

# How Do Local Authorities Prepare Their Headteachers in Taiwan? An Exploration Using Foucault's Disciplinary Power

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This study examined the emerging workplace training approach for school leadership preparation in Taiwan, namely aspiring headteachers' *administrative placement in education departments* (AP), through the lens of Foucault's notion of disciplinary power, using case-study methodology with semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Findings indicate that aspiring headteachers in the AP programme were not only developed as effective school leaders but were also disciplined. The prevailing AP programme across local governments represents a new disciplinary technology used by local governments to make school leaders not only productive and efficient but also obedient and docile. This paper therefore contributes an alternative theoretical perspective to school leadership preparation.

*Keywords:* school leadership preparation, administrative placement, Foucault, disciplinary power, Taiwan

## Introduction

Interest in school headship preparation and development has long been a global trend (Huber 2004b; 2008; Bush 2009; 2012; Eacott 2011). It is also increasingly recognised that leadership is a specialist occupation that requires specific preparation (Bush 2012). Many countries across the world place headship preparation as a high priority on their policy agendas (Bush and Jackson 2002; Huber 2004a), Taiwan is no exception (Chen 2009; Chen and Chen 2006). While there is a growing interest driving headship preparation and development due to global forces, local traditions ensure that these processes play out differently in each national context (Brundrett and Crawford 2008; Crow, Lumby, and Pashiardis 2008; Müller and Schratz 2008; OECD 2008). This is indeed the case in Taiwan. Recently, the Taiwanese local governments responsible

for headship preparation created a training approach known as aspiring headteachers' *administrative placement in education departments* (AP). Unlike the school placement in other countries where aspiring headteachers [aspiring heads] are placed in school settings (Huber 2004a), AP headteachers [AP heads] in Taiwan are placed into local Department of Education for one-year AP training in order to enhance their policy sensitivity and administrative capacities through workplace experiential learning.

To date, there is very limited literature that has attempted to apply Foucault's ideas to an analysis of school leadership preparation and training, particularly in the context of Taiwan. We note this limited focus on disciplinary process and subjectivity formation of aspiring heads relative to other research and also the limited work that presents the views and experiences of aspiring heads themselves. It is this gap that we aim to contribute to filling. Our analysis applies Foucault's notion of disciplinary power in theorising the workplace training process of participating in AP leadership preparation training. Anderson and Grinberg (1998) have argued that Foucault's concepts are powerful tools for helping to understand the dangerous characteristics of educational administration which can result in more effective technologies of control. Nietzsche (2010; 2011) also presents very convincing evidence that headteachers' subjective views are normalised through the disciplinary power of grants and submission writing. Acknowledging disciplinary power as a technology of control, this paper seeks to uncover the power relations within the preparation of school leaders and the way in which these relations are exercised. We argue that the prevailing AP programmes across local government represent a new disciplinary technology used by local authorities to make aspiring headteachers not only productive and efficient but also obedient and docile.

The paper begins by introducing the context of school headship preparation in Taiwan. The next section briefly reviews the concepts of workplace learning for school headteachers. Following this we will then present the theoretical concepts of Foucault's disciplinary power. The remaining sections offer an analysis of the data from three selected cases woven together with Foucault's notions of disciplinary power.

### **School Headship Preparation in the Taiwanese Context**

Since the mid-1980s, education reform in Taiwan has pushed very strongly toward democratising education, mainly through

devolving decision-making authority to the local and school levels (Walker, Chen, and Qian 2008, 415). As a result, school-based management or decentralised power has become a predominant feature of current reforms in Taiwan. The democratising education reform movement led to two main changes related to the practice of headship: firstly, the policy and practices of school headship preparation have been decentralised, becoming local district-level affairs (Chan 2009). Secondly, the method of headteacher designation has been transformed from being 'appointed' by the government to being 'selected' by a participatory headship selection committee at the district-level (Hsiao, Lee, and Tu 2012; Lin 2003). Meanwhile, the roles of school headteachers have expanded to accommodate new demands for developing staff and increasing schools' capacity for change (Pan and Chen 2011). As Chen (2004) claims, the role of headteachers has become complex and paradoxical as they are charged with responsibility for curriculum, personnel and budget, but are also expected to share decision-making power with parents, teachers and other community members. The current approach also calls for the professional preparation of school leaders and their continuous professional development.

