

## The Leadership of Banzhuren in Chinese School: Based on the Sample Survey in Changzhou City of China

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### Abstract

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The leadership quality of teachers is highlighted by researchers both in China and internationally. Banzhuren, a very particular category of teacher in Chinese schools, is the leader of teachers and the key person responsible for developing the whole community of students by classrooming. In Chinese schools, the leadership quality of banzhuren is also highly demanded. This study aims to explore and describe the characteristics of leadership of banzhurens in Chinese schools by investigating and comparing teachers' and students' experiences and perceptions regarding the banzhuren's work. Empirical data were collected using teacher and student surveys in the form of a questionnaire in 10 schools in Changzhou city. The results indicate that the majority of banzhurens have a direct and positive influence on students' everyday lives and good relationships with other adults. However, communication between the banzhuren and students and training of student leaders need to be improved. Banzhurens' leadership and their work are integrated and comprehensive. The leadership of the banzhuren is a long-term construction that calls for strategies to develop and cultivate banzhuren leadership.

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**Keywords:** banzhuren, banzhuren leadership, class and student community, student and teacher survey

### 1. Introduction

In October 2011, the last author of this paper attended an announcement activity for Teach for America at Vanderbilt University. Teach for America is a growing movement of leaders who work to ensure that kids growing up in poverty get an excellent education. It looks for individuals who show leadership potential and have other traits that are found in the most successful teachers. The leadership quality of teachers is highlighted by Teach for America. The organization's ideas and values are also related to and inspired by research of school reform, professional learning communities, and the belief that everyone has the potential and right to work as a leader (Fullan, 1993; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Owen, 2007).

When visiting Chinese schools, one American principal wrote as follows:

"We talked at dinner about the state of Confucian traditions in current Chinese pedagogy, about commonalities between Dewey and Confucius, and about the importance of a role in Chinese schools that has no equal in the U.S. This person is a kind of general advisor, perhaps a classroom teacher for part of the day but more importantly a constant presence outside the classroom for the 40, 50, or 60 students in a typical Chinese classroom group. The revered figure in this role loops with the same group for several years in many cases, knowing each student and helping the whole group wherever and whenever they need, on and well beyond the campus. Our hosts pointed to that role as crucial in the experience of students" (Durnan, 2013, para. 6).

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This person is the Chinese *banzhuren*, similar to a U.S. home-classroom teacher, advisor, or counselor, but actually very different. The *banzhuren* is the leader of teachers and the key person responsible for developing the whole community of students. In China, educators regard their work as *classrooming*, similar to schooling or teaching but with different resources and methods (Li & Chen, 2013). Firstly, the *banzhuren* and students spend time together in the same class. In the Chinese school system, the class is an important unit/organization. All teaching, learning, and other activities happen in the class or are based on the class (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2009). The classmates always spend the days together for years. All the students and the *banzhuren* have responsibilities to develop the class community. It is also a social space, where students and the *banzhuren* have close relationships, communication, and cooperation. The rich everyday lives in the class provide students with the opportunities to learn and to be socialized (Li, 2014). Secondly, the *banzhuren* always accompanies the students for several years. Therefore, as the key person, the *banzhuren* is responsible for the all-around development of all students. The *banzhuren* is supposed to focus on the management and development of daily lives of the class (Ban, 2010b; Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2009). Thirdly, the *banzhuren* is also a subject teacher who is expected to carry out teaching and classrooming while cooperating and communicating with other teachers. Moreover, a *banzhuren* needs to have contact with the parents or other social partners (Li, 2015a). The *banzhuren* plays an important role in school management and the relationship between school and society. All of these relationships and responsibilities constitute *banzhuren* leadership.

This study intends to introduce the concept of a *banzhuren*, describe the work of a *banzhuren*, and explore the characteristics of leadership of *banzhurens* in Chinese schools. The following questions are put forward:

- 1) What is included in a *banzhuren's* work?
- 2) How do teachers and students perceive the leadership of a *banzhuren*?
- 3) What are the challenges and strategies for improvement of *banzhuren* leadership?

## 2. Research Review and Theoretical Framework

Teacher-leadership research was orientated in the 1980s in relation to the exploration of American educational reform regarding teacher specialization (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Over the past 30 years, international research on teacher leadership has been booming, which also attracts the attention of Chinese researchers.

### 2.1 Teachers as Leaders and Teacher Leadership

*Teacher leadership* refers to expertise and skills demonstrated by teachers in taking critical responsibilities in teaching and learning and in mobilizing and engaging others in the educational practice within and beyond the classroom with the goal of improving school performance and development (Danielson, 2006; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Lieberman & Miller, 2005; Silins & Mulford, 2004). Meredith (2000) suggests a *REACH* model to characterize teacher leadership. *REACH* stands for *Risk taking, Effectiveness, Autonomy, Collegiality, and Honor*. It is argued that these elements together equal the type of performance of ideal teacher-leaders as they demonstrate in their classrooms, their schools, and their professional learning communities. Other research also supports multiple dimensions of teacher leadership, such as developmental focus, collaboration with colleagues, being recognized, autonomy, positive environment, open communication, and participation, in which positive environment, open communication, and autonomy are regarded as the dominant dimensions of teacher leadership (Ngang, Abdulla, & Mey, 2010).

