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Transforming Turnaround Schools in China: Strategies, Achievements, and Challenges

Abstract The existence of turnaround schools has been a problem in the Chinese education system. There are diverse causes including the education system itself, the financial system, and other issues. However, there has been a lack of research to help us fully understand this phenomenon. This article provides a holistic perspective on the strategies the Chinese government has used to improve turnaround schools, the achievements that have been made, and challenges in the change process. Implications for transformative practice will also be explored.

Keywords transformation, turnaround schools, China

The Definition of Turnaround Schools in the Chinese Context

The literature has stated that turnaround schools' weaknesses can be categorized in terms of "hardware" and "software" (Wu, 2012). In terms of "hardware," weaknesses are mainly shown as limited resources, a poor school environment, small schools, overloaded facilities, limited education resources and poor library facilities. In terms of "software," the weaknesses can be seen in poor school leadership, poor management, weak teaching teams, low student quality, and low quality and effectiveness of the school administration. Guo (2013) stated that the economic development of Chinese society has brought about an evolution of weak schools into a new stage. From a management perspective, Guo defined the concept of turnaround schools in terms of significant improvement in compulsory education in a specific time period and location. However, even if a

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school has been “turned around,” the school environment may still be relatively weak and the reputation of the school may still be low. This definition is derived from the perspective of societal development and education implementation in a modern urbanized environment.

Research conducted in cities in China, such as Shanghai, has shown that schools there are mostly equipped with strong “hardware,” and that turnaround schools are mainly weak because of their “software.” The quality of the teaching team is the key factor as this has a strong effect on students’ performance (Hou, 2015; Ju, 2014; Xiong & Chen, 1998).

Conceptual Framework for This Study

The literature on turnaround schools in the Western school context has documented various strategies to tackle this problem. Many of these strategies have been found to be effective in transforming schools and improving student learning outcomes. The conceptual framework for this paper has therefore been constructed on the basis of a review of these strategies. These strategies are briefly discussed below.

First, various initiatives in the United States have provided funding to turn around low-achieving schools. The School Improvement Grants (SIGs) target “persistently lowest achieving” public schools in the United States but require the participating schools to implement a school reform model approved by the federal government. The maximum annual funding is two million US dollars per school for three years. By using data from schools in California, a study by Dee (2012, April) found that “lowest-achieving” schools which have undergone SIG-funded whole-school reforms have shown significant improvements in test results. It is also found that schools which were under the federal turnaround model and experienced a larger percentage of staff turnover showed greater degrees of improvement.

Second, standardized turnaround policies have been adopted in Western countries to improve failing schools. In the United States, the “No Child Left Behind” school reform policy focused on standardizing learning outcomes, which has led to standardized curricula being adopted by many schools. However, Null (2010) noted that this standardization may not be universally suitable as each school has a unique background and student composition.

Third, a reasonable evaluation system has also been used in improving turnaround schools. The accountability requirement in the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) requires states and local school districts to assess whether schools or school districts are meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP). Schools which do not meet AYP for two consecutive school years should initiate new policies or reforms by taking more resources or undergoing corrective actions (Goertzl, 2001).

Fourth, in the United States, charter schools have been coupled with low-performing schools for the purpose of school improvement. Fryer (2014) examined the influence on student performance of implementing a number of best practices from charter schools which are high-performing to low-performing public schools. The findings showed that these practices significantly increased elementary and secondary school student achievement in certain subjects.

Fifth, governments or education agencies have implemented mandatory administration to turn around failing schools. The High-Poverty High-Performing Readiness model is a district experiment in comprehensive intervention of failing schools. It has been used in major districts in Chicago, Philadelphia, New York, and Miami-Dade. It requires fundamental changes in turnaround schools' operating conditions (Calkins, Guenther, Belfiore, & Lash, 2007).

Sixth, developing rational mobility for principals and teachers is also important for improving turnaround schools. Rosenholtz (1985) stated that effective schools are able to retain good teachers, and principals of effective schools have the responsibility to create a suitable environment in order to recruit outstanding teachers. Johnson, Kraft, and Papay (2012) also stressed that persistent teacher turnover hinders the development of sturdy organizational culture and makes it difficult to coordinate instructional programs over time.

Seventh, improving the comprehensive quality of school principals is essential. Mette (2012) discussed the Turnaround Specialist certificate which is a cooperative initiative between the State of Virginia and the University of Virginia to provide training for education specialists, school leaders, and principals. It is found that successful schools were able to develop a school culture based on shared leadership and shared accountability.

Eighth, in contrast to school-based research in China, school-based professional development is mainly running in schools in the Western context. Wei, Darling-Hammond, and Adamson (2010) studied the impact of professional

learning communities on teaching and student learning. They found that professional learning communities not only improved student performance, they provided direct distributed leadership training for principals and teacher leaders, and provided training for them to lead grade-level learning teams, which is a key component of grade-level teams. They also found that the work of grade-level teams needs to be coherent with district policies in order to be more sustainable.

Ninth, the promotion of teacher professional development is important to improving turnaround schools. Vaughan (2009) studied the influence of professional development experiences on teaching practices in low-performing schools. Higher levels of change were observed in teachers who were personally assigned to professional development. Also, teachers' practices were more likely to change when their professional development experiences met their immediate needs in terms of the personal development or growth of their students.

Tenth, promoting student learning is also an important strategy for turning around failing schools. Higa (2012) studied the public non-charter elementary schools in Hawaii and how their resource allocations were used to promote student learning. It is found that a few elements within the school-wide instructional program were able to effectively improve student performance.

The literature has shown that the strategies discussed above are able to bring significant contributions to improving turnaround schools in the Western context. The conceptual framework of this study was constructed on the basis of the above ten strategies to analyze how to change turnaround schools in the Chinese context and see ways in which there are parallels with or differences from the Western model.

The Reasons for the Existence of Turnaround Schools in China

The Chinese literature has extensively discussed the underlying reasons for the existence of turnaround schools in China. Liu (1999) discussed the historical and practical causes of turnaround schools in China. The historical reasons include financial and policy limitations. The practical causes include changes in economic development and the labor market, inequity in the financial situation of different areas in China, and economic inequity in society which has brought about differences in the financial situations of different households. G. Q. Li (2005) stated that the turnaround school phenomenon is an education problem. It

is also a social problem as it has strong roots in historical and social issues. Some of the main issues are: imbalanced educational resource distribution, insufficient educational investment, investment differences due to a hierarchical education management system, differences between schools due to people's different levels of awareness about education, and problems in the education evaluation system. Guo (2013) also discussed both external and internal causes of the existence of turnaround schools in China. External causes include the schools' geographical location, education investment from the government, poor school management, low teacher quality, weak student body, and poor school reputation. Internal causes include China's urban-rural dual economic structure, the system of selecting key schools, poor management of education investment, and the rapid urbanization of China.

