

# Internal Leadership Practices and Institutional Identity Construction in a Chinese University EAP Community of Practice

RUI Xiaosong LI Jiayin

Harbin Institute of Technology.

## ***Abstract***

*This qualitative research means to study how the institutional leaders construct their institutional identities and community identities with their engagement in the EAP community practices and alignment with the institutional community practices in the process of EAP community development. Three participants with institutional leadership identities in an engineering university participated the in-depth interviews on their academic experiences, EAP teaching practices, the interaction with other EAP community members, difficulties and conflicts they encountered under the background of College English teaching reformation when EAP became part of the teaching program. Thanks to their institutional leadership practices, the EAP Community was established, in which they had institutional leadership, inspirational leadership, day-to-day leadership, boundary leadership, and interpersonal leadership practices. The EAP community practice engagement and institutional community alignment both facilitated and conflicted with each other as far as their different roles as institutional leaders, their former academic and teaching practices, the balance and conflict between institutional responsibilities and EAP community commitment were concerned. This research will specify the concept and meaning of institutional identity as well as depict the internal leadership practices (Wenger, 1998) of the institutional community members as they enter other Communities of Practice.*

**KeyWords:**

*Community of Practice (CofP), internal leadership, institutional identity, English for Academic Purposes (EAP).*

**1. Introduction**

Teacher development has always been of great concern in the top universities with diverse forms of teacher development center to support the professional development of different staff groups (Gosling, 2009; Zhu, 2016; Liu & Zhang, 2019; Pang, 2019). In recent years many Chinese universities have also developed similar centers for teacher training, teaching consulting, teaching research, quality evaluation and monitoring, teaching resource building and inter-university communication (Wei & Zhao, 2017). Teacher development under the background of educational reformation has drawn special attention of many Chinese scholars (c.f. Hao, 2015) with the large-scale reform of college English teaching including pedagogical approaches and curricular contents. The newly published *Guidelines for College English Teaching* in 2017 illustrates for the first time the connotation, characteristics, levels, and teaching arrangements of ESP: ESP courses are directed at the field of English use, in order to enhance students' competence to communicate professionally and academically, engage in work, and enhance their academic and vocational abilities. For the purpose of professional attainment, it includes academic English (general academic English, specialized academic English) and vocational English (Cai, 2012, 2014).

*The National Standard for the Quality of Undergraduate Teaching of Foreign Language Majors in Higher Education* set the goal for teacher development: "The universities should formulate scientific teacher development plans and systems... Teachers should establish the concept of lifelong development and formulate practical development plans." Therefore, in the context of

teaching reform College English teachers are faced with the transformation from general English teachers to academic English teachers. The administrators (referred to as “institutional members” in this paper) encountered the challenge of more participation in the academic teaching practices of the EAP community in addition to the usual administrative practices. Hence, their internal leadership and institutional identity experienced more complicated conflicts. This paper carried out in-depth interviews to describe and illustrate their inner world as practitioners of College English reform, so as to have a better understanding of the professional development status of academic English teachers, especially when they play the roles as administrators of the teaching practices as well.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Research on College English Teachers’ Professional Development**

Teacher professional development (TPD) is necessary to improve the quality of education, in order to ensure that all teachers are able to meet the needs of diverse student populations (Vescio et al., 2008). Researchers concerned about the current situation of teacher development (Yang & Yang, 2015; Zhang, 2011), describing challenges and developing solutions and measures as far as teachers’ orientation, training, cooperative learning and evaluation were concerned (Wen & Zhang, 2017; Zhou, 2008).

Foreign scholars have been increasingly interested in EFL teachers’ beliefs on teaching and learning. Farrell (2011) explored the professional role identities of experienced ESL teachers through reflective practice. Hamman et al. (2010) used possible-selves theory to understand the identity development of novice teachers.

## 2.2 Research on Teachers Identity

The theme teacher identity has begun to attract researchers' attention since the 1990s. In the last decade, teacher identity emerged as a separate research area. Many studies on identity were under narrative perspective, the research methods included in-depth interview, ethnographic case study, autobiography study and narrative inquiry. Affected by post structuralism these studies on EFL teacher identity concentrated on the diversity of culture, power, voice and identity, among which identity conflicts and negotiation was always discussed (e.g. Day, 2006). A six research-based dimension analytical framework of PLC was established by Hord (2009).