Based on classroom studies at three public elementary schools, Triska (2007) found that students' success and contact, initiating and risk taking, reliability, focus on collaboration, and traditional leadership are regarded as the most important elements related to teacher leadership behaviors. According to Harris (2003), *teacher-leader* refers to both formal and informal roles in the classroom and in school. Informal roles comprise classroom-related functions, including planning, communicating goals, and regulating activities. Formal roles entail specific positions such as head of department and coordinator of teacher team, positions that function collegially at the school level beyond the classroom.

## 2.2 Teacher Leadership Research in China

During recent years, enlightened from international research and practice within this field, Chinese scholars have been trying to tease out and introduce the rationale and theories of teacher leadership (Guo, 2011; Liu & Liu, 2007), and emphasize analyzing and discussing the challenges and influence factors of the development of Chinese teacher leadership (Chen, 2009; Long & Chen, 2010). Inspired by the West, Chinese educators have become more aware and confident with teacher leadership in the Chinese education context. Furthermore, after the positive outcomes demonstrated by Shanghai students in PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) 2009 and 2012, the West is now looking for good experiences and examples from Chinese school education to adopt in its own education system (GOV.UK, 2014). The state of Tennessee in the United States, for instance, is borrowing and learning the models of Shanghai teachers' *Jiaoyanzu*<sup>4</sup> and *Beikezu*<sup>5</sup>, which are the typical organizations that develop Chinese teacher's leadership (Brasher, 2013).

Wu (2008) pointed out that teacher leadership should not be considered mandatory but rather as a process of guiding and coordinating members to complete tasks and reach the goals of an organization. Teachers, as individuals or as a collective, can affect their colleagues, principals, and other members of school organizations in this process and in doing so improve teaching and students' learning. According to Du (2010), teacher leadership also reveals teachers' participation in decision-making and their influence to their peers. All teachers have the potential, right, and responsibility to be leaders.

As for the definition of teacher leadership, Chinese researchers also have their own understanding based on special circumstances in the Chinese context in terms of the education system, school organization and culture, and pedagogical premise. In a modern sense, teacher leadership includes competences to influence teacher peers through professional proficiency, moral authority, and emotions by participating in decision-making and managing daily teaching in a collaborative environment where learning and sharing organizational culture are emphasized. Teacher leadership is formed in the process of mutual learning and guidance among colleagues and is reflected by taking part in school management, formulating daily activities, and constructing school culture with school leaders (Li, 2010). Besides the theoretical understanding, researchers also focus on practice, such as the construction of the teacher post, which is provided for teachers to bear leading responsibilities in formal or informal organizations (Li, 2013a).

However, studies on teacher leadership in China are still new in coming to the research area and contain some limitations and disadvantages in methodology, research design, and defining research objects. Both qualitative research (Lu & Chen, 2007) and quantitative research (Hu & Gu, 2012) need more developed arguments and discussions. Some studies seem to be thin and weak, especially lacking concrete and deep analysis and reflections as well as awareness of different cultural, social, and institutional contexts between the East and West. While research on the teacher leadership of subject teachers is dominant in this field (Li, 2010; Ma, 2009), studies on the *banzhuren*s as the key people in Chinese schools and their role and responsibility in the classroom and school are scarce.

## 2.3 Banzhuren as a Leader in Chinese Schools

In Chinese schools, the leadership quality of a *banzhuren* is highly demanded, which is different from the abilities of management. According to Collins (2006), "Social institutions are learning more from commercial organizations about leadership models and styles, but I suspect that we can find more real leadership in social institutions" (p. 29). Owen (2007) explicitly points out that "Management is to adapt to existing state. However, leadership is creative, that's why our times need leadership. Nowadays, the model has changed, which needs more leadership" (p.97). Based on the differences between management abilities and leadership, a *banzhuren* is an irreplaceable leader, just like a principal. The leadership of a *banzhuren* mainly includes the following four aspects:

First, a *banzhuren* is the leader of student groups. In China's primary and junior high schools, the *banzhuren* is undoubtedly the most important person (Li, 2012). Without a high level of leadership, the *banzhuren* will have difficulty coping with the complicated challenges of class lives, having influence on and promoting individual students' development, and contributing to the development of student groups and organizations.

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<sup>4</sup>*Jiaoyanzu* refers to the department (or team) for all teachers who teach the same subject in the school. There are always some *Beikezus* in the *Jiaoyanzu*.

<sup>5</sup>*Beikezu* refers to the department (or team) of the teachers who teach the same subjects in the same grade or some grades. It is the sub-organization of the *Jiaoyanzu*.

In the activities organized by the banzhuren, students can have opportunities to observe and learn from banzhuren leadership as well as get guidance for improving their own leadership in the process of cooperating with the banzhuren (Li, 2012).

Second, the banzhuren is the leader of the class system. The internal organization of Chinese schools is holistic. In Dewey's opinion, the school should be organized in a new way: "It gets a chance to be a miniature community, and embryonic society" (Dewey, 1959, p. 18). From an internal perspective, there are not only relationships between banzhurens and students but also relationships among students in the class. From an external perspective, the banzhuren also communicates and cooperates with other subject teachers, school leaders, educational institutions, parents, and related social organizations (Li, 2010; Li, Zhang, & Gu, 2012). In the sense of leadership, the banzhuren is the leader of class system and is responsible for planning, coordinating, and communicating with many different people.