Furthermore, China is still at a developing stage and its GDP per capita is still low compared to other countries. Education investment per capita is also relatively small. According to UNESCO, the average education investment worldwide is 5.7 % of national GNP. The figure is 6.1 % for developed countries and 1 % for developing countries. China is at the low end of this range. From 2000 to 2002, China's education investment was 2.79 %, 3.19 %, and 3.3 % of national GDP. This is lower than most other countries in the 1980s and far from the 4 % goal set in the "China Educational Reform and Development Framework" which was released in 1993 (Li, 2004c). Another figure from UNESCO shows that, in 2005, the average education investment worldwide was 4.9 % of national GDP. The figure was 5.5 % for developed countries and 4.7 % for developing countries. In 2007, China's education investment was only 3.32 % of national GDP (Yuan, 2009). These numbers are also reflected in a study on cities' contribution to education investment that was conducted by Lin and Cheng (2009). They found that although GDP per capita in Asia was 70 % of the world average, public funding for basic education per capita was only 58 % of the world average.

One important reason for the existence of turnaround schools in China is due to the fact that there is a lack of sufficient and equal financial support from the government. This is an objective cause of the occurrence of turnaround schools, which lack sufficient funds (Zuo, 2013; Ma, 2013). Li (2007) also argued that the key school system has contributed to imbalanced resource distribution in compulsory education in China. Since 1949, China has placed most of its scarce education resources in key schools under the planned economy in order to

educate an elite. In 1953, the Ministry of Education (MOE) announced the setting up of 194 key secondary schools, which is about 4.4 % of the total number of secondary schools in China. In 1978, the MOE required cities to set up key schools at the city and county level, which were also supported by more funds and teachers and students with higher teaching and learning quality. This created key schools at the national, ministerial, provincial, county, and city levels. On the other hand, in most cities 20 %–30 % of schools are still turnaround schools. Some schools in rural and remote areas do not have even basic operating conditions (Cheng, 2002). This imbalance in education funding means that students cannot be guaranteed quality education in their own neighborhood.

The basic education management system in China is another direct reason for the emergence of turnaround schools. Basic education is the main responsibility of provincial rather than central government, and therefore, the investment in basic education mainly comes from the provincial government. Divergences in the economic development level among provinces in China directly create differences in terms of basic education funding. Therefore, a large number of turnaround schools exist in underdeveloped regions (Li, 2004b; Jiang, 2007).

Li (2004c) also stated that China lacks a mature evaluation system. Up until this point, the evaluation system has not examined schools or individuals. The evaluation standards are too simple and cannot accommodate the diversity of different schools (Lu, 2006; Jiang, 2007).

Ma (2013) argued that low school reputation and poor sources of students are also causes of turnaround schools. With poor social reputation, the achievement of turnaround schools cannot be recognized. At the same time, good students go to the better schools, leaving turnaround schools at a disadvantage. Ma further analyzed the family factors causing turnaround schools, stating that a lack of healthy family atmosphere, appropriate ways of fostering children, and proper ways of collaboration are reasons for the existence of turnaround schools.

Scholars in China have also analyzed the internal reasons for the existence of turnaround schools (Jiang, 2007; Sun, Guo, & Sun, 2006). These will be presented below.

Low Quality of Education Facilities

Poor quality education facilities generally refers to a shortage of library books,

inferior situations in labs, insufficient educational financial resources, insufficient campus space, and poor quality school buildings (Qiang, 2011). Moreover, Guo (2013) examined the conditions of turnaround schools in rural areas of China. He noted that rural turnaround schools had poor school facilities, a shortage of library resources, and poor laboratory equipment. It is further stressed that some school buildings were old and dangerous. They did not have internet access or multi-media classrooms. Some schools were also located in remote areas and had poor transportation and communication channels. Road conditions could become very poor in bad weather. Although some schools were equipped with student housing, the living conditions there were also poor. In Guo's (2013) investigation of six provincial areas in mid-western China, it was found that, in general, two students needed to share the same bed and there were more than 10 students living in the same dormitory room. Guo's (2013) survey of educational administrators and teachers also found that the majority of them agreed that student housing services needed significant improvement.

Low Efficiency of Internal Management

Diverse internal management problems cause the malfunction of some schools. These problems include the low quality of the leadership team, a lack of innovative drive, and a lack of appropriate management mechanisms. Qiang (2011) noted that the rules and regulations in the school management in China are not standardized. In turnaround schools in China, the implementation of rules and regulations in school management is especially weak. Moreover, the management system in turnaround schools lacks planning, organization, clear objectives, and protocol. There is a lack of a strong system for decision-making, implementation, assessment, and feedback. The coordination between school, family, and society is also weak. It is also noted that the moral education organization in these schools is not well-structured. Students' education in terms of daily behavior, physical development, hygiene, safety, and legal knowledge is weak. Moreover, the importance of education quality and research is not emphasized in school management. Continuous education and proactive teaching practices are weak among teachers. Teaching practices also lack enthusiasm and innovation.

One of the important factors influencing school management is that school

principals in turnaround schools are not always capable. Qiang (2011) noted that principals in turnaround schools usually have relatively inferior levels of education and understanding of management concepts. They have weak leadership skills, low motivation, and low self-confidence. They also have low levels of independence in terms of leadership.

Low Teaching Quality

The teaching quality in this kind of school is lower than for others, which is reflected in low graduation rates. Additionally, turnaround schools lack a sufficient number of qualified teachers. Guo (2013) stated that a lot of teachers in turnaround schools have not received formal training in education and they also have higher average age. There is a shortage of teachers of English, music, physical education, and art, and there is a high rate of teacher mobility.

Meanwhile, the curricula in these schools are not complete according to the national education plan, and the development of their students cannot meet the national standards. W. Zhang (2011) also stated that it is quite common for the ministries and departments not to comply with rules and regulations set out by the national government. This is especially shown in the area of education funding. Data from 2006, 2007, and 2008 shows that some provinces and districts provided less funding to schools than they were instructed to do by the national government.

Low Social Reputation

Turnaround schools in China only have the chance to recruit low-achieving students since key schools have the priority to enroll the best students in the system. Qiang (2011) indicated that although teachers' teaching quality affects the whole school's teaching quality in compulsory education, students' future enrollment in higher education is largely determined by their learning ability. Schools which are financially wealthier provide better conditions and scholarships for prospective students, which attract stronger students. Schools with less education funding enroll students who are weaker academically, and some of these later become turnaround schools. Weaker students have weaker motivation, are more passive, and have not mastered effective learning methods.

