transformative changes of underperforming schools in a short period (within two years), followed by a longer period of sustained improvement.

There is rich research literature about turnaround schools from Western perspectives. In 1993, England developed a national inspection system to identify schools in need of ‘special measures’ to improve their performance. The system hence has led to many turnaround interventions that often have combined accountability and capacity-building strategies, trying to improve the performance of failing schools at a relatively rapid speed (Fullan, 2005; Stark, 1998). In the United States, turnaround schools are categorised as schools that consistently fall short of meeting the Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) benchmarks in standardised test performance and strive for institutional makeover. To help with the educational reform of these schools, a policy-oriented turnaround model has been developed, featuring replacement of staff, modification of governance structure, implementation of new professional training, and cultivation of school leadership (Duke, 2012; Huberman et al., 2011; Murphy, 2008). With the development of the turnaround literature in different cultural contexts, scholars have recognised that
the definitions of turnaround schools should be localised and modified. For instance, Harris et al. (2018) found Western ideas of ‘turnaround schools’ could not be readily applied within Malaysian school settings because the concept was not widely recognised and was perceived as a negative term by Malaysian educators. Likewise, in Indonesia, too many schools could be categorised as ‘low-performing,’ so the concept of turnaround school is relatively meaningless.

Compared with the Western definition of turnaround schools, which primarily focuses on student academic achievement, turnaround schools in the Chinese context can be defined in a broader sense. In China, schools with relatively poor facilities, fragile leadership, insufficient resources, and low teaching quality can be regarded as turnaround or ‘weak’ schools (Guo, 2012, as cited in Liu, 2017). In November 1998, the Chinese Ministry of Education issued Suggestions on Strengthening Weak Schools During Compulsory Education for Students in Medium to Large Cities and Ensuring Education Quality for Every School During Compulsory Education for Students. In the Suggestions, ‘weak schools’ were described not only as those with low academic performance but also those with poor conditions in terms of teaching faculty, school management, teaching quality, school reputation, and trust from students and parents (Ministry of Education of The People’s Republic of China, 1998, as cited in Liu, 2017). In practices of school turnaround, Chinese education authorities have mainly adopted methods including equalising school funding, improving teaching resources, obtaining community support, enhancing student growth and enrolment, building up the capacity of turnaround schools by merging them with key schools, and implementing standardisation while fostering the uniqueness of turnaround schools (Liu, 2017).

**Benevolent Leadership**

In the Western literature, benevolent leadership refers to the process of creating a virtuous cycle of encouraging and initiating positive changes in organisations for the ‘common good’ (Bryson & Crosby, 1992). Karakas and his colleagues (2013) proposed the benevolent leadership model based on four paradigms: (a) a morality paradigm that focuses on leaders’ ethics and values, (b) a spirituality paradigm that focuses on leaders’ inner landscapes and spiritual actions, (c) a positivity paradigm that focuses on leaders’ actions of bringing positive changes, and (d) a community paradigm that focuses on leaders’ contributions to society and community service. In short, benevolent leadership in organisations involves making ethical decisions, creating a sense of meaning, inspiring hope and courage for positive actions, and taking social responsibility by influencing the larger community (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2012). In the political realm, Desrosiers and Thomson (2011) suggested that benevolent leadership has two themes; ‘benevolence’ implies goodwill, good intentions, and positive actions, while ‘leadership’ indicates the ability to lead, as well as the capacity to take control and guide others. Therefore, benevolent
leadership entails a sense that a regime is willing and able to ‘lead the country and its population on the path towards the greater good.’

Confucian Thought

In the Confucian thought, the primary aim of education is the proper training of noblemen (junzi), who are ethical and capable people who can undertake historical missions to benefit society and the nation. The cultivation of junzi involves constant self-improvement, self-knowledge, and self-realisation through social interactions (Tu, 1998). Confucius suggested that benevolence (ren) was the most important virtue of junzi; it is a fundamental virtue that involves the relationships between individuals and society (Xie & Chen, 2013). Confucius illustrated benevolence as loving all: love your family, love others, and love your country. Benevolence also includes many moral qualities, such as loyalty, integrity, forgiveness, frugality, faith, and so on (Xie & Chen, 2013).