Many of the early domestic identity studies were literature reviews of foreign studies or discussions of the theoretical concepts. Until recently there was a trend for empirical studies with a constructive paradigm. For instance, Liu (2009) analyzed professional identity construction of six college English teachers from a narrative perspective. Hao (2010) drew on the interviews with nine EFL teachers in a Chinese university with a qualitative case research exploring the changes of their professional identity with in-service PhD study experience. Tang (2013) developed an ESP teachers' professional identity scale based on qualitative researches. However, most of the studies concentrate on teachers' self-identity and neglect their identity as members in professional learning community.

## 2.3 Community of Practice and Relevant Research

Community of Practice (CofP) is defined as "an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations - in short - practices - emerge in the course of this mutual endeavor" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 45). Practice is "a way of talking about the shared historical and social resources,

frameworks, and perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action” (Wenger, 1998, p. 5). Identity is “a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities” (ibid.). The core members of the institutional CofP with diverse identities have made special contribution to the EAP community development by their institutional and community practices.

The construction of Professional Learning Community (PLC) has been regarded as crucial for professional development of teachers (Vescio et al., 2008). Some researchers focused on the productive results of PLC towards teachers’ knowledge construction and improvement of teaching behaviors (ZellerMayer & Tabak, 2006). Another group has described the confusion and challenges brought to teachers (Roblin & Margalef, 2013). Most researchers relied on qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews, working sessions, participant observation and teacher narratives. Domestic journals also published abundant empirical reports about the practices and the construction of PLC in China (Chang & Li, 2015; Guo & Xu, 2016; Zhang, 2011). What is more, Wen (2017) tried to construct a theoretical framework for establishing college English teachers’ learning community, which at the same time managed to build the bridge between domestic studies and foreign ones.

#### **2.4 Research Questions**

The existent research seemed to focus either on the individual member of a community or the mutual endeavor of community development. Different identities in a community is regarded as related to the participation in community practices. However, it should be noticed that the identities in other communities might also have complicated interactions with both community practice participation and identities. This research means to study the construction of the

institutional leaders' identities in the process of EAP community development, addressing two questions:

(1) What are the institutional identities and community identities of the institutional leaders with their engagement in the EAP community practices and alignment with the institutional community practices?

(2) How do the institutional identities and community identities interact in the process of EAP community development?

### **3. Research Methods**

#### **3.1 Participants**

The participants are three institutional members of the School of Languages and Literature in an engineering university, whose demographic information can be seen in Table 1. It is worth mentioning that their names are pseudonyms in accordance with their "portraits" in the EAP community. Shen is knowledgeable with solid academic background. He has contributed "wise thoughts" in the process of EAP Community construction so he suits the name of "Si", which means "thought" in Chinese. As the Assistant dean of the School, Zhao has confronted with huge identity conflicts between his leadership in the institution and membership in the EAP Community, struggling to seek for the balance of different identities. "Heng" means to find balance in Chinese. As a responsible head of EAP teaching team, Song is just like the fragrance ("Fang" in Chinese) of flowers which can waft to others, always being cheerful and bringing warm encouragements to other members in the community.

**Table 1 Demographic Data of the Participants**

Name	Gender	Age	Education	Position	Years of Teaching / EAP Teaching
Shen Si	Male	43	PhD	Dean	20/10
Zhao Heng	Male	37	MA	Assistant Dean	14/1
Song Fang	Female	34	MA	Head of EAP teaching	12/3

### 3.2 Data Collection

In-depth interviews were conducted with the three participants and each interview was around one hour. The interviews aimed at collecting information about the participants' their academic experiences, EAP teaching practices, the interaction with other EAP community members, difficulties and conflicts they encountered under the background of College English teaching reformation when EAP became part of the teaching program. The transcription of the interviews were coded. The details of the interviews were listed in Table 2.

**Table 2 Details of the In-depth Interviews**

Name	Date	Site	Duration	Word Number of Transcription
Song Fang	2017.4.5	Office	38'37"	8691
Zhao Heng	2017.4.19	Office	40'00"	10810
Shen Si	2017.4.21	Office	47'30"	11053

After the preliminary analysis, there were also follow-up short interviews to supplement the data about identity conflicts and negotiation within the EAP Community. In addition, three members of the EAP teaching team including Song Fang, the leader of the team, and the two EAP teachers Wu and Qiu were invited to join in a focus group to further explore the extensive influence of the institutional leadership towards the EAP CofP. Different from in-depth interview, the focus group is more like a discussion based on a topic among participants. After given the topic which related to the practices they have been engaged together, the interviewees started discussion which lasted for one hour. As the listener and also the observer, the researcher would moderate the talk in case of getting off the topic.

