

1-1-2011

The Role of Staff Development in School-Based Management

Hon Yau

Alison Cheng

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.fhsu.edu/alj>



Part of the [Educational Leadership Commons](#), [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Yau, Hon and Cheng, Alison (2011) "The Role of Staff Development in School-Based Management," *Academic Leadership: The Online Journal*: Vol. 9: Iss. 1, Article 50.

DOI: 10.58809/YAUY4795

Available at: <https://scholars.fhsu.edu/alj/vol9/iss1/50>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Peer-Reviewed Journals at FHSU Scholars Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Academic Leadership: The Online Journal by an authorized editor of FHSU Scholars Repository. For more information, please contact ScholarsRepository@fhsu.edu.

Academic Leadership Journal

Introduction

In the 1980s, the system of relatively uniform centralised budget resource allocation to schools was judged by many to have impaired the achievement of equality, efficiency, liberty and choice. Thus, school-based management was suggested, with lump sum budgets allocated to schools, together with a high degree of community involvement in school decision making and the fostering of diversity within schools to ensure choice (Caldwell and Spinks, 1988). School-based management (SBM) was intended to encourage positive participation from teacher, principal and parent representatives on the school board committee (Yadollah, 2006; Cheung and Kan, 2009). This attracted groups of people with different interests to participate in school policy decision-making. SBM also promised greater freedom and authority for principals to exercise their leadership (McInerney, 2003). Schools also allowed professional teachers to express their opinions and take up greater responsibility for decision-making. Teachers became more like partners rather than employees. Teachers also acted as a facilitator and coordinator to reinvent the organisational culture in school (Cheng, 2004). SBM could provide the necessary conditions such as transparency (Cheung and Kan, 2009), autonomy and flexibility in making decisions (Cheng and Mok, 2007). This was intended to help the employees develop the school and strengthen their sense of belonging to the school.

In the 1970s and 1980s, student performance was judged to be far from adequate in Hong Kong. Wong (1995a) argued that this was partly due to the tightening of administrative and financial controls over the schools caused by the proliferation of Education Department's policies over the years. The Education Department published the School Management Initiatives in 1991 and suggested that all schools should implement school-based management by 2000: thus schools would change from the external control model to that of decentralised authority.

Different features of SBM are being implemented in Hong Kong schools to assure quality. However, experience suggests that the policy of *School Management Initiative* has created many implementation problems resulting in negative perceptions of SBM. It appears that time is inadequate for principal preparation and teacher training programmes to prepare a body of professionals to cope with the changes required, and the Education Department does not sufficiently promote school management effectiveness in schools. School community members have insufficient incentive for schools to take or accept responsibility for achieving school management effectiveness. Schools appear to feel discouraged by the inflexible funding and funding levels unrelated to performance. Hong Kong's primary school system has been configured in a unique way because the Education Department is the central bureaucracy. Unlike the private, profit-making schools and those government schools controlled by the Education Department, most aided schools are publicly funded as they operate under a Code of Aid and a Letter of Agreement between the Director of Education and the schools' sponsoring body. SBM appears to conflict with the previous practices in local primary schools and school reformers, principals and teachers have to confront several tensions in restructuring. The three main such tensions are: changes in the way of teaching and learning in schools; changes in the occupational situation of educators, like decision-making processes and conditions of teachers' work

in schools; and changes in the school governance and the distribution of power between schools and their clients. It is, therefore, worthwhile to investigate what features of SBM are actually being adopted in the local primary schools. Moreover, as the principals are the highest rank and the direct manager of the schools, their perceptions of SBM are also important. Some previous studies indicate that most of the principals are of opinion that they are facing new challenges as the leader of the school. Most of the principals are not sure whether they should also need to play the role of school manager (Gamage and Sooksomchitra, 2004). According to the policy document – The School Management Initiative (SMI): Setting the Framework for Quality in Hong Kong Schools (EMB&ED, 1991) and previous researches (Brown and Cooper, 2000; Purkey and Smith, 1983; Stedman, 1987; Levine and Lozotte, 1990; Sammons et al., 1995; Middlewood, 1997, etc.), staff development can improve SBM. The study aims to examine the perceptions of a sample of Hong Kong principals and teachers of the extent to which staff development has been effectively implemented in the school-based management in primary schools. More specifically, this study aims to investigate the following research question, as perceived by principals and teachers: How effective is their implementation of staff development on SBM in Hong Kong primary schools?

Theory Context

School-based management has no clear cut definitions, but has various names, such as local management of schools, site-based management, self-managing school, school-site autonomy, school-based budgeting, school-based curriculum development, shared decision-making, restructuring and decentralised management. The differences in names are less important than the shifts in authority implicit in the process (Herman and Herman, 1993).