### *The Reform of School Headship Preparation*

Since 1965 school headship preparation in Taiwan has been mandatory by law and was conducted mainly by the central government. After the decentralisation movement in the 1990s, it has been implemented at the district level within a centralised regulatory system (Walker, Chen, and Qian 2008). Local government takes charge of the headship examination, headship pre-service training, headteachers' induction and professional development in order to meet their local needs (Chen and Chen 2006). The process of headship preparation consists of three steps: first, in order to be considered for the pre-service headship training courses required in order to be able to apply for a headship, leaders must qualify to sit and pass the headship examination. The examination is set by the local Department of Education within central guidelines, and includes written and oral components. Second, aspiring headteachers who successfully pass the examination are required to attend official government-subsidised pre-service training. This eight-week official training aimed specifically at headship preparation is similar across all local government Third, if candidates successfully complete this course they will be certi-

fied as qualified reserve headteachers who may be considered by a headship selection committee held by local government when positions become available.

### *The Transformation of Headteacher Selection*

In the past, after headteachers took up their position, the full responsibility of the headteacher appointments and transfers belonged with the local Department of Education. Headteachers could keep the position as long as they wished, barring serious mistakes and failure to observe procedures (Lin 2003). In 1999, the 1999 Education Fundamental Act radically changed the headteacher selection and tenure mechanisms. Since then, headteachers have been selected and contracted for four year terms by district-level committees composed of administrators, parents, teachers, headteachers and other educational experts (Walker, Chen, and Qian 2008, 414). The headship is no longer 'life-long tenure' for every headteacher (Lin 2003, 192), but instead, depends on their performance, as judged by the selection committee. This introduces a competitive component into the headship role definition and at the same time places more pressure on the headteachers' shoulders.

### *The Emerging Administrative Placement (AP)*

In addition to the above reforms, recently more and more Taiwanese local governments have introduced the 'administrative placement in the education department (AP)' as a core feature to the headship preparation programme. After pre-service training, qualified reserve heads are then placed into local education departments, rather than school settings, to undertake administrative work for between six months to one year, depending on the districts' requirement. After the AP has concluded, AP heads are eligible to apply for certain headship positions. According to the documents in this study, almost every local government has introduced the AP, and since 2007 more than half of the local governments have made the AP compulsory. As one official document explains, 'the aspiring headteachers have to attend the AP in the Department of Education for at least one academic year in order to understand policy and policy-making and prepare their administrative abilities' (New Taipei City Government 2011). These AP programmes are created as a training approach for aspiring

headteachers to strengthen their readiness for headship, and to meet local needs.

### Workplace Training for School Leadership Development

There is a global trend of more and more leadership programmes abandoning the workshop model and turning to the authentic workplace, using the school as a clinical faculty (Huber 2004a). School internship, or placement, is viewed as a critical and effective method in the literature of school leadership development (Earley 2009). Internships at one school or various schools are organised within leadership preparation programmes and provide an opportunity for aspiring heads to shadow experienced headteachers (Huber 2004a) or to play the role of headteacher. Crow (2006) argues that internships may improve aspiring headteachers' professional socialisation in post-industrial society. Huber (2004a, 64) claims that school-based internships may be viewed as 'the authentic workplace' to assure 'adequate complexity and authenticity leading to the learning process required' and may also be considered as 'an integrating factor' which make it possible to achieve a more 'holistic learning process.' The redesigned NPQH (National Professional Qualification) for Headship programme in England also includes a school placement in another school context, for a minimum of nine days (see <https://www.gov.uk/national-professional-qualification-for-headship-npqh>). An evaluation study on the NPQH by Crawford and Earley (2011) reveals that the trainee heads receive benefits from the school placement which inform their future work as a headteacher. These benefits include establishing communication skills, personal development, community engagement and developing leadership strategies. These school-based activities are designed to enable participants to develop their leadership qualities and skills in the 'real' contexts of their own schools (Simkins, Close, and Smith 2009, 392) so as to reduce the possibility of reality shock (Clayton 2012).