The two interviews were both conducted in Chinese, audio-recorded and transcribed in full. Since the language of this paper is English, the quoted data were translated into English. As for the translation of some expressions with special cultural connotations, Chinese pinyin and supplementary explanations were provided.

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

The bottom-up grounded theory (Chen, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) is applied for data analysis. Initial open coding proceeds through examining each line of data. Then comparison and interpretation were made between all the categorized data through repetitive reading which are called secondary codes. Based on the conceptual analysis, the tertiary codes are summarized. An example of code is shown in Table 3.

Table 3.3 An Example of Code

Primary code	Secondary code	Tertiary code
An empty paper	EAP teachers have little knowledge	Low Self Evaluation

#### **4. The Role of Institutional Leadership in EAP Community Development**

##### **4.1 Alignment with the Institutional Community**

To shoulder the responsibility and meet the requirements of teaching reform, the institutional leaders perform tight alignment with other organizational institutions, in particular the educational authorities. During the interviews, both ShenSi and ZhaoHeng stressed the situation that China was going to launch a large-scale reform of educational practices including pedagogical approaches and curricular contents. The improving enrollment quality of this university as well as the students' growing demands of academic development makes the transformation from GE (General English) to EAP "an urgency".

Zhao is the one in charge of implementing course reform in the School of Languages and Literature. He attended a number of surveys and conferences to learn about EAP curriculum and teaching practices from other universities. When asked about reformation and the EAP curriculum in the interview, his active participation in communication turns and the detailed

introduction of the whole reformation process showed his familiarity with these practices. Thanks to the institutional leadership and boundary leadership provided by Shen and Zhao, the basic framework of EAP curriculum was finally constructed. However, setting up the framework of EAP course was only the first step of the construction of an EAP Community.

#### **4.2 Mutual Engagement in the EAP Community**

The concept of EAP and rationale of EAP teaching were not accepted by the GE teachers at first. In consequence, it could be an arduous task for the institutional leaders to inspire some GE teachers to enter the EAP Community with voluntary intention. Shen has made great contributions by discussing EAP courses and encouraging the teachers to get themselves involved in the EAP teaching practices.

Shen mentioned that “the process did not go smoothly at first. Some of the teachers had even not heard of EAP, let alone to teach the course as EAP teachers.” So he encouraged the teachers to participate in EAP learning practices, expecting that teachers to understand gradually the necessity of EAP learning for students’ academic development and even their own professional development. As long as the teachers connected the teaching reformation with their own career development, they began to develop the motivation to enter the EAP community and accept the identity as an EAP teacher. This process was not as easy as it might seem to be.

A community of practice is different from a team in that the shared learning and interest of its members are what keep it together. It is defined by knowledge rather than by task, and exists because participation has value to its members (Wenger, 1998). Instead of proposing instruction directly to the teachers as a predominant leader of the institution, Shen hoped the teachers could regard the EAP teacher team as a Community of Practice, in which the members attempt to work for the common goal together. It “should not be a compulsive teaching team controlled by myself.”

### 4.3 Diverse Identities of the Internal Leadership

Shen's performance of leadership in the EAP community reflected his former learning and working practices as both a scholar of English Teaching and an experienced EAP teacher. Since he was also teaching the graduate students' EAP courses, he had learned how meaningful the EAP course could be for the students thanks to the feedback he received from the students and his own reflections. In the EAP community Shen shared his experiences with the other members so that they became confident that they could become qualified EAP teachers just like Shen given the opportunity to participate in learning and teaching practices.

Shen has stronger alignment with other institutional communities as both a scholar and a leader thus he could turn his academic institutional resources to learning opportunities for the other members lack of EAP teaching and researching experiences. Shen's identity as an academic scholar made himself a considerate leader, preparing the other members of the community for their professional development in the process of transition from a GE teacher to an EAP teacher.

