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Leadership Preparation in Taiwan and the US: Professional versus Experience Models

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Abstract

School principals are now facing greater demands for better performance and effectiveness than ever before. Therefore, the training and preparation of school principals has become an issue of concern. Educators around the world need to find or develop effective leadership programs and learn from the best practices of other systems. This paper compares principal preparation in two countries of interest, the United States and Taiwan, with focus on the socio-cultural frameworks that shape their models of leadership training. The analysis shows marked difference in the demographics, training process, and selection patterns between American and Taiwanese principals, which result from two distinctly unique preparation models, that is, professional model of the US and experience model of Taiwan. The professional model, defined as university-based professional training programs and state-approved professional licensure for principals, is rooted in the Western context that focuses more on task and theory. On the other hand, the experience model, characterized by accumulating experiences at hierarchical administrative levels of the school, is embedded in the Confucian context that emphasizes more on people and practices.

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「專業模式」與「經驗模式」的校長 培育——美國與我國中學校長培育 模式的比較研究

符碧真、王秀槐

摘 要

隨著社會大眾對學校績效表現的要求日益提高，學校校長的責任日漸加重，各國教育學者力圖找出最適合培育校長的模式，以期培育出能發揮領導效能的校長。本研究旨在探討美國與我國中學校長培育模式有何不同，並進一步探究社會文化脈絡如何衍生出兩種不同的培育模式。研究結果顯示，兩國校長在性別、年齡、學歷等基本資料，以及訓練過程、選拔過程上均有明顯不同。此可能源自於美國中學校長培育較傾向採取「專業模式」，而我國校長培育較傾向採取「經驗模式」所致。「專業模式」係指接受大學提供之專業訓練課程並通過專業認證之培育模式，「經驗模式」係指在中小學校現場經長期經驗累積、職級逐步升遷之培育模式。美國採取「專業模式」可能與西方社會強調「事」與重「理論」的文化脈絡有關，而我國採取「經驗模式」則可能與華人社會強調「人」與重「實務」的文化脈絡有關。

關鍵詞：學校領導、校長培育、專業模式、經驗模式、臺灣、美國

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1. Introduction

The process of preparing principals for school leadership has become a global concern since the late 1990s (Bush, 1998). In many countries, heightened expectations of education from the general public have created increased scrutiny on school effectiveness, which in turn mandates school principals to be better equipped for new challenges. Principals are now facing greater demands for better school performance, accountability and efficiency than ever before (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001; Daresh, 1998; Portin, 2000; Roberson, Schweinle, & Styron, 2003). Therefore, the training and preparation of school principals has become a central issue in the field of educational leadership. Educators around the world need to seek out more effective leadership programs and learn from the best practices of other systems. This paper focuses on principal preparation in two countries of interest, the United States and Taiwan, with attention to the socio-cultural frameworks that shape their models of leadership training.

Under the influence of globalization, an emphasis on socio-cultural contexts has recently grown in the field of comparative education, where the focus of research has shifted from the traditional approach of comparing national systems of education to a more in-depth perspective of the underlying cultural and historical contexts of the systems (Broadfoot, 2000; Crossley, 1999, 2000). This emphasis has also penetrated the field of school administration since the mid-1990s (Cheng, 1995; Cheng & Wong, 1996; Hallinger & Leithwood, 1996; Walker & Dimmock, 1999a, 1999b). In recent years, a renewed focus on exploring school administration and leadership across national and cultural boundaries has been advocated (Cheng, 1995; Dimmock & Walker, 2000a, 200b; Hallinger & Leithwood, 1996; Lam, 2002). It is argued that this new perspective in comparative study can help educators from different countries expand their knowledge by learning from each other, and ultimately develop an

indigenous knowledge base for the school administrations of each society (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000).