From the above literature review, the internship or placement very often highlights the relevance of workplace learning to the real headship. Thus, to gain the 'authentic experiential learning,' aspiring heads are placed in *school settings* during a period of time shadowing successful heads. As Huber (2004a, 64) points out, schools are used as the 'authentic workplace,' a 'clinical faculty' for headship preparation. However, recently the trainee heads of

the AP in Taiwan are not placed in school settings; instead, they are assigned to bureaucratic departments, the *local Department of Education*, a setting which does not represent their future workplaces. Therefore, the main focus of this paper is on the AP heads' practices during their AP in government departments, with the aim of examining whether the AP training represents 'authentic headship learning.'

### A Foucauldian Toolbox: Disciplinary Power

In this paper we draw upon Foucault's notions of disciplinary power to understand what occurs and is being exercised in the AP process. Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977) contains his most famous and elaborate exposition on disciplinary power (Hoffman 2011). Discipline, Foucault says, is a 'technology' aimed at (O'Farrell 2005):

[...] how to keep someone under surveillance. How to control his conduct, his behaviour, his aptitudes, how to improve his performance, multiply his capacities, how to put him where he is most useful: that is discipline in my sense.

The target of individual bodies is always the main concern of disciplinary power. Disciplinary power strives to make the body 'more obedient as it becomes more useful, and conversely' (Foucault 1977, 138). As Gillies (2013, 52) argues, the net effect of discipline is to maximise the productivity and potential of the learner, while at the same time, through a highly structured regime, to increase obedience and minimise deviation. In this paper, the learner (i.e. the 'body') would be the aspiring heads in the AP.

Foucault uses disciplinary power to refer to a range of techniques aimed at controlling behaviour, surveillance and improving performance (O'Farrell 2005). Such techniques include Bentham's Panopticon; distributing individuals, controlling activities and organising geneses; hierarchical observation, judgment and the examination (Foucault 1977). This paper draws specifically on the notions of hierarchical observation, normalisation and examination. Foucault uses the term *hierarchical observation* to refer to 'a dense network of multi-directional gazes' (Hoffman 2011, 31) on highly visible individuals that causes disciplinary power to appear simultaneously ubiquitous and inconspicuous. As Foucault writes, *hierarchical observation* is used 'to act on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct, to carry the effects of power

right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them' (1977, 172).

Foucault terms *normalising judgement* 'a small penal mechanism' that functions at the heart of all disciplinary systems (1977, 177). Normalisation is a particular form of judgement that differentiates individuals through a range of practices, rituals and regimes of truth (Niesche 2010). It aims at conformity (Foucault 1977, 183):

[...] the perpetual penalty that traverses all points and supervises every instance in the disciplinary institution compares, differentiates, hierarchies, homogenises, excludes. In short, it normalises.

Its function is to reduce gaps, and so is essentially collective (1977, 179). The *examination* that is able to combine the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of normalising judgement is a particularly effective technique (O'Farrell 2005). Foucault (1977, 184–185) regards the examination as:

[...] a normalising gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify, and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them [...] the examination is highly ritualised. In it are combined the ceremony of power and the form of the experiment, the deployment of force and the establishment of truth. At the heart of the procedures of discipline, it manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected.

Through the examination each 'case' is individualised so as to uncover specific abilities and features while at the same time it allows for a comparative mechanism to be established through documentation. This written data and documentation can be established with the resultant knowledge being used to tighten control over both populations and individuals (O'Farrell 2005, 105). Foucault emphasises that this 'power of writing' (1977, 189) forms an essential part of the mechanisms of discipline.

## Methodology

This paper draws upon data collected from a comparative case study of three local governments with their school headteachers and educational officials in Taiwan. Three local governments with

varying AP approaches were selected as research cases. One of the cases has the optional AP approach and the other two cases have a compulsory AP design that requires that every qualified reserve head has to complete the AP before becoming a headteacher. Using Yin's (2009) notion of case study, the aim was to examine the ways that the AP headteachers practice their AP in three local education departments. In particular, the focus was on the power relations exercised at the level of the AP heads' day-to-day practices and the resultant relationships between AP headteachers and local governments.

Data collection occurred through intensive, semi-structured interviews and analysis of relevant documents. In order to acquire an extensive understanding, three groups of participants in three cases were selected who met a range of selection criteria. This includes headteachers with varying AP training experiences and from different geographical locations; education officials who have worked with AP heads; and school inspectors who have interacted with headteachers with varying AP training experiences. The participants comprised 22 headteachers, 4 division chiefs and 3 school inspectors in three local governments.