### 4.4 Alignment with other CofPs

During the in-depth interviews Shen mentioned little about the work he has done, while Zhao stressed Shen's "indispensable contribution" as both an institutional leader and an academic scholar.

[Q-1]赵衡：当时搭建这个平台实际上主要是沈书在这里面工作，院里当时主要是给他们提供了很多出去培训、开会的学习机会。再就是有一些学习资源。沈书毕竟是在语言教学这个领域里面，相对资源可能更多一些，比如跟国内学术英语这块，就是蔡基刚教授他们也比较熟悉<sup>1</sup>。

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<sup>1</sup>The interviews were carried out in the participants' native language (Putonghua, Mandarin Chinese). The quotations in this paper were translated by the authors of this paper.

[Q-1]Zhao: Shen played a vital role in building the learning platform for EAP teachers. Our school mainly provided many learning opportunities like training and meeting, as well as some learning resources. Being engaged in the field of language teaching, Shen has more resources. Take EAP academic field as an example, he has acquaintance with Professor Cai Jigang and the group of scholars.

As Zhao has mentioned, Shen's institutional leadership maintained his alignment with other organizational constituencies (institutional communities), in particular the official authorities and professional experts. In other words, Shen's identity as both a scholar and the institutional leader interacted with each other so as to promote the construction of the EAP CofP. His leadership encouraged GE teachers to enter the EAP community with the identity of an EAP teacher and engage themselves in the learning practices as an EAP learner, among whom Song Fang confronted with a even greater challenge as the institutional leader of the EAP community.

On the whole, the two core members of institutional community Shen and Zhao identify their leadership by aligning instruction with external standards and relevant institutions, setting school goals for student performance, measuring progress against those goals and making adjustments in the school program to improve performance, which have been proposed as essential practices of school leader (Schleicher, 2012).

Shen and Zhao have ever fully participated in the teaching practices of the EAP courses due to the lack of enough EAP teachers. However, different from the other four teachers who shared the goal to become excellent EAP teachers through learning, researching, discussing and teaching practices, Shen and Zhao engaged in the teaching practices only for one year. As Zhao's has mentioned, he entered the community just for "closing the gaps". Therefore, they entered the CofP due to their boundary leadership instead of the identity as a community member.

## **5. Interaction between Institutional Leadership and EAP Community Membership**

### **5.1 Parallel Identities: Learner and Coordinator**

As have been mentioned in 4.3, Song entered the EAP community with dual identities, both as an EAP learner and a team leader. Instead of suffering from identity conflicts, she reinforced the two identities by engaging in EAP learning practices with other members of EAP community as well as aligning with the institutional community.

Due to the fact that Song has no much academic experiences, anxiety and negative attitude were expressed when she was first exposed to relatively new learning practices. The metaphoric words like “at a loss”, “feel like a blank page”, “have really no idea” appeared many times in the interview. Yet the identity conflict between a teacher and a learner was shared by all the other members in the community, encouraging their active participation in learning practices.

In addition, as an institutional leader representing the community Song had more opportunities to align with the institutional community, learning from experienced experts’ stories and receiving positive messages related to curriculum reformation. The responsibility with the day-to-day leadership also stimulated her to organize many community practices, such as reading report meeting and teaching discussion. The identity as a learner added empathy of other members’ feelings and then she could organize more appropriate practices for the community as a leader. Guo (2018) suggested that when a teacher with institutional identity participated in the discussion practices with the other members in the team, it would be hard for the others to regard him or her objectively as just a teacher instead of a leader. It supported the idea that to be a learner is the best way to provide day-to-day leadership with the similar condition.

Song said that the teaching community seldom set specific time to discuss with each other about the class, instead they started to discuss about the class as soon as they met each other. The spontaneous participation in the discussion practice reflected their positive attitude towards the community and the leadership.

[Q-2] 吴画：但是说实话，我上了这个课之后我们这两本教材当中涉及到的 critical thinking 跟我以前了解的是有区别的。

邱琴：我怎么都不觉得里面有 critical thinking 呢？

宋芳：有。

吴画：它的 critical thinking 涉及到的是基本学术技能，他是用很具体的操作步骤，就是好像是学习方法这种的。

宋芳：我感觉他们所谓的这种 critical thinking 说白了就是他要对自己阅读的这些资料，有自己的一个评判和想法。

吴画：你是要建立在事实的基础上，比如说他怎么帮助你，怎么列举你的论据。

宋芳：其实我觉得，咱们这本书锻炼批判性思维还是挺系统的。

吴画：对对。

邱琴：我怎么没有这种意识呢。

吴画：他有，他练习题上面……

宋芳：比如说第四单元讲的那个，他有五个问题，你要从这五个问题来评判你的阅读资料，这不就是属于一个 critical thinking 么。

[Q-2] Wu: But to tell the truth, the content of critical thinking described in the two textbooks is different from what I learned before.