They also have poorer language skills. Other indicators of weak students are poor learning habits and weak basic knowledge. Some students, due to family and social stresses, may have psychological problems and behavioral issues, and commit crime in the future. These student issues have brought significant challenges to turnaround schools in terms of student management. The low quality of teachers leads to even bigger management problems. This in turn contributes to a vicious cycle of poor performance. Furthermore, weak schools have poor school culture and they are not able to provide a positive influence on student behavior. Some students at turnaround schools also come from a less educated background or from poorer families. These families may not be able to cooperate with schools to ensure better education.

Generally speaking, the weaknesses in turnaround schools can be examined from two perspectives. First, turnaround schools normally do not have sufficient education funds, and have poor teaching facilities and insufficient books. Second, the low management level and poor teaching abilities in these schools cannot be adapted to the local teaching.

Strategies for Transforming Turnaround Schools

The process of transforming Chinese turnaround schools has undergone two different stages (Sun et al., 2006). The first stage took place during the 1980s and 1990s. It focused on providing sufficient support to turnaround schools in terms of personnel, finances, and materials, with the aim of helping them to survive. These supports were mainly provided by education administration bodies, such as education bureaus. The second stage has focused on providing educational facilities and strengthening the educational abilities of schools. These reforms have been directly executed by the government, which is the foundation to implement quality education (Sun et al., 2006) and school improvement.

Strategy 1: Macro-Education Policies

In order to realize the goal of transforming turnaround schools, the MOE has taken measures such as initiating the standardization of public schools, realizing equalization in funding schools, and identifying effective strategies for funding schools.

The Chinese government has formulated diverse policies in the effort to transform turnaround schools. The main practices undertaken include resolving financial problems, building an effective school evaluation system, and implementing the standardization of schools in basic education. According to China's *National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010–2020)*, it is important for schools to promote the balanced development of compulsory education, effectively narrow the inter-school difference gap, and solve problems related to school choice. Transformation of weak schools, and accelerating the balanced development of compulsory education, are key steps in achieving equity in education. Transforming weak schools in China is led by the government and implemented by weak schools, with the participation of society at large. The goals of these reforms are to limit the inter-school gap, to expand quality educational resources to meet the needs of the masses for high-quality educational resources, and eventually to achieve a harmonious society.

Solving the School Funding Insufficiency Problem in All Ways Possible

In China, education investment is insufficient. Therefore, efforts have been taken to improve the situation. The data shows that in 1985, Chinese education investment only ranged from 2.79 % to 3.3 %, and still lags behind many countries in the world.

The major percentage of this limited education funding is invested into higher education, which reduces the financial resources available for the operation of basic education. The Chinese government needs to increase its investment in basic education. Scholars also suggest it would be feasible to transfer funds from developed regions to underdeveloped regions with the aim of ensuring equality (Wang, Y. Q., 2014).

Chinese scholars and practitioners have recognized the imbalanced financial distribution in Chinese basic education, which is a bottleneck for the sustainable development of basic education in China. Diverse methods have been adopted by the Chinese government to provide sufficient funds to schools (Xu, 2014). Jin (2015) took the province of Zhejiang as an example. In Zhejiang province, private funds were imported to public education, which is an important method to improve turnaround schools. This method proved to be effective in reducing

the phenomena of small schools and the lack of sufficient financial support from the public.

Improving Turnaround Schools by Initiating the Standardization of Public Schools

Sun et al. (2006) pointed out that ensuring all schools meet basic conditions is the starting point for the Chinese government to transform turnaround schools. Meanwhile, the main focus is to provide relatively balanced education conditions. The final goal is to establish a relatively equal competitive environment. Y. R. Wang (2014) discussed how the huge gaps between different regions in China cause the imbalance of different economic levels, which cannot be changed within a short period of time. Aiming to ensure the balanced development of Chinese education, the standardization of basic education as a kind of national policy is being implemented in China. The policy focuses on improving classrooms, teaching resources, average student expenses, teaching and experimental equipment, and libraries, and a strategic plan will be established and drafted by the government. This measure will ensure all schools have equal opportunities to compete with each other. In recent years, the policy effect has been significant. For example, a project of the standardization of primary and secondary schools was successfully implemented in Shanghai; in total 40 billion RMB have been invested in this project and 1,569 schools have been shut down or improved. This provides a great example for other schools.

Establishing an Effective Evaluation System

A standard evaluation system has been established in Chinese education for the purpose of improving schools in the system as a whole. This is problematic in practice since turnaround schools are in a totally different situation from key schools and other schools. Yang (1998) analyzed the turnaround school evaluation system in China and made a few suggestions for the way forward. It is suggested that the government should reform its evaluation system for turnaround schools and introduce more scientific measures. It is also suggested that turnaround schools should have more communication with evaluation authorities in order to have more effective improvement. However, Guo (1992)

noted that some schools might use the categorization of “turnaround school” in order to gain more financial benefits. They might claim to be turnaround schools to the education administrative authority in order to gain more resources while denying this status during assessment and evaluation. It is suggested that the evaluation system is unclear because some administrators use students’ future enrollment results as the only factor in determining which schools are turnaround schools.

Liu and Xiao (2004) introduced a new method that has been adopted by the Shenyang Education Bureau. In this method, added value is the main criterion for education bureaus to consider when evaluating schools. This kind of method is meaningful for turnaround schools since under this kind of system their achievement can be objectively evaluated. For example, in this city, four of 10 star schools are turnaround schools due to their significant growth based on longitudinal data. Moreover, Wang (2007) also discussed turnaround schools in Shenyang. In 2006, Shenyang began to implement a reform in the Balanced Development of Compulsory Education Comprehensive Pilot Area; transforming turnaround schools is a key to the balanced development of compulsory education. One of the criteria used in assessing turnaround schools is examining the number of student lost each year and problems related to “school choice.”

Education evaluation plays the roles of leading and motivating, and the education administration is responsible for evaluating the education facilities and education quality. Diverse evaluation methods, such as added value, need to be used to facilitate the healthy development of turnaround schools. Additionally, multi-standard evaluation needs to be established with the involvement of different parties (Wang, Y. Q., 2014). Furthermore, Deng and Lin (2015) investigated the commissioned management of turnaround schools in China. They studied the access and exit system, evaluation system, and supervision system related to this turnaround school method. This is a new management method which requires rational and effective top-level systems and a supportive organizational environment.

Ensuring Equality in Funding Allocation

The literature has shown that the imbalanced distribution of financial resources has led to significant differences in school conditions and development between

key schools and turnaround schools (Guo, 2013; Chen, 2012). There has also been increasing number of studies in recent years which have called for the balanced development of compulsory education in China (Chen, 2012; Bao, 2008; Ye, 2003). This generally refers to the need for equal distribution of resources between schools. This is important for the principle of fairness and the healthy development of children. Feng (2013) also stated that, because of the influence of education policy, there have been huge differences in education investment in compulsory education in China. Key schools have been receiving significantly more resources and this has brought about huge long-term difference in school conditions. This has resulted in the turnaround or weak school status of non-key schools and rural schools. It is suggested that the distribution of education funds should consider the schools' funding history and current savings. Schools, especially turnaround schools, that have received less funding historically should be allocated more resources for current school development in order to achieve greater equity between schools.