The focus of the questions was on the AP heads' experiences and practices during the AP and the subsequent effects on their school leadership and management. Data were analysed through the lens of Foucault's notion of disciplinary power (1977) with the aim of exploring the ways that the discourses and power relations are exercised in the process of the AP.

### **Controversies with the AP**

The AP literally means an experiential training approach that benefits aspiring heads in experiencing day-to-day operations in authentic settings. Following this, the AP could be one of the elements within headship preparation. The research found that there is a contradiction between the officials' and AP heads' perceptions about the AP. As the division chief explained, the AP is viewed as a part of headship training. However, in this study most of the AP headteachers stated that the purpose of the AP is for solving the understaffed problem of the department, rather than preparing the aspiring heads:

In my view, I think the AP is one part of the headteacher preparation. So, the aspiring headteacher has to fulfill their obligation to do the AP. [Division Chief C2-1]



Several heads revealed that they were aware of their role as equal to case officers and civil servants. This might be because they were deployed and ‘used’ as civil servants by the education department, rather than deployed as ‘trainee heads’ in schools. They were mainly in charge of specific educational projects and also administrative routines within local education departments. Most of them had to deal with official documents, accounting and mechanical bureaucracy, and worked as if civil servants in the local government department. The data showed that some of the AP headteachers were aware of the AP’s distance from the authentic practice of school-centred headship. As one head noted:

As you ask about what is my opinion of the AP approach, my answer of course is very positive to it. But, we also nurse a grievance for some of its details. For example, we are like the case officers or the civil servants because we have to cope with and be responsible for the official documents and paper work. We have to do all of these [...] [Headteacher C44-17]

### Developing the Headteachers

Nevertheless, all participants viewed the AP as a necessary and valuable process for aspiring heads benefiting their subsequent school leadership and administration. It was positively recognised by officials, inspectors and headteachers. Several headteachers reported that they learned a lot from the workplace administrative training and saw it as headship preparation or induction in a positive way, although they also felt their duties in that period of time to be painstaking. They viewed the AP as a unique opportunity to develop their own administrative capacity and broaden their horizons for their future headship career. Several headteachers in the study felt a gratitude for having the experience of the AP.

I think that there are more advantages than disadvantages in terms of the AP. Although you were very tired during that period of time, you could benefit a lot by the AP when you become the school headteacher. So, it’s worth it. [Headteacher C41-20, 28]

The data indicated that the AP heads were able to provide examples of benefits to them from the AP experiences. The range of benefits for AP heads identified in the study included: administrative and leadership capacity building; resource accessing; bet-

ter policy implementation; wider networks; various experiences of school cases.

### ***Improving Administrative and Leadership Capacities***

During the AP training, AP heads mainly had to take charge of the administrative paperwork, sharing that duty with full-time civil servants, while also taking responsibility for some professional education projects. The majority of AP heads were required to deal with official documents, accounting and routines; in other words, the typical mechanistic bureaucracy. Through taking charge of high-stakes work for one year as a sort of preparatory training, the majority of headteachers reported that their administrative capacities improved in the aspects of efficiency, effectiveness and coordination, and they also had better understandings about how to cooperate with the education department. Moreover, the data showed that the AP heads also had the opportunity to team up with experienced headteachers to run educational initiatives during the AP. The collaboration with and then the learning from experienced headteachers were also highlighted as important in developing AP heads' leadership capacities. The AP heads could learn how to interact with the department from those headteachers:

I also learned a lot from [...] I had collaborated with some experienced headteachers for running the educational activities during the AP. I saw how they lead and manage their schools. And I think, from the collaboration, you can see the abilities of a headteacher and then you will try to prepare yourself more. [Headteacher T42-36]

During the AP, the AP heads had time to 'shadow' experienced heads (Huber 2004b), and learned from the school heads. It is undeniable that the AP could provide a stronger learning opportunity, as professional socialisation (Crow 2006), for aspiring heads to develop the context-specific knowledge and skills, notwithstanding the fact that the context is an education authority.