Qiu: How could I fail to find anything related to critical thinking in the text book?

Song: There is something.

Wu: The content related to critical thinking is mainly about basic academic skills, like detailed operating steps, just like studying methods.

Song: I think this kind of so-called critical thinking is just to give your evaluation and thinking by reading texts.

Wu: Based on the facts, you should know how critical thinking can help you with providing arguments.

Song: To be honest, I think the book has successfully given specific training of critical thinking.

Wu: I agree with you.

Qiu: But I fail to be aware of it.

Wu: You can find evidence in exercises...

Song: For an example, in Unit 4 there are five questions from which students make assessment about the text. Isn't it something like critical thinking?

This conversation in the focus group interview depicts the typical practice engaged by the members in the community. The frequent turn-taking shows that members were able to play their role in the discussion and have active participation, not only feeling comfortable to expose their puzzles but also trying to help each other solve problems. Furthermore, Song was the coordinator to balance the relationship among the members instead of a leader who controlled the turns. In this way her interpersonal leadership helped the members solve the puzzlement through discussion with each other. Compared with the other two participants Wu and Qiu, Song was more likely to summarize and explain all the others' opinions in short words in the focus group interview so that members could discuss with each other openly in the community without

tension or misunderstanding which in the long run coordinated the interrelationship between members.

## 5.2 Interdependent Identities: Expert and Leader

When it comes to the identity construction of ShenSi, the other members of the community still treated him as a leader even though he regarded himself as a member of EAP community. The other member tended to compromise to Shen's decision of changing textbooks despite some disagreements.

[Q-3] 访谈者：老师们当时都同意把比较难的那本教材换成简单的么？

宋芳：也是有争论的一开始。

邱琴：对对，我就记得第二学期当时我不是带大二的么，然后我当时已经感觉到，其实用那个难的教材其实老师操作一下也能用，不过当时不是沈老师坚持必须要换。

宋芳：反正主要是因为他上过那个教材，他后来把咱们都调到大二了，因为他说大二的学生……没有接触太多专业的东西，所以他觉得把这个放在大一可能不太合适，然后他觉得大二的同学有的已经接触到专业的，可能对他们帮助更大一些。

[Q-3] Interviewer: Did all of you agree to change the textbook from a difficult version to an easier one ?

Song: Not (all of us agreed) at first.

Qiu: Yes, I remembered when I gave class to sophomores at that semester I realized that the more difficult textbook could be utilized with specific teaching method. But Mr. Shen insisted on changing the textbook.

Song: That's because he had used the textbook. Later, he decided to transfer all of the EAP class to the second year because he thought the class was not suitable for freshmen. The EAP class could be more useful for sophomores compared with freshmen who have not been exposed to professional knowledge.

In Song's response the word "he" appeared three times and the verbs following "he" are "use", "decide" and "think". Despite the fact that "use the textbook" was mentioned by all the members in the CoP including the three institutional leaders and the other four members, he "decided" because he "thought" it was a more suitable arrangement without any arguing or discussing. All the verbs are subjective ones, yet because the subject "he" represents the expert and authority, the subjective verbs were treated as facts. These details implied that Shen was regarded as the inspirational leader of the community by Song and herself as the institutional leader of the EAP teacher community. The dominant role in the context could therefore demonstrate the inspirational leadership provided by Shen as the top leader of the community and a recognized expert. Hence, the institutional leader was still kept at a distance by all the other members even when he participated in the teaching practice as a community member. With the rich teaching engagement in EAP teaching and the alignment with a broader academic community, he played the central role as he did in the institutional community with the identity of the dean in the school.

