Curriculum Leadership of Hong Kong Secondary School Principals in Times of Reform

By

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CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

In memory of my father and dedicated to my mother who have given me

endless love and support

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

ABSTRACT

This study was designed to examine the leadership role of secondary school principals in the ten-year curriculum reform in Hong Kong to gain insights into the complexities of curriculum leadership and management in schools. While studies of principal leadership in relation to school reforms and successful quality interventions in education have been quite common, principal leadership during the ten-year reform has barely been studied in Hong Kong.

A purposive sampling technique led to the identification of six principals from different school contexts who had experienced the process of the Hong Kong Curriculum Reform since 2000. Adopting a case study method, the research examined the insights and experiences of principals who were midway through the historical ten-year curriculum reform. Data were gathered from semi-structured interviews, school documents and External School Review Reports by the Government. These data were analysed to generate information pertaining to their understanding of the curriculum reform, their leadership role and their leadership behaviours.

The major finding was that all six principals agreed with the need for education reforms in Hong Kong and accepted that the new curriculum framework was necessary to keep pace with changing social and global trends. All of them adopted a mix of leadership styles in leading the curriculum change in their schools. The leadership strategies they adopted resembled some of the characteristics of effective principals reviewed in the literature, namely: *possess clear vision and strategic planning, create a facilitative environment and culture for change, distribute leadership and develop middle leaders,*

build teacher capacity, build a learning and collaborative community, apply appropriate leadership styles, and *seek and provide resources and support.* The enabling factors and constraints they identified through the implementation of the reform and their views and experiences relating to their professional development are also reported in the study. Implications for policy, practice and further research are offered.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

There has been much attention given to school reforms and principal leadership in achieving quality education in various parts of the world. However, there have been few studies on curriculum management at the micro-school level in Western societies or in Asian countries to gain insights into the complexities of curriculum leadership and management. This study examined the role and leadership of secondary school principals in the ten-year curriculum reform in Hong Kong. The purpose of the study was to address the question:

"How do Hong Kong secondary school principals understand and perform their role as curriculum leaders in relation to the education reform in Hong Kong?"

Before the return of Hong Kong's sovereignty from the U.K. to the People's Republic of China in 1997, the community as a whole was full of political, social, and psychological uncertainties and tensions (Cheng, 2000). At the handover ceremony on 1 July 1997, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) announced his belief that education was the future of Hong Kong. Accepting the proposal by the Education Commission (1997), the Chief Executive announced a blueprint for quality education in his policy address in October 1997. It indicated a political intention to mark the independence from colonial history and a symbolic new era for Hong Kong's education for the next generation. After conducting a comprehensive review of the whole school system and a series of unprecedented territory-wide consultations, a holistic education reform programme began in 2000.

As a major component of the reforms to the whole education system, a large-scale, ten-year curriculum reform took off in 2001. School heads and teachers have been experiencing a long and painstaking process of understanding, preparing for and implementing the changes. They bore a great responsibility for providing quality education to the next generation and were burdened with an immense workload. The researcher found this historical moment a good opportunity to study principals' perception of their role and actual practices in leading the schools to achieve quality learning and teaching under the curriculum reform in Hong Kong. This study focused on secondary school principals because the researcher was interested in studying their leadership behaviours in meeting the great challenges in preparing for the New Senior Secondary curriculum, separate from the common curriculum changes to be implemented in both primary and secondary schools.

In support of the education reforms, the Hong Kong SAR Government has invested increasing resources into the education system since 1997 despite the worldwide economic recession and the great challenges to Hong Kong after the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003 which claimed 300 lives and caused a heavy blow to its healthcare sector, and the short-term economy (SARS Expert Committee, 2003). This has also brought along higher expectations from the community, the government, and even parents. At the same time, more learning and teaching initiatives and activities both inside and outside schools have demanded more efforts from teachers and principals. Another challenge faced by schools was greater student diversity due to the change of student bandings from five to three according to academic performances. The government also advocated that schools should have school-based measures to enable good students to excel and help the weaker ones.

Having students of greater individual differences in a class, schools had to find better ways to address the problem and to achieve effective learning and teaching. Moreover, due to falling birth rates, primary schools faced the problem of reducing classes leading to a reduction in the number of teachers. This had adversely affected teachers' job security and morale. This phenomenon, which also happens in western countries, will extend to secondary schools of Hong Kong as the smaller cohorts of students move through the school system.

In line with the school-based management and quality assurance initiatives promoted in the education reform, the principal is expected to take on additional responsibilities as a result of increased credibility and accountability. While the principal had to oversee the overall development and implementation of all curriculum initiatives, and be responsible for the learning and teaching of the school, the principal needed to pay attention to the intertwining relationships among staff, subjects and students, the teaching and learning activities, and the assessments and the learning outcomes. The above challenges resulted in more demanding requirements for leadership in leading curriculum development.

This study has its significance in shedding lights on the perceptions, role, and leadership behaviours of Hong Kong secondary principals in leading their schools through the curriculum reform. How school leadership responds to the education reforms is an important concern in policy formulation and research not only in Hong Kong but also other parts of global community.

The Conduct of this Study

Adopting a case study method comprising interviews with six principals, the research
examined the insights and experiences of principals who were midway through the
historical ten-year curriculum reform.   Semi-structured interviews were conducted
with the principals.   Relevant school documents were studied to collect useful data for
verification of information collected from different sources.   From the rich data,
categorisation of ideas and concepts as well as the actual practices in the case schools
was undertaken to generate information pertaining to principal leadership in the specific
context at the turn of a new century.   Information and views on the professional
development and support for principals were also studied and reported.

Though the findings of the study may not be representative of all principals of Hong
Kong, this thesis contains useful information for getting a better understanding of the
issues providing a basis for further studies in this area.

Organisation of the Thesis

This study is reported in seven chapters.   This first chapter has presented an
introduction to the study and outlined the purpose of this study.   Chapter Two reviews
the theoretical foundations of this study through the analysis of the role of principals
and theories of leadership of principals.   The methodology of this study is detailed in
Chapter Three.   Chapter Four gives the contextual factors of the six schools and
backgrounds of the principals.   The next three chapters present the findings of this
study.   The principals' beliefs and understandings are reported in Chapter Five, and

their leadership behaviours in Chapter Six.   Their leadership types are discussed in relation to their practices and outcomes in curriculum and management.   Related issues such as the promotion of school culture and teacher professional development, their self-expectations, and constraints in the curriculum reform are also reported in Chapter Six.   Chapter Seven provides the discussions of the study and recommendations for policy, school practices and further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature pertaining to the background to the education reforms and school leadership in the Hong Kong contexts is presented in the first part of this chapter. The second part of the review focuses on theories of principal leadership. It then reviews studies on the role of the principal and leadership behaviours in relation to curriculum reforms.

Background to Education Reforms in Hong Kong

Under the influence of global trends of education reforms, Hong Kong has been undergoing a series of major changes in the education system since the 1990s. From 1984 to 1996, six reports were published by the Education Commission (EC) which was appointed by the Hong Kong Government to define overall educational objectives, formulate education policy and priorities, coordinate and monitor education research. Policy initiatives recommended in the EC Reports No. 1-6 led to the "first wave of education changes and developments", which was characterised by a top-down approach (Cheng, 2000, 2003). There was "an assumption that policy makers could establish best practices to enhance effectiveness or optimal solutions to major problems for all schools at the school-site level" (Cheng, 2000, p. 23). The School Management Initiative (SMI) policy was introduced in 1991 (Education and Manpower Branch and Education Department, 1991), which was largely based on the model of school restructuring from Australia. In the year when Hong Kong's sovereignty returned to mainland China, the Education Commission (EC) submitted its seventh report (ECR7), which further recommended building a quality culture in Hong Kong schools (Education Commission, 1997). This led to "the second wave" of education reform in

Hong Kong (Cheng, 2000, 2003). The aim was to improve the quality of school education by soliciting the involvement and commitment of the community and all players in the school system (p. 4). Fifty-six recommendations arose from the ECR7, which can be grouped under the following categories: setting goals and developing indicators; putting into place a quality assurance mechanism; providing funding flexibility; providing incentives to encourage quality school education; raising professional standards of principals and teachers; and related reforms (Dimmock & Walker, 1998). Schools could develop along these lines at their own rate of progress, with the school leaders exploring initiatives in the developmental journey and being observed for reference by other schools.

As compared with previous reforms, the second wave of education reform in Hong Kong, which began from the late 1990's, placed strong emphasis on a school-based, "bottom-up" approach, the use of knowledge and research, and adopting a futures outlook (Cheng, 2000, 2003). It took school-based management and human initiatives at the site level as the major means of promoting effectiveness and quality assurance in education. Therefore, the role of the principal and their leadership of the school took on a new and high level of importance.

The Education Commission (EC) of Hong Kong conducted a comprehensive review of the education system in 1998-2000 and made recommendations aiming to meet the needs of society in the 21st Century and to provide quality education, which formed the basis of a large-scale ten-year holistic education reform. After a territory-wide consultation across different sectors related to education, the Overall Aims of Education have been set out as follows:

To enable every person to attain all-round development in the domains of ethics,

intellect, physique, social skills and aesthetics according to his/her own attributes

so that he/she is capable of life-long learning, critical and exploratory thinking,

innovating and adapting to change; filled will self-confidence and a team spirit;

willing to put forward continuing effort for the prosperity, progress, freedom and

democracy of their society, and contribute to the future and well-being of the

nation and the world at large. (Education Commission, 2000, p. 4)

Alongside with the education reforms, other initiatives have been carried out, including

promotion of information technology in education through a five-year strategy from

1998-99 to 2002-03; restructuring of the Education Department to enable it to function

more efficiently, effectively and responsively in its mission to provide quality education

(Education and Manpower Bureau, 1998); and promoting innovations and initiatives

through the Quality Education Fund. The policy of using Chinese as the medium of

instruction in secondary schools was put in place in 1998, with only slightly less than

one quarter of the schools in the public sector allowed to use English as the medium of

instruction.

Curriculum Reforms in Hong Kong

In parallel to the attempts to reform school administration and management, and in line

with developments in the UK, Australia, and North America (Dimmock & Walker,

1998), curriculum reforms have been introduced in Hong Kong. Target Oriented

Curriculum (TOC), a major curriculum reform, was piloted in 1993 and fully

implemented in 1995 in primary schools. In contrast with the traditional curriculum,

TOC was based on a constructivist view of learning and knowledge and was characterised by weak boundaries between subjects, a focus on broad generic skills, and a shift from teacher-centred to student-centred curriculum (Dimmock & Walker, 1998). Criterion-referenced assessments with systematic formative and summative assessment procedures were introduced.

Before TOC was implemented in secondary schools as planned to cover nine years of compulsory schooling (Primary 1-6 and Secondary 1-3), a holistic curriculum reform was introduced in 2001 in parallel with the EC review. After conducting a holistic review of the school curriculum in 1999, the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) issued a comprehensive report 'Learning to learn – The way forward in curriculum development' (CDC, 2001), which set out the blueprint and guidelines for the new curriculum in Hong Kong for the 21st century. The proposed school curriculum maintained the spirit of TOC and further advocated general learning skills across subjects through the creation of Key Learning Areas. The aims and principles of the Curriculum Reform are (a) to raise the overall standard of knowledge and ability of students; (b) to inculcate positive values and proper attitudes in students; and (c) to lay a foundation for lifelong learning and whole-person development. Seven learning goals have been set for the reform, namely *Healthy Lifestyle, Breadth of Knowledge, Learning Skills, Language Skills, Habit of Reading, National identity, and Responsibility.* All students should be entitled to five essential learning experiences for whole-person development, including Moral and Civic Education, Intellectual Development, Community Service, Physical and Aesthetic Development, and Career-related Experiences.

The report proposed a ten-year plan and recommended strategies and actions for the short-term phase (2001-02 to 2005-06), the medium-term phase (2006-07 to 2010-11) and the long-term phase (beyond 2011). Short-term targets included firstly achieving the Seven Learning Goals through using Four Key Tasks (i.e. *Moral and Civic Education*, *Reading to Learn*, *Project Learning*, and *Using Information Technology for Interactive Learning)* (CDC, 2001). Second, priority was given for developing the three generic skills of communication, critical thinking and creativity. Third, a whole-school curriculum plan was to be formulated according to individual strengths and to cater for students' needs through developing school-based curriculum and teachers' professional development. Much discussion and emphasis in the report were put on learning opportunities and flexible learning environments, collaborative lesson preparation and flexible learning time. Other new initiatives included assessment for learning, life-wide learning opportunities for whole-person development, smooth transition between kindergarten and primary school, primary and secondary school, and home-school collaboration.

A series of seminars and meetings were organised for school personnel, students, parents, the public and media by the Education Department (ED) to disseminate the concepts and contents of the curriculum framework. However, speculations, concerns, worries and complaints arose among principals and teachers. Such a holistic review of the school curriculum and whole-school approach of implementation exerted much pressure on all the staff in the school, especially the principal, subject panel heads and other middle leaders in charge of major functional bodies like the Moral Education Teams and Academic Committees.

In October 2004, the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) published a consultation document entitled "Reforming the Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education".   This was followed by a three-month consultation to seek the views of different stakeholders from the education and other community sectors on the design blueprint, timing of implementation and financial arrangements of the new academic structure.   In 2005, *The New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education (NSS) - Action Plan for Investing in the Future of Hong Kong* (The 334 Report) was published which made a range of recommendations. Starting from 2009, all students are given the opportunity to study three years of senior secondary education on top of the nine-year basic education (six-year primary and three-year junior secondary).   Three-year university education will be changed to four years.   The NSS structure aims to establish a vibrant and flexible education system that will widen students' knowledge base, promote all-round development and life-long learning in a diverse and complex environment; and provide multiple progression pathways for further studies and career development, which articulate well with international higher education and the manpower requirements of the 21st Century.

In 2009, the NSS curriculum will be introduced as extension of the curriculum in basic education, aiming to further promote students' *Learning to Learn* capabilities.   It is supported by a flexible, coherent and diversified curriculum aimed at catering for students' varied interests, needs, aptitudes and abilities.   The curriculum recommends that every student should have the opportunities to study four core subjects and two to three electives, and acquire Other Learning Experiences (see Figure 2.1).   It is intended to be broad and balanced, and is developed from prior knowledge of the eight KLAs and the learning experiences of students gained in their basic education with an emphasis on positive values and attitudes.
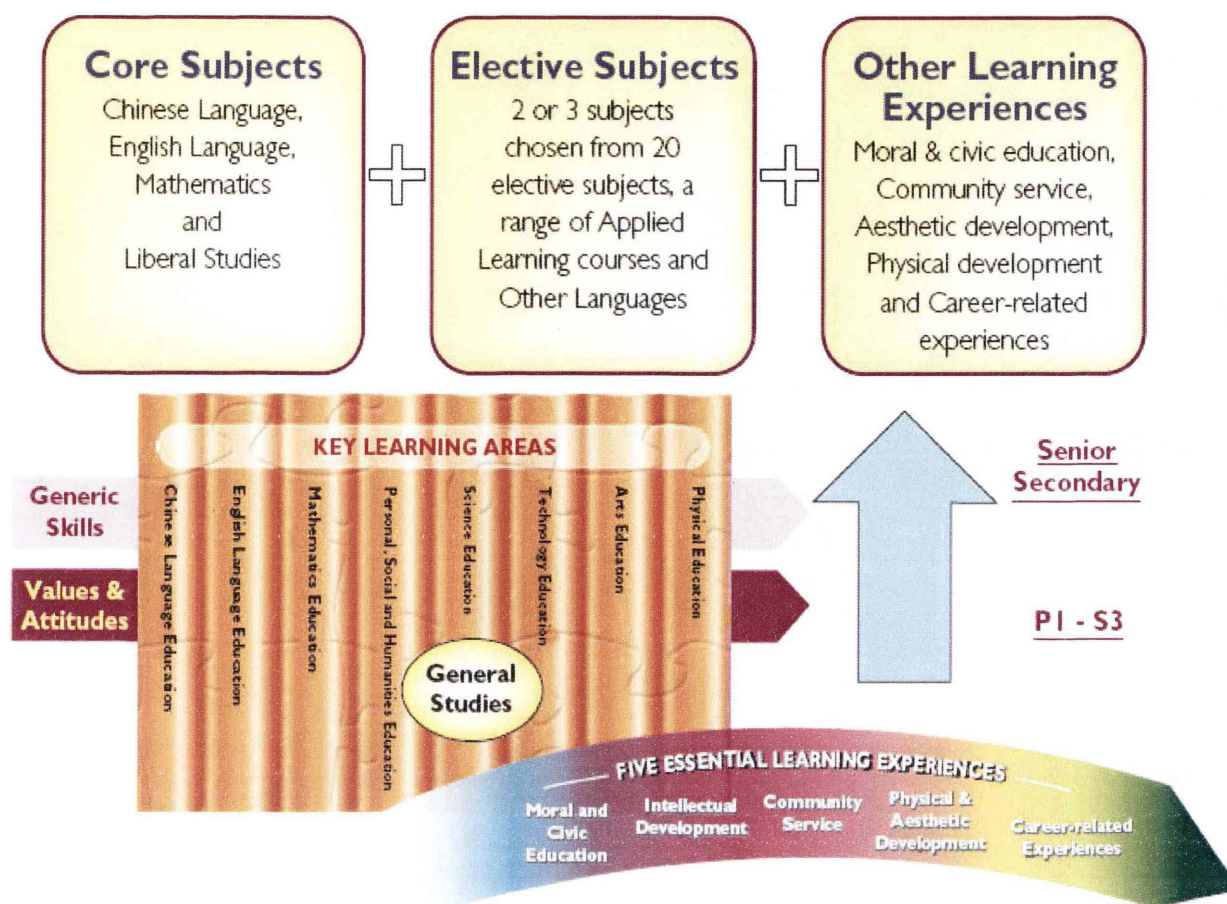
Figure 2.1: Building on Strengths of Basic Education

(Curriculum Development Council, 2009, Book 1, p. 7)

The Liberal Studies is a new subject which is designed to enable students to make

connections across knowledge areas and see things from different perspectives, and to

expand their knowledge, and become independent thinkers. It aims to help students

gain a better understanding of the Hong Kong society, the development of China and its

place in the modern world, globalisation, and citizenship at multiple levels. The Other

Learning Experiences is also a new curriculum component. After three rounds of

consultation on the academic structure, curriculum and methods of assessment and

incorporating the views of the public and the education sector, the revised and finalised

NSS Curriculum and Assessment Guides (24 subjects in total) have been released by the Curriculum Development Council in June 2006 and January 2007.

The emphases for the mid-term targets of the curriculum reform (second 5-year plan, 2006-2011) include strengthening moral and civic education and values development in KLAs through the development of positive values and attitudes, promoting Reading to Learn and Reading across the Curriculum, and enhancing Assessment for Learning. To be in line with the new curriculum framework, public assessments needed to change as the traditional "one-off" written examination could not fully assess students' learning outcomes.   Students entering Secondary One in September 2006 will sit for the first Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) examinations in 2012 after completing six years of secondary education.   School-based Assessment (SBA) has been introduced as a more comprehensive and accurate assessment of students' overall performance.   In the first two rounds of consultation, principals and teachers generally accepted diversified assessment but were skeptical about the fairness of SBA and worried about the extra workload.   Adjustments were subsequently made in the requirement and weighting of an SBA component as well as their design to better demonstrate learning outcomes in school-based assessment approaches.   The development of SBA would be further consolidated step-by step and its scope extended gradually with options and transitional arrangements provided for teachers to integrate SBA into daily teaching activities (EMB, 2006).

In support of the curriculum reform, in addition to the curriculum guides to pre-primary education, basic education, and NSS education, a range of learning, teaching and assessment resources have been developed for schools' reference and use.   Relevant professional programmes for principals and teachers, and various modes of

collaboration, support, and cross-school sharing have also been provided.

The progress and effectiveness of the education reform has been studied by conducting school visits, focus group visits and discussions with school personnel, case analysis, and large scale questionnaire surveys (Education Commission, 2006). Commissioned by the government, the City University of Hong Kong conducted a survey in October 2005 on "The Reform of the School Curriculum and the Implementation of Key Learning Area Curricular in Schools". A sample of 219 primary schools and 138 secondary schools took part in the survey. The findings were encouraging. Over 90% of school principals used the four key tasks as the entry points for implementing the curriculum reform since 2001, and confirmed that the tasks helped facilitate student learning. Over 70% of schools had adopted a five-year short-term strategy for whole-school curriculum, and reported better change in school in the aspects of "school as a learning community", leadership competence, professional development, collaboration with teachers, and understanding of the curriculum development. Over 70 % primary schools and over 50% of secondary school principals reported student improvement in generic skills, attitudes and overall learning performance as well. (Education Commission, 2006, pp. 12-19, pp. 51-52).

The survey relied on self-reporting by principals and thus risked a positive bias. However, independent evidence of Hong Kong students' impressive performance (at least in some academic areas) has been provided by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Hong Kong students attained encouraging results in PISA 2003. Among 15-year-olds in 41 countries and regions around the world, Hong Kong

students ranked first in mathematics, second in problem-solving skills and third in scientific literacy (Education Commission, 2006, p. 52). In PISA 2006, Hong Kong ranked the first in mathematics, the second in science performance and the third in reading performance among a total of 57 countries or regions. There has been significant rise in reading performance since PISA 2000 and the students are found capable of sophisticated, critical thinking (OECD, 2007). The challenges lying ahead include the implementation of the New Senior Secondary curriculum in 2009, at the time of declining student population which will impact on the secondary school sector and inevitably cause anxiety and worries to school heads and teachers (Education Commission, 2006, p. 53).

The Changing Roles of Principals

The previous section has highlighted the increasingly crucial roles played by principals in the implementation of the Hong Kong education reform. The global context for this also points to significant changes in the roles of principals (Leithwood, Jantzi, Earl, Watson, Levin & Fullan, 2004; Cranston, 2007). Policies of decentralisation and deregulation, defined as the reduction of central government regulations, have led to an increase in school autonomy and the accountability of school principals. Principals are expected to be the educational leaders of their schools. The complexities and demands of the principalship are increasing. Principals have to find ways to manage these intensifying demands, but the personal opportunity costs are universally high and, long-term, potentially damaging as principals are challenged by the loss of personal and professional time (Day, 2000; Mullen, 2007). Their role has evolved into a CEO as in the private sector (Cranston, 2007). School leadership can be 'greedy work' (Gronn,

2003b) and there is rarely a time when leaders feel their work is finished. Goodwin, Cunningham and Childress (2003), based on anecdotal and empirical evidence, pointed out a recent phenomenon of high wastage of principals in the US and shortage of applicants for vacant posts despite adequate numbers of qualified persons. The shortage problem seems more serious at the secondary level. Stress, time constraints and the changes in the principalship are the reasons for reluctance on the part of qualified, certified teachers to seek this important position. Kruger, Van Eck and Vermeulen (2005) echoed the point that the premature departure of primary and secondary principals is also a regular occurring phenomenon in Europe, and that there is shortage of principals in the Netherlands (p. 259). The risks for premature departure are a "combination of personal characteristics and factors embedded in the working environment and the culture of the school where leadership is performed" (Kruger et al., p. 256).

The study by Goodwin and her colleagues (2003) of contemporary high school principalship confirmed that the principalship has increased in complexity and identified four types of conflicts in their roles and responsibilities: (a) Role conflict (conflict between the roles of strategic leader, instructional leader, organisational leader, and political and community leader), (b) Accountability conflict (conflict between being inclusive and being accountable, between meeting the diverse needs of students and meeting high standards), (c) Autonomy conflict (conflict between being responsive to mandates and being autonomous), and (d) Responsibility conflict (between increased responsibility and the need for both professional and clerical assistance). Nearly three in four U.S. public principals say that daily emergencies eat into time that they would rather spend on education issues (Johnson, 2004).

According to The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA, 1995) in the USA, the roles of principals include instructional leadership, organisational leadership, strategic leadership and community and political leadership.   In New South Wales, Australia, educational leadership is considered the preferred role of secondary principals, which aims to improve the academic and social outcomes of students, enhance the professional learning of staff and develop quality relationships with parent and the community (NSW Secondary Principals' Council State Assembly, 2004).

Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) described principals as the "gatekeepers" and "gate-openers" of their schools.   Trail (2000) described the various roles of the principal as psychologist, teacher, facilities manager, philosopher, police officer, diplomat, social worker, mentor PR director, coach and cheerleader.   Lewis (2001) concluded that the roles of principals included developing a learning culture, developing a learning community, establishing a learning platform, and sharing the responsibility of accountability.   Crowther, Hann and Andrews (2002) described the role of the post industrial principals as visioning, identity generation, alignment of organisational elements, distribution of power and leadership, external alliances and networking (p. 11).   Goodwin et al's (2003) study validated the importance of principals' role as the strategic leader, as a visionary and as a change agent.   The international literature has informed the analysis of the data gathered for this thesis.

Leadership in Schools

There is little doubt from a review of the literature that leadership is important in developing effective schools and in facilitating quality learning and teaching (e.g. Burns,

1978; Sergiovanni, 1984, 1992; Murphy, 1990; Fullan, 1991; Hallinger & Heck, 1998;

Blasé and Blasé, 1998; Day, 2000).   Early research on leadership focused on

personality and physical traits which were thought to be the essential precursor to

leadership (MacNeill, Cavanagh & Silcox, 2003).   Weber's (1947) separation of

charismatic leadership from position-based leadership promoted the belief that

leadership was more of a consequence of a set of human actions based on emotional

power that engaged the support of others (Solomon, 2003).   Sergiovanni (1984)

identified multiple dimensions of leadership, termed "leadership forces" referring to

expert knowledge about matters of education and schooling in relation to technical,

human, educational, symbolic and cultural forces.   In the 1990s, consideration of

educational leadership took the form of an inter-dependent relationship between the

leader and the led (Ciulla, 2003).   Successful leaders do not only set directions,

organise, monitor, and build relationships with the school community, but also model

values and practices consistent with those of the school so that "purpose which may

have initially seemed to be separate become fused" (Sergiovanni, 1995).

In the past three decades, three conceptual models of leadership dominated the debate

on the most suitable leadership role of school leaders.   They are the models of

instructional, transformational and distributed leadership.   Sustainable leadership has

been recently added to it.   The merits of these four models are examined and discussed

in the following sections.