Third, banzhuren leadership and a banzhuren's work are comprehensive and integrated. Education is present in life, especially in the lives of teachers and students (Li, 2012). Classroom life, including communication between classmates, relationships between students and teachers, establishment of class groups and teams, management of class meetings, formation of class culture and so on, constitutes the resources for students' development and reflects obvious educational meaning (Li, 2015a). In this sense, as the important organizer or leader of classroom life, the banzhuren is also considered to be an indispensable educator.

Fourth, the development of leadership of the banzhuren is a long-term process with a focus on continually promoting the development of the class community and all individual students. Making comprehensive plans for the whole semester and organizing, reflecting, and reconstructing related theme activities are included in a banzhuren's work (Ban, 2010a; Li, 2013b). In short, the banzhuren will experience the process of class construction from creation to development and propel the class' lives with the maturing students.

### 3. Method

This study is a sub-study of the key research program of the Institute of Schooling Reform and Development at East China Normal University, "Research on the Reconstruction of Classroom Everyday Life and Development of Students in Compulsory Education." In this article, banzhuren leadership in Chinese schools is studied from the teachers' and students' perspectives, aiming to find out the levels of their experiences of the banzhuren's work and their perceptions of the characteristics of banzhuren leadership.

#### 3.1 Research Design and Data Collection

We conducted a survey during May and June 2012 in Changzhou City. The survey included student and banzhuren questionnaires. The questionnaires were designed by the last author of this paper based on the experiments carried out in Chinese classrooms over a longer period of time and the reflections and critical thinking regarding them (Bu & Li, 2013; Li, Wang, & Li, 2009). Both questionnaires began with questions regarding background information (such as class, grade, and gender), and contained three main themes: educational expectation, practice of class construction and activities, and relationships between the banzhuren and students and with other adults. There was an additional theme for teachers regarding issues of internal teacher-support systems within the school.

The questionnaires consisted of single- and multiple-choice questions, rating-scales questions, and rankings with both open- and closed-ended questions. Ordinal rating-scale questions provided statements regarding the respondents' five degrees of agreement from *totally agree* to *totally disagree*. Rankings with both open- and closed-ended questions provided the respondents the opportunity to rank the order of their responses based on the importance or priority assigned by them to some attitudinal objectives (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). The questionnaires were distributed in 10 schools, including elementary (N=5) and junior high schools (N=5), which were suggested by the local government considering of the developmental state, geographic area, and school size targeted to involve varied samples that represent as many different circumstances as possible to provide a general picture of the research objectives (Bryman, 2008). A total of 2,170 students (N=2,170) and 176 banzhuren (N=176) responded to the questionnaires. Tables 1 and 2 present the demographic information of the respondents.

**Table 1: Demographic Information of Banzhuren Questionnaire<sup>6</sup>**

Contents	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	26	14.8%
	Female	150	85.2%
Grade	One	8	4.5%
	Two	6	3.4%
	Three	14	8%
	Four	18	10.2%
	Five	17	9.7%
	Six	20	11.4%
	Seven	39	22.2%
	Eight	40	22.7%
	Nine	13	7.4%

**Table 2: Demographic Information of Student Questionnaire<sup>7</sup>**

Contents	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	1159	53.4%
	Female	1007	46.4%
Grade	Four	507	23.4%
	Five	373	17.2%
	Six	441	20.3%
	Seven	417	19.2%
	Eight	429	19.8%

During May and June 2012, the researchers visited the 10 schools in Changzhou City, and distributed the questionnaires in paper form to the students before lunchtime with the help of their banzhurens. The sample classes were the first and the last class from Grades 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. Students from Grades 1, 2, and 3 were not selected because they might not have the capacity to understand the questions in the questionnaire or to answer the questions on their own. The students from Grade 9 were not involved in the survey because they were very busy with preparing for the high-school entrance examination at that time. Different classes carried out the survey on different occasions; some classes completed it after they had lunches, and some conducted it during the class meeting time in the afternoon.<sup>8</sup> It took about 15–20 minutes for the students to finish the survey. The questionnaires were gathered by the researchers from each school after they were completed. With the help of the principals, the banzhuren questionnaires in paper form were distributed to the banzhurens from Grades 1 to 9 in these 10 schools, which covered all of the sample classrooms, and also other banzhurens who were available in the morning when the questionnaires were distributed. The teachers filled in the questionnaires during the last two lessons in the mornings, and the questionnaires were gathered directly by the researchers afterward.<sup>9</sup>

### 3.2 Data Analysis and Ethical Consideration

We adopted a descriptive statistics approach to measure and analyze the main data from the survey. A number of analytical strategies and functions such as frequency and percentage in SPSS 19.0 are used to measure and interpret different types of data, including single- and multiple-choice questions, rating-scales questions, and ranking questions. When analyzing and presenting the results from the survey, we compared a number of students' and teachers' responses that dealt with the same topics in order to show the similarities and/or differences in their experiences and perceptions. The questionnaires were anonymous, which means that no individual could be identified. We also guaranteed the confidentiality of the schools—all samples were measured and analyzed as a whole, and no names of the schools were given.

<sup>6</sup> Within the 176 banzhurens, one banzhuren did not answer the question of grade.