Despite Shen's absence from a large amount of community practices, his previous learning practices in (other) academic communities engaged him to participate in EAP teaching practices with no difficulties. His lack of presence in the community practice could even become a kind of "privilege" enjoyed by the inspirational leadership. When he became less accessible to other members, he would be less likely to confront contradictions between his leadership as an inspirational expert and the membership as a normal EAP teacher (see Lortie, 1975; Rosenholtz, 1989; Smylie, 1989; Smylie & Denny, 1990). From another perspective, if the institutional leader tends to fully engage in all kinds of community practices, it might provide a negative impact on other members, who would be more sensitive to their behavior in front of the leader rather than

concentrate on community practices. As for Shen, the teaching practice in the EAP community could both reinforce his inspirational leadership and promote his practice as the institutional leader of the school, making wise decisions so as to better construct the community even when he was no longer a member of the EAP community.

### 5.3 Conflicting Identities: Learner and Leader

ZhaoHengencountered with identity balancing problem, which was quite different from Song and Shen who were free from serious identity conflicts and managed to perform appropriated leadership in the community.Zhao participated in learning and teaching practices of EAP community only for one year (just as Shen did due to the lack of enough EAP teachers). What added Zhao's conflicts was that he had neither relevant EAP teaching experience nor strong academic background as Shen who was already a mature EAP teacher. In addition, the pressure of both teaching and administration threw him into further identity conflicts. His expression about that period presents his painful experience vividly.

[Q-4] 说实话我在平衡工作和教学上的压力这方面做的不是很好...主要是时间问题。因为你看行政这块儿呢每周院里有例会，学校也有教学口的例会再就是经常有一些突发性的，你像学生评比、比赛你要做评委呀，还有特定时期的一些你像专业介绍呀，迎新呀、毕业呀这些。像这种事务就是每个周你闲不下来的。我大致算过一下，在行政这一块至少每个周处理常规事务需要三个半天，然后教学呢，也至少有三个半天。这还不算晚上的二学位的课。这一下子就是固定的这些时间就已经占上了，这还不算备课呀、批作业呀等等这些。

[Q-4] To be honest, I fail to balance the stress of working and teaching. Time is the biggest trouble. Both our school and university have regular meeting every week. Besides, there are some impromptu meetings such as work as a judge in students' appraisal or competition. In addition, on some occasions I would be in charge of English major introduction, new arrivals' welcome days, senior year and so on. All these stuffs cover each week. I have calculated that regular business takes 3 and a half day each week, so does teaching missions, set aside the classes for second degree in the evening. Therefore, my time is occupied by these regular work. And class preparation as well as homework checking has not been accounted yet.

His statement exposes his great work pressures due to limited time and trivial works which leads to identities conflict as EAP learner, executive leader as well as English teacher. It could not be denied that Zhao's leadership had contributed to the construction of the community, but as a community member he rarely spent time participating in the EAP community practices. He told the interviewer that he prepared the EAP lessons "on his own" by reading books and searching on the Internet without participating in community discussion practice. For one thing, with less relative experience and knowledge compared with all the other members in the community, it would even be less efficient for him to engage in group discussion. For another, the identity of a leader who had built the whole framework for the community does not have any overlapping with the identity as a learner with little knowledge. As a new comer in the community, he was definitely a peripheral member but different from the "legitimate peripheral participation" which provides a way to speak about crucial relations between newcomers and old timers and about their activities, identities, artifacts, knowledge and practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). His leadership grabbed his opportunity to grow into a core member through fully engaging in community practices. Wenger (1998) underlined that "it is mutual engagement that makes a CoP a community". Therefore, ZhaoHeng failed to construct his identity towards community. Contrary to ShenSi whose dual identity can in general boost his leadership, ZhaoHeng had to suffer from the imbalance position between his leadership and membership. Therefore, the identity as an EAP teacher was not strong and the EAP teaching practice was more like a tough task he needs to complete as a responsible institutional leader. Thus, to some degree his membership in the CoP had negative impact on his executive leadership, only to reinforce the leadership when he completed the task successfully.

#### 5.4 Summary

In general, the leadership provided by the three institutional leaders in the research can be divided into five types as in Wenger's taxonomy (1998). The interrelationship between the leadership and membership can be complicated under different situations. The day-to-day leadership and interpersonal leadership are provided by leader who works like a coordinator. It would even be more beneficial for the institutional leader to complete the leadership if he/she shares the similar knowledge background and situation with the other members.