In the field of school leadership where major theories and research have been mostly dominated by American academics, the principal preparation model of the US has been widely documented and advocated, thus becoming quite influential in the field (Dimmock & Walker, 2000a). And under the prevalent economic, political and academic influence of American society, it is assumed that non-Western countries may tend to adopt the US model into their own systems without deep reflections on their own social, cultural and historical contexts where local school leaders are prepared (Dimmock & Walker, 2000a, 2000b; Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000). Taiwan, an island-state situated to the southeast of mainland China, is a predominantly Chinese society with a Confucian cultural tradition. Embedded in this socio-cultural tradition, Taiwan has developed an indigenous model for preparing school leaders, and this model is expected to be very different from that of the US. As Taiwan and the US may vary in their conceptions of ideal and effective school leaders, there may also be differing demographic profiles, training processes, and selection mechanisms for school principals in each country. Such different patterns invite further investigation into the underlying assumptions and beliefs of the two systems. A comparative study of these two models will expand our understanding of diverse methods of preparing school leaders and contribute to the field of school administration. In this study, a comparative research methodology characteristic of the following four steps of comparison will be adopted through description, juxtaposition, comparison and interpretation. This paper will first compare and contrast the characteristics of the US and Taiwanese principals, then describe the preparation model of the two vastly different systems, further investigate the underlying socio-cultural context of the two systems, and finally, discuss implications for preparation for school leaders in each country.

2. Comparative study of principals in the US and Taiwan

This comparative study of principals in the US and Taiwan is based on a larger-scale international study on the preparation and role perception of secondary school principals in Australia, China, Korea, the US and Taiwan. The instrument of this international study “The Principal Survey Questionnaire” was originally developed and validated in the International Development Academy at California State University, Northridge (Su, Adam, & Mininberg, 2000). The following four factors of principal preparation were derived: Factor 1: principals’ background information; Factor 2: pre-service and in-service training experiences; Factor 3: principal’s views on their job and responsibilities; and Factor 4: principals’ perceptions of their goals and tasks. The questionnaire was translated from its English into the Chinese version. Some minor additions were made in the sections on recruitment process and training topics in order to fit the Taiwanese context.

This study only extracted and reported data on the demographics, training, and selection of principals from the dataset. Data was gathered from the Los Angeles metropolitan area in the US (a sample of 111 participants) (Su et al., 2000) and the Taipei metropolitan area in Taiwan (a sample of 127 participants).

2.1 Demographics of principals

Data from the survey of school principals present interesting differences in the demographics of principals in the US and Taiwan. Compared with their American counterparts, Taiwanese principals tend to be male-dominant, more senior and receive fewer years of academic training. While 58 percent of the American principals are female, only 36 percent of the Taiwanese principals are female (see Figure 1) (Su et al., 2000). Moreover, almost all (99%) of the Taiwanese principals are above the age of 41, in contrast to nearly a quarter (22%) of the American principals below the age of 40

(see Figure 2) (Su et al., 2000). Furthermore, while the majority of the American principals hold a master's degree (90%) or higher (doctorate, 9%), only half of the Taiwanese principals have attained a master's degree (47%), and half of them hold a bachelor's degree (48%) (see Figure 3) (Su et al., 2000).