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership became popular in North America during the 1980s with an

emphasis of the school leaders being involved in the school's instructional programme (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Blasé & Blasé, 1998; National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2002). Much of the research and literature on instructional leadership describes principal behaviours as distinct from the behaviours of other members of the school organisation or community. Murphy and Hallinger (1992) suggested the need for empowering others to exercise leadership. The notion of multiple instructional leadership and facilitative instructional leadership calls for more focus shifted from prescribing what others should do to what it enables others to do. Gupton (2003) has noted that instructional leadership is not the sole domain of principals and it can take the form of direct or indirect actions. MacNeill et al. (2003) argued that "instruction" is a limiting, clinical term that is related to "one part of the teaching and learning cycle" (p. 4). Other important factors contributing to effective learning and teaching are not encompassed by this term, such as formative or summative assessments, the effect of the teacher's body language or discourse and the creation of favourable learning environment and school culture. The term "Instructional Leadership" implies a directive or active role of the leaders and a passive role for teachers. The facilitative instructional leadership of the mid 1990s which empowers staff has superseded the top-down, principal-driven model of instructional leadership of the 1980s (MacNeill et al., 2003).

Hallinger's (2003, 2005) reviews of the literature in this area revealed that increasingly principals saw their major responsibility as instructional leadership. MacNeill et al. (2003) suggested that the evolution of principal-based instructional leadership into facilitative instructional leadership, whether in positions of formal or informal leadership, warranted the need for a holistic view of school leadership including

leadership of both student instruction and the total school community. Fullan (1991) emphasised the role of principals as curriculum leaders. Recent descriptions of "Instructional Leadership" (e.g. Blasé & Blasé, 2000) include both the moral and visionary dimension with a practical focus on how leaders can influence teachers to promote teaching and learning.

Transformational Leadership

Burns (1978) described transformational leadership as a process in which "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation" (p. 20). In contrast with transactional leadership which was based on followers' individual, typically monetary, extrinsic interests, Burns argued that transformational leadership engaged others to raise intrinsic motivation. Following Burn's studies, Bass (1998) identified four dimensions of transformational leadership: charisma, inspirational motivation, individualised consideration and intellectual stimulation. Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) concluded that transformational leadership could foster capacity development and higher levels of personal commitment to organisational goals on the part of leaders' colleagues. Their model of transformational leadership includes six dimensions: (a) building school vision and goals, (b) providing intellectual stimulation, (c) offering individualised support, (d) symbolising professional practices and values, (e) demonstrating high performance expectations, and (f) developing structures to foster participation in school decisions. Each dimension entails specific leadership practices and the problem-solving processes used by transformational leaders.

In a study of forty-one government secondary schools in the New South Wales in Australia, Barnett, McCormick and Conners (2000) concluded that transformational

leadership is more facilitative of positive teacher outcomes (extra effort, satisfaction and effectiveness), task focus goals and excellence in teaching.   The study also suggests that "individual concern" is a critical leadership task as it builds the capacity of teachers to identify and pursue a shared vision.   In a review of 32 studies, Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) identified additional effects of transformational leadership on changed classroom practices, collective teacher efficacy and organisational learning, and on pedagogical or instructional quality.

Distributed Leadership

The task of leading a school is too complex and demanding for only one person.   The concept of distributed leadership originated in the 1980s with the work of Sergiovanni (1984).   Research studies (Day & Harris, 2002; Dinham, 2005; Gurr, Drysdale & Mulford, 2005) indicate that distributed leadership is an element of successful school principalship.   Spillane (2006) described distributed leadership as an activity, a social practice among many people, which included the situation in which leadership activity took place.   The essential components of distributed leadership include leadership practice; interaction of leaders, followers and their situation; and the situation which defines leadership practice.

MacBeath (2005) emphasised the building of trust for distributed leadership as mutual trust was necessary for building relationships and respect.   According to MacBeath, trust is a multi-faceted concept which operates at four levels: the individual level (trustworthiness); the interpersonal level (reciprocal trust); the whole school level (organisational trust); and the wider community and public level (social trust) (p. 354).   However, principals face a dilemma between entrusting staff and the pressure of

accountability from external sources. Therefore, principals are cautious about taking risks for which they might have to pay the price. MacBeath (2005) identified six models of distributed leadership in a developmental sequence: (a) distribution as formal (hierarchical with designated leadership and management roles); (b) distribution as pragmatic (ad hoc in response to external environment); (c) distribution as strategic (goals oriented); (d) distribution as incremental (sponsored growth, 'let go' more); (e) distribution as opportunistic (capable staff willingly assume leadership); and (f) distribution as cultural (leadership embedded in the culture) (pp. 357-362).

The concept of distributed leadership overlaps substantially with shared (Blasé & Blasé, 1999), collaborative (Wallace, 1988), democratic (Gastil, 1997) and participative (Vroom & Jago, 1998) leadership concepts (cited in Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 59). Blasé and Blasé's study (1999) showed that many principals defined shared governance in terms of teacher, parent, student, and support staff participation and empowerment (p. 481). Building trust, developing open communication, sharing information, building consensus, and embracing inevitable conflict in productive ways were the primary strategies used for implementing shared governance (Blasé & Blasé, 1999, p. 484). The study showed that teachers' participation in shared governance tended to evolve from a consultative role or giving input to a decision-making role. However, teachers' involvement in the decision-making process also depends on the issues of discussion and how the dialogue is initiated and other factors, like the nature of issues, teachers' interest in issues, and willingness to take risks connected with assuming responsibility for decisions (Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Crockenberg & Clark, 1979).

Sustainable Leadership

The term 'sustainability' has been recently applied to education leadership by Fullan

(2005) and Hargreaves and Fink (2003, 2006).   The role of the principal is pivotal to

systemic school change.   To meet challenges of reforms in the education system as a

whole, Fullan (2005) calls for sustainable leadership or what he names in his book title

"system thinkers in action".   He describes sustainability as the capacity of an education

system to engage in the complexities of continuous improvement in ways consistent

with deep values of human purpose.   Besides working intensively in the school site and

concentrating on student learning as the central focus of reform, school leaders should

connect with and participate in the bigger picture of the system and its context and act

accordingly (Fullan, 2005; Gurr, Drysdale & Mulford, 2006).   Fullan's (2005) eight

elements of sustainability include moral purpose, commitment to changing contexts,

lateral capacity building, vertical relationships, deep learning, commitment to short-term

and long-term results, cyclical energizing, and leadership to put in place the above seven

elements.   School leadership has its critical role in "changing the context" in which the

role is embedded.   Fullan called for principals to become change agents as well as

beneficiaries of the processes of school change.

Hargreaves and Fink (2003) interpreted sustainable educational leadership differently,

claiming that it "preserves and develops deep learning for all that spreads and lasts, in

ways that do no harm to and indeed create positive benefit for others around us, now

and in the future" (p. 694).   Hargreaves and Fink (2006) identified seven principles of

sustainability in school leadership and change, which include *depth, length, breadth,*

justice, diversity, resourcefulness and conservation (pp. 18-20).   In contrast to Fullan's

view of supporting the system focus through imposed short-term, standardised achievement targets, Hargreaves and Fink (2006) argued that leaders "cannot mandate what matters to effective practice" (p. 253) and should be aware of the collateral damage on other areas of sustainability. They stressed that "Sustainability is a meal, not a menu. You can't pick and choose. All the principles fit together" (p. 251). Hargreaves and Fink (2006) outlined five action principles for achieving sustainability: (a) activism (engage assertively with environment), (b) vigilance (monitor the environment), (c) patience (defer gratification instead of seeking instant results), (d) transparency (open to scrutiny and inspection), and (e) design (create systems that are personalized for people's use and compatible with human capacity) (p. 256). It is important that sustainable leaders attend to their own renewal without sacrificing themselves too much as they serve their community so that they can "stay the course, stay together, stay around, and stay alive" (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 272).

School Leaderships and Effective Leaders

Comparing the instructional and transformational leadership models, Hallinger (2007) identified more significant similarities than their differences. Both models emphasise (a) creating a shared sense of purpose in the school; (b) developing a climate of high expectations, innovation and improvement; (c) providing staff intellectual stimulation and continuous development; and (d) the leader acting as a model. Their differences are most apparent in the emphasis given by transformational leadership to individualised support for staff and to building organisational goals out of the personal professional goals of staff and community members. The instructional leadership model has been interpreted as more top-down and directive (Hallinger, 2007, pp. 4-5).

Robinson, Lloyd, Hohepa and Rowe (2008) found that the impact of instructional leadership had considerably greater impact on student outcomes than transformational leadership. Five dimensions of instructional leadership were found particularly powerful in creating the impact on students: "establishing goals and expectations, strategic resourcing", "planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum", "promoting and participating in teacher learning and development", and "ensuring an orderly and supportive environment".

In a questionnaire study on 96 South Australian and Tasmanian secondary schools, Silins and Mulford (2002) found that both the principals' transformational leadership style and the schools' distributed leadership helped achieve organisational learning. This in turn had positive impact on teachers' work which then had a strong influence on student participation and engagement. Transformational and distributed leadership were found indirectly related to teachers' work and student outcomes. Successful school leaders do not just distribute leadership but also develop leadership capacity in their staff.

In the presentation of the leadership models above, some essential elements of success are common, such as moral purpose, commitment, capacity building, relationships, and deep learning which are considered elements of sustainability (Fullan, 2005; Day, 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Based on case studies on successful school leadership in Tasmania and Victoria, Australia, Gurr et al. (2006) highlighted "the significant contributions principals made to schools, in particular in the areas of capacity building and teaching and learning" (p. 371). The themes and models from the two studies demonstrated a remarkable degree of commonality in the principals' characteristics and qualities. Gurr et al. (2006) concluded that "What helped to make the interventions

successful were the beliefs, values, vision, personal characteristics and leadership style of the principal" (p. 386).   Discussing the nature of visionary leadership, Murphy (1990) concluded that "more effective principals have a clear sense of direction for their schools that they are able to clearly articulate" (p. 167).   This is in tune with Sergiovanni's (1994) argument that schools should be "purposeful communities" in which firmly held core values "permeate every aspect of the school organisation." Brown and Anfara (2003) added that visionary leaders, besides being able to clearly articulate what is and what ought to be, will take actions to build a new reality (p. 30). Visionary leaders should understand the relevance of the reform in terms of need, practicality, and complexity.   They should assess the readiness of staff to be involved, and ensure the necessary resources and support are available, including the time to accomplish the task.   They will work collaboratively with a critical mass of diverse constituents like teachers, community members, and parents.

Gurr et al. (2006) argued that the principal should be more than just an instructional leader in a school site.   Fullan (2001, 2002) emphasised of the principals' role as a change leader.   Fullan (2002) maintained that Cultural Change Principals display "palpable energy, enthusiasm, and hope" (p. 17).   Fullan (2003) argued that transforming schools and school systems on a large scale requires principals' moral imperative of school leadership.   Day's (2004) study confirmed that successful principals displayed a strong sense of agency and moral purpose (p. 435).   He identified six areas of passion contributing to successful leadership, which are passions for achievement, care, commitment, collaboration, trust, and inclusivity (Day, 2004). The successful principals in Day's (2004) study survived and continued to strive for improvement because of the strong values they held and their willingness and ability to

be creative. They made efforts in creating collaborative cultures to enhance teacher participation and enable distributed leadership to sustain teacher commitment. The principals focused on teachers' motivation and self-efficacy and the emphasis on the creation and sustained building of productive, participative community relationships. The principals encouraged developing the school into a community, building a sense of continuity and purpose through creating narratives of experience (pp. 427-436).

Besides moral purpose and relations building, Fullan (2002) argued that leaders in the knowledge society should have an understanding of the change process, focus on knowledge creation and sharing, and maintain coherence. Leaders should achieve greater alignment in school and avoid having "disconnected, episodic, piecemeal and superficially adorned projects" (Fullan, 2001, p. 109). A focus on students, learning and teaching is the core to success of principals. Appropriate leadership behaviours of principals will lead to teachers' growth of commitment, professional involvement and willingness to innovate. To ensure deeper learning and to develop and nurture highly motivated and engaged learners, it is necessary to mobilise the energy and capacities of teachers (Fullan, 2003). Barnett et al. (2000) argued that school leadership is characterised by a one-to-one relationship between the leaders and the teacher (follower), and leaders have a set of relationships, which vary from one teacher to another.

Gurr et al. (2006) found that successful principals showed "a common and consistent set of personal traits, behaviours, values and beliefs" (p. 371). The characteristics and qualities included "honesty and openness, highly developed communications skills, flexibility, commitment, passion, empathy with others, a sense of 'innate goodness,

support of equity and social justice, a belief that all children are important and can succeed, being other-centred, high expectations and a belief that schools can make a difference" (Gurr et al., 2006, p. 371). Though Gurr and colleagues admitted that the study had limitations as most of research evidence was from Northern America or the UK and the source of evidence typically relied on the principals, their findings are supported by other research previously mentioned.

The one-size-fits-all, charismatic, heroic model of school leadership seems out of place in most contexts (Mulford, 2008). The recent literature incorporates expanding understanding of leadership including aspects of the context, of antecedent conditions, the school mission and culture, and the centrality of learning and teaching. The literature review indicates that the suitability or effectiveness of a particular leadership model is related to factors in the external environment and the local context of a school (e.g. Fullan, 2002, 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2003, 2006; Gurr et al., 2006). Hallinger (2007) concluded that effective leaders respond to the changing needs of their context, and that the leader's behaviours are actually shaped by the school context. Thus, one resolution of the quest for an integrative model of educational leadership would link leadership to the needs of the school context (p. 5). Successful leaders adapt and adopt their own leadership practice to meet the changing needs of circumstances in which they find themselves. As schools develop and change, different leadership approaches will inevitably be required and different sources of leadership will be needed so that development work keeps moving.

Principal Leadership in Hong Kong

Cheng and Chan (2000) commented that "many principals in Hong Kong often adopt a transactional leadership style, if not autocratic or laissez-faire, in managing schools" (p. 224). Yu's study (2007) demonstrates strong evidence of both transformational leadership and transactional leadership (Parry, 1998), which were necessarily and simultaneously employed in the participant Protestant Christian schools in Hong Kong. Transactional leadership consists of the factors of *Contingent reward* (e.g. promotion, recognition, praise or special reward), *Management-by-exception (active)* (e.g. provide induction and mentoring support to new teachers) *and Management-by-exception (passive)* (e.g. take action only when errors occur) (Yu, 2007). The study also supports the behavioural characteristics of both types of leadership. The principals applied the strategies of instructional leadership (involving *curriculum focus, delegation, teacher focus and student focus*) and transformational leadership (involving *vision, professional development, wider knowledge, and information technology*) (Yu, 2007). In coping with the increasing requirements on the leadership style of school-based management (SBM) emphasised in the school reforms in Hong Kong, Wong (2003) argued that, apart from "the traditional approach of leadership like authoritarian versus democratic, continuum, people versus task orientation, and contingency approaches", charismatic leadership and learning leadership are needed (p. 246). As SBM involves decentralisation of decision making from the Education Department to individual schools, the role of leadership is essential in making efficient and effective decisions aiming at developing the school. Principals are bound to face problems from strategic to operation levels and it is important to evaluate the feedback from all involved participants to inform decisions. Wong (2003) concluded that "an effective leader for

SBM has to lead with learning and possess the characteristics of instructional leadership, organisational leadership, strategic leadership, cultural leadership, reflective leadership, people leadership and community leadership" (p. 246). To this list, Yu (2007) added educational leadership (delegation to subject departments, staff supervision and monitoring, emphasis on professional development) and responsive leadership (accountability for staff performance and school achievement).

A dilemma was observed in Hong Kong principals' practice that "a type of remote leadership in which strong, almost autocratic, leadership is expected not only by principals themselves, but also by teachers" (Walker & Dimmock, 2002, cited in Walker, 2004, p. 87). In exploring principalship in Hong Kong, Walker (2004) probed the formation and preservation of the deep leadership structures of Hong Kong schools. He argued that "deep structures are formed partly through a dynamic relationship between constitution and culture" (Walker, 2004, p. 75). By "constitutions", Walker referred to "the more formal aspects of system governance and organisation". He defined "culture" as "the shared norms, values and patterns of understanding that appear relatively common across a system or collectivity and influence individual and group behaviour at all levels" (Walker, 2004, p. 76). He described the deep structures as "power relationships that define action and behaviours in schools and across the wider system" (p. 90). He concluded that the deep structures had influenced and would continue "to influence how leadership is practised, and subsequently, how reforms are perceived and implemented in schools" (p. 91).

Leung and Chan (2001) commented that "participatory management that is based on the principle of equality and a contractual relationship between the boss and

subordinates—is culturally alien to a Chinese society like Hong Kong" (p. 242). Lo
(2002) also remarked that teachers in Hong Kong schools are reluctant to confront
superiors, express dissent and criticise peers. Walker (2004) concluded that "the
dynamic tussle between existing structures and values, and those accompanying
ongoing reform efforts, will mingle to further define the uniqueness of Hong Kong's
school leadership for the benefit of its students" (p. 91).

Walker (2007) discussed the quest for authentic leadership in Hong Kong. He referred
to Begley's (2004) definition of authentic leadership: "a metaphor for professionally
effective, ethically sound and consciously reflective practices in educational
administration" (p. 5). Authentic leadership must "engage with values orientations,
associated behaviours and more pragmatic and structural considerations such as
state-level policies and specific organisation intricacies" (Walker, 2007, p. 259). He
explored the difficulties of Hong Kong school leaders face in leading authentically at
the cross roads of traditional values and modern reform demands. Walker (2007)
concluded that it is important but difficult for principals in Hong Kong to lead
authentically due to the hybridity of the context which is continually changing.
Leadership tensions in Hong Kong schools arise from the shift of traditional
management role to that of educational, curriculum or instructional leaders, pedagogical
reforms (e.g. student-centred learning approach) and traditional culture (e.g. uniformity
of Chinese traditional culture versus diversity advocated in the globally driven reforms).
The findings of this study will shed further light on the leadership styles and practices
of the principals in Hong Kong.

Curriculum Leadership

There is little literature using this term explicitly to describe principals' roles and responsibilities in relation to curriculum and learning and teaching. There have been more discussions of "educational leadership", "instructional leadership", and "transformational leadership". Glatthorn (1997) defined curriculum leadership as "the exercise of those functions that enable school systems and their schools to achieve their goal of ensuring quality in what students learn" (p. 20). His definition emphasises functions (not roles) and the processes that enable systems and individuals to achieve their goals. Mullen (2007) argues that curriculum includes more than just activities and materials associated with instruction. Curriculum encompassing formal, informal as well as hidden components is an overarching element that leads to overall school improvement. Mullen defines the curriculum leader as a person who facilitates the development of a curriculum while embracing the desires of all key stakeholders, and especially the learning needs of students. While emphasising the role of principal as curriculum leader, Glatthorn (1997) remarked that other incumbents, such as assistant principals, department chairs, team leaders, and classroom teachers, all have a part to play and can work together to discharge these responsibilities (p. 21). Glatthorn reminded principals to use the routines that comprise the typical day as occasions for curriculum emphasis. Principals should understand that "curriculum leadership does not exist in a vacuum but is simply one component of effective behaviours" (Glatthorn, 1997, p. 25).

Lee and Dimmock (1999) used the term "Curriculum leadership and management" in their study and treated it as synonymous with Hallinger and Murphy's (1987) reference

to "instructional management" and "instructional leadership", which include goal setting and planning; monitoring, reviewing and developing the educational programme of the school; monitoring, reviewing and developing the staff of the school; culture building and allocating resources; and the management of interpersonal relations. Lee and Dimmock (1999) used four frames of leadership (structural, human relations, political and cultural leadership) to conceptualise curriculum leadership.

Leadership more specifically related to learning and teaching include "productive leadership" (Hayes, Christie, Mills & Lingard, 2004) focusing on developing productive pedagogies, and "pedagogic leadership" (MacNeill et al., 2003) aiming at improving the learning outcomes. Productive leadership is characterised by a focus on pedagogy for improving student learning outcomes and learning; support for developing a culture of care which encourages teacher professional risk taking; and a focus on leadership structures and strategies for developing organisational processes that facilitate the smooth running of the school (Hayes et al., p. 524).

Pedagogic leadership can be viewed as a component or a distinct style of school leadership focusing on the improvement of student learning. Characteristics include the application of expert knowledge about student learning and development, leaders' focus on pedagogic rather than administrative functions, and improvement of pedagogic practice. Similar to other leadership models, both productive and pedagogic leaderships also emphasise the principal and staff's moral obligations, shared vision and sense of mission about student learning, commitment to mission realisation by staff and students, engagement and empowerment of staff, multiple leadership, creation and sharing of knowledge throughout the school, development of relationships and a sense

of community, re-culturing school improvement, and on motivating others, thus facilitating culturally aware learning (MacNeill et al., 2003, p. 8).

In Hong Kong, curriculum leadership and instructional leadership are combined in the use of the term "curriculum leaders" including principals and relevant subject teachers (EMB, 2002). As detailed in the Government guidelines, they are expected to help schools reform the curriculum in accordance with the educational aims of the Curriculum Reform Project. Curriculum leaders are to lead and coordinate whole-school curriculum planning. Their responsibilities include planning and coordinating assessment policy and assessment, improving learning strategies, promoting a professional exchange culture within the school and establishing links with other schools for sharing of experiences in learning, teaching and curriculum development. The principles for curriculum leadership include (a) seeing curriculum development as a continuous process; (b) empowering others in curriculum construction and monitoring; (c) seeing the interconnectedness of curriculum supervision and staff development; (d) being guided by research in their decision-making process; (e) believing in self-improvement, staff development and supervision as tools of improvement (EMB, 2002).

Preparation and Professional Development of Principals in Hong Kong

Before 2000, school leadership preparation and development in Hong Kong was incoherent and scattered. New principals were required to attend a basic course focusing on administrative matters only. Professional development opportunities for new and serving principals were provided by the Education Department, school

sponsoring bodies, tertiary institutions and other educational organisations on an ad hoc basis. Preparation was linked "loosely to major education reform initiatives and rarely touched 'real' leadership life in schools" (Walker & Dimmock, 2006, p. 127). In order to equip principals in Hong Kong to become competent leaders to lead schools into the new millennium, the government established a Task Group in 1999 to look into the training and development of school heads (Task Group on the Training and Development of School Headers, 1999). The Task Group proposed a new leadership training programme and a framework for broader consultations. In response to the views, a second consultation document was released and adopted as policy in 2002. A structured principals' Continuing Professional Development (CPD) framework was drawn up for "differentiated levels of leadership" for the first time (Walker & Dommock, 2006, p. 128): serving principals (SPs), newly appointed principals (NAPs) and aspiring principals (APs). A designated programme was introduced for NAPs in the 2002/03 school year and the policy Continuing Professional Development for School Excellence (Education Department, 2002) aligning with the concept of lifelong learning, was implemented in 2002. Detailed arrangements for the Certification for Principalship (CFP) were announced in 2003 (EMB, 2003). Aspiring principals must satisfy all the criteria for the three components within two years to attain the CFP which will be valid for five years from the date of conferment. Only in exceptional circumstances, the government may approve a school sponsoring body or school management committee to appoint a principal without CFP on an acting basis (EMB, 2005).

Under the Principals' CPD Framework, educational values, professional knowledge, leadership skills, and attributes needed by Hong Kong principals are clustered into the

six core areas of school leadership: (a) strategic direction and policy environment; (b) learning, teaching and curriculum; (c) teacher professional growth and development; (d) staff and resources management; (e) quality assurance and accountability; and (f) external communication and connection to the outside world (Education and Manpower Bureau, 2003; Walker & Dimmock, 2006). The four leadership domains are "Strategic Leadership, Instructional Leadership, Organisational Leadership, and Community Leadership". Serving principals have to engage in professional development activities in the modes of structured learning, action learning and service to education and the community for a minimum of 150 hours in three years. They have to develop a personal development plan as part of the overall school plan. The knowledge and principles included in this framework will be discussed in relation to the leadership behaviours, training and support for the principals in this study.

Summary

The literature reviewed confirms the value of principal leadership in the school and large-scale education reforms and their influence on student learning though the primary providers of learning are classroom teachers. The key role of principals in bringing changes to their schools, for example, through setting clear goals, promoting teacher leadership and creating a collaborative culture among all staff, has been given much emphasis. Over the past 30 years, there have been changes and development in the theoretical understandings of principal leadership. Instructional leadership, transformational, distributed and sustainable leadership have a primary focus on the role and style of principals with the emphasis on what principals should do in terms of adopting a direct, indirect or multiple leadership approach or informal or formal

leadership style.　Studies of successful or effective principals show that they have common behaviours, which have been included in various leadership models discussed above.

While the literature has considered constructs such as productive leadership and pedagogical leadership, there is little literature specifically on the curriculum leadership of principals.　Partly to address this gap in the literature, this study examined how principals in Hong Kong understood and performed their curriculum leadership role.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHOD

In Chapter One, the overall direction of the study was stated as an investigation of the role and leadership of Hong Kong secondary school principals in leading their schools to achieve quality learning and teaching within the context of the Hong Kong SAR Curriculum Reform initiative. Through a review of the literature on curriculum, leadership and education reforms, Chapter Two identified characteristics of effective principal practices and leadership strategies. This chapter clarifies the focus of the study, restates the research questions, and describes the research plan and the methods used for data collection and analysis.

In the following sections, theoretical and practical dimensions of the research design will be addressed. The purpose of presenting sufficient details of the methods is to allow readers to develop informed judgments regarding the quality of the study and the value of its findings.

Purpose of Research

The researcher has a special interest in studying the curriculum reform in Hong Kong, not only because of its political implications and significance in achieving quality education, but also her working experiences. After teaching in primary and secondary schools for many years, the researcher joined the government as an education administrator in 1997. It was the year when the government announced and started carrying out waves of education reforms. In performing different roles in different

posts since then, the researcher has been involved in school inspections, curriculum development of the English subject, as well as the policy of Language Proficiency Requirements for English and Chinese language teachers.

The most recent duties are related to implementation of policies and measures on continuing professional development of principals and teachers. The researcher, as an education administrator, has observed the progress of the Hong Kong curriculum reform and impacts of the massive changes on schools. As there is little literature on principals' leadership under curriculum reforms in other places and that the large scale curriculum reform is a historical phenomenon in Hong Kong, the researcher decided to study, as a learner, how principals have been leading their schools in the first phase and preparing for the second phase of the curriculum reform. This study focused on secondary school principals because the researcher was interested in studying their leadership behaviours in meeting the great challenges resulting from the New Senior Secondary curriculum, in addition to those from the common curriculum changes recommended for both primary and secondary schools.

Key Research Question

The key research question of this study is: How do Hong Kong secondary school principals understand and perform their role as curriculum leaders in relation to the Hong Kong Special Administration Region (SAR) Education Reform project?