Besides benevolence, other foundational doctrines of Confucian thought include righteousness (yi), ritual propriety (li), wisdom (zhi), and trustworthiness (xin) (Li, 2003). The idea of righteousness or uprightness (yi) indicates living and behaving according to moral principles instead of focusing on material gain and self-interest (Van Norden, 2004). Ritual propriety (li) is related to the appropriate behaviours for smoothing human interactions and bringing harmony (he) to social relationships. For Confucius, ritual propriety requires not only simply performing certain duties and obligations but also embodying attitudes through one’s conduct. For example, to fulfill filial duty, simply meeting one’s parents’ daily needs is insufficient – reverence (jing) must also be shown (Ma, 2009). Wisdom (zhi) includes not only learning but also the ability to perceive situations accurately and make appropriate judgements and correct decisions (Romar, 2002). Trustworthiness (xin) refers to loyalty and obedience to moral principles, ritual codes, and social rules. This virtue encourages people to self-regulate and respect the commitments made in social relationships (Woods & Lamond, 2011).

Li (2003) commented that the primary concern of Confucius ‘was not academic, not mind oriented, but moral in nature … the Confucian model is about moral striving’ (pp. 146–147). This comment again indicates the inherently moral orientation of Confucian thought, as well as the importance of self-cultivation in moral development.

The Roles of Benevolent Leadership in Transforming Low-Performing Schools

In the English literature, there seems to have been no direct discussion concerning benevolent leadership as a type of leadership that impacts school turnaround, but some leadership practices discussed as effective in improving school performance can be associated with benevolent leadership. For instance,
Leithwood and Strauss (2008) found that, among the specific leadership acts rated as most valuable by respondents in turnaround schools, three stood out: providing resources, building a learning community or collaborative culture in the school, and ensuring adequate professional development in the form of ‘intellectual stimulation.’ These behaviours are consistent with the Western perspective of benevolent leadership, especially in terms of the spirituality and positivity paradigms that require leaders to create a positive organisational culture and to take action for changes (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2012; Karakas et al., 2013).

There is also scattered empirical evidence supporting the idea that principals’ benevolence in leadership may positively influence school management and teacher performance in K-12 educational settings. For example, by collecting and analysing data from 64 high-performing elementary, middle, and high schools in the United States, Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) found that the impression of the principal’s’ benevolence, honesty, openness, competence, and consistency contributed to the faculty’s trust in principals and that trust was then associated with teacher professionalism, school climate, and student achievement. Likewise, a study conducted in 19 public and private schools in Maryland demonstrated that the principals’ authentic leadership, which featured benevolence and integrity towards their followers by principals’ encouraging open communication, engaging their followers, sharing critical information, and sharing feelings at work, could positively predict teacher trust (Fox et al., 2015).

To fill the gaps in the literatures this paper aims to explore the definition of benevolence from the perspectives of school principals in Chinese turnaround schools; the main elements in benevolent leadership from Chinese principals’ perspective; the development of benevolent leadership; and the roles of benevolent leadership in the process of transforming Chinese turnaround schools.

**Method**

**Sampling Process**

We employed semi-structured interviews as the research tool. In terms of the sampling process, purposive sampling was used in this study to identify and select information-rich cases for the best use of constrained resources (Patton, 2002). Specifically, we looked for individuals who were very knowledgeable about the phenomena we were interested in (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Therefore, we considered principals who had worked or were working in K-12 turnaround schools at least five years of holding the position and had experienced successful transformation of low-performing schools. We contacted them by email or phone to introduce our study and invite them to participate in an interview. All seven principals accepted our invitation. Their demographic information is showed in Table 1.1.
Data Collection

The interviews were scheduled with principals by email, and they signed consent forms in advance of the interviews. Participants P2 and P4 were interviewed remotely, and the other participants were interviewed in person in their schools. Each interview lasted 40–60 minutes. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed into Chinese for later analysis.

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol was designed based on a conceptual framework derived from the literature review. Five questions were included: (1) What is benevolence from your perspective? (2) What is benevolent leadership from your perspective? (3) What do you think are the main elements in benevolent leadership? (4) How have you developed your benevolent leadership in your career? (5) How do you use benevolent leadership to facilitate change in a turnaround school context? Participants were requested to provide examples to illustrate their answers. Ethical clearance was sought at the local institute before conducting this research.

Data Analysis

Comparative analysis was conducted in this study based on the identified findings, as constant comparative analysis can uncover patterns (Fram, 2013). The meaning of words, phrases, and paragraphs was the foundation for coding during this process. Constant comparison among the codes was used to create themes related to the answers of each research question. Specifically, the initial analysis followed the initial framework derived from the literature review, and then new themes emerged in the process of data analysis that went beyond the original analytical framework. Researcher validation was conducted to ensure the validity of the research findings.

Table 1.1 Demographic Information of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Previous teaching subject</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Years of teaching</th>
<th>Years of holding principal position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Chinese language</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Chinese language</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>English language</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Chinese language</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Vice Principal</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>Chinese language</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>