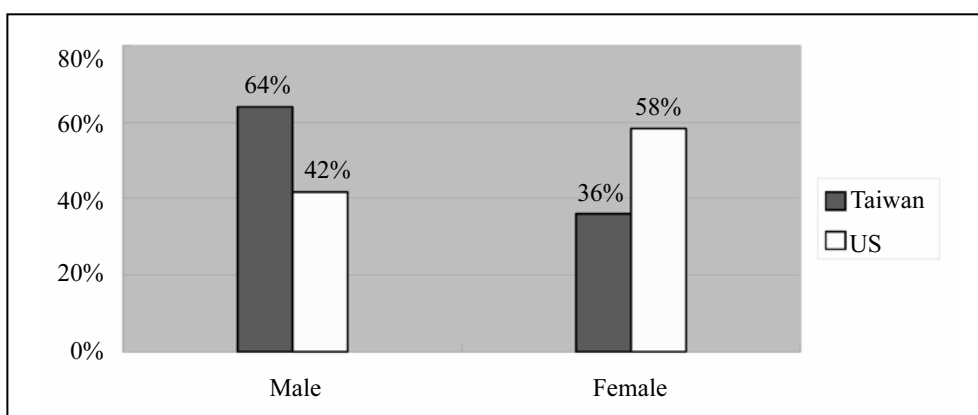


Figure 1 Gender Distribution

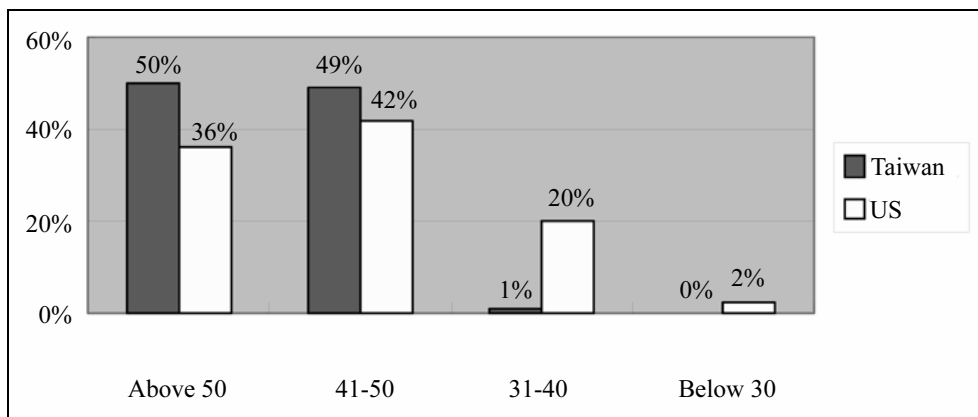


Figure 2 Age Distribution

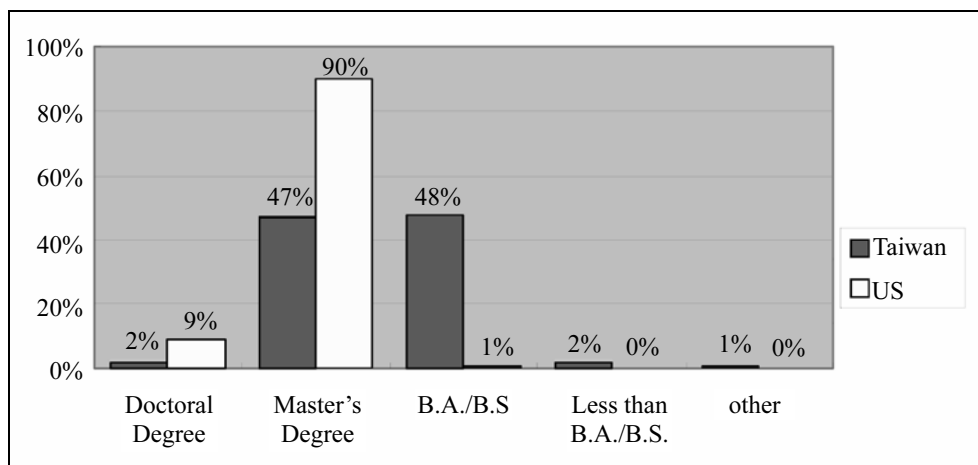


Figure 3 Distribution of Academic Degrees

The differences in age and educational background between American and Taiwanese principals may reflect the distinct training and selection mechanisms of the two countries.

2.2 Training of principals

There appears to be a sharp difference in the length of pre-service training between the US and Taiwan. Nearly all (96%) of the American principals receive more than one-year formal training (usually an M. A. or Ph. D.) before taking their positions in school (Su et al., 2000). On the contrary, the majority of the Taiwanese principals (95%) receive only a short-term (3-month) pre-service training prior to appointment (see Figure 4). Prospective principals in the US are required to attend university-based training programs, which convey a systematic body of knowledge and skills essential for principalship. After completing the program, they receive a professional degree at a master's or doctoral level in educational administration or school leadership, and obtain the qualification for becoming a principal (Cooper & Boyd, 1987; Miklos, 1992). On the contrary, Taiwanese principals do not need to attend a university-based training

program to earn a master's or doctoral degree in order to qualify for principalship. They only need to attend short-term, usually 3-month orientation courses at local educational training centers to learn the basic do's and don'ts of the job before being assigned to a principal post.