Specific Research Questions

Two major research questions were identified to study the principals in their natural

contexts.

1. What are the views, beliefs and understandings of secondary principals in relation to:

    a.   the Hong Kong SAR curriculum reforms;

    b.   the practicality and effectiveness of the proposed curriculum framework;

    c.   the content, measures/strategies and schedule for the proposed curriculum

        changes;

    d.   their role more broadly as the curriculum leaders of their schools;

    e.   the problems and difficulties they encounter in performing their role as the

        curriculum leaders;

    f.   the support and resources they have and need in carrying out their role as a

        curriculum leader of the school; and

    g.   the leadership training they have experienced to support their role as

        curriculum leaders?

2. What actions have secondary principals undertaken to:

    a.   implement the Hong Kong SAR curriculum changes;

    b.   influence learning and teaching in the school;

    c.   achieve effectiveness and success in their curriculum leadership;

    d.   solve the problems and difficulties they encounter in performing their role as

        the curriculum leaders; and

    e.   gain support, resources and professional development training to assist them in

        their role as curriculum leaders?

These specific research questions provide the parameters for the case study in which the interlocking relationship between the understanding and beliefs of the principals, the leadership styles and strategies they applied, their impact on learning and teaching, and the effectiveness and success of their leadership could be studied in their schools.

Development of Research Method

Selection of the research approach for this study was based on the several considerations suggested by Creswell (1997, pp. 17-18) : (a) the nature of the research question focusing on what and how the principals did under the curriculum reform; (b) the intention to study the factors that influenced the prncipals' beliefs and behaviours; (c) the intention to study individuals (i.e. principals) in the context of their schools; and (d) the researcher's role as an active learner who gave an account on the story from the participant's view rather than as an "expert' who passed judgment on participants.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994), describe qualitative research as multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter (p. 2). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), the aim of qualitative research is "to explicate the ways people in particular settings come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day to day situations" (p. 7). Creswell (1997) explains that "qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinctive methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The research builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting" (p. 15). In comparison, qualitative researchers study a few cases and many variables while quantitative researchers work with a few

variables and many cases. Having considered the above factors, a qualitative approach using naturistic methods of inquiry was adopted for this study to investigate six principals' leadership behaviours in their natural school settings. Analysis of the rich information collected from the principals and school documents should be able to give a description of the lived experience of the principals.

Case Study

The research problem was investigated through a qualitative case study approach, involving six case studies. The case study approach offers an 'in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon' (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996, p. 545). Merriam (1998) agrees that this approach results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon in real-life situations, and offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers' experiences (p. 41). As contexts are unique and dynamic, case studies investigate and report the complex dynamics and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships, cause and effect, and other factors in unique and real contexts (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Babbie, 2004). Mullen (2007) concludes that case studies can serve as a "proven reflective tool that connects knowledge with practice for school personnel to make sense of often fast-paced situations" (p. 7). In view of the above reasons, an interpretative case study approach (Yin, 2003; Merriam, 1998; Sturman, 1999) is chosen to study the principals' leadership behaviours under the curriculum reform in their unique school contexts.

Nisbet and Watts' (1984) summarise the advantages of adopting a case study approach. The results are more easily understood as they are usually written in everyday non-professional language. Real and unique features are captured to contribute to understanding of the situation, where they could be lost in larger scale data like surveys. Case studies can be conducted by a single researcher without the need of a full research team. Case studies also provide insights into other similar situations and cases. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) agree that a case study approach is valuable when the researcher has little control over events (p. 317). As unanticipated events and uncontrolled variables can be incorporated in the study, the researcher can be open to new ways of understanding. This approach does not require predetermined hypotheses, which can avoid limitations on what data to be collected and, reduce possibilities of bias (McMillan, 2000). These advantages supported the use of the case study approach for this research.

In deciding the research method and planning data collection and analysis procedures for this study, strengths and weaknesses of the case study approach were considered. This research is based on six case study schools. The decision to focus on six cases was made on the grounds that each case would yield rich and thick descriptions and thus the volume of data would be manageable. Stake (1995) referred to the study of multiple cases as collective case study. Six cases instead of one were studied so that comparisons could be drawn among the participants in relation to their individual characteristics and their school contexts. As schools vary in composition and experience from school to school, situational factors (Turner & Bolam, 1998) or organisational socialisation, which are related to the context in which individual principals are actually working, were studied. This approach enabled the researcher to

study how the principals responded to the context and accordingly applied strategies and techniques to suit the circumstances. It also enabled the researcher to seek clarifications and check understanding, during the conduct of site visits and interviews.

However, the case study approach has its weaknesses. Nisbet and Watt (1984) summarise that (a) the results may not be generalisable except where other readers or researchers see their application; (b) they are not easily open to cross-checking, making them seem selective, biased, personal and subjective; (c) they are prone to problems due to observer's bias in spite of attempts made to address reflexivity. As it was not the researcher's intent to generalise the cases, the other concerns mentioned were of greater importance and to be addressed in this research.

Nisbet and Watt (1984) and Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) raise some important concerns in undertaking case studies, which include identification and selection of cases, purpose of the case study, what is reliable or objective evidence, how to select data for inclusion, what is a fair and accurate account, what is the most appropriate sampling, the extent of triangulation and how it will be addressed, how to strike a balance between uniqueness and generalisation, the appropriate form of writing up and reporting the case study, and what ethical issues will be exposed. Cohen et al. (2000) remark that a key issue in case study research is the selection of information. In designing and conducting this study, the researcher had duly considered the above concerns and taken actions to address them. These will be described in the following sections.

Selection of Participants

Six secondary principals were invited to participate in this study. A purposive
sampling technique was conducted with participants selected through the researcher's
own networks and through peer referral. One primary selection criterion was that they
have witnessed the process of the Hong Kong Curriculum Reform in the post of a
principal, vice principal or senior teacher since 2000. As the researcher wanted to
conduct an open inquiry on secondary school principals' leadership behaviours in ther
natural contexts, a sample of principals from a wide range of school contexts was
selected. The sample included:

a. principals of both genders. There were four female and two male principals. The
   difference in the numbers was not planned and the researcher had no intention to
   compare the leaderships relating to two genders.

b. principals with different years of principalship, which might have relationships wih
   philosophy of education, views on the curriculum reform, and leadership behaviours
   at their particular developmental stages. The six principals in this study had been
   in the post from two years to more than 14 years and their age ranged from early 40s
   to mid 50s.

c. a range of schools with different backgrounds in terms of funding mode, history,
   religion, students' socio-economic status and ability level (banding), and medium of
   instruction (Chinese or English).

Data Collection

Yin (2003) recommended six types of information to be collected in a case study:

documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations and physical artifacts. In view of the scope of the study and limited manpower of the researcher, it was decided to adopt interviews and scrutiny of documentation as the tools. As the study focused on principals' self accounts of their perceived roles and actual leadership strategies applied in the curriculum reform, interviews with the teachers or other school stakeholders were not relevant.

Case study methods have been used in many similar qualitative research studies on leadership and management of principals and subject leaders, like Lee and Dimmock, 1999; McLay and Brown, 2001; and Day, 2005. In the above studies, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from a small number of participants in their school contexts and the results generated useful insights into the issues.

Relevant school documents provided by the principals and posted on the schools' websites or the governments' websites, including year books, newsletters to parents, records of school projects or activities (e.g. pamphlets, photographs, and videos) and External School Review Reports, were reviewed for planning the interviews and for triangulation of data or for preparing follow-up enquiry. Accessible information included school mission and vision, policies, administrative structures, class structures, staffing, major concerns, curriculum development programmes, and principals' background. This provided valuable contextual information and informed the development of interview questions.

Interview questions were sent to the principals in advance in early 2007. Data collection was conducted from February to August 2007. Originally, considering the

many interviewing questions and principals' limited time for the interview, it was

planned to conduct two face-to-face interviews. However, all the principals preferred

having one long interview lasting for about two hours at their school offices or venues

acceptable and convenient to them. The interviews were conducted in Cantonese,

mother tongue of both the principals and the researcher. Subsequent interviews, when

needed to clarify information, were conducted by telephone depending on the

preference and availability of the principals.

Data Analysis

The interviews conducted in Cantonese were transcribed into written Chinese with

repeated cycles of listening and checking to ensure that the text accurately captured

what was said. Transcripts were read many times to get a sense of the interviews as a

whole. Besides recording typical, representative occurrences, the researcher was also

alert to infrequent, unrepresentative but critical incidents or events that were crucial to

the understanding of the case. As Cohen (2000) suggests, case studies, in not having

to seek frequencies of occurrences, can replace quantity with quality and intensity.

Significance rather than frequency being a characteristic of case studies enabled the

researcher to obtain an insight into the real dynamics of situations and people.

Key concepts, short phrases or ideas in English were written in the margins of the

transcripts in the initial process of exploring the data. The researcher then engaged in

the process of moving from the reading loop into the spiral to the describing, classifying

and interpretation (Creswell, 1997). Transcriptions of interviews were read carefully

several times and analysed qualitatively to derive tentative categories for the further

generation of themes and sub-themes regarding their views and practices as curriculum leaders.

Stake's (1995) four forms of data analysis and interpretation in case study research were practised in this study. In categorical aggregation, the researcher sought a collection of instances from the data, trying to find issue-relevant meanings. Tables and charts were created to organise data and the emerging categories or themes. In direct interpretation, on the other hand, meanings were drawn from single instances. Data were "pulled apart" in the process and put back together in more meaningful ways. The researcher also attempted to establish patterns and look for a correspondence between two or more categories showing relationships between the categories.

As advised by Riordan (1996) and in person as the supervisor of this study, a matrix was used to facilitate recording and managing the large amount of data in the analytical process. During the process of data analysis and interpretation, the matrix was frequently referred to, enriched and enhanced in terms of information and format. The researcher finally tried to develop naturalistic generalisations from analysing the data, hoping to generate some knowledge from the study (lessons learned) or implications that could be applied to other similar cases. Cross-case analysis was then conducted in relation to the themes and sub-themes of each case. The matrix provided useful and effective guides for retrieving and comparing data for writing up the thesis.

Ethical Issues

There has been a growing awareness of ethical issues of educational and social research

as reflected in the growth of relevant literature and in the appearance of regulatory codes of research practice by various agencies and professional bodies (Cohen et al, 2000, p. 49).   Ethical issues in educational research can be very complex and subtle and can place researchers in moral predicaments.   Having considered the possible ethical issues that might arise from the nature of this research and the research methods used to obtain valid and reliable data, the researcher had taken measures to strike the balance between the demands in pursuit of truth and the participants' rights and values. This research was approved by the University of Technology of Sydney's Doctor of Education Research Ethics Committee.   The research was potentially quite sensitive as principals are school leaders bearing both authority and accountability.   It was anticipated that they might have feared being evaluated on their leadership.   The researcher was extremely careful in not making them feel like they were being challenged or judged.   The following measures were taken to address the ethical issues.

The objectives of the research were made clear to the participants prior to the commencement of the study.   They were assured that the identity of themselves and their schools were kept confidential, and that the research was conducted on a personal basis having no relationship with the government.   Their informed consent was obtained for studying and reporting their experiences and they were given freedom to withdraw from the study at any stage.   All participants were requested to sign and return the original of consent form, and keep a copy for their records.   The letter of information to participants, the consent form and interview questions are provided as Appendices A, B and C respectively in this thesis.   The interviews were conducted in a safe, open, trusting and friendly atmosphere.   The researcher was alert to any possible

risks of misleading the interviewees in responding to the questions.

All the six schools had conducted their school self-review at their own pace using the tools suggested by the Government.   Reports of these schools' self-review and external review by the Government could provide useful information.   However, the researcher did not explicitly request such documents to avoid creating a negative intention of critiquing and assessing the school's performance.   Extra care was exercised to avoid the possibility of making principals worry that what they had said about the school and the education reform would be disclosed to the public or their school personnel. During the interviews, the researcher avoided giving any evaluative remarks on their school improvement and curriculum leadership.   The principals were given the opportunity to review the summary of findings about them prior to including it in the thesis for submission for assessment.   Throughout the analysis and writing processes, reference was constantly made to the matrix and, very often back to the transcripts and sometimes even the recordings for clarifications.   Follow-up interviews by phone and correspondence by email were adopted when necessary.

Throughout the study, all the stages were documented.   The digital recordings, data, transcripts, and materials arising from the analysis were processed and handled by the researcher only.   All materials were saved in the researcher's personal computer, with a copy on a CD-ROM kept by the researcher as backup. Relevant literature relating the study was filed for easy reference.   All the above were performed to address ethical issues.

Trustworthiness

The study aims to identify and explore individual principals' perceptions and practices in their particular contexts. The case study has yielded some common leadership behaviours and understandings among this group of principals. It was not the intent of the researcher to generalise the cases, and the sample size of six principals makes generalisation impossible.

Cohen et al. (2000) discuss the importance of validity and reliability of qualitative naturalistic research. Mischler (1990) argues that through a validation process, researchers can "evaluate 'the trustworthiness' of a particular study as the basis for their own work" (p. 415). Harrison, MacGibbon and Morton, (2001) refer "trustworthiness" to the ways that researchers use "to meet the criteria of validity, credibility, and believability of their research—as assessed by the academy, our communities, and our participants", and highlight trustworthiness is "inherent in the politics of what we do at any and every stage of the research process" (p. 324). To ensure credibility of the research, member checks were conducted. Each principal received a draft summary of findings in English about him or her for verification as an attachment to an email (Appendix D), explaining the purpose of this procedure and inviting the principal to return his or her feedback to the researcher within two weeks. The finalised summaries (Appendices E1–E6) including suggested amendments or clarifications from the principals were used for further data processing and analysis across the cases and writing up the thesis. Having been an experienced teacher and currently a government official responsible for conducting school inspections and administering education policies in Hong Kong, the researcher has good background knowledge and experience

relating to the education policies, the participants and their schools.   All these add to the trustworthiness of the study.

Summary

The methods employed in addressing the research question have been presented in this chapter.   Justifications and specific methods for conducting qualitative research, in particular the case study method, recommended in literature were provided.   A description of the process of data collection, data analysis and considerations of validity, reliability, trustworthiness, and ethical issues were stated.   The details of the way in which the study was conducted, together with the contextual information of the principals and the schools in the study in Chapter Four, and the findings of the study in Chapters Five and Six, will allow readers to form their own view on the transferability of these findings to schools and principals in other settings.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION OF THE SCHOOLS AND THE PRINCIPALS IN THE STUDY

This chapter presents the contextual information about the six case study schools and their principals.   The schools are scattered in different districts of Hong Kong.   In order to safeguard their identity, they are referred to as School A through to School F and their district locations are not provided.   The context of each school is presented first in terms of their size, history, finance type, students' background, and language of instruction.   Next, the age, gender, educational qualifications, and years of principalship of each principal are presented.

School A

School A is a standard, government co-education secondary school with about 1,200 students and about 60 teachers.   It is situated in a new town.   It is approximately 20 years old.   The school is fully funded and supervised by the government.   It has no religious affiliation.   It is a prestigious school using English as the medium of teaching and their students belong to Band 1.   The school is very popular among parents in the district.

Like all other government schools, the principal and most of the teachers were deployed to this school by the central government.   Because of this, the principal and teachers tend to adapt to the existing vision and culture of the school.   Since 1997, new teachers have been employed on contract terms because of the economic downturn and the

policy of "frozen employment" of civil servants. Compared with other schools funded by the government, government schools enjoy less autonomy and flexibility in school management. With all the bureaucratic hierarchy and traditions of teaching and supervision practices, the government expected that government schools would pilot or follow the reform initiatives recommended. Yet government school teachers were generally perceived to be quite conservative and the pace of reforms was in general less rapid than in aided schools.

Principal A was a woman in her fifties who had been leading the school for six years. She had been working in government schools for about 30 years. Before joining School A, she had been the principal of another government school for some years. She held a bachelor's degree and a teaching training qualification. She was involved in the preparatory training programmes for aspiring principals for several years and was an active member of various organisations and associations of principals.

School B

School B is smaller than the other five schools and has about 800 boys and girls. There are about 40 teachers. It belongs to the category of Caput schools. These schools are funded by the government according to the number of students and supervised under some rules and conditions set out for this type of schools. This school has been operating for more than 55 years. It has a strong Christian ethos though teachers do not have to be Christians.

Students of this school mostly belong to Band 2 or 3 categorised by academic

performance.   Chinese is used as the medium of instruction.   The school has plans to become a Direct Subsidy School.   In order to achieve this, the school would have to comply with a new set of conditions and requirements and accordingly set out new plans for school development.   The school has to attract a certain number of students in order to get sufficient funds from the government.   If it could achieve this, it could enjoy a greater flexibility in designing the school curriculum and management.

Principal B was a woman in her forties, slightly younger than the other principals. She had been the principal of the present school for 10 years.   Before that, she had been the deputy head of the school for five years.   She undoubtedly had a very good understanding of the school, the staff and the students.   She was quick to try out various initiatives.   Collaborative lesson planning, peer observation and small class teaching had been systematically implemented.   The school had undergone External School Review by the government and received positive comments on school management.   Principal B had attained a masters degree in education and had teaching qualifications.   She had not much involvement in organising principals' training programmes but quite active participation in development programmes and activities organised by principal associations.

School C

This is a Christian girls' school with a history of more than 100 years.   It has about 1,200 students and 60 teachers.   The school is a Grant School, which bears a prestigious and historical status though they receive more or less the same government funding and administration flexibility as aided schools in Hong Kong.   Members of the

Grant School Council enjoy close collaboration and support from each other. The medium of instruction is English. The school is prestigious and popular among parents. Students are from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The school has been careful in creating a tradition that all students should be treated equally. Students' academic standard is very high.

Having been a principal for about 14 years, **Principal C** had the longest history of principalship among the six principals. She was in her fifth year in the present school. When she joined School C, major plans for curriculum initiatives had been formulated by the former principal. She therefore decided to respect the tradition and plans already in place and only to implement these plans with some minor modifications.

She had attained a masters degree. Though she said she would like to further her studies in education, she could not do so due to the time constraints of her current role. School matters were her top priority. Being a Christian and a principal with great passion for education and her school, she thanked her family for their strong support and her religion. She was committed to offering help in principals' development programmes and found that it had benefited her as well.

School D

This school is an aided co-educational school with a history of about 30 years. It also has about 1,200 students and about 60 teachers. It has a strong religious culture and is well supported by its sponsoring body, being an international and religious organisation. The school has striven for academic achievement and had been successful in getting the

approval to become an English Medium school in 1998 when the policy of Medium of Instruction was implemented. The intake of Secondary 1 students has risen from Band 3 to all Band 1 students in the past ten years. In the recent External School Review by the government, the school received very good comments on various aspects of school management as well as learning and teaching.

Principal D had been working in the present school for about 26 years, comprising 16 years as the deputy head and 10 years as the principal. She had attained a masters degree in education. She was actively involved in the preparatory programme for aspiring principals and a mentoring programme for newly appointed principals. She was a committee member of various principals' associations. Being a committed Christian, she found that her religion had given her immense spiritual support to help her face difficulties and the heavy workload.

School E

This aided co-educational school has 26 classes with about 1,000 students and 55 teachers. It has no religious affiliation. Students are mostly from low income families and have average ability territory-wide. The medium of instruction is Chinese. Students and their parents are aware of students' ability and limitations. The principal wished to help students gain better confidence and achievements starting from their low level. He was proud of the "value-added" by the school in the Territory-wide System Assessment at the Secondary 3 level first conducted in the 2005/06 school year and public examinations for Secondary 5 and 7 students. Students' active participation and achievement in open competitions like Speech Festivals was another feature of the

school.

Principal E had been a deputy principal for eight years in another aided school before becoming the principal of this school. It was now the seventh year in the principal post. He had experience in curriculum development of science subjects which extended back to the 1980's. His personal experience in curriculum development made him supportive of the curriculum reforms. He had been invited to be a speaker in principal training programmes to share with participants his views and experiences in school management.

School F

School F is an aided co-education school using English as the medium of instruction. It is a standard secondary school with about 1,200 students and 60 teachers. All the students belong to Band 1 and it is thus a prestigious school in the district. The school sponsoring body is a Christian church. A very strong religious atmosphere is cultivated in the school as all their teachers are Christians. However, as the district faced a serious problem of declining number of students, competition for good students among several EMI schools in the district was quite keen. Besides achieving good academic results, the students had won many awards in non-academic competitions, in particular in territory-wide dancing contests.

Principal F had a masters degree and had completed the principal training programme as required by the policy for principals' certification implemented in 2003. He was the only one among the six principals who became the principal after the implementation of

the policy.   He had been working in the school for about 35 years, including about 10 years as vice principal.   He had been the school head for about 2 years.   He knew the school, the staff and the students extremely well.   He had observed the changes and development of the school since the beginning of the curriculum reform under the leadership of two former principals.   He chose to work collaboratively with his colleagues in taking the school through the reform rather than in an authoritarian manner.

Summary

Among the six secondary schools, there was a variety of characteristics in terms of the funding by the government, size of schools, religious background, medium of instruction, as well as students' ability and background.   Among them, one was a government school while the other five were funded by the government by various modes.   Four schools were of standard size with approximately 1,200 students and 60 teachers.   Two schools had about 800 to 1,000 students, and around 40 to 50 teachers.   Four of the six schools had a religious background.   English was the medium of instruction in four schools while two schools adopted Chinese as the medium.   The six schools were located in different districts of Hong Kong.   The oldest school had been operating for over 100 years while the newest school was approximately 20 years old.   The schools had different sponsoring bodies.   The profiles of the schools are summarised in Appendix F.

There were four female and two male principals in this study.   All of them were university degree holders and four had Master's degrees.   Their experience in the post of principal spanned from about 2 years to 14 years.   All of them had teaching

experience ranging from 15 to more than 30 years. Since the requirement for

Certification for Principalship was first announced in 2003, one of the principals had to

undertake a structured principal training programme before taking up principalship.

The other five principals had attended professional development programmes of various

modes for serving principals to equip themselves for the mission of taking the schools

through the education reform. Appendix G shows a summary of the profiles of the six

principals.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PRINCIPALS' BELIEFS AND UNDERSTANDINGS

This chapter reports the answers to Specific Research Question 1:   What are the views, beliefs and understandings of secondary principals in relation to:

a.   the Hong Kong SAR curriculum reforms;

b.   the practicality and effectiveness of the proposed curriculum framework;

c.   the content, measures/strategies and schedule for the proposed curriculum changes;

d.   their role more broadly as the curriculum leaders of their schools;

e.   the problems and difficulties they encounter in performing their role as the curriculum leaders;

f.   the support and resources they have and need in carrying out their role as a curriculum leader of the school; and

g.   the leadership training they have experienced to support their role as curriculum leaders?

The answers are grouped under three subheadings: "Curriculum Reform", "Curriculum Leadership", and "Principals' Professional Development and Support".   A summary of the salient findings is provided at the end of the chapter.   The beliefs, understandings as well as leadership behaviours of individual principals are summarised in Appendices E1-E6.

The Curriculum Reform

The information provided below relates to the six principals' understanding and views on (a) the rationale for the education and curriculum reforms instituted in Hong Kong, (b) practicality of the new curriculum framework, and (c) the government's schedule, process and strategies for the implementation of the curriculum reform.

Rationale for the Curriculum Reform

All six principals agreed with the broad aims of the education and the school curriculum. They viewed these reforms as part of an international trend. Most of the principals thought that the previous education systems, curriculums and teaching strategies were no longer appropriate. Some principals expressed the view that global changes made it imperative to implement reform initiatives immediately. In tune with other principals, Principal C said, "The teaching methodology in the past could not achieve the cultivation of creativity and multi-perspective learning in students." All the principals welcomed the emphasis on developing students' generic skills, as well as positive values and attitudes to prepare them for life-long learning. In this regard, Principal F explained:

> There may be some gain and some loss. While emphasis is now put on generic skills, foundation of subject knowledge may not be strong. However, no worry, knowledge can become outdated one day. It is more important to develop students' learning capability and skills for pursuing life-long learning. Equipped with thinking skills and problem-solving skills, they can catch up with the

knowledge. Information technology can help a lot. Just by keying in one word, a great amount of information can be searched on the web.

Principal E however hoped to see more emphasis on human elements in the reasons for education reforms and that the government showed more concern, love and care for its people. He believed that education should not be entirely instrumental just to help society meet the challenges of the 21st century. Apart from knowledge workers, he thought that there was still a place for people with manual trades and skilled labourers in the Hong Kong society. He thought that the policy making process lacked meticulous consideration and formulation, and there was insufficient research-based evidence and careful planning. He opined that more thorough considerations should have been made in the planning stage on issues like the extent of change, how to help able students to excel, and how to enable students of lower academic performance to continue their study. He maintained that provision of alternative curriculums should have been more thoroughly planned.

Comparing the education reforms instituted in Singapore, Mainland China, and Hong Kong, Principal E commented that Singapore's educational policies and reforms were well planned to align with its national goals, led by committed professionals with internationally recognised professional knowledge, and supported by the teachers' union. He believed that government leaders had their influence on education policies. He said, "Many Hong Kong people might not agree with Singapore and their top-down approach, while some Singaporeans might prefer to come to Hong Kong. However, being indecisive and struggling between two extremes would not take you anywhere." He opined that what worked in Western countries could not be indiscriminately implemented in Eastern countries and cultures, and cited some less successful examples.

According to him, the curriculum reform in Taiwan having an emphasis on creativity finally failed because it was too fast. In Shanghai, the new Integrated Science curriculum was not practically adopted in schools. Instead, the traditional examination-oriented curriculum was prevalent because students and schools were concerned about the university entrance rate. Referring to the case in Hong Kong, he remarked that the secondary school curriculum was directly influenced by the university education. He stated:

> Liberal Studies was once introduced in the Secondary 6 curriculum some years ago as a university entrance requirement. But with the sudden increase of university places in the nineties and decreased competition among students, the requirement was withdrawn and the subject disappeared. Now Liberal Studies has been brought back under the curriculum reform.

Nevertheless, Principal E accepted the need for curriculum reforms to enhance learning and teaching in Hong Kong. He actually had extensive experience in developing the Integrated Science curriculum, which dated back in the 1980s. The other five principals did not comment on the reasons for curriculum reform or the policy making procedures. However, all six principals showed concerns about the implementation process and strategies, which are discussed in the latter part of this Chapter.