<sup>7</sup> Within the 2,170 students, four students missed the question of gender and three students missed the question of grade.

<sup>8</sup> The classes usually have a 40-minute class meeting every week.

<sup>9</sup> From July 2012 to January 2013, the data were collected by the second and last authors of this paper. Data analysis was carried out from 2014–2015 by all three authors.

### 4. Major Findings

Based on the definition and the empirical data, the development status of banzhuren leadership can be described from the following three main aspects: the influence of the banzhuren on students' daily lives, the relationship between the banzhuren and other adults, and support for development and improvement of banzhuren leadership.

#### 4.1 The Influence on Students' Daily Lives

The influence of banzhuren leadership on students' everyday lives can be reflected in planning class activities, student organizations, classroom environment decoration, and involvement of class activities. The class' activity plan is very important for the class not only for the improvement of students' participation in the classroom activities, but also for leading to new developmental objectives for the class.

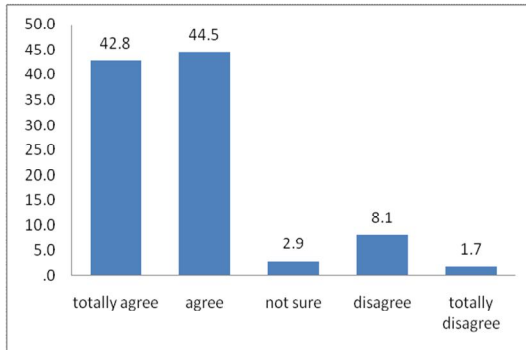


Figure 1. At the beginning of the semester, I will inform or discuss with students about the plans of this semester (N=173)

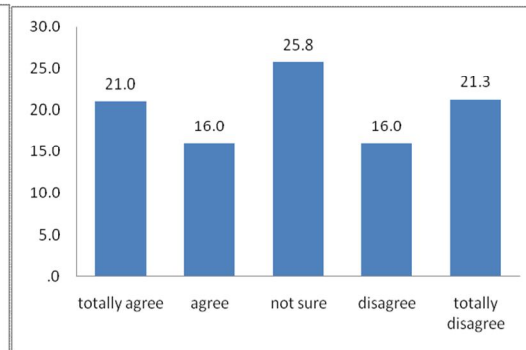


Figure 2. I know the plans of this semester in the beginning of semester (N=2154)

While 87.3% of the banzhurens reported that they would inform or discuss with students about the plans for the whole semester at the beginning of semester (see Figure 1), only 36% of the students agreed with this. The largest group of students chose *not sure* (25.8 %; see Figure 2). This indicates that although banzhurens think they have done this well, students do not think so.

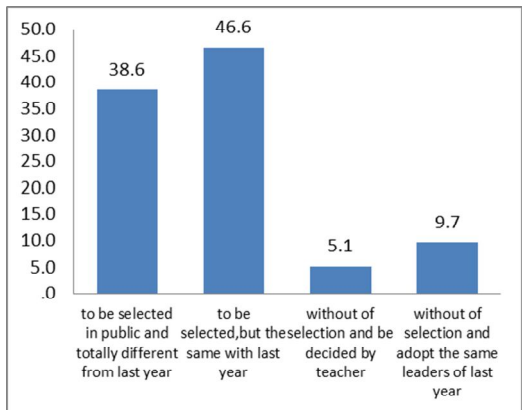


Figure 3. Selection of student leaders in this academic year (N=176)

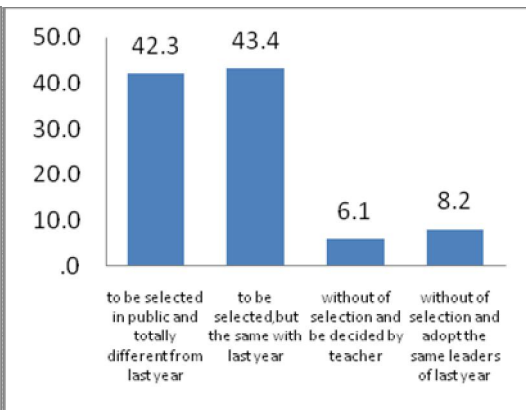


Figure 4. Selection of student leaders in this academic year (N=2163)

Considering student organizations, it should be noted that the Chinese classroom is very different from the Western classroom model. For example, the whole class may be combined into four to eight groups of students with group leaders in each. There are class clubs that may be developed from Grade 3 onward, and the class monitors responsible for different issues in the class may be elected by all students (Li, 2015b).

All student leaders are usually elected once an academic year. The data show that 85.2% of all banzhurens admitted that their student leaders are selected in public (see Figure 3), and nearly the same amount of students agreed (85.7%; see Figure 4), indicating a more democratic process regarding the selection of student leaders from both the banzhurens' and students' perspectives. However, nearly half of the banzhurens still adopted the same leaders after selection, which means not everyone had the chance to be a leader.