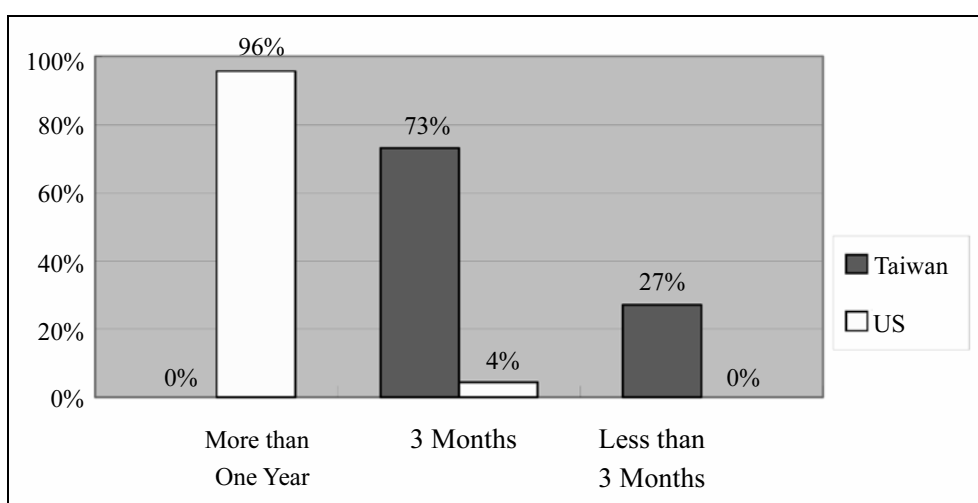


Figure 4 Pre-service Training

2.3 Selection of principals

Entrance into principalship involves different mechanisms for principals in the two countries. For American principals, the process of attaining the position involves mainly self-motivated decisions, from the point of entering into the university-based training program to receiving the professional degree, to actively seeking job vacancies available in schools or districts. In fact, most American principals (75%) enter the profession through this self-decision process (Su et al., 2000). In contrast, a typical Taiwanese principal attains the position through a long process of accumulating experiences at different levels in school administration, and with endorsement and selection by the district educational authorities. In fact, the majority of the Taiwanese

principals (74%) are selected through this top-down appointment scheme by educational authorities based on seniority and performance (see Figure 5).

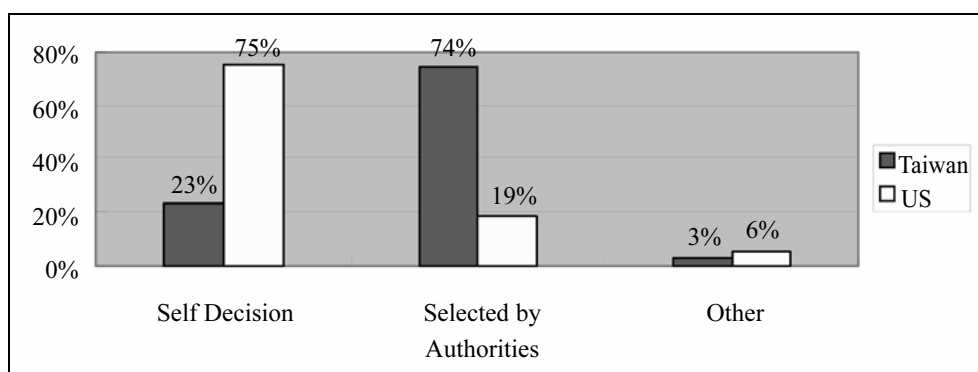


Figure 5 Selection of Principals

3. Preparation model for principals in US and Taiwan

We see a sharp difference in the demographics, training process, and selection patterns between American and Taiwanese principals. These differences result from two distinctly unique preparation models, that is, professional model of the US and experience model of Taiwan. It is important to investigate why these differences exist.

3.1 Professional model

The process of training a principal in the US can be called the professional model, which is characterized by university-based professional training programs and state-approved professional licensure for principals (Cooper & Boyd, 1987; Miklos, 1992; Murphy, 1998; Willower & Forsyth, 1999). An individual interested in pursuing the principal career needs to enter such a professional training program, which is usually provided by a graduate school of education and last for more than one year. This is why 99% of the American principals in our study received more than one-year

pre-service training and possessed at least a master's degree. Furthermore, self-initiated decisions play an important role in this career process (Su et al., 2000). As long as one is interested in becoming a principal, he/she may enter the program and obtain the qualification to apply for a position. Those who exhibit high leadership capacities or qualities are expected to be chosen by the school districts to become school principals, even if they are at a younger age. This is why our study shows that almost one-fourth of the American principals are below the age of 40.

This training model intends to equip the prospective principal with a systematic body of knowledge and skills essential for fulfilling the role (Cooper & Boyd, 1987). A prospective principal takes well-structured and scientifically warranted courses at the university before assuming the position, so that he/she may immediately apply this body of professional knowledge to the daily ins-and-outs of the real world of any prospective school site. A well-equipped competent principal is expected to focus more on the task of running an effective school than building interpersonal relationships based on long-term trust and familiarity. In this model, all the essential professional training is completed prior to employment. A good analogy of this model can be paralleled to the processing of raw materials through a standardized and scientifically warranted production line, and yielding a finished product for the immediate utilization of the market.