School-based management can be defined as a system where there is a significant and consistent decentralisation to the school level of authority to make decisions related to the allocation of resources, with resources defined broadly to include knowledge, technology, power, material, people, time and money and to work as the collaborative school management cycle which integrates goal-setting, need identification, policy-making, planning, budgeting, implementing, and evaluating systematically. The school remains accountable to a central authority for the manner in which resources are used (Caldwell & Spinks, 1988, 1992).

Hong Kong is facing challenges in the international economic arena and has adopted a new managerialism philosophy and decentralised power in its education system to meet the economic challenge (Ng and Chen, 2008; Cheng, 2005a, Cheng 2005b). The Hong Kong government focused its education policy on improving the quality of education and proposed a comprehensive change of public sector school reform in financial and management strategies and procedures of the administration in 1989. In 1991, the Education and Manpower Branch and the Education Department published the policy document named *The School Management Initiative (SMI): Setting the Framework for Quality in Hong Kong Schools* (EMB&ED, 1991) for setting out the reform of the school system. The SMI document supports Hong Kong's school restructuring with a school effectiveness model, that is, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the school management and to achieve better quality of education in all the systems. The Hong Kong's SMI is equivalent to the United Kingdom's local management of schools, school-based management in the United States and the self-managing school in Australia.

In 1991, SMI was introduced in Hong Kong as a voluntary scheme opting in by schools to increase membership by persuasion rather than by legislative coercion. The first cohort of 21 schools (aided secondary) joined the scheme in 1991. In 1992, 13 secondary schools (10 government and 3 aided) joined it. The participating schools increased sharply to 93 (70 primary and 23 secondary) in 1993 by the influx of schools from the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals and Po Leung Kuk. In 1994, more than 100 schools participated out of a total of approximately 1250 schools. By 1997, only a minority of schools (under one-quarter) had chosen formal membership, an outcome regarded as somewhat disappointing. It is worth recognising that though many schools had chosen not to become formal members of the SMI scheme, they were, in fact, implementing policies consistent with the SMI strategy. Yet, Wong (1995b) noted that the tightening of administrative and financial controls over the schools had been the Education Department's own doing caused by the proliferation of its policies over the years. The net outcome was the stretching of its own resources and the stifling of school initiatives (Wong, 1995b).

Based on the policy document – *The School Management Initiative (SMI): Setting the Framework for Quality in Hong Kong Schools* (EMB&ED, 1991) and previous researches (e.g., Brown and Cooper, 2000; Purkey and Smith, 1983; Stedman, 1987; Levine and Lozotte, 1990; Sammons et al., 1995; Middlewood, 1997, etc), the staff development of SBM has been distinguished in this study and it is discussed in the following.

Staff Development

When there is the need for improvement and change in education, there will be the need for the investment in professional development (Fullan, 1990). The leaders stress that changes, being natural phenomena, are welcomed, examined, and understood as a necessary part of learning, but they should try hard to prevent mistakes and eventually bring order out of chaos. Teachers must be learners themselves through meaningful staff development programmes to perform at the highest professional levels (Joyce and Showers, 1981; Hargreaves and Dawe, 1989). Day et al (cited in Middlewood, 1997) argued that staff development could not be forced but could only be encouraged and promoted.

Again, there are problems, as many writers argue. Without professional development and the enthusiastic involvement of teachers and administrators, a school cannot be developed and improved continuously. Therefore, school-based staff development is important to school effectiveness (Cheng, 1993). If there is not much change in the system, staff do not need to learn or be retrained for the external-control model. Since the external-control model only emphasises implementing appointed duties and avoiding errors, administrators with considerable relevant experience, familiar with present ordinances and able to work according to regulations and preventing problems are often regarded as successful. However, with considerable autonomy and participation, school-based managing schools regarded development as important in facing complicated education work and pursuing educational effectiveness. Thus, the requirement of administrators' quality is very high and that they should not only be equipped with modern management knowledge and techniques to develop resources and generate manpower, but also need to learn and grow continuously, to discover and solve problems with open-minded for learning and school improvements. In short, in addition to being familiar with present school ordinances, they also need to widen their view and open their mind from learning so that they can promote long-term development for their schools (Cheng, 1993). Meaningful skill-development experiences should be created and promoted. Staff development programmes in school-based

management should be designed to emphasise on providing directed and continual interaction among teachers for problem-solving, follow-up assistance, peer observation, professional dialogue, and professional growth planning as to reduce teacher isolation by fostering a cooperative supportive relationship between teachers and principal, and as to heighten collegial effort and support among teachers as colleagues (Young, 1988). Brown and Cooper (2000) suggest that professional development is a key to the success of an SBM initiative and through training, for building capacity and commitment early and continuously.