### ***Understanding the Department and Accessing Resources***

Headteachers reported that they could have better understandings of the operation of the education department as a whole, such as administrative procedures and educational affairs and projects in department divisions. They could also get familiar with the department superiors and thereby expand their networks. It was

evident that through these stronger networks and their better understandings of the education department, school headteachers had the advantage of accessing resources, applying projects, receiving funding and information. They reported that they had better ideas about how to apply for funding and projects and who can help them to solve problems. Going beyond schools and understanding the department organisation, to some extent, contributes to headteacher's 'learning capacity' and strengthens their 'organisational socialisation' as well (Crow 2006, 318). To this point, the functioning of socialisation of the AP rightly accord with what Crow termed 'expanded notion of organisational socialisation' (2006, 318):

Broadening the notion of organisational socialisation to include not only a particular school, but also social, mental, and health agencies; community religious and governmental entities; and other schools with similar and different demographics, can strengthen the learning of beginning principals.

### *Understanding and Implementing Policies*

Headteachers also noted that they had better understandings of the gist of a policy and the process of policy-making by situating themselves in the policy-making authority. The evidence showed that AP heads' participation in the policy formulation and their better understandings of administrative operations in the education department would subsequently not only reduce their resistance of policy implementation but also more clearly 'deliberate the policy to school colleagues' (Headteacher T45-9). This would enable them to deliver or to transform the policies at the school level, as the following comments reveal:

After the AP, as a headteacher in school, I can understand the main points of policies from the department more precisely. Once I catch the points, I am more likely to transform the policies into feasible strategies and steps. [Headteacher T41-34]

### *Widening Networks*

The research also found that AP heads would have unique opportunities to interact with various public officials, to attend district and national-level meetings and to contact with city councilors and the media during the AP. Headteachers reported that

this could broaden their horizons, expose them to the wider networks and thereby enrich their social capitals which would benefit their subsequent school management. The general aspiring heads would not have this kind of widening experience if they did not go through the AP. As several participants reported, they had the opportunity to attend national-level meetings of the Ministry of Education on behalf of their local education department.

Although I was overworked, I found that I had wider horizon and vision through the interaction with the Ministry of Education. So, I think I have the better understanding of the education as a whole. So, I never regret going through the AP and I recognise it [...] [Headteacher C44-28]

### *Various Experiences of School Cases*

In general, school middle leaders only experienced a few different schools in their teaching and leading careers in Taiwan. Many of them stayed in the same school for their whole school career. However, the majority of headteachers in the study reported that they could see plenty of school cases, which included positive and negative examples during the AP, and thereby that experience widened their knowledge base of school leadership and management. As one headteacher notes:

The more schools you contacted with, the more you learnt from that. You could transform more cases into your personal experiences. In my view, that is quite beneficial to headship. [...] If headteachers have more experiences to support their decision-making, the decisions will be more robust. For me, it was a great harvest that there were more contacts with other schools during the year in the education department. [Headteacher T41-6]

Similarly, school-based placement in various schools could benefit the aspiring heads in a similar way (Huber 2004a) so as to reduce the reality shock (Clayton 2012). For the case in this study, AP heads got the opportunity to shadow officials or inspectors getting into schools to deal with school problems, and thereby they learnt how to avoid negative events by closely and practically observing schools. They viewed this experience as a great benefit to their subsequent school headship.

## Disciplining the Headteachers

Besides the efficient preparatory function of the AP, the research also found that the AP heads were under surveillance at all times, assessed and examined by the rules, standards and norms of the department and superiors through the daily practices in the AP. Therefore, their performances were improved and at the same time they seemed to be more obedient and adherent to the department. As Foucault (1977, 138) aptly says, disciplinary power strives to make the body 'more obedient as it becomes more useful, and conversely.'

### *Enclosure Space, Observation and Panoptic Effect*

Headteachers reported that they were aware that the open-plan office in the education department made them visible which was different from their offices in school. The data showed that the highly visible AP heads that worked in the open-plan office were 'closely observed' and 'examined' at all times by various department officials (Headteacher T62-18). The open-plan office forced the AP heads to expose themselves to the officials' observation in that 'enclosure of space,' as headteachers note:

But the office environment of our department, it is a big open-plan. The big office is divided into several compartments for divisions. Divisions are allocated into the units without panels. Yes, every division is inside the open plan [...] Furthermore, when we talk in that office, I never get any privacy. When the superior blamed someone, everyone could hear that and see that. Then we felt, [...] we don't get the privacy there, and everyone could see what you were doing there. [Headteacher C43-5, 6]