3.2 Experience model

The process of training a principal in Taiwan reveals a very different story. This model can be called the experience model, which is characteristic of accumulating experiences at hierarchical administrative levels of the school site. No university-based professional training is provided, nor is state professional licensing mandated. In this process, a teacher with several years of teaching experience and the esteem of his/her supervising officers is promoted to section chief of the academic or student affairs office, and will usually work there for several years. The individual may then be

promoted again to a higher position such as director of academic or student affairs. After several years at the director level, he/she may become eligible to take a qualification exam for principal candidates (The Act of School Personnel Appointment, 2003).¹ After passing the exam, the candidate then attends a short-term orientation workshop for principalship (Guidelines for the Screening and Preparation for Principal Candidates in Taipei in 2005, 2005).² Finally, he/she may be selected and appointed by local school authorities to be principal at a school (Compulsory Education Act, 2004; Senior Secondary Education Act, 2004).³ This prolonged process explains the relatively older age of the Taiwanese principals in our empirical data, where 99% of the principal are above the age of 41, compared with their much younger American counterparts.

The preparation of a prospective principal in Taiwan is implemented through this prolonged process of observing colleagues and supervising officers in action, acquiring first-hand experience as an administrative leader, and practicing different roles through interaction with students, teachers, parents and external constituencies. The focus is on learning to build a good network of colleagues, staff and supervisors, and maintaining harmonious relationships with people all around. Smooth relationships based on familiarity and trust is deemed as an important prerequisite for the accomplishment of school tasks.

¹ “The Act of School Personnel Appointment” (2003 version), Articles 6 and 7, indicates that directors of academic affairs/or students affairs are eligible to take a qualification exam for principal candidates.

² For example, according to the “Guidelines for the Screening and Preparation for Principal Candidates in Taipei in 2005” principal candidates are required to take a 2-month pre-service training before being appointed as a principal.

³ “Compulsory Education Act” (2004 version) Article 9 and “Senior Secondary Education Act” (2004 version) Article 12 indicate that principal candidates will be appointed as principals in effect only when vacancies are available in school.

In this way, through the daily ins-and-outs of a real school environment, a principal is made. The school itself is the actual training site for the principal-to-be. What they needed was only a short-term orientation debriefing the basic do's and don'ts of principalship, of which they already have relatively clear ideas through long-term observation and modeling. Completing systematic professional courses at university and obtaining a professional degree seems too far-fetched from the real world and is not deemed to be very essential. This is why our empirical data shows that, unlike most of their American counterparts who receive at least one-year professional training, 95% of the Taiwanese principals receive only 3-month pre-service training. Furthermore, unlike most American principals who possess a master's degree, only half of the Taiwanese principals hold a master's degree, and these degrees appear to be in the field of their own academic disciplines rather than in professional administrative leadership.

In this process, the pursuit of the principal career is less a purely self-initiated decision than a result of both personal motivation and the appreciation and encouragement of supervising officers, who decide if promotion is in order. This is why the empirical data shows that, opposite to the American scenario where three-quarters of the principals are self-decided, 75% of the Taiwanese principals are appointed by authorities.

In a word, unlike the “professional model” characterized by a systematic transmission of knowledge and skills by academic establishments in a concise and efficient manner, this “experience model” features an active construction of knowledge by oneself through embodied actions of first-hand experiences and practices through active participation. This kind of knowledge can only be formulated through a long gradual process. Thus, this model can be likened to a slow baking process in which grains are grinded and pressed through a long winding pass in a rolling mill, fermented with yeast, slowly baked in an oven and finally transformed into hand-made bread.

In summary, there are sharp differences between the professional and experience

models in terms of the training site, method, and focus. While the main training site for the professional model is at the university, the site for the experience model is the school itself. The method of training in the professional model is mainly via transmission of knowledge and skills from books and faculty at university, whereas the method for the experience model is primarily through learning by observing and modeling practitioners on-site. Finally, the two models point out different ways to accomplish the task of running an effective school: the professional one emphasizes the use of professional competency, while the experience model stresses building long-term harmonious relationships with people around school. Thus, while the professional model features efficiency in accomplishing the task, the experience model is characteristic of its connectedness with all parties in a particular context.

4. Underlying assumptions/beliefs for the two models

It is important to further delve into the underlying beliefs that may have impacted the formulation of the professional and experience models in these two different cultural contexts.