Practicality of the Curriculum Framework

In the first five-year phase of the curriculum reform (2001–2006), curriculum initiatives were mainly implemented at Key Stages 1-3 (Primary 1 to Secondary 3 levels). Short

term targets included, infusing priority generic skills into eight Key Learning Areas (KLAs), formulating school-based curriculum, and using the Four Key Tasks (Moral and Civic Education, Reading to Learn, Project Learning, Information Technology for Interactive Learning) to achieve the seven learning goals. All six principals accepted the KLA structure and appreciated its due emphasis on developing students' generic skills, as well as positive values and attitudes. Principal A said, "Moral education and civic education are now formally included in the curriculum taking a required percentage. This is good as all schools have guidelines to follow. No schools will neglect this and all students will be benefited." Principal C appreciated the structure of the reform introducing initiatives one after the other starting from basic education level to the final stage of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum. However, all the principals felt that more time should be allowed for schools to implement the curriculum initiatives.

In the second phase of the curriculum reform (2006-2011), the focus was on the preparation for the NSS curriculum and public examinations leading to tertiary education. Due to greater emphasis on problem-solving skills in the new curriculum, Principals B and E remarked that their students, mostly belonging to Band 2 and Band 3 ability groups, would have greater difficulties. Previously, students interested or talented in cultural subjects, such as Design & Technology, Visual Art and Physical Education, had chances of passing the subjects. Under the curriculum reform, these subjects were turned into "theory papers" in examinations which demanded higher language skills. Principal B explained, "In the past, our students could answer some questions by memorisation. But now questions are no longer straight forward and they require problem-solving skills. The discussion topics are interesting but our students

could not express themselves."

Principal B remarked that, no matter how hard teachers motivated their students to learn, in reality, students faced frustrations in examinations. The problems might be due to students' intelligence, low self-confidence, weak language skills, low socio-economic status and lack of parental support. She believed that students from middle class or rich families would have a better chance under the curriculum reform as they had parental support and guidance. She understood that student learning relied very much on their teachers, especially when current textbooks were mostly full of graphics with much reduced content. She was convinced from her observation that some teachers could teach in more lively and inspiring ways to achieve effective learning and teaching.

Principals C and D also affirmed that the emphasis on learning critical thinking and problem-solving skills also posed challenges to their students who had higher language proficiency. It was observed that all six schools included enhancement of students' language proficiency as a major concern in their school development plans.

Principals B and E were worried about the gaps between student ability and expected standards in examinations. The situation became worse with the change of student banding from five to three which led to wider range of student diversity in schools. They anticipated that some students could not follow the senior secondary curriculum and it would bring problems to their schools and families. Principal B hoped to see some 'exit points' for these students. Principal E suggested better planning on provision of alternative curriculums to cater for their needs. The other principals did not explicitly comment on the gaps between student learning and assessment.

Nevertheless, they all agreed that learning diversity existed in their schools, even the schools admitting Band 1 students.

Governments' Schedule and Strategies for Curriculum Reform

All six principals were concerned about the massive scale and fast pace of the curriculum reform. The New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum and corresponding changes in the public examinations in the second phase had greater impacts on students, teachers and schools than the first phase focusing on Key Stages 1-3. Some initiatives, like the new Liberal Studies curriculum, were criticised for lacking clear directions and concrete details when they were announced. Principal A said, "What should be taught? In what mode or format? What teaching strategies should teachers use? Actually I think teachers have not grasped the necessary concepts and knowledge. It's too early to say anything about the effectiveness of the proposed curriculum."

Principal F observed that teachers could not cope with so many new requirements, and said, "Some are forced to implement new initiatives before they could grasp the rationale or knowledge. Not sure if they understand the concepts or not. Maybe some are still trying to figure out." Both Principals A and F suspected that curriculum changes in schools were quite superficial. They were not sure if all their teachers were able to design their teaching to achieve the goals.

All six principals unanimously thought more time should be allowed for schools to implement the numerous initiatives. Principal C believed that not many government officials realised this issue. She said, "So many new initiatives were introduced one after another in these years. Schools of different backgrounds have experienced

different problems in implementing the proposed changes."

Regarding the ten-year schedule of the curriculum reform with its short-term and long-term targets, some principals found the pace too fast but some found it acceptable. Principal C said, "More time could have been given but it should not drag too long. Otherwise, the momentum of change will be lost." Having the same view, Principal D said, "Education reform takes time. However, no matter how much time is allowed, some teachers still would find it difficult to face changes while some are more proactive and ready to meet challenges. If changes come too slowly, the immediate needs could not be satisfied and the right time would be gone."

The government's strategies for implementing the curriculum reform policy received most criticisms. Principal E opined that it lacked research-based evidence and the reform was started with a slogan: 「樂於學習、善於溝通、勇於承擔、敢於創新」 (i.e. to enable students "to enjoy learning, enhance their effectiveness in communication, and develop their creativity and sense of commitment", Education Commission, 2000, p.4.). He said,

> When some successful experiences were identified in a few schools, all schools were encouraged to follow suit. In reality, not all other schools could do the same. This problem happened repeatedly. Taking school-based assessment for example, a few member schools of the Science and Mathematics Association could manage this but other teachers could not.

Principal E found it necessary to adjust the pace and fine-tune the initiatives to suit the current situation, as the plans were made several years ago based on estimations and

assumptions.   During the implementation, unanticipated problems began to surface and should be dealt with.   Nearly all the principals cited school-based assessment (SBA) as an example of problematic issues under the New Senior Secondary curriculum, though none of them challenged its rationale.   Principal B saw her students' difficulties due to their weak listening and speaking skills and lack of exposure.   She said. "Our students have barriers to overcome.   Many of them have fears."   She appreciated teachers' efforts and sympathised with their increasing workload and pressure.   She said, "In recent years, we have Chinese verse speaking, choral speaking, drama competitions.   There are many items under SBA.   Teachers are working very hard. Students are guided to read books, watch films and then do oral reports.   It's time consuming.   We have to hire extra teachers for conducting split classes in Secondary 4 to share out teachers' increased workload."

Principals C and E found it unreasonable to require every subject to have SBA.   They also sympathised with language teachers, who had been working like "mad' and had to chase students for the files or portfolios which only took a very small percentage of the total score.   Teachers would have greater difficulty handling less behaved students who would not bother to submit their work for just a few marks.   Principal C concluded, "The intention was good but the planning was terrible.   It has affected the overall atmosphere of the reform."

Principal C also criticised the confusing implementation schedule of SBA.   At first, it was announced that SBA would be enforced in Chinese Language and English Language.   Then schools were informed to opt to implement it in 2007, and it was further postponed to 2009.   She said, "Among 24 subjects, eight have been finalised,

ten are in the final consultation stage, and seven will be deferred.   If all the options had been announced earlier, schools could have made more thorough considerations in their preparation."

Both Principals C and D were disappointed with the consultation stages.   Principal C thought that ten years was not a short time for launching the curriculum reform but preparations should have been done well before it started. Principal C felt that the government had presented an image of lacking thorough planning and under-estimating the complexity of the reform process and the difficulties stakeholders were facing during the reform.   She said,

> If everything should go through consultation stages, ten years will become inadequate.   At the consultation seminars, all I got was their willingness to hear our views and that the teaching contents could be trimmed down if needed. When there was negative feedback, they would withdraw the proposal.   It might sound great that the government is democratic and receptive to views from frontline teachers.   But it simply showed that comprehensive planning was lacking.

Principal E also believed that careful considerations and planning should be done before implementation to avoid causing teachers' negative feelings and resistance.   More time and flexibility should be allowed for the implementation. He referred to his experience in developing the new Integrated Science curriculum for junior secondary levels. Schools were allowed to adopt the new curriculum before the three existing science curriculums of Physics, Biology and Chemistry gradually phased out in about ten years.

Another example of successful implementation was the policy on teachers' competency in Information Technology. Instead of enforcing benchmark assessments as in the case for English and Putonghua language teachers, school-based assessments by the principals was adopted, which had greatly reduced the negative impacts of the policy on teachers.

The principals noted a negative sentiment developed in schools which was unfavourable to the curriculum reform. This was due to various factors including additional requirements for upgrading teachers' professionalism, massive changes in school policies and curriculum, and reduction of classes leading to redundant teachers and closure of schools. Principal D remarked, "The atmosphere is unpleasant. There have been petitions, protests, court cases. . . . There is little trust between schools and the government. Some even thought that reduction of classes and closure of schools are the government's hidden agenda." She was worried that the education sector had presented to the society a harmful image. She observed that more students were turning to international schools or studying overseas at a young age. She regretted to see her students leave as the school had paid much effort on them.

Prinicpal A thought that teacher grievances were due to the pressure and workload in relation to the holistic education reform, not the curriculum reform alone, that many reform measures were implemented in the early 2000s, like quality assurance, school self-evaluation and external school reviews. In fact, she observed that a prevalent 'atmosphere for change' had gradually been established in the past few years, which had positive influence on school reforms.

Curriculum Leadership

This section reports how the six principals understood their role in taking the school through the curriculum reform and what qualities and attributes they perceived curriculum leaders should possess. The problems they encountered or anticipated are described as well.

Role of Principals in the Curriculum Reform

All six principals recognised their responsibility in leading the school's curriculum reform. Principal F said, "Theoretically, the principal should be the overall leader but not necessarily the sole leader." As Principal E said, "The principal could not do all the things. In all the schools, the vice principals played an important role in leading the reform. Admitting they were not specialised in curriculum development, all six principals explored the reform process together with the staff. They worked closely with their special team(s), mostly comprising vice principals, heads of subject departments and Key Learning Areas, and other middle managers. The principals considered these teachers as curriculum leaders because they offered great assistance in developing and promoting reform initiatives, collecting teachers' views and suggestions, drawing up action plans, and putting them into practice.

All six principals played a more active role in the initiation stage. Principal A saw no significant change in her role as a principal under the curriculum reform. Like other principals, she would understand the rationale and requirements of the new curriculum. The principals proposed and explained the initiatives in line with the school vision and

needs, gave directions and advice, and consulted teachers' views to work out plans. Acting as a resource person, they provided updated and useful information to promote and support the curriculum initiatives. Principal B said, "I am like a 'merchandiser browsing in the supermarket', attending seminars and bringing back inspirations and ideas of initiatives that would suit the school's major concerns." Principal F remarked, "I'll bring in new information from the outside and something that could be applied to our school. As I'm not bound by the classroom, I can learn the trends from many sources, like the web and newspapers. I'll introduce pioneering practices to our teachers who are a bit conservative." Principal D called herself a 'curriculum initiator' and was keen to pilot new initiatives.

The principals mostly discussed with the curriculum team or academic team first, then with the teachers concerned before consulting the whole staff. All the principals preferred making small changes at a time and inviting proactive colleagues to form with a critical mass. They set up special teams to deal with particular issues, such as the NSS curriculum, to focus teachers' resources and expertise. Gradually the principals stepped back to let teacher leaders lead the implementation, with themselves playing multiple roles, such as an advisor, a facilitator, a resources provider, a problems shooter, and a negotiator. They encouraged and facilitated coordination and collaboration among the staff and across subject departments. They emphasised team building and deployed staff according to their personality and expertise. Taking a macro perspective of the curriculum changes and school development, the principals provided necessary professional and administration support, allocated resources, monitored the implementation, and reviewed the effectiveness. All six principals said that they often encouraged teachers to propose sensible use of the resources available.

They also played a key role in maintaining communication and collaboration between the school and stakeholders, including the school sponsoring body, parents, and alumni in instituting changes and soliciting their support to achieve school development.

Qualities and Attributes of Ideal Curriculum Leader

The principals showed a good understanding of the qualities and attributes that curriculum leaders should possess or perform to enable them to successfully lead schools through the massive curriculum changes. Their views are summarized below. One of the basic requirements was professional knowledge and understanding of the current trends of education systems and curriculum development, both in the local and international contexts. They should know what, why and how changes should be made to cater for their students taking into account teachers' concerns. Principal A opined that curriculum leaders should understand the rationale and requirements of the new curriculum. Principal C said, "Without deep understanding, one could not spot the loopholes or do early planning." Most importantly, they should have a clear vision and should align reforms with school development. Curriculum leaders should have an international and comprehensive perspective on education, and they could guide teachers to analyse the current situations, plan and implement appropriate changes to achieve the school goals.

All six principals mentioned that a curriculum leader should prioritise changes, start with core items or major concerns, and find the right timing for initiating and implementing reform initiatives. Principal C said, "Leaders should also have the guts to carry out the plans and cut down some existing practices. . . . It's important to

decide what should be sustained. Identify the major concerns. Do the right things, not do the things right!"

Required attributes and skills included strong commitment, clear vision, good communication and interpersonal skills, patience, perseverance, analytical power, open-mindedness, willingness to explore and try initiatives, being supportive, insightful, visionary and far-sighted. In common with all other leaders in general, curriculum leaders were expected to be energetic, competent, fair, just and decisive. Principal E remarked that they should be able to handle human conflicts and relationships, work under pressure, meet deadlines, possess the expertise and take the lead to work it out. Principal F thought that leaders should get involved in the process and should be the role model of the staff.

The principals believed that good curriculum leaders should put due emphasis on teamwork and be able to nurture a culture of sharing and collaboration in schools. All six principals stressed the need to change teachers' mindset and mobilise them to enact productive curriculum changes. Principal C said, "Different strategies have to be adopted to explain, counsel, guide and attract the staff to accept the changes." The principals agreed that promoting teacher professional development was most important and useful means. Leaders should also encourage teachers to experiment new initiatives in schools and seek all possible resources and support within the school and from external organisations and communities.

The expected qualities, skills and attributes of an ideal curriculum leader mentioned by the six principals are summarised in Table 5.1. The principals showed good understanding of the characteristics of effective leaders. At the same time, they

seemed to be setting very high expectations for themselves and their colleagues in

implementing the curriculum reform.

Qualities / skills / attributes	
– visionary, far-sighted – willing to change and have the courage to change – courage to cut existing practices to give room for new initiatives – willing to take the lead and get involved in actions – energetic – competent – fair and just – analytical mind – calm and sharp – decisive – observant and alert	– convincing, persuasive, good communication skills – good listening skills – good interpersonal skills – be focused – willing and committed to equip oneself through professional development – have sense of mission/passion / commitment – have skills to handle conflicts, able to dissolve disputes and misunderstanding – able to work under pressure – be the role model besides having expertise

Table 5.1: Expected qualities, skills and attributes of an ideal curriculum leader

Problems and Difficulties in Leading the Curriculum Reform

All the principals displayed commitment and passion in taking their schools through the

curriculum changes, implementation was not easy.   Problems and difficulties

encountered or anticipated by the principals are reported under sub-themes below.

Multifarious roles of principals

All six principals found their multifarious roles too demanding and some roles were

conflicting with each other. While being instructional leaders, they acted like the CEO of the school. Besides paper work, they had to handle matters relating to teachers, students, parents, and outside communities. Pastoral care was time consuming. Their day-to-day duties were often interrupted by unexpected and urgent matters. Describing her conflicting roles, Principal C said:

> The principal is a CEO taking up administrative work and performing curriculum leadership at the same time. I have to manage the funds provided and consider how to use them. Under the direction of devolution of responsibility, we are given more space and flexibility. So we have to think. We can't work according to the book anymore. We have to be accountable to stakeholders. Documents, staff meetings, briefings to parents and alumni, explanations about reforms and how to implement the initiatives, pastoral care . . . All these demands are beyond a principal's capability.

Being a new principal, Principal F found the work even more challenging. New administrative procedures under the school-based management policy, finance and staff management consumed much of his time and effort. He needed to catch up on curriculum development which was not his duty or focus when he was the vice principal. He met numerous challenges, such as working with the police to handle student incidents, and taking contingency actions after a parent's suicide case.

Finance management was a difficult and time consuming task for most principals. Principal B assigned a senior staff with relevant knowledge to help out, but she anticipated more complex administrative and financial work in the process of changing into a Direct Subsidy Scheme school. She was also concerned about the cyclical

effects of this change. Government funding based on student enrolment would affect the school structure, teachers' benefits, job security and morale. All these contributed to school development which would influence the student intake. Principal B found it hard to keep a balance between the benefits of the teachers and the students. While urging teachers to work hard, she had to avoid making them feel too stressed. Other principals also expressed concerns about this.

Apart from school matters, they had other outside commitments, like meetings with district boards, principal organisations, school sponsoring body, sometimes even during lunch and in the evenings. The various tasks and roles were competing for the principals' time and energy.

Teacher resistance

The principals believed that teachers were the key change agents in the classroom, and that, without their support and contributions, the reforms would not be successful. However, some teachers, especially those with long years of teaching experience, did not understand why and how the reform initiatives should be implemented. These teachers were reluctant to change. All the principals wanted to change teachers' paradigm, but it was difficult. This could be illustrated by Principal F's account below.

> Two-third of our teachers are experienced and have been teaching here for over ten years, one-third are relatively new. All of them are professional and cooperative but some are not quite ready for the big wave of education reforms. It is difficult to change teachers' mindset. They have many questions. "Why do this? Why need success criteria and concept analysis? Why cross-curricular

development?" The proposed practices were not done in the past but still they observed students' progress. They have fragmented views, not comprehensive understanding of the current trend of education. It takes time for them to see the full picture.

Despite the principals' efforts, some teachers could not be convinced to change. In such cases, the principals could only ensure that these teachers did not hinder other teachers to implement the curriculum changes. It was reported that a large number of teachers were leaving the profession. Principal C explained, "The momentum of the curriculum reform is fast and there are a lot of initiatives. Some teachers could catch up with the pace but some are behind. For those who don't want to change, it is difficult to survive in schools. Some of them, seeing their difficulties, have resigned or opted for early retirement. Not many without the passion and commitment for teaching would stay in the profession."

The New Senior Secondary curriculum brought major problems, including restructuring and creation of subjects, and new public examination requirements. Teachers had to acquire and apply new knowledge and pedagogies through undergoing relevant professional training, which demanded extra time and efforts from teachers. Principal F said, "Teachers of this era find it painful as they are required to teach the skills they have not been taught before." Some teachers who were experts in their teaching territories or at the age of retirement were reluctant to teach a new subject or undergo relevant training. Principal A said, "Young teachers have the courage and willingness to face the requirements in the reforms." Most of the principals made use of the natural turnover to recruit younger teachers with the required subject knowledge, passion and courage to meet the needs of the school and the curriculum reform.

The principals said they had to cope with teachers' sentiment and lead them to implement numerous changes at the same time. It was difficult to handle teachers' complaints and worries. As the closure of primary schools after 1997 due to reduced enrolment would happen in secondary schools, secondary school teachers would face problems of excess teachers and job security. Heavy work, pressure and anxieties had affected teachers' physical and mental health. Expressing her concern, Principal D said, "There were petitions, protests, court cases. There is a lack of trust. There were rumors that some schools would be closed down because of teachers' under performance. . . not sure if it's true. More and more students are turning to international schools and many are going to study abroad. All these have given the society a bad impression of the education sector."

Student problems

All the principals placed students at the centre of consideration in the curriculum reform. They believed that the learning outcomes largely depended on students' background and abilities, and the learning process in schools. Students of the six schools had slight differences in their social-economic backgrounds. Nevertheless, all the principals thought that their students needed wider exposure and diverse learning experiences so as to enhance their learning and self-confidence. Student diversity had become more serious in these schools due to the change of student grouping from five bands to three bands. School B admitting mostly Band 3 students faced greater difficulties. Principal B said,

> We have now admitted more bottom-ten students. Due to the recent integration education policy, we have students of diverse educational needs like hyperactive, autistic, and dyslexia students. There is inadequate financial and professional

support for these students and our teachers. Though there are training courses for

teachers, could all our teachers receive such training?   Besides, the

teacher-student ratio is not as good as special schools.   We don't have any

education psychologist and so we hire a social worker to provide support and

small group remedial teaching after school.

Parent problems

Resistance to curriculum changes also came from parents who did not understand the

reasons for the reform initiatives and the details.   They did not know how to guide and

support their children to learn.   Principals B and C called it a "cross-century" issue for

parents and teachers.   Principal C received complaints from parents about the new

Chinese Language curriculum and teachers' teaching strategies.   Referring to their own

learning experiences years ago, parents queried the new curriculum encouraging

extensive reading.   They wanted to have sample passages, recitation of sentence

patterns and vocabulary, and dictations as in the past.   Principal C found it even more

difficult to cope with parents' resistance than the teachers'.   All the principals saw the

imperative need to communicate with and 'educate' parents so that they would support

and collaborate with the school to achieve school development.

Time and energy constraints

In carrying out the multiple roles and tackling the problems and difficulties, the

principals were working under great pressure and struggling with various constraints.

All these had influence on their physical, emotional and mental health.   They worked

late every day and, as a common practice, on weekends and school holidays.   While

the government was advocating quality education for students, the quality of life of

principals and teachers was at stake.   Principal B said she tried to arrange a trip with

her family during the summer holiday, which was getting shorter because increased

administrative work.   Principal D stated her views as follows:

> We really work very hard and have a difficult life.   I've been thinking whether we
>
> really have to work so hard to achieve the result - quality education.   If we don't
>
> have quality life, how can we have quality education? We've been deprived of our
>
> family life.   Though I enjoy my work and I'm lucky that I don't need to spend too
>
> much time on my children, not everyone could afford this.   Should the education
>
> reform bring us to this situation?

Principal F said, "All my energy is put into the school and so I feel tired after school.   I

often mix with students.   I join their ball games and other activities.   I hope to be an

energetic principal, not only sitting in the office."   He was conscious of his health and

teachers' well-being.   He normally left the school at around 7 p.m. and encouraged

teachers to leave by that time as well.   Principals B, C and D, who were female,

expressed gratitude for the understanding and support of their family.   They

sympathised with younger principals who had to struggle to find time for their family

after work.

The problem of principal burnout was a great concern.   According to the principals,

quite a number of principals were considering early retirement or quitting the profession.

According to the government statistics, there was an annual turnover of about 70

principals in the past few years.   The problems and difficulties mentioned by the

principals in the study are summarised in Table 5.2.

I. Principals' multifarious roles and constraints
- Conflicting roles and immense job responsibilities for principals
- Limited professional knowledge in curriculum
- School administration and management problems, financial management not easy
- Reduction of student places and teacher posts
- Limited resources to support student activities, management of resources,
- Insufficient time for principals to hand immense workload, demanding their energy and health, and affecting their quality of life
- Insufficient knowledge and lack of support on legal aspect, e.g. teachers holidays

II. Teacher resistance
- Teachers' paradigm, capacity, readiness and willingness for change
- School/teachers too traditional, needs courage to change and try new initiatives
- Teachers' resistance, worries and problems
- Retiring teachers unwilling to change
- Inadequate qualified teachers though funding is adequate
- Government schools had problems with teacher deployment, only contract teachers employed in recent years, mismatch of teachers existed
- Problem of contract teachers
- High/low teacher turnover rates affecting the composition and culture of the staff
- Changes in subjects under the reform leading to changes in staff deployment
- Professional development of teachers, professional support for teachers to carry out reform initiatives

III. Student problems
- Greater student diversity due to the change of five ability bandings into three
- New curriculum imposed higher demand for students' language proficiency
- Gap between curriculum and assessment
- Resources required to cater for life-wide learning

IV. Parent problems
- Parents lacked understanding of curriculum reform
- Resisted the curriculum reform
- Unable to provide children with guidance and support under the curriculum reform

V. Other constraints
- Physical space for reform initiatives
- Lack teaching materials for new curriculum, e.g. Liberal Studies

Table 5.2: Problems encountered or anticipated in the curriculum reform

Principals' Professional Development and Support

This section describes the principals' views and experiences relating to leadership training, and the support and resources that enabled them to lead the curriculum reform.

Principals' Professional Development

All the principals had at least a bachelor degree and teacher training qualifications. Four of them attained a masters degree, of which two were majored in education. In support of the policy of Certification for Principals implemented in 2003, the first structured principalship training programme was organised for aspiring principals in Hong Kong. Only Principal F completed the programme as required. He also joined an induction programme and a two-year structured support programme for newly appointed principals. He found the programmes useful in that he had gained much theoretical knowledge and wide perspectives, especially from the sharing by experienced principals. As he was an acting principal while on the programmes, he took the opportunity to seek advice from the trainers and guest speakers after class to meet his immediate needs and solve his problems. Support from his mentor principal and peer principals was also found very valuable.

The other five principals did not receive any structured principalship training before taking up the post as it was not available before 2003. They attended a mandatory basic course mainly focusing on administrative matters when they started their principal role. They then voluntarily attended ad hoc professional development programmes to update their professional knowledge and leadership skills. Following the policy of

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of Principals since 2003, serving

principals had to complete 150 CPD hours in three years. All six principals agreed

that they needed to continuously equip themselves through life-long learning. Most of

them admitted they had not adequate curriculum knowledge, and some principals

believed that they should know the international and current trends of education.

There were various professional development programmes organised by the

government, tertiary institutions, school sponsoring bodies, and professional

associations to help principals and teachers understand major education reform

initiatives and how to lead changes in schools. Due to time constraints, all of them

said they carefully selected programmes catering for their needs and aligning with their

school development, such as programmes relating to reform initiatives, leadership, as

well as new curriculums and assessments. They commented that the quality of the

programmes was quite varied, depending on the speakers and the topics. On the whole,

they found the programmes useful, in particular, the opportunities for having

professional sharing with other principals.

Four of the principals participated in principalship training programmes serving as

assessors in needs analysis sessions, guest speakers and mentors. They thought that

these programmes helped participants to build up networks which should be important

to them. Principals C and D assisted as mentors in a structured support programme for

Newly Appointed Principals, called 'Blue Skies', which was commissioned to a tertiary

institution by the government. The participants had to write journals and do their

reflections. There were shadow sessions in which new principals observed how their

mentors managed their daily routine in the school. The mentor principals also joined

the activities like school visits and seminars organised for participants. Principal D commented that the usefulness of the programme depended on the participants' motivation, capacity, and personality. If both the mentor and mentee principals were committed and conscientious, the results should be very good. There are many opportunities and topics for professional dialogues. Principal D said, "I benefited from the talks and seminars that we attended together. I've actually learned something from the new principals." Principal C said, "Experience could be poison that blinds you. It's good that I got inspirations from my mentee principals."

Principals B and C hoped to pursue some longer and more structured professional programmes but could not afford the time. Most of them had participated in thematic study tours to China and overseas like Singapore, the U.S., and Australia, which had broadened their knowledge and perspectives. Principal F preferred to spend more time in the school in the first few years as he was new in the post and wished to gather more experience first.

Support and Resources for Principals

The principals were on the whole pleased with the increased funding and resources provided by the government since the commencement of the curriculum reform. Various special grants, professional development training, and professional services in support of various curriculum initiatives were also provided.