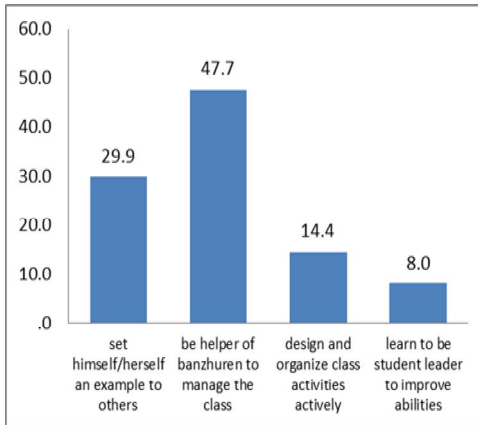


Figure 5. The expectation of student leaders in the classroom (N=174)

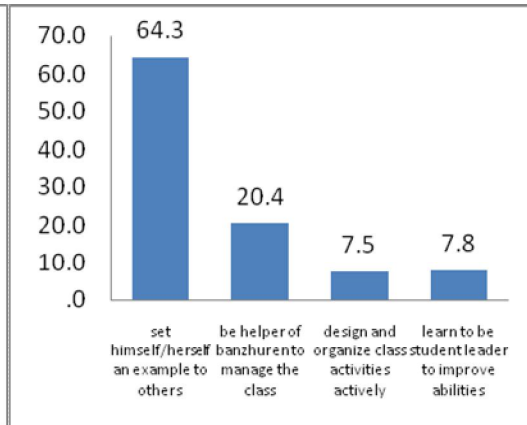


Figure 6. The expectation of student leaders in the classroom by my banzhuren (N=2166)

The results show that 47.7% of all banzhurens just wanted student leaders to be their helpers, and only 8% of the banzhurens paid attention to their leadership development (see Figure 5). However, 64.3% of students thought that the expectation of the banzhuren to the student leaders was to set a good example for other students in class (see Figure 6). This means that the banzhuren and students have different perceptions of student leaders' roles and responsibilities.

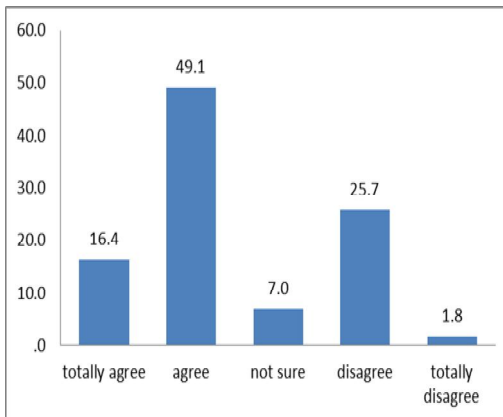


Figure 7. We have organized evaluations of student leaders many times in this academic year (N=171)

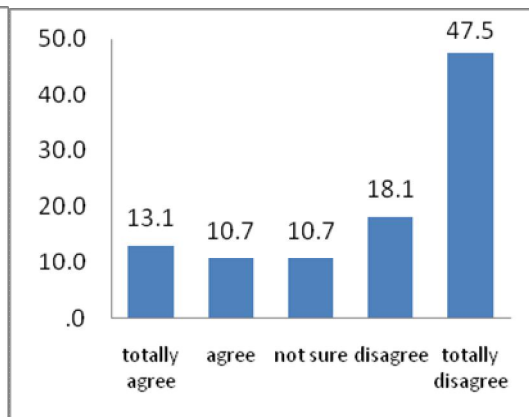


Figure 8. We have hardly organized any evaluation of student leaders in this academic year (N=2143)

Based on the data, 65.5% of the banzhurens had organized evaluations of student leaders many times within an academic year (see Figure 7), and 65.6% of the students confirmed it (see Figure 8). It seems that the evaluation of student leaders has been regularly included in the classwork routine, as perceived by both the banzhuren and students.

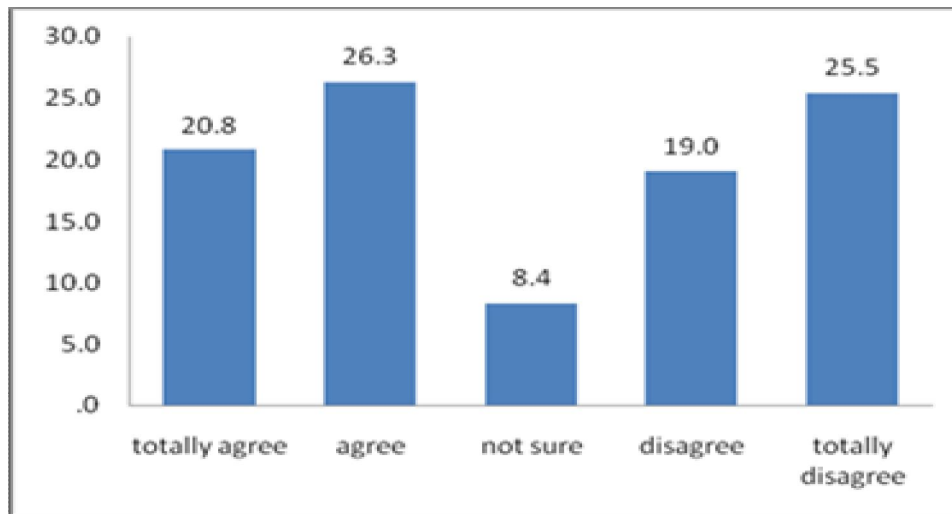


Figure 9. The rules, motto, and requirements of our class are mainly designed by the banzhuren or in accordance with demands from the school (N=2160)

Regarding the development of classroom environment, 47.1% of the students agreed that their class rules, class motto, and requirements were mainly designed by the banzhuren or in accordance with school demands while 44.5% of students disagreed with this (see Figure 9).

