



SEMINAR SERIES

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UNDERSTANDING CURRICULUM & PEDAGOGY IN A TURBULENT NEO-LIBERALIST WORLD

State Officialism and the Leadership Dilemma in Chinese Education?

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Guest Host | Dr. Anna Kindler

▶ **March 20** | Scarfe 310 | 12:30 - 2:00 p.m.

Administrative power of Chinese schools and universities is concentrated in the hands of a few who hold official positions. This phenomenon can be traced back to a millennium-old tradition of state officialism, which has permeated Chinese politics and the education system. Under officialism, teachers normally play the roles of supporters and followers. However the increased complexity of school management and the growing concern over governance issues have given rise to opportunities for teachers to assert leadership in certain areas of schooling, particularly in the curriculum and pedagogy. Teacher leadership, which is a Western conception originally, draws attention to the empowerment of teachers for enhanced pedagogical practice. A broader implication is that teacher participation in the decision-making process will strengthen the capacity of schools and institutions. In its circulation among Chinese academics and educators, discussions on the feasibility of applying “teacher leadership” to school settings are usually accompanied by an expressed desire for a more equitable distribution of power and opportunities in the Chinese education system.

In this seminar, Chinese political and sociological theories will be used to illuminate the forces that sustain the administrative structure of Chinese education. With examples drawn from research findings and participatory observations in Mainland China, it is argued that while there are indications that certain state-imposed changes have allowed teacher leadership to emerge in schools and universities, structural constraints will continue to undermine its authentic adaptation in their management. In the foreseeable future, teacher leadership will remain an aspiration for those working in a highly structured system of education.

Leslie N.K. Lo is a professor and senior research fellow at the Center for Teacher Education Research at Beijing Normal University in the People’s Republic of China. In the last decade, his research interests have been focused on teacher studies and school improvement. He has served on the editorial boards of established educational journals, including *Comparative Education Review* (USA), *Teachers College Record* (USA), *Teachers and Teaching* (UK), and *Jiaoyu Yanjiu* (China). For thirty years, he worked at the Chinese University of Hong Kong as Wai Lun Chair Professor of Educational Administration and Policy, the founding dean of education and the director of its Hong Kong Institute of Educational Research.

* Light refreshments will be served at 12:00 p.m. | Lecture will commence at 12:30 p.m.

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