The principals valued the support from their school stakeholders, including the sponsoring bodies, staff, students, parents, and alumni. Close collaboration with their teachers was undoubtedly considered the most immediate and essential in achieving

successful implementation of change in the school. How the principals sought their support is discussed in the Chapter Six on leadership behaviours.

The principals also welcomed professional support from tertiary institutions through joining collaborative research projects, partnership projects and organising school-based development programmes, which were mostly funded by the government.

Being members of principals' organisations, the principals valued the support and information through the networks. Sharing of experiences with peer principals through formal or informal occasions was most appreciated. Principal B said she learnt much from some experienced principals who were her 'role models'. She also got advice and practical assistance from some of them.

Most of the principals were in their mid forties to mid fifties. Five of them were married and their children had grown up. All the principals demonstrated commitment and passion for their schools, teachers and students, that drove them to face the challenges. They also thanked the full support from their families which enabled them to devote their time and energy in their work. Four of them (Principals B, C, D and F) had religious background and admitted they had gained strong spiritual support in handling the complex and demanding tasks.

Summary

While all the six principals were positive about the rationale, aims and direction of the curriculum reform as well as the proposed curriculum framework, they commented that there were too many curriculum changes. Some principals anticipated that gaps would

exist between student learning and assessments. They feared that academically weaker students would be disadvantaged in the new curriculum. They were quite disappointed with the Government's implementation strategies and procedures for the lack of thorough planning and inadequate preparations for the reforms. The principals thought that, while it was necessary to maintain the momentum of the reform, schools should be given more flexibility and time to prepare for and implement the numerous curriculum changes.

The principals in the study understood their important role in leading the curriculum reform. They admitted they were not specialised in curriculum development and none of them were the sole or direct curriculum leader in their schools. They all took a macro perspective of the curriculum reform and worked closely with the teachers in planning, implementing, monitoring and reviewing the changes. They were aware of the expected qualities, skills and attributes of curriculum leaders, which they had developed or applied in leading curriculum changes in their schools.

The principals had a comprehensive picture of the problems and difficulties they were facing under the curriculum reform, which included their multifarious roles, teacher resistance, problems of students and parents, as well as constraints like time and energy. They were concerned about the problem of principal burnout and teachers' well-being. Yet, all of them strove to implement curriculums changes in their schools with intense commitment and determination.

The principals had different learning experiences regarding curriculum leadership. Apart from structured training programmes, they learned from experienced principals

through working or sharing with them at various formal and information occasions. Their leadership styles and strategies for implementing curriculum changes were shaped by various factors, including internal contexts such as school context, school tradition, staff's expertise and readiness; and external contexts like the wide environment of the education sector, their family backgrounds and their religion.

Resources and support from the government and school sponsoring bodies were found adequate. Working relationships and support from teachers and parents were on the whole satisfactory. The principals were striving to solicit support and collaboration of teachers, parents, alumni and other educational organisations. The principals also acknowledged the support from their family and religion. How they implemented the curriculum changes and tackled the problems will be reported in the next chapter on "Principals' Leadership Behaviours".

CHAPTER SIX

PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOURS

This chapter reports findings pertaining to Specific Research Question 2:

What actions have secondary principals undertaken to:

    a.   implement the Hong Kong SAR curriculum changes;

    b.   influence learning and teaching in the school;

    c.   achieve effectiveness and success in their curriculum leadership;

    d.   solve the problems and difficulties they encounter in performing their role as the curriculum leaders; and

    e.   gain support, resources and professional development training to assist them in their role as curriculum leaders?

The findings are reported under five subheadings: "Curriculum Changes Implemented in Schools", "Principals' Approaches and Strategies", "Principals' Perceived Influence and Future Actions", and "Principals' Professional Development and Support".

Curriculum Changes Implemented in Schools

This study was conducted from 2007 to 2008 when the first phase of the curriculum reform (2001-2006) had just been completed.   This section discusses the curriculum changes implemented in the schools.   Sources of data were the interviews with the principals, school documents and government's External School Review Reports provided by the principals or uploaded on the schools' websites.   Following the governments' recommendations, the schools had drawn up their five-year school

development plans and their annual plans to guide their school development to cater for their needs. They had considered government's curriculum guidelines and their own contextual factors, such as "schools' developmental stage and needs", "student backgrounds and needs", "teachers' readiness and competence", and "resources available". Various curriculum changes were implemented in the schools at their own pace to address their concerns. School-based curriculums were designed in the schools. As emphasised by Principal F, a broad definition of curriculum was adopted, which included learning activities both inside and outside the classroom and school hours. There was also restructuring of curriculum in lower and senior secondary levels giving rise to new subjects like 'Integrated Humanities' and 'Liberal Studies, and 'History' to replace subjects such as 'Western History' with 'Chinese History'. 'Design and Technology' and 'Computer Studies' belonged to a Technology Education Key Learning Area instead of being two separate subjects. New teaching strategies like small-class teaching and co-teaching were adopted to improve learning and teaching.

There was due emphasis on generic skills, with priority on communication skills, critical thinking and creativity. The four key tasks (*Moral and Civic Education, Reading to Learn, Project Learning, and Information Technology for Interactive Learning*) were implemented in all six schools in different forms. For example, they were implemented as individual initiatives at the department level or in a whole-school approach, or integrated into the whole school curriculum across subjects or Key Learning Areas. Apart from various reading pogrammes, remedial and enhancement programmes to enhance students' language learning, project-based learning, drama and musical production, leadership programmes, study tours and various extra-curricular

activities were provided to develop students' multi-intelligences, collaborative learning, moral and civic sense and national identity. Schools also saw the importance and urgent need to broaden perspectives and experiences of both students and teachers to keep them abreast of international trends of education. Lesson observation and school-based staff sharing and in-house training activities were organised to promote teacher development. Major curriculum initiatives implemented in the schools are presented in Table 6.1.

Type	Major Initiatives
Key curriculum initiatives in all the six schools	– 4 Key Tasks (Reading to learn, Project learning, Moral & civic education, Information technology in learning and teaching) – New Senior Secondary curriculum (new subject – Liberal Studies in senior secondary levels, School-based Assessment (SBA) / Other Learning Experiences) – Collaborative lesson planning – Lesson observation for professional development and appraisal – Assessment for learning
Major school-based initiatives in line with the curriculum reform	– New curriculum of Integrated Humanities in junior secondary levels – Alternative curriculum, e.g. Hotel Management and Tourism – Split class teaching, small class teaching, co-teaching – Various initiatives pertaining to improvement of students' language skills (Chinese and English) (e.g. writing competitions, student publications, student talks in assemblies, new vocabulary introduced every day, debating teams, application for funds supporting language learning initiatives (e.g. EMI grant, CMI grant) – Drama education/ musicals production / dancing / choral speaking – Emphasis on self confidence, civic sense, national identity – Various educational activities to broaden exposure of students and teachers, e.g. school visits, thematic study tours outside Hong Kong

Table 6.1: Major curriculum initiatives implemented in the six schools

In the second phase from 2006 to 2011, all these schools had plans to continue their efforts in enhancing their school-based curriculum and building on their strengths, and most importantly to prepare for the New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum which would become effective in the 2009/2010 school year. Staff development and early deployment plans were among the major preparatory priorities.

Principals' Approaches and Strategies

The principals in this study displayed different leadership approaches and strategies in leading their schools through the curriculum reform, and coping with the problems and difficulties which were discussed in Chapter Five. The differences might be related to their working experience, school context, school culture and tradition, as well as student backgrounds. The principals had teaching experience ranging from 15 to above 30 years. Five of them had worked as vice principals for some years while Principal C directly took up principalship in another school after serving as a senior teacher. They had been principals from 2 years to 14 years. All of them found their experience working with former principals useful for reference. They were well aware of the importance of using an appropriate style or strategy for a particular context or situation. Principal A said, "The management styles of former principals may have influence on me. However, what worked with them might not be applicable in this school due to differences in school context, culture and staff." The other principals made similar comments. This concurs with Mulford's comment (2008) that it is important and a challenge for principals to be able to understand and act on the context and organisation of the school.

With regards their leadership styles, expressions used by the principals included "liberal", "democratic", "consultative", "collaborative", "facilitative", "listen and discuss", "negotiate", "explore together", "participate in", and "walk through the process". A "top down" approach was usually adopted at the initial stage of the curriculum reform or a new initiative. Most of them said they discussed their initial ideas and plans with the vice principals and respective team(s) before consulting the whole staff. All six principals also valued and encouraged "bottom-up" initiations. They hoped to help build teachers' capacity and nurture a culture to enable them to be more proactive and independent in leading and implementing the reforms. Discussions of individual principals are reported below.

In facing new policies or initiatives, Principal A would understand them first and consider whether they were applicable in the school and how they could be implemented in the school. Together with the vice principals, they worked out a framework of strategies and steps and briefed staff to solicit their views and get their consensus. She said she had to wisely change her leadership style to suit the situation, as she realised that teachers of her current and former schools responded differently to similar initiatives and her leadership approach.

Principal B was courageous in trying new initiatives. She adopted a democratic, facilitative and collaborative approach. She first shared with the Academic Team her inspirations from the outside and her ideas. Then she discussed with the teachers concerned before discussions at staff meetings. If she met resistance, she would listen to teachers' views and reasons before deciding whether to postpone or shelf the proposals. Regarding her leadership style, she said, "It's related to my personality.

I'm neither authoritative nor bossy.   Some teachers might think that I'm soft-hearted.

I'll talk to the teachers individually if they do not perform well."

Principal C said she usually adopted a liberal style and trusted her staff, which was

partly due to her upbringing and personality.   She quoted a warrior strategy of Sun Tzu

(an ancient Chinese philosopher and warrior consultant) saying that "If the General is

capable, the Emperor needs not command.   This is the best strategy."   Nevertheless,

she said her approach depended on "the followers and the school culture".   As she

found the teachers in general sensible and some very capable, she would not interfere

too much or closely monitor if the directions were correct.   She said that she seldom

adopted micro management in the past, but she had learnt the need to adopt different

approaches as different people had different perspectives.   She said, "Some people

need detailed and specific guidelines and close monitoring.   For example, I have

teachers who have no time sense.   So I won't be completely relaxed and rely on them.

There are two kinds of people, 'capable' and 'incapable'.   When working with the

incapable, specific instructions and close monitoring is necessary."

Principal D was active in bringing in new initiatives at the right time.   She then

gradually retreated from her leading role but continued to oversee the development,

steer the directions and provide support.   She adopted an open and democratic style.

However, she also realised her role as a "goal-keeper" and "gate-keeper" of the school

and would thus hold on to her own views depending on the situations.   She encouraged

initiatives and suggestions from teachers.   Like Principal C and Principal E, she would

not interfere and could be more relaxed when some initiatives were doing well.

Principal D said, "When problems or conflicts arise, I help to settle them."   She said

her passion and commitment originated from her religion that supported her to carry out her mission despite the difficulties. She thought that her leadership style was more related to her upbringing and the space provided by her family than the influence of former principals with whom she had worked.

Principal E, having gained much experience in curriculum development in the 1970s, showed confidence and had his own views regarding the direction of curriculum reform in his school. He raised an interesting point about the difference in leadership styles between male and female leaders. He said, "I'm more on the rational side. My vice principal is a woman. She is more humanistic and attends to people's feelings. She helps me make more balanced decisions. Having worked out an overall plan, we'll discuss the details among or within relevant teams." Principal B, a female principal, had the patience to consult and discuss with the staff in the decision making process. Referring to her observation about difference associated with leaders' gender, she said, "In general, men may wish to discuss and see the results faster. Females will discuss slowly. I'm not sure if it is due to the difference in gender." The views of Principal B and E concur with the findings of Gilbert, Skinner and Dempster (2008) that female principals are expected to emphasise compassion and nurturance over resolution and assertiveness. It also shows the need for providing training on broad communication skills to principals.

Principal F adopted a different leadership style from his predecessors, who were more authoritative and always taking the leading role. He said, "They had many outside connections. At that time, we just followed the instructions, sometimes without complete understanding and not out of our wish." He adopted a consultative,

facilitative and participative approach. He wanted to 'walk through' the reform with the staff, thinking that they were "in the same boat". Respecting his staff, he did not give them too much pressure. He did not adopt a "hard sell" approach but spent time explaining to them the situations, the rationale for change, and the plans to get their consensus before implementation. To convince teachers to accept and implement changes, he wished to "get involved and to be the role mode".

The principals' strategies applied in leading the curriculum changes are summarised in Table 6.2 and described in the following sections.

Strategies	Descriptions of Behaviours / Actions
Adopting Different Leadership Styles	– Liberal / democratic / consultative / facilitative / collaborative – Top down approach, initiate and lead changes – Value bottom-up suggestions/plans, encourage teachers to propose initiatives, provide support to realise teachers' "dreams" and plans – Varied styles depending on contextual factors (school, staff, time)
Setting Clear Goals and Strategic Planning	– Principal as the leaders taking the macro view of the school curriculum and development, giving directions and advice – Understand the rationale and details of the curriculum reform and reform initiatives – 'Positioning', review school situations, identify school development concerns and set goals – Prioritise changes/reforms, start with core items/major concerns – Formulate development plans or framework that align with school mission and development – Draw up school curriculum and manpower/resources plans (e.g. preparing for NSS curriculum, creating new subject - Liberal Studies, merging subjects under KLA, staff development and deployment plan) – Draw up overall progamme plan and form administrative structures for curriculum initiatives – Identify committed and competent teachers to form critical mass – Provide support and allocate resources wisely – Monitor the cycle of implementation, review and evaluation of reform initiatives and school development
Creating Facilitative Environment & Culture for Change	– Respect the school culture and tradition – Seek right timing and appropriate entry points to introduce/implement initiatives – Adopt a gradual approach to implement change, allow time for initiatives to develop – Be patient and supportive during the process – Change teachers' paradigm; explain the school situation, need for change and importance of initiatives – Guide teachers, instill genuine belief in teachers to change, change teachers' paradigm – Collaborate and explore together with teachers

Strategies	Descriptions of Behaviours / Actions
	– Communicate and negotiate to get consensus and support from teachers – Induce ownership among teachers – Facilitate teacher coordination and collaboration, counsel teachers, settle disputes – Implement staff appraisal, emphasise self-reflection – Attend to teachers' concerns and worries, and take appropriate actions, e.g. reduce teacher workload by hiring more contract teachers and administrative staff to provide space for teachers – Bring in information, resources and professional support from outside, practical sharing among teacher of different schools – Careful planning, evaluate/anticipate outcomes – Alert to practical difficulties/problems in the implementations and solve problems – 'Learn from success', make use of evidences to inform school plans (e.g. public exam results, External School Review results, results of interschool competitions, school projects, dramas)
Distributing Leadership and Developing Middle Leaders	– Communicate with middle managers; middle managers act as a bridge between the principal and teachers – Delegate responsibilities, assign the right jobs to the right people – Aware of and respect teachers' individual differences (e.g. their personality, preferences, expertise and abilities) – Work closely with vice principals, academics committee, department heads and teachers – Invite them to participate in the decision making process
Building Teacher Capacities and a Learning Community	– Encourage and support teacher professional development – Emphasise teamwork, cultivate culture for communication, sharing and discussion among staff – Create a school culture, team spirit and school atmosphere for collaboration in facing/creating the changes
Partnership with stakeholders	– Maintain communication with school stakeholders, build trust, seek support from them

Table 6.2: The principals' approaches and strategies for implementing curriculum initiatives

Setting Clear Goals and Strategic Planning

All six principals had clear goals and a strategic plan for curriculum development. They had their initial views and plans in mind, and consulted the staff before implementation. They believed that schools should have core values and clear goals. They prioritised curriculum changes and started with core items to address their major concerns. All six principals put student learning at the centre of the reform and involved teachers in setting the school vision and decision making process, which was in accordance with transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1998; Leithwood, 2000; Mulford, 2008). They adopted a macro approach, providing directions, initial professional concepts and implementation ideas. Administrative structures were in place to help coordinate and monitor curriculum initiatives, such as academic committees and specific committees on reform initiatives like the New Secondary School Curriculum. Heads of subject departments or Key Learning Areas, and functional teams were key persons supporting the curriculum reform. In School C, the school librarian was also invited to join the School-based Curriculum Development Team.

All six schools put down their major concerns in the five-year and annual school plans to focus teachers' attention and guide their development. Students' language proficiency, preparations for the NSS curriculum, and moral and civic education were common concerns of the schools. Principals A, B and E also focused on the students' confidence in learning. Among the nine generic skills, Principal A specifically put emphasis on higher order thinking skills and made it a major element in the school plan. Principal F hoped to strengthen their review self-evaluation mechanism, and enforce proper documentation to facilitate future planning. He had a special concern for the

effectiveness of using English as the medium of learning and teaching so as to sustain their good reputation and enhance competitiveness in the district. Schools A, D and E also made efforts to enhance their English learning environments and teaching effectiveness. Strategies of individual principals were described below and illustrated with examples.

In designing the school curriculum plans, Principal E adopted a three-stage procedure: positioning, planning and implementation. Firstly, he carefully analysed the school's current position, including students' abilities and needs, teachers' capacity, as well as parental support. Having students mostly of average ability territory-wide, Principal E decided to focus on helping the students gain confidence and in attaining higher passing percentages in public examinations, whereas prestigious schools aimed at scoring more distinctions or credits. After discussion with the middle management, the evidence-based school policies and concrete plans were drawn up for discussion among staff. He decided to continue adopting Chinese as the teaching medium in senior levels, though the policy allowed school autonomy to switch to English if it suited their student needs. He believed that learning in the mother-tongue would help their students develop high-order skills and achieve better public examination results. He also allowed Secondary 5 students to sit the minimum number of subjects in the school certificate examination to focus their energy. In line with curriculum reform, measures for the four Key Tasks concerning reading, project learning, information technology, and moral and civic education were implemented. More emphasis was placed on developing students' self-confidence and nationality awareness, and helping them gain wider exposure. He informed teachers of the school goals, evidence-based decisions and expectations and encouraged them to work out their teaching plans and strategies

accordingly.

Principal E listened to teachers' views but said that the principal's decision was important when there were divided views. He quoted an example in deciding the role of the Native-speaking English Teacher (NET) in the school. Having considering teachers' different views, Principal E finally decided to assign the NET with duties as an expert helping the team with curriculum development instead of being one of the English teachers. He believed it would benefit both the students and teachers in the long term.

Principal D also drew up data-driven policies and curriculum plans from a SWOT analysis through open discussion and consultations processes. She said, "What should be implemented and in what pace? I have my reform plans in mind. My primary questions are 'What do my students need?' and 'What do my teachers need?' Changes are not implemented simply for the sake of having reforms." The whole staff had developed a consensus of adopting a student-centred and total approach in educating their students, and designed a slogan for the current year, i.e. "Let Our Students Shine". Their major concerns were preparations for NSS curriculum, further enhancement of students' abilities, in-depth moral and civic education, and strengthening students' international outlooks. Principal D saw the merit of drama education and turned musical production into an integrated curriculum since 2001, as it was in line with the school statement of nurturing students' moral, intellectual, physical, social, aesthetic and spiritual skills. She said, "Students have also learnt the importance of being cooperative, humble, punctual and disciplined. All these contribute to moral and civic education."

The other principals did not specify their policy formulation procedures as had Principal E. However, from their accounts on their vision, mission and reform initiatives, it could be concluded that they had made due considerations before planning and implementing the curriculum changes.

Believing that good language skills are essential to students' future learning and career needs, Principal C designed a single school concern in the 5-year school development plan, focusing on "Reading". The school development plan was formulated through thorough discussion in Staff Consultative Committee meetings and full staff meetings. Building on their previous work on students' self and collaborative learning, project-based learning and information technology infrastructure, a whole-school approach was adopted to promote reading and integrate elements of the four key tasks into its school-based curriculum. She collaborated with the senior management team and middle managers to draw up coherent implementation plans to promote reading step by step. The focus gradually progressed from quantity of reading to quality of reading, thinking and creative writing. She was firm in explaining her beliefs and successfully convinced the government's External School Review Team about her school development plans.

Recognising the importance of assessment, Principal C led a special team to study how to use existing tools and data to analyse student performance and learning, and to review their assessments. Improvement measures were implemented, such as the introduction of informal assessments to pave the way for implementing the school-based assessment initiative of the New Senior Secondary curriculum, and changes in the school's grading system and students' report to better inform students'

performance.   This could also facilitate them to review and enhance learning and teaching.

While many schools created a new curriculum of Integrated Humanities (merging History, Geography and Social Studies into one subject) at junior secondary levels to prepare students for studying Liberal Studies at senior levels starting from 2009, Principal C did not do the same.   Seeing that the proposed Liberal Studies curriculum was yet to be finalised, she did not want to risk drastic changes that might be found unnecessary or inappropriate in the future.   She decided to encourage teachers to apply in all subjects the learning and teaching strategies for Liberal Studies to achieve effective learning and teaching, and to prepare both students and teachers for the new subject.   She said, "One should be smart in making changes which should fit the current trend and development in the future."

School A and School D developed their school-based Integrated Humanities curriculum for the junior Secondary levels.   School B implemented it in Secondary 1 and 2 only but retained the three separate subjects in Secondary 3 to enable students to learn important basic skills.   All three schools considered their measure appropriate to their students, and there were no serious problems in the implementation.   As school-based decisions on individual curriculum initiatives and their results are not the subject of the study, the researcher did not pursue this issue in the study.

Creating a Facilitative Environment and Culture

The principals saw the importance to create a facilitative environment and culture for

implementing curriculum changes through collaboration among the whole staff. They respected their stakeholders and the established school culture and traditions. They seized the right time and entry points, and adopted a gradual approach to introduce reform initiatives. They demonstrated patience and allowed time for initiatives to evolve and mature. They also provided the support, attended to teachers' feelings and worries, helped them solve problems and tactfully changed their mindset to face the challenges. As advocated by Principal E, good leaders should lead the school to advance by building on success. Examples are given below to illustrate the above strategies.

When Principal C took up the principalship in the current school, major reform plans had already been made, which she found were "on the right track". Respecting the work done and the school culture of stressing trust and autonomy among staff, she focused on fine tuning the reform initiatives and supporting the implementation. She found the vice principal very capable with good understanding of the curriculum reform, and so she did not adopt a strong leadership approach as in her previous school. Instead, she worked closely with the vice principal, sharing their vision, information and ideas relating to the curriculum reform.

The principals attended to the teachers' feelings and reactions towards the changes. Principals A experienced teacher resistance when she first introduced exercise books inspection. Understanding the teachers' views and worries, she adjusted the requirements, procedures and pace. She allowed more time for the staff to experience the initiatives and observe the positive impacts on learning and teaching. She said, "After about two years, seeing students' improvement because of teachers' quality

marking and feedback, they have gradually accepted this practice." In the case of micro-teaching, because of great teacher resistance in the early implementation, Principal A withdrew this and organised discussions on video-taped lessons launched on the website of Hong Kong EdCity. Gradually, the teachers started their voluntary peer lesson observations.

In facing teacher resistance to the idea of co-teaching where she hoped to address the problems of students' short attention spans and student diversity, Principal B strategically piloted the initiative in English lessons, because the department head was more supportive. Taking the opportunity of teacher turnover, she assigned newly appointed English teachers and the Native-Speaking English Teacher to take the lead. She hired teacher assistants to help out and organised a visit to a school which successfully operated co-teaching in all subjects. Improved student interactions and academic performance convinced other teachers to join in. Principal B said, "Now we have started co-teaching in Chinese, Math and English in Secondary 1 and 2, and will go up to higher levels."

The principals believed that changes, initiated by a bottom-up approach, would induce a sense of ownership in teachers and thus be easily accepted and successful. Principal D waited patiently for the right time to introduce musical production though she saw its value during her study in a school with this tradition. The right time came when a past student initiated it and joined the school as a teacher assistant. Principal C often threw ideas for discussion with staff, encouraged them to 'make dreams', and provided resources and support to turn their ideas into reality. Principal E accepted a young teacher's proposal on entering an inter-school choral speaking competition. With the support of the principal and other language teachers gradually joining in, students of all

levels participated in the annual event and won many awards in the past few years. Facing keen competition among EMI schools in the district, Principal F seized the opportunity of the government's policy on EMI teacher qualifications to make it a major element of the school development plan. He said, "I sometimes walked past the classrooms and found some subjects were actually taught in Chinese. The teachers hoped to ensure that students could understand and be able to perform critical analysis. I understand them but being the principal now, I have to perform my role and give them a push." He hoped to further enhance the English learning environment and to achieve excellence in public examinations. Adopting a gentle approach, he explained the policy to teachers, reminded them nearer the deadline to draw up action plans, and urged them to meet the requirements. Concrete school plans were made, including expected teachers' standard and support measures. He also introduced lesson observation through a three-year cycle with an aim to improve class teaching, with the first year focusing on self-reflection, second year on peer sharing and the third year for teacher appraisal. Principal F said the culture of lesson observation for non-appraisal purpose had started in some subject departments and would be promoted to other subjects.

All the principals believed that reforms could not be rushed. Implementation of lesson observation is a good example to illustrate the step-by-step approach. Principal D introduced it in 1998 adopting a soft-landing approach for teacher development. Teachers made their free matching to do reciprocal observations under an honorary system. She also observed their lessons and talked about their weaknesses in private without keeping records. She publicly showed appreciation of teachers' good practices and efforts, and encouraged them to learn with and from each other. In School C,

records of peer lesson observations were kept by individual teachers. Respecting the school tradition, Principal C said, "The system works and I appreciate that it could satisfy teachers' needs for professional development, not to meet my needs." To obtain feedback on pedagogy for enhancement, she observed lessons of the new teachers and experienced teachers for promotion or re-grading purposes. After some time, taped lessons were used for discussion and sharing on a voluntary basis. As requested by teachers, Principal C did not attend the sharing sessions. It was practised for three years with four sharing sessions a year. Principal C said, "At first teachers were polite and cautious. Now, they have become more relaxed and don't mind comments from colleagues. Though it's not very structured, it has its merits and could serve the purpose." The other schools also adopted a gradual approach for peer observation and staff appraisal system though the format and schedule of progressive implementation varied.

All six principals collected evidence for evaluation and future planning. Principal E believed that schools should be led to progress through gaining successful experiences, not through learning lessons from failures. He said, "Continuous and accumulated successes could gradually help cultivate a school practice and even a culture." All six principals celebrated successes with their staff, students, and even parents. Good progress and results could become incentives for both teachers and students to take the changes forward. Principal B remarked, "I quoted our students' good progress to reassure and encourage our teachers." In School D, guests' positive comments on their musical performance brought encouragement and unforgettable memories to both her students and staff. Principal D said, "A team of about seven teachers were invited to share our experience with other schools. It was good for their professional development as well."