Y. X. Li (2005) also stated that the key school system in China has created a layered school structure where key schools have better human resources than turnaround schools. These key schools are still receiving more benefit even after the key school system has been abandoned. This is because these schools have accumulated financial, human, and other resources. They have also gained a good social reputation which allows them to charge higher school fees in the later stage of their development.

Feng (2013) also made a few more suggestions on how the Chinese government could transform turnaround schools. It is suggested that the MOE should set out a detailed plan for transforming turnaround schools. At the same time, the government should raise and provide more funding to turnaround schools in terms of project funding or rewards. The standardization of turnaround school improvement is also encouraged. Moreover, calculations such as campus size vs. number of students, dormitory size vs. number of students, and laboratory equipment and library resources vs. number of students are also good indicators of school resources.

Balanced distribution of teacher resources among schools could allow a reasonable flow of financial resources, which is a significant part of turnaround school development (Feng, 2013). Japan, South Korea, and the United States have experience in encouraging teachers to move between schools and providing

financial incentives and assistance for this. It has been suggested that teachers' salary in the same school district could be unified and standardized, which could provide financial incentive for strong graduates to teach in turnaround schools. This could allow a reasonable flow of teachers between high quality schools and turnaround schools. Bi (2005) also supported the balanced distribution of teacher resources among schools. Teacher loss is especially severe in rural poor areas of China and policy should be directed in these areas to ensure that teachers' salaries and benefits are ensured in rural turnaround schools.

A balanced education investment is important to improving the quality of schools (Liu, 2011). Since 2002, Guangzhou's city and district government has invested 2.1 billion RMB in general schools in the area. This increased the percentage of teachers who meet the education background standards from 91.7 % in 2001 to 99 % in 2008. This significant increase in the number of high quality teachers was due to the improvement of teachers' salaries and benefits which allowed teachers to concentrate on teaching. Guangzhou has also implemented various financial and taxation policies to attract more education investment from society.

Strategy 2: Main Transformation Models in Practice

The Chinese government has adopted different strategies to transform turnaround schools including setting up education groups led by key schools, implementing mandatory management, and building up the unique characteristics of turnaround schools.

Setting Up Education Groups Led by Key Schools

One important strategy the Chinese government has used to transform turnaround schools is setting up education groups. Education groups were first established in the 1960s, and a particularly large number of linked and networked education organizations and education alliances have bloomed in these regions. For example, the DPS linked school in India was founded in 1949, and the USA group was established in 1973. Education groups in China have arisen in economically developed regions. One successful model is that of Shanghai. The main benefit of education groups is collaboration between strong and weak

schools, and between big and small schools, which allows the sharing of resources (Jin, 2015). The main methods used in managing education groups include “merging, establishment, and alignment.” Education groups can improve teaching resources through expert teacher experiments, membership exchanges, and school visiting schemes. The use of education groups to improve turnaround schools is a relatively grassroots method of management.

Sun et al. (2006) summarized the main functions of education groups. Education groups can be changed to private schools in order to improve education quality. Education groups are meant to explore the landscape of education. They not only help teachers’ professional development, but speed up the expansion of excellent education resources. This, in turn, reduces the duration of educational professional development, and expedites the improvement of turnaround schools.

Theoretically, Huang and Wei (2003) categorized education groups into four types:

- Education groups supported by industry. For example, an enterprise may provide sufficient education funds;
- Education groups on the stock market, in which diverse investors share financial responsibilities;
- Government oriented education groups: in which the local government provides the education; and
- From a legal perspective, education groups on the stock market and contract style education groups.

Dai (2013) argued that some problems exist in the operation of education groups. First, key schools are famous for their excellence in school culture, but in the education group process cultural values cannot be transferred clearly. Second, the stakeholders of these groups may lack clear responsibilities and there may be an incomplete group management structure. Third, these education groups can lack an operational mechanism for teachers’ exchange, and teachers themselves may lack motivation to participate in these exchanges. Fourth, as for sharing resources, there is the tendency to focus on the city, and the resources cannot be sufficiently taken advantage of. Additionally, there is a tendency to support the city, and offer sufficient financial support while the rural or countryside location lacks support. Finally, the effectiveness of resource use in education groups is lower than normal.

Adopting Mandatory Administration

Mandatory management is a method of handing over the management of a school to a third party to manage the school without changing the school's ownership (Yang, 2016). In the current practice of mandatory management, the government supervises the management activities of the third party and tries to improve teaching quality. Normally, the third party is a professional education organization like an education service organization or an advantaged school which facilitates the sharing of resources and collaboration. Financially, it is the responsibility of the government to provide funds to the management team. Yang described the case of Pudong District of Shanghai. There the Shanghai Chengong management consultation center provided mandatory service including principal selection, education ideology, school management, teacher training, and teacher education, in a manner that was relatively independent from the education administration.

Yang (2016) also described another category of administrative assistance: expert consultation and diagnosis. This mode is different from the one described above, which focuses on mandatory management. This mode is built on the analysis of large-scale data to identify weaknesses and strengths in turnaround schools.

Building up the Unique Characteristics of Turnaround Schools

Turnaround schools in China need to develop distinguished and featured characteristics (such as a focus on physical education, music, or art) because they do not have the financial and other advantages of key schools. Liu and Xiao (2004) noted that fostering unique characteristics is one of the key factors in school survival and development. Unique school characteristics are a key to maintaining schools' competitiveness in the current education system where there are diverse school systems, investment channels, government decentralization, and the expansion of school autonomy.

Moreover, the development of school-based curriculum can help to create unique school characteristics (Liu & Xiao, 2004). Liu and Xiao stressed that openness, flexibility and diversity in school-based curriculum are important for nurturing innovative talents. School-based curriculum is developed based on the

specific situation, vision, and traditions of each school, and is also related to students' personalities and strengths. They also noted that differences between the school environment and the unique situations of its students should be taken into consideration.

Zhu (2006) summarized in his study that a turnaround school can develop its characteristics through setting up specialty courses, implementing a unique school management style, or initiating special teaching. Qiang (2011) also noted the importance of school vision and educational philosophy in transforming turnaround schools. It is noted that the government should develop a modern school system, combine internal and external reforms in a management system, and introduce a competitive mechanism into turnaround schools' management.

There are models for turnaround schools to develop distinguishing features (Li, 2004a). W. Zhang (2011) has suggested some examples. Nanjing Ninghai Middle School in Jiangsu province is one of the schools which has been able to gain a better social reputation and level of investment through the development of its special characteristics. This school has particularly emphasized its art education and become the leader in art education in non-key secondary schools in China. Other examples raised by X. L. Zhang (2011) show that developing school characteristics can build a school's social reputation and may eventually lead to more investment.