Nevertheless, not all the leadership construction requires fully engagement in the practices of CofP. When it comes to the inspirational leaders with rich background knowledge and similar community practices in the past, they do not have to participate in the community practices. The role they play in the CofP is to provide necessary instruction at certain situations and set good samples, inspiring the other members to participate in practices with higher motivation. Last but not least, the executive leadership including boundary leadership and the institutional leadership can provide basic foundation for the community by building the structure of the curriculum and offer learning opportunities to the community members. Accordingly, although it seems that ShenSi and ZhaoHeng experienced different process of identification after entering the EAP Community of Practice, both of their membership in fact reinforced their previous leadership. Shen identified his inspirational leadership by helping the members negotiate disagreements while Zhao spared no efforts to complete the teaching task regardless of suffering from serious identity conflict. On the other hand, their leadership in turn weaken their identity as a community member as they or other members regard themselves as a leader.

## **6. Conclusion**

### **6.1 The Main Findings**

In conclusion, we divide the five types of leadership into three dimensions. For those leaders providing day-to-day leadership and interpersonal leadership, the identity in the community (i.e. membership) is essential for their institutional identity construction, which makes those who shares similar knowledge backgrounds and goals with the other community members suitable for the position. The second level of leadership is summarized as executive leadership including boundary leadership and institutional leadership. These leaders might not have to learn relative knowledge in the community since their goal is just to provide conditions for the community development. Their practices in the community can do little for their identity as a community member but can promote their executive leadership construction. The third level of leadership is inspirational leadership, which can provide both mental inspirations and practical benefits to the CofP members' identification even without entering the community. Alignment is proven to be an effective sense of belonging for the community members to get connections with the inspirational leaders. Therefore, the inspirational leadership can be reinforced by the community members' identity in the CofP.

### **6.2 Implications**

It is reported that as more countries nowadays require better achievement from their schools and grant greater autonomy to schools in designing curricula and managing resources. But effective school autonomy depends on effective leaders, including system leaders, principals, teacher leaders, senior teachers and head teachers, as well as strong support systems, which in turn

requires effectively distributed leadership, as well as new types of training and development for school leaders (Schleicher, 2012). The finding of this qualitative research reflects the distributed leadership offered by the members in the institutional community.

Three participants can represent three different kinds of institutional leader. We not only point out the five types of leadership provided by the participants, but also classify the leadership into three levels and discuss the relationship between the construction of institutional identity and community identity based on their engagement in the community practices and alignment with institutional community. Besides, in-depth interviews taken will not only raise public concern about the community of institutional leaders, but also take advantage of specific kinds leadership to facilitate the construction and development of the community.

### **6.3 Limitations**

The relationships between different participants and the researcher are complicated which may have impact on participants' performance during interviews. As the interviewer (the second author of this paper) is a student of the participants, sometimes they might be a little too relaxed or somewhat less active to think of interviewer's questions. Besides, the discussion observation of all the CofP members including the three institutional leaders could have been conducted to triangulate the interview data.

### **6.4 Further Research Suggestions**

Institutional leaders' identity construction is a complicated topic influenced by various factors. The findings based on in-depth interviews could be triangulated by observations on practices of PLC (Professional learning communities) for further research, including group discussion, on-line communication through social media and so on.

In a broader sense, further research on teacher development under the background of teaching reformation could be carried out on trans-disciplinary and cross-country comparative basis. To be more specific, the internal leadership in a Community of Practice could be practiced in trans-disciplinary cooperative communities and the institutional identity would become more complicated and constitutive in different communities as well as in higher administrative authorities. As far as cross-country comparison is concerned, multiple social and cultural factors might get involved, as well as the history of educational reformation and teacher development in universities of different countries.

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<sup>2</sup>There was no English title translation in the original journal. The title was translated by the authors of this paper.

<sup>3</sup>There was no English title translation in the published book. The title was translated by the authors of this paper.

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### Authors

RUI Xiaosong, PhD of linguistics, lecturer in Harbin Institute of Technology (Weihai).

Email address: [ruixiaosong@hit.edu.cn](mailto:ruixiaosong@hit.edu.cn)

Mail address: No.2, Wenhuxi Road, Weihai, Shandong Province, China

LI Jiayin, MA student in Harbin Institute of Technology.

Email address: [17862701132@163.com](mailto:17862701132@163.com)

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