Distributing Leadership and Developing Middle Leaders

All six principals took the lead at the beginning of the initiatives and gradually delegated the leading role to their vice principals or senior teachers when good progress was made with the initiatives.   Some principals, like Principals B and F, adopted a consultative and participative approach from the start, acting as indirect leaders or sharing the leaders' role with the curriculum development or academic team.   All of the principals empowered teachers where appropriate to share leadership and responsibility in making decisions.   They encouraged middle managers to pursue professional development and entrusted them to guide and other teachers to carry out the reform initiatives.   Principal E said they had expanded leadership training in recent years, and assigned a vice principal to coordinate teacher development.   In line with the government's continuing professional development (CPD) policy for principals and teachers, all the schools had started to formulate their school-based plan and guidelines in coordinating their staff's CPD.

All six schools had set up special teams to look after respective reform initiatives, in particular the massive preparatory work for the New Senior Secondary currriculum. The leadership role of middle leaders was duly emphasised.   Principal A made it a major item in the school plan.   Principal D worked closely with the Administrative Advisory Committee and the Academic Team comprising the vice principals and middle managers.   She had adopted different compositions of team members depending on teachers' talents and expertise.   Principal F entrusted the vice principal and a senior teacher, who had gained professional and operational knowledge through participating in government's curriculum committees, to make early preparations for the NSS

reforms.　Principal C empowered the vice principals to lead the curriculum implementation while she provided necessary support and resources, as well as handled staff matters, giving major directions, advice and explanations on the initiatives at staff meetings.

The principals realised the importance of assigning the right job to the right person, and they would consider teachers' expertise, personality, sense of responsibility and commitment.　Principal E even considered teachers' family backgrounds when assigning special duties, like leading study tours outside Hong Kong.

The principals were observant and alert to problems that emerged during the implementation process.　Principal A emphasised teacher leadership as well as cross-curricular sharing and collaboration.　When she found the teachers assigned to lead the Academics Team and cross-KLA collaboration incompetent,　she restructured the school administration teams so that these teachers could gracefully step down with their duties taken up by the vice principals.　She learned from this experience that it did not work in her school to have a coordinator to lead other KLA heads who were of the same rank.　Principal E emphasised communication with middle managers.　He said, "I have to be alert to any disputes on resources allocation, clashes in administrative arrangements such as schedule of events, coordination between subject or functional groups.　Sometimes even a tiny detail will affect the effectiveness of the whole initiative."

When problems occurred in the implementation, Principal D would discuss with the teachers-in-charge and the teachers concerned to find out the root of problems. Sometimes the vice principals or other teachers were assigned to do the negotiation for

her.　Solutions were then worked out.　Quoting an example, she said, "I have tried assigning teachers to take up projects on a rotation basis.　Some teachers leading projects this year will be freed next year.　They feel better as they appreciate my understanding and they have hope for the future."

However, persistence of the traditional "hero-principal' perception (Mulford, 2008) existed among some teachers in schools.　In School F, for example, some teachers still thought that the principal should be there to solve problems and make final decisions. Principal F had to be patient and put extra effort in encouraging teachers to take part in discussions and decision-making processes.　The hierarchical power relationships between juniors and seniors seemed to persist in some schools in Hong Kong.　All these might have affected the leadership behaviours of the principals.

Building Teacher Capacities and a Learning Community

All six principals placed due emphasis on building teacher capacities.　They promoted teacher development for curriculum changes, in particular the New Senior Secondary curriculum to be effective in the 2009/2010 school year.　Principal D stressed early planning and timely actions relating to staff re-deployment and teacher training. Principal C said, "Decision about the curriculum should go first.　Then we assessed teachers' qualifications and proposed who would need to change their field or undergo what kind of training."　Surveys had been or would be conducted by the six schools to collect views from students, teachers and parents to inform decision making.　To help teachers prepare for the curriculum initiatives, the principals encouraged teachers to enroll on wide range of professional development programmes organised or

commissioned by the government, which were free of charge. Other learning opportunities were also provided by tertiary institutions and professional organisations. Principal D even supported teachers' applications for no-pay leaves to do full-time study. She believed it would benefit the school in the long term. Principals A, B and D said they took advantage of natural turnover to employ new teachers, who had strengthened their teaching force, in terms of subject expertise as well as staff's positive attitudes and morale towards change.

All of the principals seemed to recognise the notion of turning the school into a learning community. Besides supporting teachers to attend formal professional development programmes, they promoted on-going school-based sharing and activities to help teachers enhance professional knowledge and gain wider perspectives of education. Some principals said that they frequently gave briefings on current educational issues and shared their inspirations from educational seminars and visits. In Schools B, C and D, professional sharing among the staff frequently took place during formal and informal occasions. Lesson observation and collaborative lesson planning were common practice in the schools. Cross-curricular collaboration or a whole-school approach was encouraged by the principals in implementing reform initiatives such as Language enrichment programmes, drama production, and project learning. Principals B and E had successfully applied for a grant of about HK$3 million from the government to carry out a five-year proposal to enhance students' ability to use English as a learning tool. Principal E appealed to all teachers to collaborate with English teachers to help students learn more effectively. He said, "I made it clear to all teachers that it's not just the responsibility of English teachers. Each subject has its characteristics in the use of English. All teachers have their part to play in helping

students to learn English."

Various forms of school visits and thematic education tours were also organised to local and overseas education organsiations to widen teachers' perspectives and facilitate professional sharing and development.

Partnership with Stakeholders

All six principals valued and had established partnerships with stakeholders. There were various means to enhance communication and relationship with the staff, like formal staff meetings, weekly briefings, staff development days, newsletters, and emails. Meetings with individual teachers, and, more often with middle managers were held to have in-depth exchange of views. Communication with staff also achieved through various informal channels. Principal A had informal sharing during lunch with her vice principals nearly every day and weekly tea gatherings with teachers. All six schools had informal staff activities like New Year dinners, Christmas parties, games, cooking contests, barbecues to enhance communication and relationship among staff.

With the advancement of information technology, all the schools had developed their school website and Intranet system as communication channels between the teachers, students and parents. The philosophy of the school, information of staff and students, and school development were accessible to all of the school stakeholders. Some principals often shared their personal philosophies and views on educational issues on the Intranet.

The principals duly emphasised the need to communicate with and "educate" parents. Principal C said, "Some parents may feel frustrated or helpless as they don't know how to help their children with their school work. They themselves may not have analytical thinking and the habit or experience of reading." Workshops, seminars, parent-teacher conferencing, and networking activities of Parent-Teacher Associations were commonly organised by the schools to inform parents about the reforms and school development. The topics included secondary students' difficulties in adapting to secondary school life, different learning modes for core subjects, selection of subjects, the New Senior Secondary structure and School-based Assessment, and how parents could collaborate with the school to render support for students. The principals reported that their efforts in the past few years paid off and parents had in general become more receptive to the reforms. Parents were also invited to support the schools through various means, for example, by working with teachers and students in home-reading programmes, musicals production, fund-raising activities, giving donations for reading schemes and students' study tours.

Alumni were also treated as partners of the schools and invited to support school activities through attending or organising student and school activities. Principals B, C, and D maintained close communication with their well established local and overseas alumni associations, which contributed both financial and professional support to the schools. Principals A and E mainly focused on communicating with parents and alumni and winning their trust and spiritual support. They found it unrealistic to get their financial and professional support as the parents were mostly working class and the alumni of the schools with short history were still establishing their careers.

Principals' Perceived Influence and Wishes

Commenting on their influence on the learning and teaching in their schools, the principals were, in general, pleased with their reform progress and achievements in learning and teaching. According to them, five schools had favourable comments from the government in the External School Review while School F had not been reviewed at the time of the study. All of them reported positive changes in teachers' attitudes towards the curriculum reforms, willingness and competence in initiating or implementing changes, as well as improvements in their teaching. Nevertheless, some teachers were unwilling or unable to meet the challenges. Yet, all the principals appreciated improvement in student performance, both in academic and non-academic aspects, self- confidence, moral and civic behaviours, as well as generic skills. However, as Principals A and D said, it was hard to prove that the pleasing student outcomes were directly related to teachers' positive changes under the principals' leadership. As indicated in the literature on education leadership and teacher professional development, student learning and education are so complex that concrete evidence proving the impact of the interrelated factors of teacher, student and principals are hard to identify and measure (Meiers & Ingvarson, 2005).

All the principals said they had appropriately used available resources to provide financial, administrative, professional and spiritual support for new initiatives. Some principals, like Principals A and E, were particularly confident in school administration. Principals B, C and D were much pleased with the collaborative culture they had established among the staff. Regarding preparations for the New Senior Secondary curriculum, which was the focus of the second phase of the curriculum reform, all six

principals reported good progress achieved through collaboration and exploration with their teachers. The principals had high expectations for themselves and their staff. None of them said they had done enough. They were committed and wished to do more and better in the future. Yet, they were aware and concerned of teachers' workload and pressure.

The principals did not take the credit entirely for themselves. Principal A said, "I have my influence but I can't say how great it is. It is my responsibility to implement the reforms. Is it solely due to my influence? Hard to tell! It is also due to the wide environment. Teachers know that they must follow the government's direction." She was particularly happy with their preparations for the NSS curriculum. Principal B was particularly pleased with her staff's contributions to students' pastoral care and courage in pioneering new initiatives such as project learning and peer lesson observation. She found them cooperative and supportive. They were happy to see some problem students making positive behavioural changes and achieving better academic results, which became incentives for teachers to keep up their efforts. Adopting a consultative approach and facilitator's role, Principal B said she had successfully established partnership with staff and a collaborative culture in the school. She hoped to do better planning for the New Senior Secondary curriculum, do more about students' life planning, career planning, and self confidence.

Principal C was reassured by her decision to have a single priority in the school plan focusing on improving students' language abilities. She was pleased with the results, and that she succeeded in winning her staff's trust with her professional judgment and reducing their fears. She also appreciated the efforts of her staff and was concerned

about the constraints they were facing.   She said she had succeeded in extending the teachers' potential and in making their "dreams" come true.   Additionally, the outstanding student achievements in these years were encouraging.   She would continue to help students excel and teachers to develop.

Principal D displayed her passion and commitment in leading the school reforms as she believed what she did would affect students' future.   She was happy about their value-addedness as evidenced in students' academic results in school and public examinations, students' outstanding non-academic performances as well as student intakes advancing from Band 5 students to all Band 1 students.   She was particularly proud of their bi-annual musical productions entirely created and performed in a whole school approach.   The students, staff and parents involved had gained much knowledge, experience, confidence, and pride.   An artistic culture was nurtured in the school through their collaborative efforts.   She also saw the impact on teachers' career and students' study plans as some students had decided to study performing art or design.   The past student who initiated musical production had become a qualified teacher in her school.   Principal D hoped to continue to strive for improvement taking into consideration how to maintain teachers' quality of life.

Principal E was confident in curriculum development, because of his relevant experience in the past.   He was pleased with the result in managing teachers' resistance to change.   He was also pleased with students' academic and non-academic achievements, greater self-confidence and a stronger sense of national identity. However, he admitted that he had to accept the reality that some teachers would never change despite his efforts.   All he could do was to reduce their negative influence on

other teachers and the overall atmosphere of the staff.

Being a new principal for about two years, Principal F admitted he was still learning to cope with various administrative matters. Regarding the curriculum reform, he was gaining a better understanding and was exploring cautiously together with his staff. He allowed time for the staff to adjust to his consultative and facilitative leadership style in these two years. He observed the pleasing development of EMI teaching and student achievements. He made efforts to improve curriculum integration and cross-KLA collaboration, but the progress was slow because some department heads still held tight to their subject territories. Middle leaders expected him to be responsible for the whole task and turned to him for decisions. He hoped to change their mindset so that they could play an active and leading role in the reform process. He also hoped to develop a more comprehensive curriculum plan in a whole school approach, refine the documentation, and establish evaluation mechanisms to facilitate on-going school improvement. He stressed the need to prioritise the work so as not to overload teachers and create worries.

Nearly all the principals said they needed better knowledge in curriculum development. Principal B wished to have time and support to do some research in school. Principal C expressed the wish to pursue further education but she had to defer the action because of her priority on work. All six principals considered human resources management a major issue. They thought that efforts to sustain teachers' passion and capacity for the change should continue. Principal E stated, "We need committed and competent teachers to carry out the changes." Principal C thought that a culture of risk-taking was to be engendered in the staff so that they could be brave to step forward.

Principals' Professional Development and Support

All six principals were keen in enriching their professional knowledge and leadership skills to equip themselves to lead the reforms. Four of the six principals had a masters degree, of which two had majored in Education. Principal F had undergone formal structured principalship training as required by the Certification for Principals. All of them attended various professional development programmes on leadership and curriculum initiatives. They found adequate opportunities and relevant themes for professional development but thought the quality was quite varied. Due to time constraints, they carefully selected quality programmes that could meet their needs.

In facing frustrations, hopeless situations and busy work schedules, some principals would prefer spiritual and professional support rather than informational and administrative issues. Principal C hoped to see inspiring programmes on spiritual development and mental health, such as how to maintain freshness, remain hopeful and calm, sustain passion and commitment, and cope with pressure. She attended some programmes conducted by speakers of various religious backgrounds, which were well received by principals. Principal B also found programmes on counseling and emotional growth useful.

Most of the principals participated in educational visits to schools, both in the local and overseas contexts, which were organised by the government and principals' associations, to broaden their perspectives. Principal F, however, decided not to join any overseas study tours or get too involved with community services. As his two vice principals were newly promoted to the post, his priority was to maintain internal stability during the transitional changes in school leaders and curriculum initiatives. After attending

the structured programme for aspiring principals, he joined a two-year induction programme. He actively sought advice and assistance from the programme instructors, his mentors and peer principals on the programme, which he found very useful.

All the principals joined professional communities such as principals' associations or societies to gain professional sharing and mutual support from peers through the networks. Some principals also assisted in organising or participating in educational activities for principals, like study tours, principals' courses, induction programmes, and seminars.

All of them welcomed the additional resources and support from the government for implementing new educational initiatives, and increased flexibility and school autonomy in their uses. They had sensibly applied for other funding based on their needs and teachers' capacity. Principals E and B successfully obtained a grant totaling about $3 million to support the learning and teaching of English in CMI schools in five years. They also sought funding from the government and other organisations to support programmes for enhancing students' nationality-awareness. All six principals thanked their staff's effort in preparing application proposals, and carrying out the initiatives. Sometimes, schools had to forgo applications for grants considering the demanded on their staff's time and effort.

The principals sensibly used the additional resources to cater for their needs, like hiring more teachers and teaching assistants to reduce teachers' workload and provide space for teachers to implement changes. They also hired professional services from personnel or organisations to support teacher and student development activities. All six principals found it a challenge to use the resources wisely and appropriately.

Special teams or administrative assistants were in place in some schools to assist the principal in managing financial and human resources. Principal E appointed an assistant principal on top of two vice principals to share out administrative work. Principal F hired additional staff to take care of secretarial work and finance management. The principals also encouraged teachers to propose proper uses. Principal C stressed that resources should be used appropriately and should not be wasted. Principal F set up a finance committee to collect teachers' views and monitor the use of the resources though still the principal did the planning. All of the schools, as advised by the government, had worked out an annual plan on the use of the resources and revealed the uses in the annual school report.

Some principals hoped to have more professional support to help schools implement education reforms, such as professional guidance and advice on development of teacher leadership, curriculum planning and tailoring, and integrative education. Principal C commented that such support from the government and other educational organisations was inadequate. She said, "Teachers are practitioners. Leading education reforms need visions and theoretical knowledge as backup. Teachers are weak in this aspect and it's difficult to only rely on principals in this respect." Principal D actively sought professional support services through participating in curriculum projects or schemes organised by the government or commissioned to tertiary institutions. Some schools hired educational organisations to provide tailor-made teacher professional programmes, such as workshops on drama and script writing.

All of the principals were pleased that the teachers in general had become more positive towards the curriculum reform and more supportive in recent years. This might be attributed to the increased support measures, and space and opportunities for teachers'

professional development, which had enhanced their understanding of the reform and their capacity. Principal E suggested providing teachers with substantial encouragement and incentives, such as promotion prospects and formal recognition, and reviewing the career ladder of graduate teachers.

All six principals thanked their school sponsoring bodies for administrative, financial, and spiritual support. School A being a government school was directly supported, advised and monitored by the government. Principal B was grateful to the school sponsoring body for generous donations. As the school was turning into a Direct Subsidy Scheme school in the following year, she planned to do more fund-raising activities and invite parents and alumni to take part. The school sponsoring body of School D assisted in arranging study tours for their students to use the English language training centre in Canada. Principal E appreciated the support and trust from the school managers as evidenced in the way they handled complaints against school matters. Principal F said the school managers were supportive and gave him advice and total autonomy.

All of the schools had established formal organisations of parents and alumni respectively. Other than regular meetings, newsletters, activities for maintaining their communication with the schools, these stakeholders were invited to work jointly with the schools in educating the younger generation. In most schools, parents and alumni participated and assisted in organising school activities, like a mentorship programme for senior form students and a charity trust fund to support the holistic development of the students in School C, musical productions in School D, reading programmes in School F, and study tours in School E. However, Principal C pointed out that care

should be exercised in soliciting their support. She said, "Their participation in school activities may at the same time bring challenges and different opinions. We may be hijacked. So I need to be very careful in planning and inviting the people. What can this person contribute? What if the person goes wild and becomes difficult to master? . . . It needs careful thinking and wisdom."

Schools C and D, had partnerships with their sister schools overseas, while the other four schools had sister schools in mainland China. There were mutual visits for professional sharing and collaboration among sister schools. Three principals wished to receive more funding to support student activities, especially those relating to Other Learning Experiences and off-shore activities. All six schools had organised various kinds of study tours or activities to widen students' exposure and learning experiences. They had tried to explore resources and ways to reduce budgets to support students who could not afford the activities.

Summary

All of the principals followed the new curriculum framework and guidelines recommended by the government. Apart from the four Key Tasks common to all of the schools, each school had its own curriculum initiatives to address its own specific concerns aligning with the school development. The centrality of student learning, teachers' readiness and capacity and school development needs were also considered. The principals adopted mixed modes of leadership approaches and strategies in leading the curriculum reform. It was clear to them that specific school and staff contexts should be taken into consideration and no single way could be applied to suit all

situations.   Regarding the influence of previous principals they worked with, the principals denied applying the same strategies and leadership styles indiscriminately in their schools.   Other factors such as their personality, family backgrounds and religion also affected their beliefs, decisions, and leadership styles.

Having their visions and a macro view of school development, the principals set clear goals, exercised careful and insightful strategic planning, and formulated school policies and plans in consultation with the staff.   They then monitored and reviewed the reform initiatives.   In general, they described themselves as liberal and democratic.   They took a facilitative, supportive or consultative role in leading the curriculum reform, though in most cases, they took a more leading role at the initial stage.

The principals attempted to create a facilitative environment and a collaborative culture for implementing curriculum changes.   Strategies applied by the principals included respecting the school culture, adopting a gradual approach, finding appropriate entry points for changes, and addressing teachers' fears and concerns.   The principals were aware that communication skills and interpersonal skills were essential to successful leadership.   They maintained close communication and established partnerships in the school community through various formal and informal channels and means.

The principals delegated responsibilities and distributed leadership among teachers. Seeing the importance of developing teacher leaders, they gradually let middle leaders take over to carry out the plans while they monitored the whole process, provided resources and support, facilitated collaboration among staff, and patiently addressed conflicts and barriers to ensure smooth implementation.

To help build teacher capacities for the reforms, all six principals encouraged teacher professional development and maximised the opportunities by making administrative arrangements and making use of the available resources. Participation in support programmes and action research was also arranged to tap expert support and advice from external organisations and tertiary institutions.

The principals perceived that they had a positive influence on learning and teaching though it was impossible to measure the degree of impact. The six schools demonstrated promising results in learning and teaching, in terms of both students' academic and non-academic performances. Despite the difficulties encountered in the curriculum reform, positive progress was reported in teacher attitudes, teacher collaboration, and implementation of reform initiatives. They had high expectations for themselves and wished to make more positive changes to the school in the future.

The principals were keen in pursuing their own professional development to enable them to carry out their leadership role under the curriculum reform. In facing their great responsibilities and the massive curriculum reforms which competed for their time and energy, they wisely made use of the available resources and sought support from the school stakeholders, principal networks, and other educational organisations. Support from their family, religion and peers was also considered important and greatly valued.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study sought to investigate the ways in which secondary school principals in Hong Kong were leading schools through the historical ten-year curriculum reform. Despite the diverse school contexts and backgrounds of the six principals in the study, common themes and patterns were evident. The findings pertaining to Research Questions 1 and 2 have been detailed in Chapters Five and Six respectively. This chapter presents an overall discussion of the research findings and the general conclusions on the themes that the researcher thought may be common to other schools. The chapter ends with implications for policy and the practices of the government and principals respectively, in leading and managing large-scale curriculum reforms and provides recommendations for further research.

Principals' Beliefs and Understandings

Even though the study involved six principals, it is interesting to find that they agreed with each other in terms of their beliefs and understanding of the curriculum reform process and their roles. Therefore, this section will discuss their beliefs and understandings as a group. In facing the Hong Kong education environment, filled with numerous reforms that penetrate nearly all aspects of the education system, all six principals showed good understanding and positive views. They agreed with the urgent need for education reform in Hong Kong to keep pace with changing social and global trends. They also saw the importance of maintaining the momentum of change.

They viewed the ten-year curriculum reform initiated in 2001 as phenomenal and historically significant. They agreed with the broad aim to provide quality education to enable students to attain all-round development. They also appreciated the intent to develop students' generic skills, positive values and attitudes so that they would be capable of life-long learning. Their positive perceptions towards the curriculum reform and their personal values and beliefs created strong driving forces supporting them to lead the school through the reforms.

All of the principals realised their important roles and great responsibilities in leading the school through the Hong Kong curriculum reform, and the difficulties they were facing or anticipated. The principals mentioned some conflicts or dilemmas in their roles and responsibilities (Goodwin, 2003; MacBeath, 2005). There was conflict in their multiple roles (e.g. the role of strategic leaders versus instructional leaders), conflict between accountability for the school and various stakeholders, and conflict between autonomy and mandatory requirements. They were also aware of the complex reform environment in Hong Kong and sentiments of teachers and parents (Cheng, 2000; Walker, 2004; Wong, 2003; Yu, 2007). They understood that the reform was not easy and would be a long, developmental process. None of them saw themselves as the sole curriculum leader of the school. This was partly related to their belief in shared leadership (e.g. Blasé & Blasé, 1999), distributed leadership (e.g. Dinham, 2005; Gurr et al., 2005; MacBeath, 2005) and participative leadership (e.g. Vroom & Jago, 1998) to promote curriculum change in a collaborative and cooperative manner. It was also partly due to the practical need for sharing their increasing responsibilities and workload. Other factors included their limited relevant training and experience in curriculum development, and lack of specific professional knowledge within individual subjects or

Key Learning Areas to inform decisions. Only one principal had prior experience in curriculum development at the subject and territory-wide level before assuming the post of principal. One principal had received relevant training from a structured principal professional programme and was gaining mentoring support while acting in the post of the principal. The other four principals said they had no prior studies or training in curriculum development or curriculum leadership, thus lacking sufficient knowledge and skills for the role of curriculum leader. They claimed they were exploring while leading the curriculum reform together with their senior staff, in particular the vice principals, whom they considered as curriculum leaders as well. The importance of the role of the vice principals will be discussed in the next section on principals' behaviours and strategies.

The principals believed a curriculum leader should possess adequate professional knowledge and abilities to formulate strategic plans, change teachers' paradigms and call for their support, prioritise changes, establish a learning and collaborative culture, and monitor the reform process. All these were what Brown and Anafar (2003) describe as the knowledge and skills of visionary leaders needed for transferring a vision into reality. The principals valued teacher development and collaboration. They also showed similarities in realising the importance of cultural leadership (Fullan, 2001, 2002; Wong, 2003; Walker, 2004; Yu, 2007) in leading the curriculum reform and facing the difficulties. They welcomed the additional support and resources for the reforms, and knew these should be wisely and effectively used to cater for the needs of the students, the staff and school development. The principals demonstrated elements for achieving sustainability (Fullan, 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006) like core values, moral purpose, commitment to changing contexts, patience and resourcefulness. Their

beliefs which were translated into actions enabled them to perform the role of change

leaders (Fullan, 2002, 2005, 2008a). How they performed the leadership role depended

on other factors which will be discussed in the next section on principals' leadership

styles and strategies.

It was encouraging that all the principals accepted the new curriculum framework and

implemented the four Key Tasks satisfactorily in the first phase (2001-2006), as

reported in the principals' self-reflection or as indicated in the External School Review

Reports issued by the government. However, the New Senior Secondary (NSS)

curriculum, to take effect in 2009, brought massive changes and great concerns to

schools in the second phase (2006-2011). The principals showed great concern for

their students, teachers and parents as they were all affected by the reform. Some

principals anticipated that gaps between student learning and assessment requirements

would have negative impacts on students with lower academic performances. They

thought alternative curriculums or exit points should be provided for these students

within the NSS structure. The NSS structure also affected teacher establishment in

secondary schools, which would create administrative problems such as re-deployment

of teacher duties and timetabling to accommodate new subjects or electives in the school

curriculum. The principals understood teachers' resistance and empathised with their

worries and anxieties in facing all sorts of curriculum initiatives, new qualification

requirements, and demands for new professional knowledge and skills for implementing

the curriculum reform. They also had to attend to parents' misunderstandings,

frustrations and resistance to the education reforms. These principals put students at

the centre of consideration and emphasised building relationship and partnership with

the school stakeholders. They had moved their focus from the operational to the

people agenda and to develop community with and leadership in others (Mulford, 2008).

Though this study was not focused on leadership of successful principals and the principals were not selected as examples, the findings interestingly reflect some commonality to the ones of Gurr, Drysdale and Mulford's (2006) study. The six principals showed "a common set of personal traits, behaviours, values and beliefs" (Gurr et al., 2006, p. 371). They displayed a strong passion, enthusiasm, and commitment for their schools, teachers, students, and the curriculum reform. They believed that an ideal curriculum leader should possess qualities like openness, good communication skills, flexibility, commitment, passion, empathy with others, support of equity and social justice, high expectations and a belief that schools can make a difference.