Studies show that sharing the idea of an effective school-based management and strategically directing existing funds to promote effective staff development is very important to school management (Purkey and Smith, 1983; Stedman, 1987; Levine and Lezotte, 1990; Sammons et al, 1995; Middlewood, 1997). Staff development is needed to train participants who come and go with new ones in the restructuring process partly because each phase of restructuring calls for different knowledge and skills. SMI (EMB&ED, 1991) gives high priority to professional development of principals, teachers and other key players like parents and the community members because of its prerequisite for the successful implementation of restructuring policies. To enhance the educational quality, the government established the Institute of Language in Education to provide language teachers with training in specialist teaching skills. All teachers should develop their language proficiency in reaching the established language benchmark requirements and teaching standards. Primary school-teachers should take retraining courses for adopting target-oriented curriculum and activity approach in teaching. Teachers should be trained to reach the basic level of Information Technology competency for school administration and the pedagogical approach. The government plans that all teachers should possess a degree and initial professional teacher education before working in primary schools. The General Teaching Council should be set up to play the role of enhancing the professional status of teachers (EMB&ED, 1991).

Research Method

To investigate the research question, nine case studies was conducted and a qualitative method of interviews was adopted. Nine principals and nine teachers from nine schools were involved in interviews. Interviews involve an open-ended set of structured questions in a conversational manner to obtain and record accurately the respondent's valid evidence about human affairs (Yin, 2009). The interview questions were adapted from *Quality Assurance in School Education – Performance Indicators for Primary School* (Education Department, 1998), with modifications of their wordings were adopted as the instrument of data collection for interview to probe the perceptions of principals and teachers. The interview questions were divided into two parts. Part A included four questions on personal information. Part B included two questions: (1) How does the school provide the teachers with staff development? (2) How is the staff development system of the school?

Findings

The interview data are presented as follows:

The schools had set the goals and the system to meet the staff development needs. The staff were given staff development and encouraged to pursue professional training.

Principal G: The school has a positive attitude towards staff development and we are willing to make special arrangement for teachers to take training.

Teacher F: The principal always encourages teachers to take at least 2 courses per year with a report submitted to the schools after taking the course. However, teachers have too much workload and are not able to take training courses.

The schools having a positive attitude towards staff development are willing to make special arrangement for teachers to take training. The principal always encourages teachers to take at least 2 courses per year with a report submitted to the schools after taking the course. However, teachers having too much workload are not able to take training courses.

Principal G: For long-term staff development programmes, priority will be given to courses related to 'teaching and learning' and 'school development'. For short-term staff development programmes, it is free and necessary for staff after training to provide the internal resources group with one set of training notes or materials to share opinions in their weekly and annual staff development day, and annual SBM day. The schools also provide staff with workshops supported by the local tertiary institutions.

Teacher H: The school guidelines for teachers regarding staff development are as follows. (1) School development needs for insufficiency of manpower. (2) Teachers' work needs for professional ability and skills. (3) Teachers' years of teaching in the school (4) Teachers' subject of teaching. (5) Needs of educational change: e.g. benchmarking, Putonghua and IT knowledge with minimum required level of computer for the staff.

The school guidelines for teachers regarding staff development are as follows. (1) School development needs for insufficiency of manpower. (2) Teachers' work needs for professional ability and skills. (3) Teachers' years of teaching in the school (4) Teachers' subject of teaching. (5) Needs of educational change: e.g. benchmarking, Putonghua and IT knowledge with minimum required level of computer for the staff. For long-term staff development programmes, priority will be given to courses related to 'teaching and learning' and 'school development'. For short-term staff development programmes, it is free and necessary for staff after training to provide the internal resources group with one set of training notes or materials to share opinions in their weekly and annual staff development day, and annual SBM day. The schools also provide staff with workshops supported by the local tertiary institutions.

Discussion and Conclusion

Since the publication of the School Management Initiatives by the Hong Kong Education Department in 1991, schools in Hong Kong have gradually changed from external control management to school-based management to improve educational quality and school effectiveness. Teachers and principals have also supposedly changed from the role of employees to partners in the schools. They bear the responsibility for participating positively in the decision making of school policy and implementing the school plan to maintain management effectiveness in school.

