

Research on Chinese Principals and Their Work

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This review paper extends from one of our earlier works (see Walker, Hu & Qian, 2012). In that paper we reviewed Chinese school principalship written in both English and Chinese between 1998 and 2008. We identified some core patterns associated with both empirical (imported framework, indigenous investigations and contextual influences) and non-empirical (prescriptions and commentaries) research of Chinese principalship. We also delineated some major features of the work of Chinese principals; these included key concepts such as politics, relationships, examination, and harmony.

On the basis of the earlier work, this paper examines more recent research of Chinese school principals and their work published since 2008. To keep the review at a manageable volume, we choose to review papers published in selective CSSCI (that is, Chinese Social Sciences Citation Index) journals. The review is conducted with three major purposes. The first purpose is to examine whether the core patterns discerned in our earlier paper endure. In other words, we attempt to find out which patterns continue to be characteristic of principalship research in China; which patterns discontinue (if any) and what new patterns emerge (if any). The second purpose is to understand how recent research depicts principals' work; whether there is any change in principals' work compared with our previous findings and how the continuity and change is shaped by the policy context since 2008. The third purpose is to synthesize what we know about school principalship and principalship research in China and discuss the relationships between the national knowledge base and international understandings about school principalship.