Strategy 3: Improving Teaching and Management Forces in Schools

A lack of sufficient human resources has been the main problem in turnaround school management. In practice, the Chinese education administration has encouraged the mobility of quality school principals and teachers in the process of transforming turnaround schools.

Encouraging the Rational Mobility of Quality Principals and Teachers

A long-standing problem in Chinese education has been the imbalanced distribution of qualified staff like school principals and teachers. Therefore, to ensure the balanced development of basic education, the government has taken measures to foster the mobility of principals and teachers. Distinguished principals can be sent to turnaround schools and excellent teachers can be

assigned to turnaround schools as well.

Principals' mobility has been promoted in *National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010–2020)*. Xue (2011) stated that the mobility of principals could help the balanced development of schools, provide innovations for the principals themselves, and increase the openness of principals' work which will further refine the system. Zhong (2014) also stated that because of the principal appointment system, resources are unevenly distributed among schools. Zhong (2014) suggested the cadre's mobility mechanism which could allow high quality education cadres to participate in exchanges with turnaround schools. Moreover, Xu and Li (2013) recorded an example of super principal mobility. They described the experience of a principal who undertook an exchange with another school's principal for two years. Although this principal felt that the experience was stressful, he still thought that the exchange was beneficial to the school's education quality.

Additionally, China's *National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010–2020)* requires teachers and principals within the same county or district to carry out exchanges (Yan, 2012). Cai, Lei, and Shen (2014) pointed out that motivating teacher mobility could improve the transformation of turnaround schools in the United States. In this way, high quality teachers would be able to fill vacancies in turnaround schools. Teachers' mobility could also allow the exchange of school culture. The mechanism for motivating teacher mobility could also enable tutors to focus more time on teaching. However, in the Chinese context, it is necessary to have a clearer mechanism for dividing the schools which provide teachers for exchange from the schools which accept these teachers.

Si (2012) stated that the teacher mobility system is one of the policies used to resolve the "school choice" problem in China. It would not only be beneficial to teachers' professional development, it could also improve the teaching efficiency of turnaround schools. Moreover, as high quality teachers tend to seek jobs in urban areas with key schools, the teacher mobility system could attract high quality teachers to teach at turnaround schools and reduce the resource differences between schools. On the other hand, Yang and Li (2012) investigated the teachers' turnover mechanism in China's compulsory education. Zhang (2003) also made suggestions on how a teachers' turnover mechanism should be administered.

Teacher Mobility

Zhang (2003) defined the teacher mobility mechanism in China as teachers being assigned to teach in another school after working in their original school for a couple of years. This kind of system has already been used by a number of other countries, e.g., Japan and South Korea. These international examples show that a teacher mobility mechanism could ensure an even distribution of human resources and education quality between schools. Furthermore, Yang and Li (2012) divided teacher mobility into rigid and soft forms. Rigid mobility refers to the forced flow of human resources authorized by government agencies and based on standards like working experience and school staff structure. Soft mobility refers to the encouraged flow of human resources which aims at achieving balanced education and a healthy communication and resource exchange between teachers and schools. In practice, the promotion of teacher mobility can help turnaround schools to have sufficient teaching resources in terms of both number and quality.

Challenges in Teacher Mobility

Teacher mobility is crucial in the process of transforming turnaround schools, but it is important to guarantee that these mobile teachers can be part of the school community and the effective learning community can be effectively built up during the school transformation process.

Zhou (2012) summarized the main challenges in teacher mobility. First, there can be a lack of appropriate investigation when the policy is formulated. Zhou highlighted one Chinese city as an example where the educational administration lacked sufficient understanding of its teachers. Zhou suggested that it is important for policy makers to understand fully the characteristics of the teaching resources in their own region, their strengths and weaknesses in subject areas, the teaching capacity, the local school atmosphere, the teachers' morality, the special needs of the teachers, and the willingness of the teachers to participate in mobility. In particular, it is not clear that formulating a policy that will reward teachers' active participation in mobility with promotion advantages is a good idea. This is because, in practice, teachers normally feel pressed to join this kind of activity, and this, in turn, affects the effectiveness of the policy.

Additionally, Zhou (2012) pointed out some other problems with teachers' mobility. These problems include a lack of sufficient communication with teachers: Only half of teachers in [his or her] study knew what teacher mobility was. Also, it is difficult for different stakeholders including education administration, teachers, and principals to reach a consensus about how to promote teacher mobility; usually they will only participate in teacher mobility based on their own practical needs and interests. Zhou also pointed out that there is a lack of a scientific evaluation system in China, which impacts teacher mobility, and also a lack of sufficient funds to support teachers who participate in mobility activities.

Lu (2010) also noted that the Chinese literature has divided teacher mobility into benign and non-benign flow. Teacher mobility in China falls mainly in the non-benign category, with a significant loss of teachers noted. Many places in China do not have effective regulations on teacher mobility. There is also ineffective control of the negative consequences of teacher mobility, especially in poor areas. Shao (2002) listed the following negative consequences for primary school teachers in poor rural areas: (1) teaching quality declined in primary and secondary schools; (2) the balanced development of education was negatively affected; (3) economically weak rural schools were further weakened; and (4) student enrollment rates declined. In investigating the reasons of teacher loss, Cheng (1996) stated that teachers' low economic status, their poor working environment, an insufficient management system, and ineffective coordination by the government are the main reasons. It is further stated that poor management could lead to internal conflicts and eventually to the loss of teachers. Huang (1998) also argued that setting up school unions and meeting teacher representatives could allow teachers to participate in school management and provide feedback to schools. This could enhance their sense of loyalty to their schools and reduce the loss of teachers. Some research has also found that the existing hiring system in China further weakens teachers' roles and increases their job mobility.

Moreover, the Balanced Development of Compulsory Education Comprehensive Pilot Area in Shenyang as discussed in Wang (2007) requires teachers to communicate and undertake exchanges regularly. Principals and teachers who work in the same school for six years or longer need to exchange with others within the same school area. It is stated that the exchange of

personnel should be emphasized in order to achieve real exchange of people and relationships. However, it is found that teachers in these areas generally have negative attitudes towards this kind of exchange. The survey data showed that about 40 % of teachers objected to exchanges and 72 % had negative feelings about this exchange of personnel and relationships. Around 73 % of teachers said they faced difficulties after their exchange and 87 % were not satisfied with their salary and benefits. On the other hand, 79 % of teachers thought that teacher exchanges could raise their schools' education quality. Around 84 % of teachers thought that exchanges could raise their own capabilities in teaching. These figures show that although teacher exchanges can raise school education quality and improve the balance of the distribution of teacher resources, teachers are worried about their own benefits; they may also face difficulties in their daily lives and have a lower sense of belonging in their professional relationships.