Providing Ongoing School-based Staff Development

The interviewees in the present study indicated that most principals encourage them to take training. The inadequacy in professional ability and knowledge of teachers, certainly, may block the pursuit of school-based management effectiveness. The profession needs to stress training and professional development activities in SBM for both administrators and staff members. Specifically, the training programmes should allow the administrator and other stakeholders (like teachers and parents) to become current with the body of SBM literature, and should allow time for reflection on how the SBM concept can be successfully implemented. Brown and Cooper (2000) found that administrators might be among the most enthusiastic stakeholders regarding an SBM initiative. This asset should not be ignored when planning for SBM implementation. An increase in professional development activities may foster a positive attitude in staff members. As the need of participative decision making of the school policy, teachers should take more management training whereas principals should take more training on curriculum development. Besides a balanced training of management and curriculum development should be provided to both principals and teachers. Evidence (Purkey and Smith, 1983; Stedman, 1987; Levine and Lezotte, 1990; Sammons et al, 1995; Middlewood, 1997) shared the idea of an effective school-based management as a learning organisation having a practice-oriented, on-the-job schoolwide staff development program that should aim at providing with new skills and techniques, and altering people's attitudes and behaviours. Also, to influence an entire school, it should be schoolwide, with teachers closely relating to the school instructional program. Furthermore, to reduce resistance, it should be based on the expressed needs of the teachers as revealed in the collaborative planning process and collegial relationships rather than presented as a form of redemption for teachers deficient in certain skills or attributes. However, a balance must be drawn between this period of reflection and the pressing public concerns and perceptions regarding the public schools. It may well behave the schools to accelerate the rate of SBM implementation. Staff performance is thus enhanced when providing ongoing school-based staff development as a positive step towards greater professional autonomy accountability to achieve effective schooling (Hewton cited in Middlewood, 1997).

Financial and Time Commitment to Professional Development

Another factor related to training area is that the professional development of administrators and staff members in finance has been woefully neglected because as stated by Bradley (cited in Brown and Cooper, 2000), professional development was the first area to be cut in times of fiscal difficulties. Significant SBM initiatives have the need for expertise in the budgeting and expenditure of funds at the local-school level. The appropriate use of resources is essential to a successful SBM initiative. In Chicago, business managers and individual training packages have been placed to local schools to provide for the accurate usage of local financial resources. Specific strategies such as these needed to address the legitimate concerns that exist regarding the important aspect of SBM implementation. Evidence (Purkey and Smith, 1983; Stedman, 1987; Levine and Lezotte, 1990; and Sammons et al, 1995) found that strategically directing existing funds to promote effective staff development is very important and staff composition in skill, knowledge and experience with staff development is important to school management effectiveness. Besides financial commitment, time commitment is also important. Substantial staff development time must be provided as part of the regular teacher workday and a substantial amount of time must be given to understand the roles and responsibilities of an SBM

initiative and inculcate into the culture of a school.

In summary, to achieve the successful implementation of school-based management as perceived by principals and teachers, it is recommended to have the following improvements: providing (1) ongoing school-based staff development, and (2) financial and time commitment to professional development.

Limitations of the Present Study and Recommendations for Future Research

There is one major limitation of the study that the findings are based on the respondents' perceptions. To improve the validity and reliability of this academic inquiry for future researchers, some recommendations are suggested as follows. More qualitative methods like observation and interviewing students and parents can be used to promote the reliability of the study and further understand the extent of the success of school-based management implementation. Thus, the educational institutions and educators can base on the results, improve the system and enhance school management initiatives. Hopefully, findings of this study can make a contribution to future research and effective implementation of SBM in Hong Kong and other places of the world.

Concluding Remarks

Since the Education Department's publications of SMI in 1991, primary schools in Hong Kong have changed from the model of external control management to SBM in order to improve school management. SBM is rather active in a culture with the teacher's participation in democratic school management. Thus, principals, teachers and parents have to change their traditional roles to fit the decentralised school management. The teachers have to change from the role of employees to partners to the school, and they have to take up the same responsibility as the principals and parents in participating in the decision of school policy. The chances for teachers' participation in the decision of school policy thus help them have a greater sense of belonging to the school and promote their job satisfaction and school management effectiveness.

Thus, the leadership of principals, teachers and parents in the present complicated and knowledge-changing society should continuously pursue life-long learning for professional development in order to make appropriate decision on school policy in order to enhance school management effectiveness. All these factors have to be taken into account and it is hoped that future researchers will consider them in further studies of school effectiveness.

References

Brown, B. R., and Cooper, R. (2000) School-based management – How effective is it? *NASSP Bulletin*, 84(616), 77 -85.