Despite the uncertainties, challenges and constraints under the major reform competing for their time, energy and health (Dowson, Bodycott & Walker, 2003; Wong, 2003; Walker, 2007), the principals were resilient and optimistic. They demonstrated their moral and ethical commitments to ensuring students' holistic development (Day, 2005). They believed how they led the school would bring differences to the lives and future of their staff, students, parents and the community. They demonstrated a strong desire to strive for improvements of their schools and students while being realistic about their current capacity, strengths, constraints and difficulties. They claimed that they cared about their staff and students and had maintained close communication with them through formal and informal channels. They were keen in the initiation of their school-based reform agenda to cater for the school contexts and needs, and they understood the importance of collaboration of the whole staff in implementing curriculum changes with great effort and determination. They demonstrated passion

for commitment, collaboration, trust and inclusivity which Day (2004) identified as characteristics of successful principals in leading the schools to achieve effectiveness of learning and teaching, though it was not the intention of this study to focus on successful principal leadership.

The principals' core values and beliefs informed their decisions and actions, including those regarding the provision of support and capacity building of individuals and at the school level, and the school culture (Mulford, 2008). The leadership behaviours and strategies of the six principals are discussed below in relation to their beliefs and understandings.

Principals' Leadership Styles and Strategies

All of the principals demonstrated characteristics of a mixture of leadership models, including instructional, transformational, distributed, visionary, productive, pedagogical, and sustainable leadership. In the real school context, especially in the complex reform environment of Hong Kong, it is understandable that principals will not simply adopt a single typical leadership model. Given the efforts of these principals in leading sustained reform, the findings support Hallinger's (2007) call for an integrative model of educational leadership that links to the needs of the school context. While one leadership style or approach may work well for some leaders, in practice, successful leaders adopt a range of leadership styles. In a review on leadership models in schools, Mulford (2008) remarked that "any single one-size-fits-all or adjectival approach to leadership, or checklists of leadership attributes will limit, restrict and distort leadership in ways not conducive to school development and improvement" (p. 48).

With reference to Bass' (1998) four dimensions of transformational leadership, which include charisma, inspirational motivation, individualised consideration and intellectual stimulation, the principals demonstrated characteristics in the latter three dimensions. It does not mean that the principals had no charisma. Charisma is a quality or perception that could be reported or assessed by the staff, not from the principals' self accounts in this research. The design of the research and the findings do not allow the researcher to draw conclusion in this respect. It should also be clarified that not all the above characteristics were found in all of the principals. It is impossible and inappropriate to measure the intensity of their efforts and degree of impact because they are not the purpose and focus of this study.

It can be concluded that the principals' visionary leadership was transformed into "action" (Brown & Anfara, 2003). Besides being instructional leaders, problem solvers and resource providers, the principals seemed to attach importance to cultivating and communicating their "vision" to teachers, students, and the community. They attempted to inform, inspire, challenge, guide and empower their teachers and students. The principals acted as the "gatekeepers" and "gate-openers" of their schools (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998). Both "top-down" and "bottom-up" approaches were adopted in the initiation stage. They realised the importance of developing a collaborative culture in school and turning it into a learning organisation. They understood that this would be a long-term and continuous process. They displayed moral purpose, commitment, patience, empathy, vigilance, and determination in achieving change and development in school. These are some elements of sustainability (Fullan, 2003, 2005; Day, 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006).

The principals in this study applied different leadership strategies to cater for the specific school context and culture and, in some cases, even the characteristics and personalities of individual teachers (Barnett et al., 2000), which were constantly shifting under the educational reform environment in Hong Kong.   This finding supports Walker's (2007) view on the need for principals' authentic leadership and the difficulties involved.

The leadership strategies adopted by the principals in leading the school through the curriculum reform are broadly categorised under seven themes as follows:

1. Clear vision and strategic planning;

2. Create a facilitative environment and culture for change;

3. Distribute leadership and develop middle leaders;

4. Build teacher capacity;

5. Build a learning and collaborative community;

6. Apply appropriate leadership styles to suit the school and individual teacher; and

7. Seek and provide resources and support.

Interestingly, the above strategies coincide with some of the characteristics of effective or successful principals reviewed in the literature (Murphy, 1990; Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Day, 2004 & 2005; Fullan, 2003, 2005, 2008a & 2008b).   While all the above strategies apply to general aspects of school management and administration pertaining to school development, the strategies in themes 1 to 5 are more relevant and essential in the context of leading curriculum change in school.   The themes are now to be discussed with reference to the characteristics of leadership models in the literature,

starting with the first five themes more relevant to the curriculum reform, followed by the last two themes more related to general leadership.

1. Clear vision and strategic planning

The principals' leadership behaviours and actions under this theme include *set clear goals and make strategic plans, formulate school policies, and have a macro view of overall planning, implementation, monitoring* and *review of curriculum initiatives.* The principals saw their responsibility for instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2003, 2005). They also displayed qualities of visionary leaders (Brown & Anfara, 2003) and courage to initiate changes. Crowther et al. (2002) refer to "visioning" and "alignment of organisational elements" as two of the five functions of the role of "post industrial" principals. Principal C was a typical example demonstrating instructional leadership and visionary leadership. Having instructional focus on the curriculum, students and teachers, she designed a single school concern (focusing on "Reading") in the five-year school plan, which was seldom practised in schools. She was confident and firm in justifying her belief in and strategic plans for promoting reading in a whole-school approach to enhance students' reading skills which will in turn enhance their learning. She adopted a transformational style in gradually developing teachers and nurturing a collaborative culture in the course of planning, implementing, monitoring and reviewing the change.

All six principals had clear goals for curriculum development and had put in place formal administrative structures responsible for planning and implementing curriculum initiatives, establishing goals, and specifying measurable outcomes. They addressed

their school-based concerns and led teachers to design the five-year and annual school plans aligning with the shared vision and taking into consideration their internal contextual factors, such as school vision, student backgrounds, and staff's capacity and readiness for the changes. In tune with Fullan's (2008b) guidelines for principals, the principals performed the role of a "system leader" and tried to divert the distractors. The principals showed characteristics of transformational leaders (Bass, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000), like building school vision and goals and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions.

2. Create a facilitative environment and culture for change

All of the principals understood and performed their role in "changing the context" in which the role is embedded (Fullan, 2003). They played an important role of "change leaders" (Fullan, 1998; 2002) and had considered the possibilities afforded by the changes as well as the practical issues. Actions taken by the principals to facilitate curriculum change include *respect school culture and staff, change teachers' paradigms and value their ideas, seek the right time, adopt a gradual approach, collect evidences,* and *learn from successful experiences.* The principals believed that emotionally charged ideas from the staff would lead to change in behaviours. They wanted to change the context and helped teachers see new possibilities and situations. The moral imperative of school leadership (Fullan, 2003; Day, 2005) was emphasised and practised in the schools The principals' leadership behaviours agree with two of Fullan's (2008a) secrets of change, i.e. "Love your employees" and "Connect peers with purpose". They respected the school culture and teachers' feelings and reactions towards the changes. They encouraged teachers to make dreams and learn from successful

experiences. They also strove to create a supportive environment and were patient in putting changes in practice step-by-step in a gradual way. They focused on fewer coordinated objectives so that staff members' energy could be focused. The principals remarked that they had provided all the possible support to create opportunities for implementing curriculum change in school and equipping teachers with the necessary skills to achieve expected results. They provided intellectual stimulation and offered individualised support, showing some characteristics of transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Leithwood et al., 2000).

3. Distribute leadership and develop middle leaders

The principals demonstrated distributed leadership (Day, 2005; MacBeath, 2005; Mulford, 2008) and they saw the importance to "grow other leaders" (Fullan, 2008b). Crowther et al. (2002) considered "distribution of power and leadership" a function of the role of "post industrial" principals. They applied strategies, like *delegate responsibilities, assign the right jobs to the right people, develop leadership of middle managers,* and *develop mutual trust.* They attached importance to their relationships with colleagues which is a factor contributing to teacher commitment and motivation. They attempted to encourage involvement of teachers, in particular middle leaders, in planning and carrying out curriculum changes. They created conditions for teacher-leaders' success, which included the environment, the time and the opportunities for collaboration and leadership to arise.

All the principals acknowledged the leadership role of vice-principals, department heads and other senior teachers in the curriculum reform. This study shows that vice

principals do not simply act as "caretakers" (Koru, 1993) or daily "operations managers" (Porter, 1996) with ill-defined job descriptions (Harvey, 1994). With the expanding tasks of principals in the wake of widespread educational reform, vice-principals play important roles in their schools, including strategic leadership, management and administration, curriculum leadership, staff development, pastoral support, external liaison, school improvement projects, and operational issues (Mertz, 2000; Cranston et al, 2004; Kwan & Walker, 2008). They are not "neglected actors" (Hartzell, 1993) or "forgotten leaders" (Cranston et al., 2004) anymore. Kwan and Walker (2008) argued that increased reform-driven expectations of shared leadership should warrant additional opportunities for the professional enrichment of vice principals.

The principals had started to involve teachers in decision-making processes about the educational issues at the school level in a collaborative manner. They believed that giving teachers more autonomy, discretion and control in conducting their work would encourage increased staff commitment and a greater sense of ownership of, responsibility for and quality in student learning. The ways they adopted a nurturing teacher leadership were quite similar to those mentioned by Crowther et al. (2002, p. 13). They communicated a clear strategic intent, incorporated the aspirations and ideas of others, posed difficult-to-answer questions, made space for individual innovation, stepped back where appropriate, created opportunities out of perceived difficulties and built on achievements to create a culture of success.

The pace of development of distributed leadership varied across the schools. Some schools, like C and D, showed faster development than others. School F was slower.

This was related to the degree of teachers' readiness and receptiveness towards

distributed leadership, and their willingness and confidence in taking the leaders' role.

Persistence of the traditional "hero-principal" perception among the staff of an

ever-present, ever-available principal is also one of the barriers to distributed leadership

(Mulford, 2008).   In School F, for example, some teachers still thought that the

principal should be there to solve problems and make final decisions.   Principal F had

to be patient in establishing the practice of collaborative and participative

decision-making.   This finding agrees with Leung and Chan's (2001) statement that

Hong Kong has "retained considerable elements which support hierarchical power

relationships between junior and seniors" (p. 243).   The specific deep culture of

Chinese societies and Hong Kong schools (Newman, 1991; Lo, 2002) also has their

influence.   Lo (2002) commented that teachers in Hong Kong schools are reluctant to

confront superiors, express dissent and criticise peers.   Other factors may include the

nature of issues for discussion, teachers' interests in the issues, how the dialogue is

initiated, and teachers' willingness to take risks (Crockenberg & Clark, 1979; Blasé &

Blasé, 1999).

In exploring the context of principalship which focuses on the interconnected elements

of constitution and traditional culture, (Walker, 2004) concluded that deep structures

which were conceptualised as power relationships existed in Hong Kong schools and

they had influence on the action and behaviours in schools and across the wider system.

He remarked that Hong Kong principals practised a type of remote leadership in which

strong, almost autocratic, leadership is expected not only by principals themselves, but

also by teachers.   Despite all these, it is encouraging to find that the six principals

embraced and encouraged opportunities for distributing leadership, delegating

responsibilities, building teacher capacity, and developing teacher leadership. They showed empathy and were patient in allowing time to develop leaders in school and nurture a culture for distributed leadership to take root.

4. Build teacher capacity

While the principals themselves were pursuing continuous professional development through various means, they made great efforts to promote teacher professional development. This is in tune with one of Fullan's (2008b) guidelines for principals: *"build capacity first"*. Gurr et al. (2006) recognised it as a significant contribution of principals. This is a component of both instructional leadership and transformational leadership. The principals provided opportunities and support to teachers and teacher-leaders to enable them to pursue professional development for capacity building. The strategies adopted include *make early staff deployment plans, value and encourage ideas from teachers, promote teachers' continuing professional development,* and *provide opportunities for widening teachers' exposure.* Professional sharing on learning and teaching was promoted through peer observation and various formal and informal channels within school. Both local and overseas professional visits and exchanges were also organised to widen teachers' perspective. The schools also focused continually on improving instructional practices in the light of student performance data, and linked these to standards and staff development.

5. Build a learning and collaborative community

The principals made efforts to nurture a collaborative work culture in their schools and

to build a professional learning community, though the schools showed different rates of development in this respect. The principals' strategies in this respect include *create a collaborative culture, maintain good communication and partnerships with stakeholders, counsel teachers and resolve conflicts, focus on student learning, induce reflective dialogue,* and *encourage sharing of practice, collaboration and inclusivity.* The principals performed the role of a "system leader" (Fullan, 2008b). They showed great commitment and patience in build a trusting, collaborative and learning community. The principals also demonstrated some qualities and strategies of shared-governance principals (Blasé & Blasé, 1999) with an orientation to sharing and facilitating work of staff and building an inclusive school community. They attempted to build trust, maintain open communication, share information, build consensus, and embrace inevitable conflicts in productive ways. They would "back off" or "let go" at times, encourage teachers' voluntary participation in committees or new initiatives, and encourage new ideas and openness to risk and experimentation.

All of the principals said they had to be observant and alert to any problems during the implementation of curriculum change in their schools. They made efforts in improving communication, coordination and relationship among staff. This finding highlights the importance of the personal qualities and relationship skills of school leaders. The principals were concerned about their staff's well-being and tried to maintain a harmonious relationship among them. This is also in line with Boris-Schacter's (2007, cited in Mulford, 2008) claim that relationships are embedded in each of the five dimensions of instructional leadership (Robinson, 2007), and "responsiveness" (warmth and supportiveness) and "demandingness" are two fundamental dimensions. The principals appreciated their staff's effort and contributions, especially the vice-principals

and senior staff assisting in school academics and curriculum aspects. Some schools, like Schools B, C and D, had established a culture of accepting new initiatives while some schools were making slow progress mostly due to staff factors. Most of the schools were experiencing the sequential stages of organisational learning (Mulford, 2008): *involved trusting and collaborative climate, shared and monitored mission,* and *taking initiatives and risks* (p.52). The organisational culture is a collaborative culture being gradually nurtured by the principals adopting a transformational principle. The principals hoped to develop a risk-taking mentality in school leading to a climate of innovation and experimentation. Teacher collaboration and cross-KLA coordination in some schools, like Schools A and F, needed further improvement, and were the principals' targets of continuous efforts in the years to come.

The principals also reported their attempts in nurturing staff, students, and parents in order to build successful communities. To avoid the possible risk of fragmentation of effort and energy when their middle managers focused on fulfilling their accountabilities and responsibilities, the principals encouraged the development of learning communities, supporting a strong mutually supportive, collective service ethic. Shared norms and values, focus on student learning, reflective dialogue, sharing of practice, collaboration and inclusivity, were observed in the six schools. These are the elements essential to building and sustaining schools as learning communities (Day, 2004) though they were performed in different forms at different rates of progress and with different results. The study shows that cross-curricular collaboration was commonly considered difficult among the schools. Some of the principals were still exploring certain curriculum initiatives or addressing certain problems within individual Key Learning Areas but some principals, like Principal C and D, were advancing well in coordinating and

implementing a holistic curriculum in a whole-school manner.

The next two strategies discussed in the following sections are more related to general leadership applicable to all aspects of the school, like management and administration.

6. Apply appropriate leadership styles to suit the school and individual teachers

Though the principals showed similarities in their leadership conceptions, beliefs and core values, there were differences in their individualised considerations and leadership behaviours which depended on the external environment, the school contexts, their personal experience, and the particular stage of their career development (e.g. Fullan, 2002, 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2003, 2006; Gurr et al., 2006; Hallinger, 2007). Student and teacher needs, external contextual factors, such as government's policies, parents' expectations, actions of other schools and teachers were some of their considerations.   For example, the novice principal, Principal F, was aware of his constraints and adjusted his focuses of professional development, allocation of time, expectations for himself and his staff, pace of change and leadership strategies.   He decided to focus on the management of internal school affairs and the establishment of trust and working relationships with the staff rather than external alliances and networking, which is also one of the functions of post industrial principals (Crowther et al., 2002).

As Mulford (2008) remarked, "leadership has to be learned not just by doing but by being able to gain insight while doing it" (p. 64).   The principals demonstrated the behaviours of sustainable leaders (Fullan, 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2003 & 2006).

Single forms of leadership were replaced by distributed leadership or multiple forms of leadership. None of the principals perceived and performed as the sole curriculum leader of the school. They shared their power and authority by introducing into their working environment collaborative methods of school development planning and problem-solving. The findings concur with Hallinger's (2003) remark that the leadership model of a principal is related to the external environment and the local school context. The leadership practice of the principals in the study was generated through interaction of leaders, followers and their situation (Spillane, 2006). The six cases illustrated that the situation both defined leadership practice and was defined in and by leadership practice. The principals made their breakthroughs through personal reflection and adopted a transformational leadership style to achieve sustainable school development.

7. Seek and provide resources and support

To support curriculum change and sustain school development, the principals fully supported the staff with administrative and financial resources. They also provided space and opportunities for change to happen. The strategies adopted by the principals include *wise and effective planning and monitoring of resources,* and *create space and opportunities through extending external networks.* Apart from the major source of funding and support from the government, the principals explored all possible resources from various sources, including the community, other schools, parents and even past students. Special teams were in place to help the principal plan how to effectively use the available resources, including time, physical space, and human resources.

The above strategies adopted by the principals in leading the schools through the holistic Hong Kong curriculum reform are in line with Fullan's (2008b) guidelines for principals. They applied a mixture of leadership styles and strategies in accordance with the principles for curriculum leadership laid by the government (EMB, 2002). They were exploring the journey in their own way and at their own pace, having interactions with the external environment, individual school contexts, and incorporating their personal values, beliefs and experiences. They were open to explore the change process with the staff. They were sensitive and aware of the need for time, professional development, trust and substantial support to enable transformation, which contributed to effective principal leadership (Murphy, 1990; Day, 2005; Fullan, 2008a). They were reflective practitioners (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996, p. 67) as they took necessary actions upon reflections and evaluation or assessment results and in consultation with the staff to rectify unsatisfactory situations. The findings show that all six principals were "future oriented" that they expressed hopes, dreams and goals for the future of their schools though they realised the problems and difficulties lying ahead.

Enabling Factors and Constraints in the Curriculum Reform

The findings revealed that the principals were well aware of the key issues, enabling factors and constraints in implementing the curriculum reform. Teachers were considered one of the key factors. Their acceptance, readiness, and commitment for change as well as collaboration among them were essential to the success of the reform (Hayes et al., 2004; Fullan, 2008). Resources and support from the government were applauded and flexibly used to support student learning and teacher development. The principals also appreciated the support and respect from the school stakeholders.

Efforts were made to seek resources from various sources and make use of them effectively in supporting the curriculum reforms. They hoped to have more subsidies to support students' activities to enhance their life-wide learning experiences. A principal suggested having some measures in place to create incentives for teachers to strive for quality teaching.

There were many difficulties and constraints encountered, such as the decreasing student population, closure of schools, threatened teachers' job security, heavy workload, increased qualification requirements imposed on teachers, numerous curriculum changes requiring collaboration in a whole-school approach, and teachers' negative sentiments and worries. These resemble Cheng's (2007) challenges of simultaneous educational reforms, which include the over competition from marketisation, the close control from accountability measures, the increasing workload form numerous initiatives, the de-professionalisation from over management and monitoring and the high pressure from uncertainties and ambiguities in the education environment. In a study on leadership of primary school principals in Hong Kong, Cheng and Walker (2008) concluded that policy makers have created "a bottleneck that hampers schools from achieving the educative aims of the reforms" (p. 516). The requirement for developing and using school-based learning materials was beyond primary school teachers' personal and professional capacities. Their study revealed that teachers felt additional stress and uncertainty when asked to contribute to whole-school decisional making situations. The findings of this study showed some signs of the bottleneck effect in secondary schools, though to a varied degree depending on personal capacities and experiences of the principals and teachers.

One of the tough tasks of principals was to change teachers' paradigms. Some teachers were reluctant to change. They rejected adopting new initiatives or pursuing professional development. Collaboration within KLA subject departments was more successfully promoted while cross-curricular development was still less satisfactory. Some teachers held tight to their subject knowledge and boundaries and were unwilling to collaborate with other KLA subjects. This had hindered the development of curriculum integration. How principals and middle leaders can foster collaboration and a learning culture in schools remains an eminent issue to be addressed.

Increased resources from the government could not entirely ease teachers' problems and worries. The urgent need for additional teachers to support reform initiatives led to high turn-over rates and difficulties in employing qualified teachers, especially in less prestigious schools or schools with falling student enrolments. This in turn created administrative problems and affected school planning and in turn, the effectiveness of learning and teaching.

All of the principals said that they were struggling with time and energy constraints as a result of the education reforms. They experienced dilemmas and tensions (Day, 2000), including leadership versus management, development versus maintenance, internal versus external change, autocracy versus autonomy, and personal time versus professional tasks. While leading teachers through the reforms to strive for school improvement and quality education, the principals also cared about the well-being of their staff. They understood their teachers' readiness and attitudes towards the reforms, as well as teachers' workload and pressure. According to the principals, attempts had been made to strike a balance but still the quality of life of principals and teachers was at

stake. Feeling the accountability and responsibility of quality education on their shoulders, many teachers and principals were on the verge of burnout. The principals worked long hours and succeeded partly through the support of external networks of colleagues, friends and family. The findings agree with Day's (2000) view that the main factors for their success were their personal values and their ability to maintain and develop learning and achieving cultures while they managed ongoing tensions and dilemmas.

Principals' Training and Continuing Professional Development

Only one of the principals in this study had completed a comprehensive and structured preparation programme to meet the new requirements for attaining a certificate for the principalship, while the other principals had been in their posts before the requirements policy was in force. None of them felt that they had specialised knowledge of curriculum development. While the formal, structured principalship training and induction programmes were found useful, the principals sought continuing professional development amid their busy daily routines to update their curriculum knowledge and leadership skills. Walker (2007) discussed the difficulties of principals in Hong Kong in leading authentically within their context due to the complexities of their work and the tension between reform demands and the influence of culture. Walker, Stott & Cheng (2003) remarked that politics, formal and informal structures and enduring cultural values and norms outline different, shifting configurations shape the role of the principal and how such positions are filled and sustained (p. 207). Continuous professional development (CPD) has become the phrase widely used for on-going education and training for the professions (Bubb & Earley, 2007) and CPD of principals

is one of the ways to upgrade the quality of principals (Walker, Stott & Cheng, 2003). "For school leaders to find authenticity – or their own voice - in the shifting context", they must engage with learning on an on-going basis (Walker, 2007, p. 264). To help principals learn to be authentic, they should be guided through a collaborative process of self-directed learning, self-discovery and reflection.

On the whole the principals found abundant professional development opportunities and the quality was satisfactory. They preferred practical sharing from fellow principals and spiritual input rather than theoretical and informational input, especially after implementing the curriculum changes for several years since 2001. They valued professional sharing and mutual support from peer principals. Due to time constraints, they set priorities and selected relevant activities with great care. The quality of professional programmes became their first selection criteria.

Unanimously, they considered networking among principals, both formally and informally, particularly useful. Participation in principals' associations and societies provided opportunities for gaining professional knowledge and mutual support. Purposive educational visits outside of Hong Kong were considered effective in widening their perspectives, inspiring reform initiatives in their schools and building up networks within the visiting groups and with the organisations they visited. They also appreciated the strong support and sharing from their personal peer groups. Four of the six principals had active involvement in principal training and induction programmes through which they had gained personal professional development which in turn contributed to their work and school development. The findings agree with Walker's (2007) remark that "leadership learning and practice take place in the context and can be

seen to broadly develop through social interaction, reflection, collection of ideas and evidence, openness and intentionality or design" (p. 266). It is important to instill in principals a professional learning orientation and awareness rather than rely on decontextualised, expert-derived and delivered knowledge, and training approaches should be designed in contextually sensitive ways (Walker, 2007).

The principals observed positive results from the reforms implemented so far but admitted there were areas for improvement and they wished to accomplish more to benefit student learning. They had high expectations for themselves, their staff and students. With the territory-wide curriculum reform progressing for more than six years, it was reported that the overall atmosphere in schools had turned more positive. More teachers and parents were accepting the reality of change. Credit was given to the great efforts of pioneer and committed principals and teachers. The increasing resources and support from the Government, school stakeholders, and other educational organisations had made positive impacts on the school systems and the curriculum reform. Corresponding changes made to internal assessments, territory-wide system assessments and public examinations had also reinforced the direction and momentum of the reforms. With the experiences gathered and lessons learnt from the reform process since 2001, the Government, schools, principals and teachers should have the courage and confidence to take the reform forward.

Implications for Policy

Findings of this study provided insights into the Government's policy and implementation of the curriculum reforms. The following implications are offered for consideration by

the Government.

1.   Careful and professional planning, formulation and implementation of Policy

It is essential for the Government to work out a firm foundation for initiatives before implementing them.   Details of initiatives, implementation plans and comprehensive support packages designed on a theoretical and research evidence basis should be well developed before embarking on the reforms.   This will help the education administrators of the Government establish their credibility and gain the trust of principals, teachers, and the society.   Efforts should be made to foster deep understanding of reform initiatives and strategies, rather than superficial understanding, to solicit support from and sustain collaboration with and across school communities.   Decisions on the implementation scale, pace and approach of the reforms should be carefully made taking into consideration the influence on the capacity, workload and emotions of principals and teachers.

2.   Professional development of principals

Specific and useful professional development programmes should be designed for building principals' capacity to lead schools to explore the new initiatives in the process of doing, reflecting and gaining insights while doing it, evaluating the results, and making development plans.   The programmes should enhance principals' capacity in learning new curriculum initiatives and leadership skills in facilitating staff collaboration and organisation learning.   Opportunities and resources should be provided for establishing partnerships between schools and tertiary institutions,

arranging educational exchange programme, promoting professional networks, and facilitating cross-school sharing and collaboration to sustain principals' professional development.

3. *Problems of implementation in schools*

The problems faced by the principals under the reform are summarised in Table 5.2. The Government should understand the problems and constraints and, where appropriate, plan measures to address the issues, such as the problem of contract teachers causing high staff turnover. The more stable the staff the more likely they are to build collaborative partnerships that enable the school reform be implemented effectively. The issues of employing a large number of additional temporary contract teachers to support reform initiatives, and the quality of teaching should be studied. The Government should conduct a more comprehensive review of the supply of qualified teachers taking into consideration the consequential effects of major changes, like the New Senior Secondary curriculum.

Implications for Practice

This study provided insights into the leadership of secondary school principals in Hong Kong in relation to the curriculum reform. Table 6.2 summarises the leadership approaches and strategies adopted by the principals in the study which coincide with the characteristics of effective school leadership (Day, 2005; Fullan, 2008a & 2008b; Mulford, 2008) and can provide a basis for consideration to principals who are leading or planning to lead curriculum change. The following implications are related to

principals.