Improving the Comprehensive Quality of School Principals

A good school principal determines school development. Therefore, the role of the school principal represents a good school culture. The school principal needs to have sufficient integrity and be responsible for the normal operation of the school organization (Yang, 2016). Jing (2013) further stressed that, apart from poor school environment and geographic location, the problems within turnaround schools are mainly generated and accumulated during their own development. This makes the school principal, who is the leader of school development, a key factor in the turnaround effort.

Huang and Huang (2013) discussed how to improve principals in turnaround schools. They stated that principals should improve their ability to plan the school's development. They should also improve their ability to manage and coordinate resources, and they should improve their ability to coordinate human relations. Additionally, Lin (2015) stressed the importance of innovation and uniqueness in principals' school management in order to adapt to changing demands from students and society. Lin stressed the importance of the role of principals in developing structured management and continuously improving the schools' education quality. Principals should also create a safe and healthy school environment for students, and should be a moral role model for teachers and students. Jia (2006) also offered similar suggestions. Moreover, Jing (2013)

also noted a number of key responsibilities of school principals. Principals should have a strong vision and develop a healthy school culture. They are also responsible for motivating teachers and building a strong learning culture through self-improvement. Principals should tackle personnel issues and help to maintain good relationships among school staff. This can be achieved through the development of a good management system and implementing democratic management.

Other scholars have furthered examined the influence of principals on schools. Fu (2011) investigated principals' informal influence on students and teachers. M. F. Li (2003) studied the leadership role of principals in initiating education research. Huo (1997) agreed that principals have a key role in guiding school characteristics at various stages of development. He (2002) also discussed school principals' key roles as coordinators, leaders, trainers, and assessors in curriculum reform.

Guiding Role of the Teaching and Research Team

Teacher professional development always plays a significant role in the school turnaround process. C. Z. Li (2012) believes that taking advantage of senior teachers to improve other teachers' teaching levels is one of the effective ways to facilitate teachers' professional development. Senior teachers play a guiding role in the teaching and research team (Li, Liu, & Yue, 2012). Teaching and research teams are organized by the school, and they are grassroots units for teaching research and management. They are organizations that not only benefit teachers who are teaching the same or similar subject by continuously promoting teaching quality, but also help principals and head teachers organize the teaching and research progress (Tao, 2010). For example, the education bureau of Xigang district in the city of Dalian made efforts to focus on the guiding role of the teaching instructor and research team. The bureau formulated and implemented new rules and regulations to support the teachers' research activities. Through these initiatives, both school work and the teachers' teaching and research levels were significantly improved.

Lin (1999) stated that teachers' participation in research activities, especially research on education reform, is a key path to raising teachers' quality. He talked about the necessity of participating in teaching and research teams, some of the

characteristics of these teams and their possible research methods. Improved teacher quality is also essential to transforming turnaround schools. However, He (2015) and Wang (2012) discussed some of the problems with implementing teaching and research teams in turnaround schools. These include low teacher motivation and low technology standards in the turnaround schools. Wang (2012) also noted some other problems, including low participation rates from teachers, lack of innovation in the approach, lack of actual implementation, lack of data, poor assessment, and lack of guidance from experts. Ye (2013) stressed teachers' morality, theory implementation, the developing research skills, and managing and encouraging team innovation are important directions for future development.

Implementing School-Based Research

In recent years, school-based research has been the main organizational learning phenomenon in the Chinese education field. The main purpose of this kind of school-based research is to improve teaching behavior, strengthen teaching ability, and help teachers to become lifelong learners and schools to become learning organizations, with the aim of improving the whole teaching level. In the countryside, there are huge challenges for implementing school-based research. This has led to the rise of joint research. This research follows the "Two, Three, and Two" Management Mode. Two liaisons mean that two school principals connect with each other, and directors in two schools are closely connected.

Two-track management mainly refers to the growth of teachers and overall growth. There are also different methods for conducting school-based research: (1) the self-dependent research model; (2) problem-based research; and (3) companion learning.

Gu and Ruan (2007) investigated the different strategies used in school-based research activities and their results. They found that school-based research is an effective way to encourage teachers' education research and implementation, strengthen their professional skills, and raise their classroom education quality. They stated that school-based research is a system for utilizing teachers' knowledge for better teaching and learning and better individual and collective development. They suggested that the initial phase of school-based research

requires regulations and rules in order to ensure the research attains planned objectives. These regulations could guide the research habits of the teacher team and eventually become written guidelines. School-based research could also act as a mechanism for coordinating participants' education vision. School-based research is an innovative process which changes according to school development, curriculum development, and teacher professional requirements. Gu and Ruan (2007) also stressed that the involvement of different schools, ministries, and professional agencies could create a collective culture of school-based research. Liu (2015) suggested joint school-based research between two schools, creating a close and cooperative force between them for research. It is stressed that the most important part of school-based research is that teachers use research methods to improve their instruction and practice professional development through research. Joint school school-based research needs special communication, supervision, and management systems, as Liu suggested.

Improving Teacher Quality

Zhong, Yang, and Xu (2001) found that teachers from turnaround schools and rural schools have relatively weak educational backgrounds, generally lower instructional quality, and fewer opportunities to participate in professional development. In order to improve teacher quality, it is important to provide training for teachers. Zhong, Yang, and Xu suggested onsite training for teachers in turnaround schools or rural schools. This kind of training would include on-the-job training for teachers in education theory and education methods in order for them to become qualified teachers. To implement this training, a mechanism could be set up containing a continuing education center for guiding and organizing training, delivering training information, and providing a platform for sharing experiences. An advisory committee could also be set up to give suggestions throughout the process and the right person should be appointed to provide audition and assessment. Zhong, Yang, and Xu suggested that training should be menu-driven, and contain education theories, subject knowledge, and a professional education curriculum. They suggested expert teacher workshops, professional skills courses, intensive summer training, and high quality teaching resources and experts in schools as training modes. These expert teachers have good theoretical and practical knowledge and also good social, organizational,

and technical skills. Y. R. Wang (2014) also suggested the development of a platform for teachers to communicate and exchange and the involvement of principals in observing and assessing classroom instruction. Additionally, it was suggested to develop regulations to manage teachers, encouraging early career teacher development, strengthening communications between teachers among different districts, and encouraging teachers' self-reflection and participation in research.

On the other hand, Chen (2014) analyzed problems in the professionalization of teachers in turnaround schools. It is stated that these teachers lack sufficient professional knowledge. The teachers' professional attitudes also need to be improved. It is suggested that school-based curriculum could improve the professionalization of turnaround school teachers. Through the development and implementation of school curriculum in turnaround schools, teachers would be able to participate in education research and reform, which is an effective way to improve teachers' quality.

