

Preface

My interest in exploring issues of school leadership in citizenship education is closely related to my own education experience. The idea for the research that led to this book first came to me when I was Master's student majoring in Educational Leadership at a Chinese University. As a Chinese student who had been educated for 12 years in schools led by school party secretaries (SPSs), I was aware that SPSs held positions of authority, but knew little about their actual leadership. I turned to educational policies and the extant research to learn more about SPSs' leadership, but found little research that specifically focused on SPSs' leadership, though the position had existed in Chinese schools since the 1949 founding of the People's Republic of China. SPSs' leadership thus became a myth—it had existed in and been important to Chinese schools, but was invisible and hidden in research.

I then turned my quest into research in my Ph.D. study, and chose citizenship education as a window to explore SPSs' leadership. SPSs were assigned by the CPC to conduct political work and lead citizenship education in schools. I intended to explore the process of leading citizenship education, and how SPSs, as representatives of the Communist Party of China (CPC) at the school level, exercised leadership in promoting the CPC's political socialization project—citizenship education—by interacting with the CPC-led state and other stakeholders.

After learning more about the complexity of dual-lined (administrative and political) leadership in China's schools, I expanded the scope of my initial research to study the leadership of principals and SPSs (school leaders with equal rank) and their interactions as they lead citizenship education. This dual school leadership structure has engendered a complex working relationship between principals and SPSs, especially as regards leading citizenship education. Their interactions have been complicated by the CPC Central Committee's introduction of the Principal Responsibility System. The complexities of principals' and SPSs' leadership in citizenship education is an under-researched area of study and warrants closer attention.

This book contributes to the literature on political school leadership, curriculum leadership, and citizenship education as a whole, particularly in the context of China. It adopts an interpretive qualitative approach to examine and theorize the dynamics and complexities of leadership in junior secondary schools in Shanghai, China, particularly in regard to citizenship education. It is my hope that the macro- and micro-political theoretical perspective taken in this book will contribute to informed discussions about key curriculum leadership and citizenship education issues facing policy makers. More generally, the research undertaken can also serve as a resource for academic and professional communities, and graduate students interested in the practice and theory of education in China, particular as it relates to school leadership, citizenship education, school micro-politics, and China studies.

This book is based on my Ph.D. thesis, completed in the summer of 2013. Parts of the book were expanded and adapted from a coauthored journal article that was generated from this research and completed during my Ph.D. study. It is “School leadership and citizenship education: The experiences and struggles of school party secretaries in China,” *Educational Research for Policy and Practice*, 2015, 14(1), 33–51. Because this paper has its own theme and development of discussion and does not totally fit the structure and flow of discussion in the book, most of the paper was adapted and spread through different parts of the book.

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