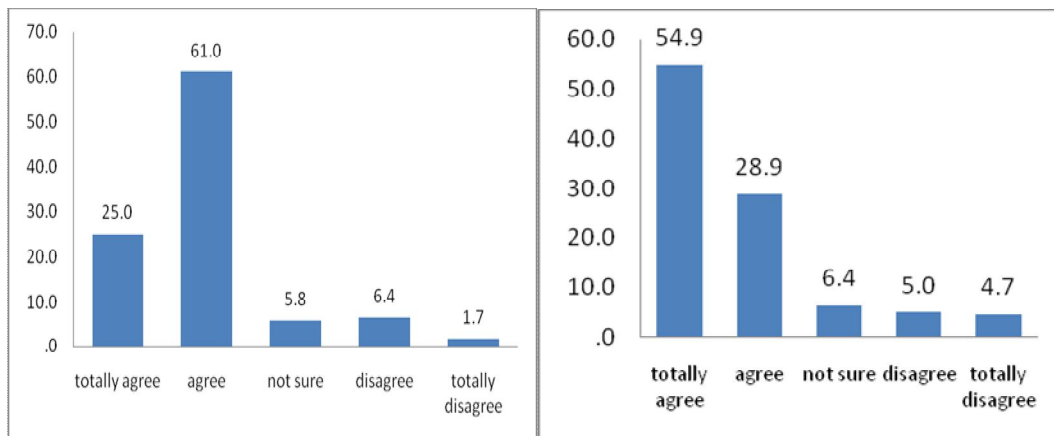


Figure 10. Class activities are always conducted through a group or team (N=172)

Figure 11. Class activities are always conducted through a group or team (N=2146)

Eighty-six percent of the banzhurens agreed that class activities were always conducted through a group or team (see Figure 10), and 83.8% of the students agreed with this as well (see Figure 11). Furthermore, students are greatly involved in class construction or activities according to the banzhurens. The data show that 77.8% of the banzhurens admitted that almost all students like and actively participate in the activities (see Figure 12). However, 52.1% of the banzhurens disagreed that their class only needed some activists and others could just participate to or cooperate with them; 37% of the banzhurens still agree with this, which means few banzhurens still feel unsatisfactory about the students' involvement in class activities (see Figure 13).



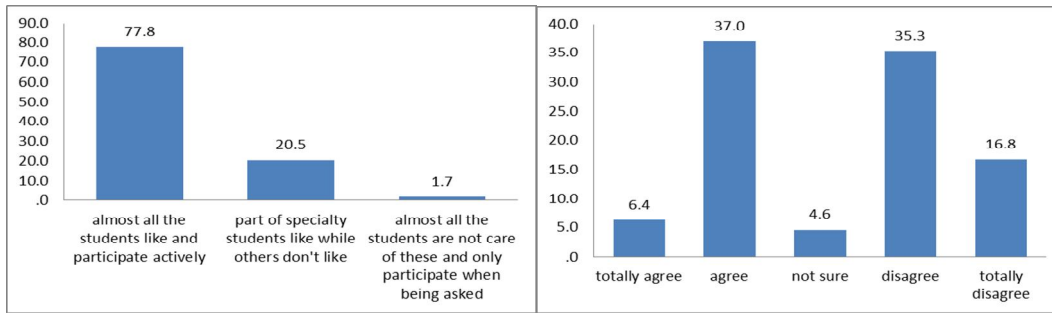


Figure 12. Students' involvement in class construction or activities (N=176)

Figure 13. Our class only needs some activists and others can just participate or cooperate with them (N=173)

**4.2 Relationship between Banzhuren and Other Adults**

Banzhuren leadership also means they should be able to deal with different kinds of relationships with other adults such as subject teachers, parents, community partners, and so on. According to the survey, 64.3% of the banzhurens confirmed that other subject teachers were concerned about or participated in class activities in that semester (see Figure 14).

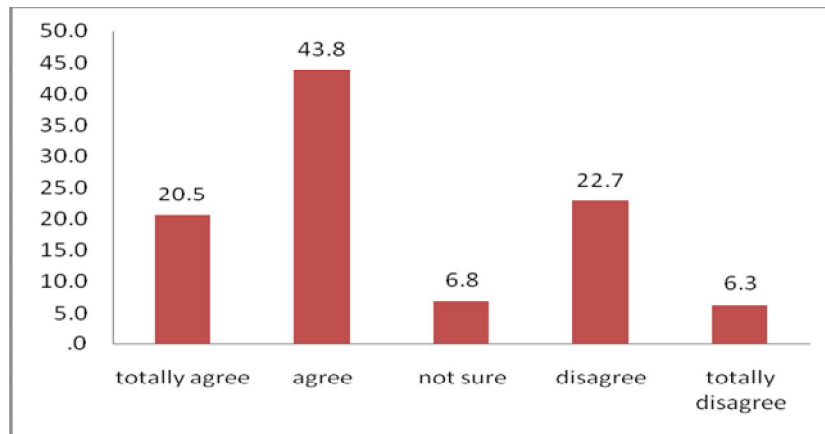


Figure 14. Other subject teachers were concerned about or participated in our class activities this semester (N=176)