In fact, your every behaviour was seen there as if you were naked. Everyone there would see what you were doing and how you were acting. You were almost examined. [Headteacher C42-78]

It was particularly the cases where the headteacher selection was more competitive in certain districts, such as the Case A and B, where the headteachers were more aware of the strong surveillance from the officials who might influence the result of headship selection. Therefore, a connection between AP heads' performance and their headteacher selection was strengthened. In order to be successful in the headteacher selection, AP heads have

to maintain their best performance in order to win the final headship selection. On the one hand, they sought to perform well and expose themselves to the officials' observation; on the other hand, they had to behave with exceptional caution because they were always on view, although they were not sure who exactly was observing them.

Here, an unfolding visibility of AP heads' abilities, dispositions and skills was established through the AP daily practices in front of the official, the observer. Foucault uses Jeremy Bentham's architectural design for a prison, the Panopticon, as an 'ideal type' of a totally disciplinary society. The design of the Panopticon makes it possible for the observer to 'see constantly and to recognise immediately' (Foucault 1977, 200). Conversely, the observed are routinely viewed and adjust their actions, as Gillies (2013, 62) notes, 'the "gaze" causes the prisoners to comply.' Headteachers reported 'they did their AP cautiously and carefully' and were 'more afraid to make mistakes' as they were surrounded and 'gazed' at by governmental officials. This was illustrated as follows:

Because everyone in the education department is our superior, I was always cautious and conscientious while working there. I was nervous and afraid of making mistakes.  
[Headteacher, T42-32]

It is this panoptic effect, as they revealed, that they had to learn how to do things right; how to behave right, and meanwhile they had to present themselves at their best to make a good impression on officials – in other words, they 'self-discipline' themselves. This normalizing observation combined with 'the small penal mechanism' in headteacher selection causes the AP heads to behave as if under constant inspection, which marks what Foucault (1977) terms 'self-discipline.'

### *Normalising Judgment*

The research found that the AP heads in the open-plan office were not only observed but also judged by the officials in relation to the range of personality and performance that a potential leader is expected to have. The officials in the study all had their criteria as to 'good and bad headships' that were embedded in the bureaucratically administrative organisation where both obedience and productiveness were stressed at the same time. The data also in-

licated that a discourse of ‘headteachers as policy implementers’ seemed to be taken-for-granted by both heads and officials. The AP heads’ practices of behaviour were required unconsciously to conform to the ‘norms,’ in terms of rules, regulations and expectation (Gillies 2013) and that discourse which seek to normalize the individual. By prioritising the good and bad subjects in relation to one another, the department ranked the AP heads by their performance that was mainly judged by their abilities of ‘execution’ and ‘implementation’ of assigned tasks. As a division chief expressed:

What is a good headteacher? I think it is easy to see, to observe in the office. For instance, if I have something urgent that needs to be completed today. I see at a glance that one is a good head whom I dare to ask for help. Why? [...] Because that one has good execution and understands my administrative language. [Division chief T22-42]

As Foucault (1977, 179) noted, ‘the function of disciplinary punishment is to reduce gaps, and so is essentially corrective.’ In the study, the function of the AP training could shorten the gap between what heads do and what the department expects. The norms and rules in the department penetrate and normalise the AP heads’ behaviour. As a result, the AP heads seem to become more ‘coordinated, efficient and productive.’ A school inspector in the study summed this up:

It is because they have gone through the AP, so they know how the department operates and what we expect, such as the precision and the speed. [School inspector C3-26]

Under the normalising judgment, headteachers are disciplined to become aligned with what is expected of them; what does not conform to the expectation or the rule is excluded, rejected and punished. As Gillies (2013, 59) noted, ‘the adherence to norms, in terms of rules, regulations and expectations is rewarded and any breaches face sanctions.’ The research found that while the department supported the ‘good’ AP heads in the headteacher selection committee to larger schools as a sort of *reward*, the department may not endorse the ‘bad’ ones, or simply appoint them to remote and smaller schools as a sort of *punishment* (T42-42). This was evidenced in cases A and B.

I knew that Julia’s (pseudonym, AP head) performance did not satisfy the superiors. They didn’t like her performance.