4.1 Emphasis on task vs. people

Our study shows that the professional model emphasizes more on task, and the experience model on people. Task-orientation may stem from the more individualistic culture of American society, while people-orientation is associated with the more collectivist and relational culture of Taiwan, a culturally Chinese society (Dimmock & Walker, 1998; Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede, Pedersen, & Hofstede, 2002). In Chinese culture, collectivism and interpersonal ‘dependency’ are highly valued, and an individual’s ability to establish, maintain, and improve interpersonal relationships can be viewed as desirable traits (Bedford & Hwang, 2003; Bond & Hwang, 1986; Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002). On the contrary, in Western culture, which

places high value on individualism and independence, individual freedom and personal goals are cherished and the accomplishment of self-referenced tasks is regarded as important (Bedford & Hwang, 2003; Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002).

Studies show that in an individualistic society such as the US, organizations generally focus on task achievement rather than the maintenance of relationships (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede, Pedersen, & Hofstede, 2002). Thus, as an organizational leader, an American principal may have a tendency to put task achievement before relationships. The more effective principal may concentrate on task-oriented functions such as planning and scheduling work, coordinating subordinate activities, and providing necessary resources and technical assistance.

On the contrary, in the more collectivist societies of East Asia, including Taiwan, good relationships as well as organizational and interpersonal harmony are preeminent considerations for an organizational leader. In other words, relationships are valued over tasks (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede, Pedersen, & Hofstede, 2002). Thus, as an organizational leader, a Taiwanese principal may have a tendency to put relationships before task achievement. A more effective principal may focus on developing and ensuring harmony among staff, behaving in socially appropriate ways so as to sustain harmony, and preventing and diffusing open conflict that may erupt and disturb the effective operations of the school organization. Teachers and staff may also prefer a leadership style in which the principal maintains a harmonious, considerate relationship with them (Bond & Hwang, 1986).

Furthermore, the methods of interacting with people are also different in the individualist and collectivist-oriented societies. In American culture, as an individual tends to act in accordance with his/her internal wishes or personal integrity, the interaction pattern is based on establishing social relationships and gaining social status through the expression of one's talents and skills (Bond & Hwang, 1986). A person's way of interaction therefore tends to be consistent over situations and relationships (Bond & Hwang, 1986; Hofstede, 2001). Since one set of rules may apply to all

situations, an individual who masters the most effective set of rules of game is very prone to apply this set of rules to any situation in his/her field of mastery. This underlying belief may have contributed to the professional training model in which the university equips candidates with the “best” scientifically warranted set of rules to run an effective school and expects them to apply it to any school situation. Thus, the competent principal trained in this manner is believed to be capable of going into any school and accomplishing the task.

In the more collectivist-oriented Chinese society on the other hand, as a person tends to act in accordance with external expectations or social norms, the typical interaction pattern is likely to be situational, reacting to different expectations and norms, varying across situations and relationships (Bond & Hwang, 1986; Hofstede, 2001). One has to learn different sets of rules to adapt to different situations, and must consider one’s position in the hierarchical order and interpersonal network in order to act appropriately, build connections and maintain interpersonal harmony (Bond & Hwang, 1986). Only through practicing and memorizing the rules and building relationships within the context can one master the task. This belief may be rooted in the experience model for training principals in Taiwan. A Taiwanese principal needs to learn these sophisticated sets of rules in a real school setting by interacting with different people in different situations over lengthy periods of time. The rules of the game can best be formulated by accumulating experiences of particular interaction cases and by taking on different roles such as section chief and director in the school administrative hierarchy. Only through continuous practicing of the rules and building harmonious relationships within the school context can one become a competent and trustworthy school leader who can accomplish the task of running an effective school.

In summary, both the American and Taiwanese training models aim to train competent principals, but adopt different strategies specific to each culture. The professional model, focusing more on task accomplishment and adopting one set of rules provided by the university, may be embedded in the individualist-oriented

American society. The experience model on the other hand, emphasizing more on people and practicing varied sets of rules within the school context, may derive from the more collectivist-oriented Taiwanese society.

4.2 Focus on theory vs. practice (*Ti-zhi*)

The two models' diverging emphases on theory and practice also manifest epistemological assumptions of how knowledge is constructed and its relation to action. In the current American professional model, it is assumed that knowing comes before doing. Acquisition of knowledge should occur prior to taking action in the field. Theory in the form of general principles, accumulated over time and justified by refined human rationality, constitutes the quintessential part of any field of knowledge. The most effective way of acquiring knowledge is to learn the theories of the field from learned scholars, who are usually gathered in the confines of the university. Therefore, the most effective way to train prospective principals is to provide them with a body of theory-based knowledge at university training programs in such fields as school administration, personnel affairs, finance, legal issues, community relations and curriculum and instruction (Miklos, 1992). Once a principal candidate acquires the necessary knowledge, he/she may go into the field to practice this knowledge and take action. An internship/practicum provides the opportunity to apply the knowledge they learned at university.