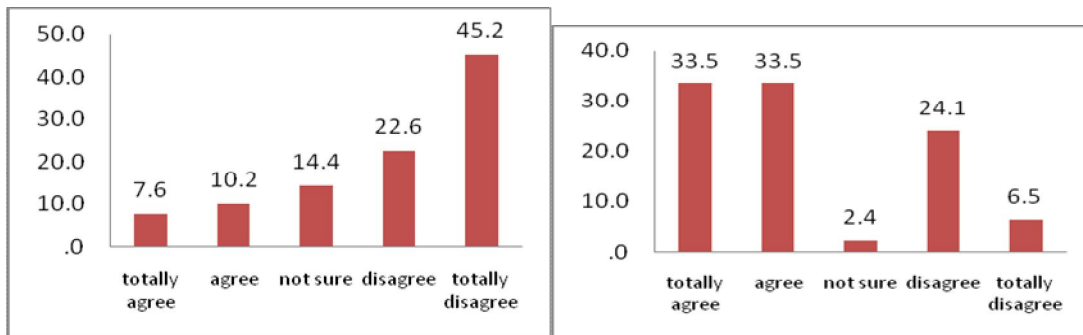


Figure 15. Banzhuren seldom contacts my parents (N=2145)

Figure 16. Community partners and parents have participated in our class activities in this academic year (N=170)

Regarding the relationship between school and family, 67.8% of the students disagreed that banzhurens seldom contact their parents (see Figure 15). Sixty-seven percent of the banzhurens claimed that community partners and parents have participated in class activities in the academic year (see Figure 16).

**4.3 Support for Development of Banzhuren Leadership**

From the survey, we also gained some information about support for the development of banzhuren leadership.

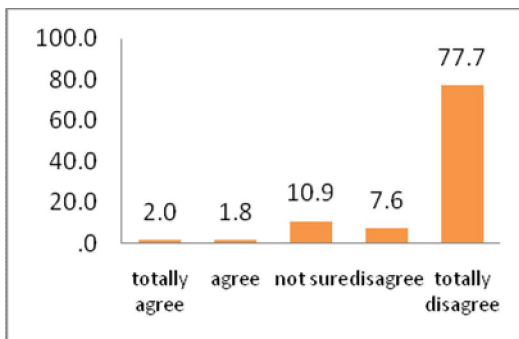


Figure 17. Our banzhuren hates to be a banzhuren (N=2153)

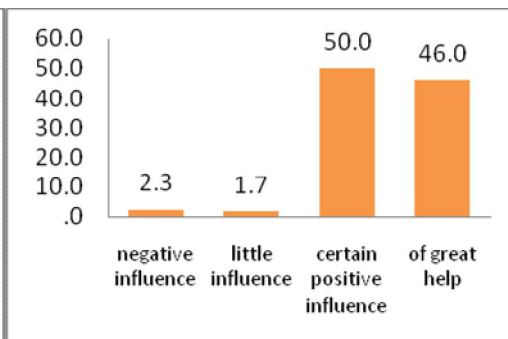


Figure 18. Influence of banzhuren work on my subject teaching (N=176)

The data show that 85.3% of the students thought that their banzhuren likes his or her job (see Figure 17). At the same time, nearly 96% of the banzhurens affirmed the positive impact of banzhuren work on their subject teaching (see Figure 18). Furthermore, banzhurens are supported greatly by school leaders and colleagues during their work; for instance, 60.2% of the banzhurens have participated more than three times in the discussion of class theme activities organized by the school (see Figure 19), and 80.1% of the banzhurens can get help with how to carry out class activities (see Figure 20).

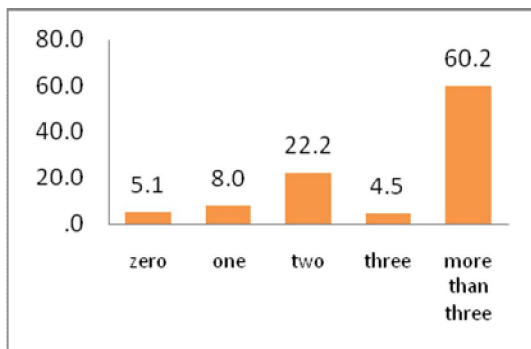


Figure 19. The frequency of my participation in the discussion of class theme activities organized by school since September 2011 (N=176)

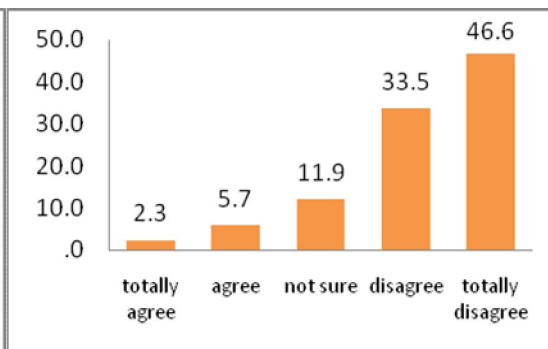


Figure 20. Nobody will tell me about how to carry out class activities in my school (N=176)

### 5. Analysis and Conclusions

In this study, the development status of banzhuren leadership was studied by looking into three main themes: the banzhuren's work in relation to the everyday lives of the class, the relationship and communication between banzhurens and students and other adults, and support for banzhuren leadership. Based on the empirical data, we find that, on the one hand, banzhurens get along well with other adults. More than half of the banzhurens confirmed that they have a quite good relationship with other subject teachers, parents, and social organizations. This may be related to school requirements, parents' attention to their children's education, and community involvement in school education. On the other hand, the direct influence of banzhuren leadership is embodied in students' daily lives. However, in this respect, there are some critical issues.