Providing Career Guidance to Teachers

Zhang (2015) stated that the Chinese government should change its methods of education planning and management. It is suggested that the Chinese government should provide more independence to schools and refrain from micro-managing education activities. Instead, principals' education knowledge and their passion should be emphasized. Also, the organizations' sense of mission, accomplishment, and belonging should also be stressed. The sense of mission is a more sustainable motivator for education philosophy and school effectiveness. Additionally, Jiang and Li (2011) also stated a number of dimensions relevant to developing teacher teams. These include attracting more high quality students to become teachers, setting up criteria for hiring teachers, setting up teacher recruitment systems, enforcing teachers' job morality, encouraging teachers' professional development, setting up a career development and training system, setting up an assessment system for teachers' teaching quality, focusing on teachers' salary and benefit issues which are related to their daily lives, developing a teachers' mobility system, and creating a teachers' retirement mechanism. All these issues are closely related to the development of teacher teams and individual teachers' career development.

Changing Teachers' Attitudes in the Process of Turning around Schools

Tan (2014) discusses teachers' psychology in turnaround schools which are located in special areas combining rural and urban features. This kind of turnaround school also has limited educational resources and hardware facilities. They also have a complicated teaching staff structure, unstable teaching teams, poor professional skills, weak students, and unsatisfied parents. These difficulties in school and teacher development have negative effects on teachers' psychology. They might feel inferior and frustrated, muddle along, and lack professional development. In order to combat this kind of negative psychology, it is suggested that leaders should provide enough care for teachers' psychology, distribute appropriate workloads, and care about teachers' professional development. The importance of teacher unions and teachers' healthy psychology and social lives are also stressed. Developing more research activities for teachers could also enhance their professional development.

In establishing resource sharing and reasonable education resource mobility in the region, and making an effort to build up reasonable mobility in intellectual mobility, it will be beneficial to have elite teachers and excellent teachers in certain regions. The modern education forum is the excellent resource for public use.

Strategy 4: Pay Attention to Student Growth

Student growth has been the focus of transforming turnaround schools, and in this regard, education authorities mainly take measures in amending student enrollment policy and paying more attention to student comprehensive development.

Amending Student Enrollment Policy

The problem of "school choice" violates fairness in compulsory education. This has led to inequity in educational opportunity and this has had negative effects on basic education in China. According to Ren (2009), "school choice" in compulsory education focuses on a common practice which violates the policy requiring students to attend a nearby school. This is usually done through money

and power. Some students also pay a higher school fee and study in private schools. This is also another form of “school choice.” For high school, “school choice” refers to primary school graduates who are enrolled in secondary schools due not to academic merit but to other factors. It is stated students who pay higher school fees have lower grades during enrollment. This is also another form of “school choice.”

It is suggested in Liu (2000) that a number of policies should be taken up by the Chinese government in order to ensure fairness in education. First, schools should ensure that they have enough funds to support compulsory education. They should only charge reasonable fees to students in the non-compulsory education phase. Second, transforming turnaround schools could reduce differences between schools and reduce the incentives of students and parents to choose schools. Moreover, along with the improvement in education quality, more variety in forms of education could be proposed to provide platforms for students to develop their own talent. Third, government should strengthen their management and regulations on “school choice” including the development of standards related to choosing school, strengthening the control on schools’ enrollment regulations, clarify fee related to “school choice” allowing schools to organize enrollment exams, and requiring schools to ensure fairness in enrollment and provide detailed enrollment information and statistics to the public.

Wang and Yu (2006) described in detail the quota allocation system for secondary school enrollment in Tongling city in Anhui province. The reform in enrollment and graduate distribution system could allow primary school graduates to be able to enrolled in nearby counterpart secondary schools and impose strict control on “choosing” students. Furthermore, the enrollment index distribution in high schools could couple with middle school education comprehensive results to improve the weak student enrollment in turnaround schools. In 2005 in Tongling city, the education bureau distributed 60 % of the provincial-level model high school’s enrollment quota to various middle schools. This significantly reduced the pressure of academic competition between various middle schools and provided greater development freedom for turnaround schools. This policy has also considered fairness during implementation. Students from turnaround schools would not be given a quota if they had a significantly low grade. In Tongling city, schools located at the outer ring of the

city and urban turnaround schools experienced significant increases in their number of students. The stable number of students provided a lot of confidence to teachers and increased their sense of connection to their schools and motivated their passion for work.

Focusing on Student All-Around Development

Zhang (2004) argues that it is feasible to carry out problem-based learning in turnaround schools in order to facilitate student learning, and this kind of strategy will be an effective way to turn around the schools and improve learning and teaching in schools. Student development is another important issue in transforming turnaround schools.

As a typical example, Zheng (2012) said that students from No. 7 Middle School were all students who had not secured places at other schools. All the students' families were poor or the students were lacking in parental control. Both class and academic performance were poor. For a turnaround school like No.7 Middle School, improving the students' quality was an urgent affair. In another study, Qiao (2011) analyzed the causes of underachievement and suggested strategies that would help. The causes of underachievement are as follows: family members' education level, occupation, income and discipline methods; the location of the school; the teachers' quality; and the students' autonomy. Chen (2013) pointed out that students' differences are important educational resources; the educator needs to respect their individual differences. Furthermore, Liang (2015) made some suggestions on how students in turnaround schools could improve their knowledge and grades in mathematics. It is stated that the "hardware" and "software" shortage in turnaround schools has restrained its education quality. So it is necessary for students to use correct learning methods in order to raise learning standards and improve education quality. Liang (2015) raised suggestions in a study plan, for active previews before class to strengthen learning outcomes. Li (2008) investigated the design of mathematics teaching material in one Beijing secondary school. It is stated that although teaching material is only one of the components of the curriculum, it is important to consider students' background in developing the material and utilize and design each lesson appropriately. Li (2008) investigated the mathematics teaching material design in turnaround school by studying the objective, learning

status, teaching material, teaching and learning method, teaching protocol and teaching and learning feedback in one Beijing secondary school.

School leaders should make efforts to cultivate students' civil habits, improve their confidence and develop their gratitude (Li, R. L., 2003; Qiao, 2011; Zheng, 2012; Luo, 2012; Wang & Ma, 2012; Zhao, 2012; Yang, 2012). Jiang (2012) pointed out that during students' development, the school can focus on three beliefs to change the students. For cultivating students' social habits, school leaders can pay attention to the students' clothing, behavior and manners. The life guidance teacher can act as a mother to teach the students how to take care of themselves. The class teacher can show the students how to do cleaning and use tools. The school can conduct an "uncivilized words and deeds" activity to educate and warn the students; also it can build up a system of rewards to promote civilized behavior. One important thing which needs attention is removing students from the inferior student list. All these efforts have made students feel that school is like a warm family and resulted in an improvement in students' social habits and confidence (Zheng, 2012). Qiao (2011) and Chen (2013) also suggested working with the community, the family and the whole class to help underachievers in ways such as increasing the frequency of home visits.