Opposite to the American professional model, the Taiwanese model may manifest a different way of knowing in which knowledge can be best acquired through embodied actions (so called *ti-zhi* in Chinese), i.e., actions taken by oneself to gain first-hand experience (Hwang, 1995, 1999, 2001; Mou, 1985; Tu, 1987). Only through continuous *ti-zhi* can one comprehend the essence of getting things done within a network of human relationships, and then construct a less theoretical and more tacit, personal knowledge base. Thus, mainly through continuous *ti-zhi* at the school site, the Taiwanese principal constructs his own knowledge of how to run an effective school,

including school management, personnel affairs, finance and budgeting, supervising and relating to teachers and staff. Unlike the American principal – who learns theories of school leadership, attempts to apply them to the field, and often experiences gaps between theory and practice – the Taiwanese principal constructs his own knowledge and “theories” of effective school operation through years of *ti-zhi* in a live environment.

5. Summary and implications

The comparison of the two distinct preparation models may provide implications for policy makers in the two countries regarding the betterment of training effective school leaders.

5.1 Implications for Taiwan

One of the major concerns for the Taiwan’s preparation model may lie in the inertia of a prolonged process of learning from predecessors. By primarily observing and modeling the behavior of more experienced administrators at the school site, a prospective principal may tend to follow conventions and traditions, abide by routine procedures and handle things in a perfunctory and unimaginative manner. This model may produce followers of conventional wisdom rather than leaders of innovative breakthrough. Another possible concern may be related to the relative shortage of systematic theory-based knowledge. Although each prospective principal may intuitively construct his/her own “theories” through a long-term process of trial and error, this kind of knowledge may appear to be less systematic, and the construction process may not be as efficient as the transmission of well-structured scientifically-warranted knowledge in the US model. Furthermore, the above concerns of the Taiwan model may be augmented by the recent sweeping education reform pressing for drastic school restructuring, heightened teacher empowerment and active

parental involvement (Fwu & Wang, 2002a; Law, 2003; Pan & Yu, 1999). Many principals found themselves unprepared for these changes and felt disoriented and dispirited (Fwu & Wang, 2002b). This may indicate that the traditional method of training through a prolonged process of accumulating experiences may not be sufficient to prepare a new generation of principals facing dramatic challenges ahead.

Under these circumstances, some US-trained Taiwanese scholars have recently introduced the more “efficient” US method of training by setting up several university-based pre-service training programs for principals, as an attempt to reform the “backward” and “unsystematic” indigenous system. For example, National Taiwan Normal University and National Cheng-Chi University have initiated this type of principal preparation program since 2004. These programs provide a series of courses lasting for 1 or 1.5 years for directors of academic affairs/student affairs interested in becoming principals. Those completed this program are awarded a certificate. However, this certificate is not such a mandate for becoming a principal as in the United States. Some Taiwanese scholars have been discussing if principal certification/licensure should be implemented as it has been undertaken in the American professional model. Nevertheless, further discussions and deliberations are needed to make the professional training model more congenial to the socio-cultural traditions of the local Taiwanese context.

It is suggested that while Taiwanese principals should still be trained in the school site as they always have been, the addition of university-based training and systematic transmission of theory-based knowledge should be incorporated into the training process. During their prolonged career path ascending to principalship, Taiwanese school administrators at different levels should be offered opportunities to attend university-based courses to learn theories on school leadership and reflect on practical issues of their day-to-day tasks and interactions with constituencies. These courses provide a forum for these experienced administrators from different school sites to learn from each other and from university faculty. Through discussions and reflections

in university classrooms, they are more likely to consolidate their experiences into effective knowledge to accomplish the task of leading a school and may collectively generate new ideas and strategies to meet the challenges of fast-changing educational contexts. Attendance of the professional courses should constitute a requirement of the qualifications for ascending to higher levels of administration. The professional courses and the practical on-site experiences can effectively be interwoven throughout their career at different administrative levels.