First, there are distinctions between teachers' and students' experiences regarding overall planning. The majority of the banzhurens reported that they usually inform or discuss with their students about the plans of the semester at the beginning of the semester, but most of the students have no idea about the plans. It seems that the communication between teachers and students could have some deficiencies.

Second, student leaders are important actors in a class, and the cultivation of student leaders is involved in a banzhuren's work as an important aspect of banzhuren leadership. However, the training of student leaders is somehow problematic because the teachers and the students have not reached a common understanding regarding the role orientation of student leaders and the selection of student leaders. These two issues may indicate that the banzhuren lacks awareness regarding students as subjects of classroom community, ignores communication with students, and has not developed more activities to develop student leadership. Results from the survey indicate that most banzhurens like their job and feel confident with their tasks and that students do benefit a lot from the banzhuren's work, which could be seen as the basic premise for the development of their leadership. Banzhurens claim that they are supported well in their work, which means that the cultivation of banzhuren leadership has a good external environment. Banzhurens are also good at the cultural construction and development of theme activities of the class. Banzhurens are doing well in cooperating with students to form their class's regulations, rules, and goals that the class should relate to in everyday life. The results also reveal that group work is very common and students are greatly involved in class construction and activities. To sum up, "leader" is no longer treated as a position or privilege but rather as a kind of ability and competence based on the needs of the individuals and groups. The leadership of banzhurens means that the banzhuren is the leader of student groups and the class system. The banzhurens' leadership and their work are integrated and comprehensive.

## **6. Discussion and Practical Implications**

Research on teacher leadership in general and banzhuren leadership in particular is still a scarce field in Chinese context. This study intends to introduce the concept of banzhuren, to describe the work of the banzhuren and to explore the characteristics of leadership of banzhurens in Chinese schools from banzhurens' and students' perspectives. We realize that there are some challenges in developing banzhuren leadership in Chinese schools. These challenges are identified both at institutional/school and individual levels.

### **6.1 Challenges**

The leadership of the banzhuren is a long-term construction. Challenges at the school level call for school leaders' understanding and support in relation to the banzhurens' needs in developing leadership, the emphasis on the banzhuren's role and responsibilities for the students' learning and development, and the revaluation of the educational meaning of the banzhuren's work for school improvement. The pressure from the outside world and the vulgar social and cultural values make school leaders move their attention away from developing banzhuren leadership and other educational practices (cf. Gunter, 2012). This issue also highlights the importance of the influence of teachers in general and banzhurens in particular in school decision-making and the critical nature of school leaders in developing teacher leadership (cf. Angelle & DeHart, 2011). Empowering banzhurens to share in school-wide decision-making will enhance banzhuren leadership throughout the school.

Challenges at the individual level refer to two respects. On the one hand, the professional qualities of teachers/banzhurens need to be improved. Banzhurens may lack recognition of the professionalism of their work. As a result, they seem to have difficulties in grasping the opportunities to develop their leadership during classrooming. Subject teachers focus mainly on their teaching and neglect their participation in class activities and the collaborative relationship with banzhurens. Furthermore, heavy work pressure of teachers in general and of banzhurens in particular is also a kind of obstacle (Li, Wang, & Li, 2009). On the other hand, students, as the most important actors in a banzhuren's work, play a crucial role in developing the banzhuren's leadership. However, the autonomy of Chinese students has not been sufficiently cultivated yet. They do not have enough time, space, or opportunities to develop their consciousness and ability of being independent and autonomous, which might influence the interaction between banzhurens and students. The less feedback from students, the less likely it is for the banzhuren to develop his or her leadership qualities.

### **6.2 Strategies**

There should be some strategies at different levels for developing banzhuren leadership. At the individual level, banzhurens should raise their self-consciousness as banzhurens. It is time for banzhurens to reposition themselves, realize their qualities and challenges, clarify the relationship between banzhuren work and subject teaching, and form a new image and connotation for this position. At the school level, schools should reorient the role and demands of banzhurens.

The most basic role of a banzhuren is of an educator. As an educator, banzhurens should form a kind of *students' position* and integrate power, professional qualities, and respect for life. The formation of students' position means to admit the importance of students in class construction, respect the specialties and competences of students, and treat students as the foundation of the banzhuren's work (Li, 2007). Integration needs a banzhuren to make full use of resources of subject teachers and other adults surrounding students and promote the development of class lives and subject teaching. Professional qualities include consciousness of the educational meaning of banzhuren work through researching students' learning, classroom practice, and banzhuren's work itself. With involvement in the class lives and the interaction with students, banzhurens can fulfill the students' potential, which in turn can also improve and develop banzhuren leadership. At the education-system level, it is urgent to develop the training system for banzhurens, establish a clear work structure, and form a reasonable development space. This demands more researchers and innovative practices in China as well as learning from the West's experiences and lessons about teacher leadership.

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