Yao (2014) studied the psychological barrier of high school students in learning mathematics under the recent curriculum reform. Many students faced difficulties because the material was expanded and deepened. The flexibility of the high school mathematics curriculum has led to some positive and negative psychology of students. Positive psychology could enhance their learning motivation but negative psychology weakens students' capability in handling the learning materials. The high school case studied by Yao (2014) was a weak school with a relatively weak student body. Students had weak foundational knowledge of the subject, poor learning habits, and low self-confidence and emotional status regarding the learning of mathematics. They had a strong sense of failure and negative feelings towards learning. Teachers in this school had the responsibility to understand students' psychology and help them gain confidence in order to overcome their learning barriers and maintain a healthy learning psychology. Additionally, C. Wang, (2014) investigated students' oral presentation skills in one turnaround secondary school. Their weaknesses were mainly shown in the use of language style, language organization skill, and

public presentation skill. Moreover, many teachers in rural turnaround schools only focus on reading and writing in language education but ignore the training of speaking. Students have few speaking opportunities in class.

Challenges in Improving Chinese Turnaround Schools

Although there are huge achievements in the process of transforming turnaround schools, challenges are still ahead for the diverse endeavors. Li (2004c) argues that the imbalanced development of education is an ongoing problem in society. Additionally, the contradiction between divergence and people's need for quality education has become increasingly urgent. Under the dual economic system (rural and urban), the majority of the investment went to key schools, and it was rather difficult for the government to ensure that all schools were high quality schools. Therefore, in the long run, the scarcity of educational funds will continue to exist. Furthermore, there is a contradiction between efficiency and justice. The turnaround school phenomenon is a relative concept since they will still emerge after key schools were developed. There is also a contradiction between the application of market mechanisms in education and the development of turnaround schools. Although many policies have been implemented to ensure the normal operation of turnaround schools, this phenomenon will endure. As for funding, the market mechanism is a cause of imbalanced development. Finally, Li (2004c) argues that there is problem with the current teacher management system since excellent teaching resources are assigned to the key schools, a situation that is hard to change. It will take quite a while for turnaround schools to be successful since it really takes a while for a school to become successful, although the facilities have already reached a certain standard. In practice, the governmental evaluation only focuses on facilities instead of internal management, which hinders the opportunities for turnaround schools to develop (Li, Y. X., 2005).

Strategy 5: Facilitating Collaboration with the Community

The power of an individual school is insufficient, so it is necessary to work with communities including local school communities, universities and families.

The Chinese government takes action to build up the relationship between key schools and turnaround schools, and makes an effort to change turnaround schools. The assumption of the Chinese government is to emphasize the roles of basic education, and build up a relationship between key schools and turnaround schools. The support from key schools includes school management, teaching support, teacher quality management, and facilities of schools, which are the basic channels for schools to collaborate (Wang, Y. Q., 2014).

Moreover, supporting education is one of the main transformational efforts of turnaround school. There are two main categories of supporting education. The first is instructional demonstration and concentrated training, which allow turnaround school teachers to learn in resource rich areas through observing in lessons. The second is personnel distribution, which ensures that high quality teachers teach in turnaround schools. These kinds of supporting education are all conducted in the form of collaboration between schools. In Han's (2010) case investigation, two secondary schools in Ningbo have collaborated for three years consecutively. They collaborated in the following way: A turnaround school sent a class of 45 students with their main subject teachers to a better quality school for a year. This group of students was taught by teachers in the other school with their original teachers observing in class. The original teachers were also responsible for some of the teaching duty in the second half of the year. Han (2010) aimed to investigate the nature of the culture exchange in this kind of collaboration. It was found that this kind of collaboration created better results than the traditional form of supporting education, which sent high quality teachers to turnaround schools. In this case of collaboration, students from the turnaround school, who went on exchanges with the other school, showed great improvement in learning habits and were significantly affected by the other schools' culture. They showed great appreciation for the other school's management style, teaching methods and teachers' passion. For teachers from turnaround schools, they are also impressed by the sense of responsibility and teaching method and education vision of the other school's teacher. However, it was found that students needed time to adapt to each others' school culture. This adjustment was felt to perhaps even have a negative impact on some students. They may experience reduced self-confidence because of the different school culture. The small number of teachers in this exchange could not bring about a significant influence on the school culture as a whole. Han (2010) also stressed

the importance of school culture in creating turnaround schools and the strong effect of culture exchange in inter-school collaboration.

Luo (2014) discussed the issues of building up a relationship between turnaround schools and universities. The Chinese government makes an effort to build up close connections between university and local turnaround schools. Henan province provides a lead in this regard for the purpose of improving the situation of turnaround schools. They took the following measures to establish close relationships between higher education institutes and turnaround schools, including a double tutor system, in which higher education teachers guided teachers in turnaround schools in education innovation and research. Guiding teachers in turnaround schools could provide guidance for pre-service teachers.

Building Up the Family Relationship

Family and society are the most important factors influencing school education. It can be said that the geographic situation of schools, cultural atmosphere, economic development level, and residency situation are external development issues. In particular, in the Chinese content, the rate of urbanization is about 54 %, and the compulsory education rate is about 72 %, which signifies the influence of communities. For example, a district where rich people live will attract better schools, which is completely the opposite for districts where poor people live.

Conclusion

The transformation of turnaround schools in China has gained great success in recent years. This article has analyzed reasons for Chinese government to turnaround failing schools. It is found that social factors, external and internal reasons are significant influencers. Equity issues are found to be key factors for the Chinese government to take action.

Additionally, this article has constructed a conceptual framework from the literature. These pieces of literature are based on schools in the Western context and the ten strategies discussed are found to be effective in transforming turnaround schools. Based on this analysis, five turnaround school strategies of the Chinese government are discussed in this paper. These strategies have been

adopted in China in recent years and they have been extensively discussed in the literature. The five strategies are: macro-policies, main transformation models, personnel in turnaround schools, student development, and community relationships. Each of these strategies has been shown to be able to produce successful results in transforming turnaround schools. Collaboration between leading schools and turnaround schools, for example, could provide sufficient support for turnaround schools' development. Different modes could be adopted, such as teaching and research team collaboration, and on-the-job training for teachers. Social support could also improve turnaround schools significantly. Making connections between principals, teachers, and other staff within and outside schools could develop turnaround schools' social capital and provide significant support to them during the turnaround process.

Although turnaround school transformation has achieved huge success in China, in practice, lack of sufficient funds, insufficient concern for turnaround schools from society, and out-of-date management ideology still hinder their further improvement. Further policy development in financing, staffing, and student enrollment could also be improved to increase the effectiveness of transforming turnaround schools.

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