5.2 Implications for the US

One of major concerns in preparing principals in the US has been the gap between the theory provided through university-based training courses and the day-to-day practical issues of the real school world (Farkas, Johnson, & Duffett, 2003; Levine, 2005; McCarthy, 1999; Miklos, 1992; Su et al., 2000). A practicum/internship upon completion of the program was added to provide the opportunity to apply theory into practice in the real-world situation (Daresh, 1988, 2003; Whitaker, 1998). However, such practicum/internship has been criticized for its lack of extensiveness, structure and intensity. Champions of preparation program reform are still pressing for a further integration between theory and practice by recommending field-based instruction, mentoring of prospective administrators by experienced principals, and interweaving of practica/internships throughout leadership preparation, not delayed until coursework is completed (Barnett, 2003; Daresh, 2003; McCarthy, 1999; Whitaker, 1998).

Another issue for the US model is regarding the appropriate personal and interpersonal skills of the prospective leaders. Studies have shown that teachers often identify their principals' communication skills as one area that may hinder principals from winning the trust of teachers and from leading the school effectively (Lester, 1993; Malone, Sharp, & Tompson, 2000). Although many university training programs have offered such communication courses, some principals may still have problems applying the skills in a real context. The current standard-based accountability movement may

augment the problem of miscommunications between principals under pressure to meet state-mandate standards and teachers protecting their own professional autonomy. The whole notion of “holding the school accountable” may compel the principal to delve into the school to solve problems. This may intensify the conflict between the principal focused on the task of meeting the standards and the staff who cares more about collegial support and interpersonal trust.

While the US preparation model is regarded as professional and efficient, the Taiwan experience model characterized by a closer linkage between theory and practice and an emphasis on interpersonal connectedness may offer some insight for addressing the US issues. Thus, it is suggested that while the US principals should still be trained in the university-based training programs, an extension and restructuring of the practicum/internship component and a focus on personal and interpersonal communication skills on the site can be incorporated into the training process. The US training programs may consider, first, extending the length of the practicum period and providing intense mentoring for prospective principals. Moreover, the university-based courses and field-based practice can more effectively be interwoven throughout the entire professional training process. In shifting between the university and school site, the gap between theory and practice may be narrowed. Finally, in addition to providing communication theory and skill courses at the university, US trainers may consider strengthening the component of interpersonal relationship maintenance and trust-building during the practicum/internship so that prospective leaders may acquire more effective communication skills for real on-site situations.

In conclusion, applying the methodology of the comparative research paradigm, the professional and experience model are compared and contrasted from the following five dimensions, including (1) empirical data, (2) training process, (3) underlying assumptions, (4) strengths/weakness, (5) implications/suggestions, as is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Comparison of the Professional and Experience Model

| | Professional model | Experience model |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| Empirical data | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Female-dominant 2. Younger 3. Majority M.A. 4. At least 1-year formal training 5. Self-motivated to become principals | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Male-dominant 2. Older 3. M.A. & B.A. evenly distributed 4. Short-term pre-service training 5. Majority appointed to become principals |
| Training process | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. University-based training 2. State-approved licensure | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On-site practice 2. Procession through administrative ladder |
| Underling assumptions | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Task-oriented 2. Focus on theory | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. People-oriented 2. Focus on practice |
| Strengths | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Well-structured and systematic knowledge 2. Universal application to any situations | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus on interpersonal harmony 2. Tied to local community |
| Weaknesses | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gap between systematic theory and local practice 2. Weak tie to the local community | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tendency to follow conventions and traditions 2. Lack of systematic knowledge |
| Implications & Suggestions | Interweaving of practicum with university-based training | Provision of university-based training during the prolonged on-site experience practice |

Table 1 shows that although the professional and experience models are different in the many aspects, both are indeed effective indigenous methods of school leader preparation emerging from its own specific socio-cultural context. Direct implantation of a foreign model will usually not succeed. However, a comparative study of two distinctly different models can provide useful insights and external perspectives for

each country. In our study, Taiwan may learn efficiency from the US professional model, whereas the US may learn connectedness from the Taiwanese experience model. Suggestions for modifying each country's indigenous model have been made to offset the apparent shortcomings of each model. It seems that a convergence into "the middle way" where the linkage between theory and practice and a balance between tasks and people are the directions for cultivating a new generation of principals. This again manifests the very strength of the comparative research paradigm.

However, this study has its limitations. The data of Taiwanese principals were collected a few years ago when the few university-based training programs were not yet available. Nowadays, some principals may attend such training programs. Nevertheless, they only consist of a minority while the majority of incumbent principals still have been prepared through the experience model. Therefore, our conclusions about the Taiwanese principals' experience training model still holds.

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