Caldwell, B. J. and Spinks, J. M. (1988) *The self-managing school* (London, Falmer Press).

Caldwell, B. J. and Spinks, J. M. (1992) *Leading the self-managing school* (London, Falmer Press).

Gamage, D.T. and Sooksomchitra, P. (2004) Decentralisation and School-based Management in Thailand, *International Review of Education*, 50, 289-305.

Cheng, K. M. (1993) Can small government survive? An international perspective on Hong Kong education finance. In *The economics and financing of education: Hong Kong and comparative perspectives*, edited by Bray, M., 154-168 (Hong Kong, The University of Hong Kong).

Cheng, C. C. (2004) Investigating the role of 'the integrated assistance system for instruction, discipline and guidance' played in educational reform from the demands for school restructuring, *Journal of National Taipei University of Education*, 18(2), 75-100.

Cheng, Y.C. (2005a) *A new paradigm for re-engineering education: Globalisation, Localisation and Individualisation* (Springer, Dordrecht).

Cheng, Y.C. (2005b) Globalisation and educational reforms in Hong Kong: paradigm shift. In *The International Handbook on Globalisation and Education Policy Research*, edited by Zaida, J., Freeman, K., Geo-JaJa, M., Majhanovich, S., Rust, V. and Zajda, R. Chapter 11, 165-187 (Springer, Dordrecht).

Cheng, Y.C. and Mok, M.M.C. (2007) School-based management and paradigm shift in education: an empirical study, *International Journal of Educational Management*, 21(6), 517-542.

Cheung, S.M.C. and Kan, F.L.F. (2009) Teachers' perceptions of incorporated management committees as a form of school-based management in Hong Kong, *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 10, 139-148.

Education and Manpower Branch and Education Department (EMB&ED). (1991) *The school management initiative: Setting the framework for quality in Hong Kong schools* (Hong Kong, Education Department).

Education Department. (1998) *Quality assurance in school education – performance indicators for primary school* (Hong Kong, Education Department).

Fullan, M. G. (1990) Staff development, innovation and institutional development. In *Changing school culture through staff development*, edited by Joyce, B. (Alexander, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Year Book).

Gamage, D.T. and Sooksomchitra, P. (2004) Decentralisation and School-based Management in Thailand, *International Review of Education*, 50, 289-305.

Hargreaves, A. and Dawe, R. (1989) Coaching as unreflective practice, Paper presented to the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.

Herman, J. J. and Herman, J. L. (1993) *School-Based Management: Current Thinking and Practice* (Illinois, Charles C Thomas).

Joyce, B. and Showers, B. (1989) Transfer of training: The contribution of coaching, *Journal of Education*, 163(2), 163-172.

Levine, D. U. and Lezotte, L. W. (1990) *Unusually effective schools: A review and analysis of research and practice* (Madison, National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development).

McInerney, P. (2003) Moving into dangerous territory? Educational leadership in a devolving education system, *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 6(1), 57-72.

Middlewood, D. (1997) Managing Staff Development, In *Managing People In Education*, edited by Bush, T. and Middlewood, D., 252-268 (London, Paul Chapman).

Ng, P.T. and Chen, D. (2008) A comparative study of Singapore's school excellence model with Hong Kong's school-based management, *International Journal of Educational Management*, 22(6), 488-505.

Purkey, S. C. and Smith, M. S. (1993) Effective schools: A review, *The Elementary School Journal*, 83(4), 427-452.

Sammons, P., Hillman, J. and Mortimore, P. (1995) *Key characteristics of effective schools: A review of school effectiveness research* (London, Ofsted).

Stedman, L. C. (1987) The effective school formula – It is time we changed and still needs changing, *Phi Delta Kappan*, 87, 215-224.

Wong, K. C. (1995a) Education accountability in Hong Kong: Lessons from the school management initiative, *International Journal of Educational Research*, 23(6), 519-529.

Wong, K. C. (1995b). School Management Initiative in Hong Kong: the devolution of power to schools, real or rhetoric. In K.C. Wong and K.M. Cheng (Eds.), *Educational leadership and change: An international perspective*, 141-153 (Hong Kong, The University of Hong Kong Press).

Yadollah, M. (2006) Globalisation and Decentralisation of Management: A Study of the Feasibility of Application of School-Based Management in Iran's Secondary Schools, *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 52(1), 84-98.

Yin, R. K. (2009) *Case study research: Design and methods*, (4th ed.) (Thousand Oaks, Sage).

Young, J. H. (1988) School budgeting: The roles played by principals and teaching, Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, April.

VN:R_U [1.9.11_1134]