The unsatisfactory impression she made impacted her final headteacher selection. [Headteacher T42-32]

If the AP heads were not good enough and not endurable, then she/he may not get full respect. If the selection is not competitive, fortunately, they will be appointed to headship in a small and remote school. [Headteacher N46]

### *The Examination*

We have already discussed how AP heads are subjects in their own ways to hierarchical observation and normalising judgment. In addition, they are subject to examination in a variety of ways. As Foucault warns, 'we are entering the age of the infinite examination' (1977, 189), and he refers to a meticulous archive so that

'the examination that places individuals in a field of surveillance also situates them in a network of writing; it engages them in a whole mass of documents that capture and fix them.'

Thus, the 'power of writing' establishes a discipline instrument. And the examination, as Foucault (1977, 191) notes, makes each AP head a 'case' which can be 'described, judged, measured, compared with others, in his very individuality; and it is also the individual who has to be trained or corrected, classified, normalised, excluded, etc.'

The evidence underlines the fact that the documentation the AP heads were required to undertake was used to judge them in their daily AP practices. This documentation that included a considerable number of official documents and educational projects, was drafted initially by AP heads, and examined by superiors. Very often, AP heads were required to redraft for several times until superiors were satisfied with the document. The data revealed that the majority of AP heads had to take charge of official documents and many of them spent considerable amounts of time on document production. They also revealed that it was through the examination of their writing of official documents that their efforts, abilities and potentials were judged, compared, and also corrected by superiors. For example:

Actually the vice-commissioner must have seen my efforts on the daily official documents, news releases and the reply to the councilor's interpellations. You have to prepare those documents carefully. But the officials in the department will



see your efforts, your abilities and your strength through this. So, that would definitely influence your selection. [Headteacher C44-15]

We have to remember that documentation is just one of the various forms of the examination that AP heads were subject to. In order to demonstrate their qualifications for a headship, they would have to be subject to the 'gaze' across a range of their emotions, attitudes, abilities and personality: they are continuously being examined, judged, and then rewarded and punished. The asymmetric power relations between AP heads and officials and the resultant judgments that occur in the AP head selection process could, as a consequence, promote a dangerously conformist culture in education.

### *Docile Bodies*

The data has shown that the real-world practical AP training informs AP heads' administrative and leadership capacities, policy understandings, leadership knowledge bases, and widening networks, particularly resource accessibility. The AP heads experienced the ways in which the local education authorities assist and monitor schools. All of these were reported to reduce the 'reality shock' (Clayton 2012) for the aspiring heads and could benefit their own professional socialisation (Crow 2006). In other words, the placement improves the AP heads' productivity, efficiency, capacity and coordination. In Foucault's words, it increases the forces of the body (i.e., the AP head). On the other hand, however, the research also found that AP heads were observed, judged, examined and rewarded and punished at the same time and thereby they became more obedient, close to, and coordinated to the authorities. AP heads become more likely to be aligned with what is expected of them. This accords with what Foucault terms 'docile body,' 'a body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved' (Foucault 1977, 136). He (1977, 138) goes further to say:

Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces of the body (in political terms of obedience).

Using Gillies's (2013, 52) explanation, the net of this disciplinary power through the practices of the AP is to maximize the productivity and potential of the AP heads, while at the same time

through this highly structured regime to increase obedience and minimise deviation.

## Conclusion

This paper provides an alternative theoretical perspective in order to better understand how the AP heads are developed and disciplined by local governments through the newly emerging Administrative Placement in the education department (AP). The specific focus relates to how the AP approach maximises the AP heads' administrative and leadership capacities, and at the same time increases their obedience and minimises deviation. Although the forms of the AP have slight difference among selected local governments, the AP heads' practices all inform the analysis of power relations within the AP design. The paper has shown how the AP heads in three cases are subjected to as what Foucault terms 'docile bodies' – they are developed and disciplined at the same time. Consequently, the AP, deep-rooted in the local contexts, cannot be simply regarded as an experiential learning approach (Earley 2009) or a socialisation process (Crow 2006) for preparing effective school leaders. The distinction of the AP also represents a new disciplinary technique used by local governments to make school leaders not only productive and efficient but also docile and obedient. The paper also shows the relevance and importance of Foucault's work for education leadership preparation to unpack how power relations are exercised and how school leaders are disciplined to be docile. The field of school leadership preparation should be a space, as Anderson and Grinberg (1998, 347) argue, where 'problematisation, rather than normalization, can take place.'

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