1. *Adopt flexible and integrative leadership*

Principals need to reflect on their capacity to lead the implementation of curriculum initiatives. Principals should understand that there is no single model of shared leadership to suit all circumstances. Principals should adopt a flexible and integrative leadership in leading the school through the reform and meeting the changing needs in relation to their school contexts and developmental stages.

2. *Be focused and provide direction*

Principals should have the capacity to fully understand the initiatives, articulate their vision and provide direction to help teachers identify, select and develop initiatives to cater for student needs aligning with the school's vision and mission. Success depends on which areas of school life the principal chooses to focus the time and attention of the school leadership team. When making decisions on initiations, principals can consider three Rs (Fullan, 1991): relevance of the innovation, readiness of staff, and resources and support available.

3. *Build a professional learning community*

Principals need to move their focus from the operational to the people agenda to develop a community with, and leadership in others. They should establish a trusting and collaborative relationship in the school and turn the school into a learning organisation. To achieve organisational learning, principals should strive to build a community of

professionals with shared norms and values, a focus on implementation and continuous enhancement of learning for all students, de-privatisation of practice, collaboration and critical reflective dialogue, especially one based on performance data. A transparent, facilitative and supportive structure and culture should be developed so that members of the community can always be reacting and empowered. Professional development opportunities within and outside schools should be provided to teachers for capacity building and leadership development.

4. Seek continuous professional development

Principals should be learning leaders who possess ambition and courage to meet and make changes. They should actively seek continuous professional development to enhance their capacities to lead the school through the reform. They should also initiate and participate in professional networking and sharing in which they can broaden their perspectives, gain inspiration and solicit mutual support.

Recommendations for Further Studies

While an immense amount of information was collected in this study and the useful findings provided insights into the principals' leadership, the adopted methodology of a case study has its limitations. First, generalisation is not possible. The findings from a small sample of six secondary school principals may not be representative of some seven hundred of their counterparts in Hong Kong. Future studies could consider conducting a quantitative survey on a larger sample of principals to collect more information to supplement findings from a qualitative study.

Second, this study included principals of an age group from the mid 40s to the mid 50s. All of them had extensive teaching experience before taking the principal's role and only one had undergone structured principalship training. It may be interesting to include in future studies principals of more diverse backgrounds, in terms of age and teaching experience to investigate how they face the reforms and cope with the difficulties. Would younger and newly appointed principals view the reforms and perform their roles differently?

Third, the data were mainly collected from the interviews with principals focusing on their own accounts. Cross examination of data was mainly done by reading school documents provided by the schools and accessed from the schools' websites. Teachers' perceptions of principals' curriculum leadership could be included in future studies for comparison and better triangulation of data.

Fourth, while four females and two males were included in this study, the factor of gender was not studied. It might be interesting to study the relationship between gender and curriculum leadership in meeting challenges of the curriculum reforms. Do female principals in Hong Kong experience greater pressure under the reforms and do they apply different leadership styles in schools? The relationship between principals' gender and leadership will be an interesting area for future study.

Finally, the issue of principals' burnout and its influence on the effectiveness and quality of education was brought up in this study. There is a phenomenon of experienced principals in Hong Kong taking early retirement or leaving the post in recent years. Could it be in some way related to the education reforms and the

increasing requirements for schools and principals? This topic is worth studying in the future to gain a better understanding of principals' leadership and their career life.

Final Thoughts

The education reforms in general and the ten-year curriculum reform in Hong Kong in particular were subject to many criticisms in the early stages. Like many other places in the world, principal burnout is a common problem in Hong Kong. Yet, the findings of this study show some cause for optimism. Firstly, there are principals, like those in this study, who demonstrated great commitment, passion, resilience and vision in leading their schools through the reforms and making promising differences in their schools. They were reflective, caring, and more concerned about cultural than with structural change. Secondly, a paradigm for change apparently has taken root in at least some schools and the community. There is now an established atmosphere in the education sector of working towards a common goal to achieve a more student-centred, all-around education. Thirdly, teacher resistance in Hong Kong has decreased with time since 2001 when the curriculum reform was launched. Despite the increased workload due to reform initiatives and qualification requirements, teachers appear to be working hard, pursuing professional development and making efforts to carry out their reform plans.

This study suggests that the major curriculum reform initiatives in Hong Kong have had a positive result and should continue to achieve sustainable school development and quality education in at least some schools. Leaders of the Government and schools have to respond to the changing needs of the markets (school, students and society) to

formulate relevant policies and strategies (Drysdale, 2001). Regular analysis, review and refinement of policies and strategies are also essential. This study also revealed some issues of concern, including the work-life balance and work intensification of principals, increasing accountability and managerial work impacting on principals and the tensions surrounding the leadership versus the management aspects of the role of principals. The dominance of management roles in the work of principals seems to be at the detriment of leadership. It may be interesting to explore the feasibility of the practice of co-principals or other modes of principalship to see if the leadership strengths of principals can be unlocked. This could be a new arena for research and practice in Hong Kong.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Information Letter to Participants

Information letter **Curriculum leadership of Hong Kong** **secondary school principals in times of** **reform**	**UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY** **Faculty of Education** **University of Technology Sydney**

Dear Principal,

My name is Chan Yuk King and I am a doctoral student at the University of Technology, Sydney. I am conducting research into curriculum leadership of secondary school principals in Hong Kong and would welcome your assistance.

The purpose of this study is to find out the views and practice of secondary school principals in Hong Kong in managing the implementation of curriculum change, including their leadership, impact on the school, problems encountered, decision-making and strategies applied in problem-solving. The leadership types will be explored and discussed in relation to their practice and outcomes in curriculum and management. Related issues such as promotion of school climate and atmosphere and teacher professional development, their self-expectations, and their constraints in the curriculum reform will also be studied.

The research would involve two to three interviews (including face-to-face or on the phone if necessary) each lasting no more than one hour. Follow-up conversations to maintain contact and resolve queries may occur on the needs basis. Interviews will mainly be conducted in your school or a place agreed by you and me which can provide a safe and quiet environment for you to disclose information relating to yourself and your school. No details of the interviews will be disclosed without your consent.

If you have any questions about this research, feel free to contact me or my supervisor Dr Kitty te Riele (email: ____). Please keep this letter so that you have our contact details, should you require them in future.

You are under no obligation to participate in this research. I have invited you because your experiences and background will contribute to gaining a wide range of views for the study.

If you are interested in participating, I would be glad if you would contact me (see my details below).

Yours sincerely,

Contact details:
Chan Yuk King, Ms
Telephone number: ____
UTS email address: ____

NOTE:
This study has been approved by the Faculty of Education (UTS) Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research which you cannot resolve with the researcher, you may contact the Ethics Committee through Associate Professor Alison Lee (ph: ____, email: ____). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix B: Consent Form from Participants

CONSENT FORM Curriculum leadership of Hong Kong secondary school principals in times of reform	**UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY** **Faculty of Education** **University of Technology Sydney**

I _____ *(your name)* agree to participate in the research project 'Curriculum leadership of Hong Kong secondary school principals in times of reform' being conducted by Chan Yuk King of the University of Technology, Sydney for her Doctoral Degree in Education.

I understand that the purpose of this study is to find out the views and practices of secondary school principals in Hong Kong in managing the implementation of curriculum change, including their leadership, impact on the school, problems encountered, decision-making and strategies applied in problem-solving.

I understand that my participation in this research will involve two to three interviews (including face-to-face or on the phone if necessary) each lasting no more than 1 hour. Follow-up conversations to maintain contact and resolve queries may occur on a needs basis. Interviews will mainly be conducted in the school office or a place agreed by me and the researcher which can provide a safe and quiet environment for me to discuss relating my work and my school. The researcher will respect my responses to the interview questions. No details will be disclosed without my consent.

I am aware that I can contact Ms Chan Yuk King (email: ____) or her supervisor Dr Kitty te Riele (email: ____) if I have any concerns about the research. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my participation from this research project at any time I wish, without consequences, and without giving a reason.

I agree that Ms Chan Yuk King has answered all my questions fully and clearly.

I agree that the research data gathered from this project may be published in a form that does not identify me in any way.

_____   ____/____/____
Signature (participant)

_____   ____/____/____
Signature (researcher or delegate)

NOTE:
This study has been approved by the Faculty of Education (UTS) Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research which you cannot resolve with the researcher, you may contact the Ethics Committee through Associate Professor Alison Lee (ph: ____ email: ____). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix C: Interview Questions for the Principals

<u>First interview</u>

1. From your perspective, how do you view the practicality and effectiveness of the education reforms, in particular the curriculum reforms?

   - Personal belief/comments on the effectiveness of the proposed curriculum changes for improving learning and teaching
   - Any personal views, attitudes and reactions to the curriculum reform (measures/strategies and schedule for the proposed curriculum change)
   - Any problems or concerns in the implementation of the new curriculum
   - Any suggestions to make this curriculum reform successful

2. How do you view the role of principals under the curriculum reform? How does it differ from that before the curriculum reform?

   - From your understanding or expectation, who should be/is/are the leader of the school curriculum in your school?
   - What are your expectations of the curriculum leader of the school in leading the current curriculum reform (within department, between department and school management, across departments)? Are there any new roles or more responsibilities?
   - What qualities/skills should an ideal curriculum leader possess, in particular to implement the new curriculum successfully in leading the school to achieve more effective learning and teaching, and why?

3. How is the curriculum reform being implemented in your school? Who have been involved in the planning and the implementation stages, and what are your role/involvement during the process?

   - What are your beliefs and concrete plans to implement the new curriculum?
   - How do you/does the curriculum leader lead the changes in school curriculum?
   - How do you/ does the curriculum leader work out the curriculum plan?
   - What are the curriculum initiatives attempted? Please briefly describe the process, the strategies/approach applied by the you/the curriculum leader during the process, the problems encountered, ways to solve them, the result, etc. and
   - What supports do you/does the curriculum leader have for the curriculum reform (e.g. professional knowledge, administration and management, resources, etc.) from the department, other colleagues, the school, the government.

Second interview

4. How do you evaluate your impact on the implementation of the curriculum reform and in achieving more effective student learning and teaching? What are the key factors contributing to success, areas for improvement and the constraints?

    - Regarding the curriculum development and effectiveness of learning and teaching in your school, what areas are satisfactory to you? What factors have contributed to the success?
    - How do you see the culture and climate conducive to curriculum development/change? What is your working relationship with the key persons involved in developing the school curriculum?
    - the aspect(s) you have most confidence in promoting the new curriculum
    - the aspects you think you can improve on
    - any constraints that you faced , e.g. time, energy, resources, conflicting roles in work (e.g. being the principal and a curriculum leader at the same time)
    - What leadership styles/approaches have you adopted in leading the curriculum changes in your school and what are the key factors leading to such styles/methods (e.g. education background, previous experience or principal training)? Can you cite some examples as illustrations?

5. How do you assess the support provide for you /the school for the curriculum reform (e.g. professional knowledge, administration and management, resources, principal training etc.) from the department, other colleagues, the school, parents, the government, etc.?

    - How do you support your colleagues in implementing the curriculum changes?
    - What other support do you/does the school need to carry out the role in the curriculum reform?

Appendix D: Email to Participants on the Summary of Findings

Dear [PARTICIPANT]

Thank you for your time and trust in me during the interviews conducted between 2007 and 2008. Attached to this email is a summary of the findings about your beliefs, understandings and leadership behaviours in leading your school through the ten-year curriculum reform in Hong Kong. The whole summary will be included in my dissertation as an appendix. Its contents will be analysed and reported in relevant parts of the paper.

Please read the summary carefully and advise me if there is anything you are uncomfortable with, anything that you would like me to include or take out, or anything, which on reflection, misrepresents your views.

You will notice that you and your school have been represented by a letter. Please be reassured that information about you and your school will be presented throughout the dissertation in a general manner to reduce the likelihood that you can be identified. This is standard practice in research of this kind.

I would be grateful if you could call or email me before _____ to let me know if you have any concerns. If I do not hear from you by that date, I will call you to seek your confirmation of approval. You may call me on _____ (Office) or _____ (Mobile).

If you would like a copy of the whole dissertation when it is completed, please let me know during our telephone conversation on or before _____.

Thank you very much for your kind support and cooperation.

Best wishes,
Yuk-king

Appendix E1: Summary of Findings of Principal A

Beliefs and Understandings of Principal A

Principal A displayed a thorough understanding of the curriculum initiatives. She appreciated restructuring existing subjects into Key Learning Areas (KLAs) at the basic education level (Primary 1 to Secondary 3). She also supported formal inclusion of essential elements, like moral and civic education, in the new curriculum framework. In principle, she agreed with the curriculum reform but stressed the importance of support provision, teacher development and readiness, as well as timing. She said she did not find many problems in its first phase. She believed that teacher grievances were mainly due to the pressure and workload relating to the holistic education reform and many reform measures implemented in the same period since 2000, like quality assurance, school self-evaluation, and external school review. Many teachers had developed a habitual resistance to any new initiatives without trying to understand them.

However, regarding the second phase of the reform, she found it rather superficial, lacking concrete details, such as teaching contents, strategies and skills, as well as teaching materials. It was unrealistic to expect teachers without adequate training and professional knowledge to design teaching materials, such as in the case of the subject 'Liberal Studies'. She doubted if all her teachers had fully understood the rationale, mastered the required knowledge and skills, and were ready or committed to implement curriculum changes in the classroom. Further, under the New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum reform, deletion or merging of existing subjects and creation of new subjects would affect teachers' teaching load, promotion prospects and even job security. Principal A stressed the need to plan ahead carefully so as not to create anxieties in teachers. She found it difficult to comment on the effectiveness of the curriculum reform at this stage.

Principal A said herself, two vice principals and KLA subject heads were curriculum leaders of the school, who had an important role in the reform. Principal A saw no significant change in her role as a principal under the curriculum reform, nor any constraints or conflict of roles. She was committed to leading the reform, naturally treating it as one of her usual responsibilities. She opined that curriculum leaders should understand the rationale and requirements of the new curriculum. They should possess qualities such as vision, energy, professional knowledge, credibility, good interpersonal skills, and abilities to persuade and influence others. Believing that principals needed training to enrich their knowledge and broaden their perspectives, she

was active in attending and organising professional development programmes for principals.

Recognising the key role of teachers in the curriculum reform, she treated teacher professional development as her top priority.   She found young teachers more courageous and willing to meet the challenges and requirements under the reform. Retiring teachers were reluctant to pursue professional development or change to teach another subject.   She understood that teachers needed space and administrative support provided by the school.   She also valued teacher leadership and hoped to establish a school culture to facilitate collaboration among the staff.   Empowering middle managers was one of the major elements of the school year plan.

She was happy to see positive developments in both her school and teachers.   She observed that her teachers had better understanding of teaching strategies and skills, student learning and how to enhance learning and teaching.   She thought she had some influence on the school but considered it hard to measure the impact and whether it was solely from her.   Government directives requiring schools and teachers to follow, and a prevalent 'atmosphere for change' built up in the wide environment in recent years were influential too.   On the other hand, if an initiative was proposed by Principal A herself, she would expect more queries from the staff.

Principal A appreciated the current funding and resources from the government and other organisations, but hoped to have more resources to support students' other learning experiences.   She found her staff on the whole supportive but some were not active, depending on the character of the department heads.   Principal A also maintained close communication with parents and alumni through formal and informal meetings and activities.   The main objective was to help them understand the school policy and development.   As the school had a short history of about 20 years, she found it unrealistic to expect much support from the alumni who were establishing their careers, and from parents who mostly belonged to the working class.

Her major difficulty in the NSS reform was human resources planning because teacher deployment in government schools was centrally conducted by the government.   She worried that there might be mismatch between the NSS subjects and teachers' expertise. She had experienced difficulties in directly recruiting teachers with qualifications meeting the new requirements under the reform, e.g. English Language teachers and native English-speaking teachers.   Sometimes even recruiting supply teachers was not easy.

Leadership Behaviours of Principal A

The four major reform initiatives (Project Learning, Reading for Learning, Information Technology, and Moral and Civic Education) were implemented within and, where appropriate, across subjects in the school. Development of students' thinking skills, language skills and civic sense through social services were also emphasised and put in the school plan. Principal A hoped to help students improve their speaking skills and gain wider exposure through participating in a wide range of learning activities, and made use of the funding and resources to support them. She also encouraged organising students' study tours to various places, such as different parts of China, Singapore, Australia and England.

In facing new policies or initiatives, the first thing Principal A did was to understand them and consider whether they were applicable and how they could be implemented in the school. Principal A said she had very good working relationship with her two vice principals and they had lunch together nearly every day. She often shared her own views and plans with them on formal and informal occasions. They usually worked out a framework of strategies and steps, and briefed the staff to solicit their views and get their consensus before implementation. To focus teachers' attention and efforts, important issues were put down as major concerns in the school plan. Planning and implementation of curriculum changes of individual subjects in line with school development were mainly led by the respective department heads. Principal A often met with department heads, in groups or individually, to discuss curriculum matters.

In preparing for the second phase of the curriculum reform, i.e. the NSS curriculum, she stressed the need for early and comprehensive planning, in respect of staff development and deployment, and subjects or electives to be offered. Views of students, parents and teachers were collected through surveys and made known to all school stakeholders for making corresponding preparations. Putting teacher development on her priority list, Principal A encouraged teachers to enroll in various programmes to help them enrich professional knowledge, keep up with educational trends, change their mindset, and even learn to teach another subject if required. She also spent time explaining to teachers what and why they should do for their professional and career development. She maintained good communication with her staff through formal and informal meetings, weekly tea gatherings and other various occasions, as well as the school intranet.

When implementing new initiatives, such as peer lesson observation and collaborative

lesson planning, she usually invited a critical mass to start first and adopted a gradual approach allowing more time for other teachers to get ready and join in. The school provided all the possible administrative support and resources to facilitate the implementation. There were times when Principal A wished to implement initiatives not required by the reform, such as exercise books inspection and micro-teaching for teacher development. She observed teacher resistance and knew that they were not ready. Understanding teachers' views and worries, she flexibly made appropriate adjustments, such as by modifying the implementation requirements, procedures or pace. She allowed more time for the staff to experience the initiatives and observe the positive impacts on learning and teaching. The initiatives were gradually accepted by the teachers and further enhanced to achieve better results.

Principal A attached importance to teacher leadership, and cross-curricular collaboration and sharing. However, she remarked that it was necessary to see if the teachers assigned could fit the tasks and could achieve the expected functions. She quoted examples of two teacher leaders who were found incompetent in leading the Academic Team and KLA coordination. She restructured the school administration teams so that the teachers could gracefully step down and their duties were taken up by other staff. She also learned from this experience that it did not work in this school to have a coordinator to lead other KLA heads who were of the same rank.

Regarding her leadership style, she said the former principals she worked with might have some influence on her. She drew reference to their experiences and ways of handling matters in her learning process. However, she was aware that what worked with them might not be applicable in her school due to differences in school context, culture and staff. She even realised that teachers of her current and former schools responded differently to the similar initiatives and her leadership approach, such as in the case of exercise books inspection. Therefore, she said she had to wisely change her leadership style and approach to suit the situation.

Structured principal training was not provided at the time when Principal A took her post. She affirmed the value of principals' continuing professional development and had attended various programmes to know more about the rationale of the curriculum reform, contents and requirements of new subjects to be offered. She found the professional exchanges with other principals very useful as well. She also participated in duty visits or study tours organised by the government and principals associations to various places, like the US, Singapore and various parts of mainland China. She found the experiences and sharing with peer principals very useful in broadening her

perspectives. Her voluntary service as a Needs Analysis assessor in the Aspiring Principals Programme also benefited her professional development.

Appendix E2: Summary of Findings of Principal B

Beliefs and Understandings of Principal B

Principal B agreed with the rationale of the curriculum reform and understood the initiatives well. However, she had reservations about its practicality and implementation, in particular regarding the New Senior Secondary (NSS) Curriculum. She found the intention of school-based assessment (SBA) good, but she saw her students' difficulties due to their weak listening and speaking skills and lack of exposure. She appreciated her teachers' efforts in enhancing students' language proficiency, and sympathised with their increasing workload and pressure. She remarked that student learning relied on the teachers, especially when current textbooks were mostly full of graphics with much reduced content. She observed that some teachers were able to teach in more lively and inspiring ways, which could enhance learning and teaching.

The school having mostly Band 3 students, Principal B was worried about the gaps between student abilities and requirements of public examinations. No matter how hard teachers motivated students to learn, in reality, they faced frustrations in examinations. There were many factors, like intelligence, lack of self-confidence, weak language skills, low socio-economic status and lack of parental support. A greater emphasis on problem-solving skills in the reform made it even more difficult for them. She anticipated that some students could not cope with the NSS curriculum, and this would bring problems to the schools and families. She hoped to see some exit points for these students in the NSS education.

Principal B believed that curriculum leaders should be committed and posses good professional knowledge, interpersonal skills, persuasion skills, and emotional intelligence. She had attended relevant professional development activities and read some literature about curriculum development and reforms, but still she found her professional knowledge limited. Under the curriculum reform, she mainly played the role of a facilitator, like 'a merchandiser browsing in the supermarket' to bring back inspirations and ideas of initiatives that aligned with the school's major concerns. All the subject department heads and the middle managers had an important role in leading the reform. Besides providing necessary resources and support, Principal B strove to build the team spirits and establish a culture of learning and collaboration among the staff, exploring with them together in the reform process.

Principal B found teachers' support and collaboration essential. She observed that

some prestigious schools with Band 1 students faced difficulties due to teachers' resistance, while some newly established schools had no problem because the new initiatives were accepted as their normal practices. She found her staff cooperative and supportive. The middle managers were capable. Being a Caput school, its turnovers were high in the past years for various reasons. She observed that the new teachers employed were more receptive and willing to try new initiatives. Also, some senior posts became vacant providing promotion incentives for experienced teachers. The atmosphere for change built up in the wide environment also had positive influence on their staff and the school.

Heads of some subject departments, like Chinese and Integrated Humanities, could keep pace with the reform and were more proactive in implementing the initiatives. Principal B considered these factors when she planned priorities and strategies for promoting reform initiatives. However, she remarked that some teachers had become 'breathless' due to increasing demands and workload. They spent much time and energy in pursuing continuous professional development to keep up with the reform.

Principal B appreciated the increased funding and resources from the government. However, the recent integration education policy had made the situation more difficult. The school had admitted more 'bottom-ten' students, and some had special educational needs, like hyperactive, autistic and dyslexic students. The teacher–student ratio remained unchanged, while additional financial and professional support provided were considered inadequate to cater for these students' needs. Also, the training needed to equip all teachers teaching these students posed problems to school administration. She wished to have an educational psychologist to help their students but could not afford it. She wished to have more financial and professional support in this respect.

The school stakeholders, including the school sponsoring body, staff, parents, and alumni were supportive. She had established good partnerships with them and kept them informed of the school development through various means. Regarding her impact, she had done much on pastoral care and pioneering new initiatives, such as project learning, collaborative lesson planning and peer lesson observation. Adopting a consultative and facilitative approach, she had established partnerships with the staff and a collaborative culture in the school. Together, they created a loving and caring culture and a harmonious campus. She was happy to see some problem students making positive changes and achieving much better academic results.

Leadership Behaviours of Principal B

Principal B felt extra pressure and workload in the past two years as the school had only one vice-principal due to internal staff deployment under the same sponsoring body. She re-allocated the administrative work among a few senior teachers. She requested a teacher to assist her in finance management, which she found difficult. Regarding curriculum issues, she worked closely with the vice-principal, the Academic Team, and subject department heads. She was courageous in trying new initiatives. She first shared with the Academics Team her inspirations from the outside and her ideas. Then she discussed these with the teachers concerned before discussions at staff meetings. If she met resistance, she would listen to teachers' views and reasons before deciding whether to postpone or shelf the proposals.

Principal B attached importance to team building and fully supported the staff in implementing the reform initiatives. She flexibly allocated resources to create space for teachers and support learning activities. She carefully considered various factors like their personality and expertise in allocating teaching load and duties, as well as forming partners and teams, so as to maximise cooperation and collaboration among the staff. She monitored the implementation, observed the impacts on learning and teaching, and made adjustments for improvement. She also facilitated interaction and communication among the staff to help achieve effective learning and teaching.

Principal B put emphasis on teacher development and leadership. She recommended teachers in turn to attend professional development activities despite possible interferences with daily teaching. She encouraged teachers to broaden their knowledge and perspectives. She often led them to visit other schools to observe how they implemented the initiatives she wished to try. She also promoted professional sharing among the staff and with other schools or professionals at their in-house staff development activities.

With students at the centre of concerns, her priority was to motivate them and help them gain confidence in learning. Split-class teaching and co-teaching were implemented to address the students' problems of short attention spans and special learning needs. She met teachers' resistance at the beginning. Strategically, she piloted the initiative in English lessons with the support of the subject department head. Taking the opportunity of teacher turnover, she assigned newly appointed English teachers and the Native English-Speaking English Teacher to take the lead. She used the impressive results, such as better class interactions and academic performances, to convince other

teachers to join in. She celebrated the success with the staff and encouraged teachers to keep up their effort.

To give students an additional choice, she decided to offer an Applied Learning curriculum – 'Tourism and Hotel Management' in Secondary 4. She was careful in announcing this curriculum so as not to create a labeling effect on the school and the students, hinting that they were of lower standard. Because the school lacked relevant facilities, resources and expertise, this curriculum was commissioned to the Institute of Vocational Education. Though it caused extra expenditure, she considered it worthwhile and practical to share it with the government and the parents.

Her major constraints included time and conflicting roles. Apart from school matters, she had outside commitments, like meetings with district boards, principal societies and school supervisors, sometimes during lunch and even in the evenings. She found it hard to keep a balance between the benefits of the teachers and the students. While urging teachers to work hard, she tried not to make them feel too stressful. The school was open till 7 p.m. so that students lacking parental care could stay longer and use the facilities of the school. Though this caused additional work and expenses, she had adopted this practice for years.

Principal B kept all the school stakeholders informed of school developments through various means, like formal and informal meetings, assemblies, school activities, newsletters, and the school Intranet. She sometimes felt lonely in her post. She took every opportunity to communicate with her staff and students through informal channels, like talking in the corridor or during Sports Day, having lunch together, and leading students' activities, like the bible studies group.

Principal B anticipated more problems when the school joined the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) in the following year. Student enrollment would affect the amount of government funding, and indirectly teachers' job security, benefits and morale. Though the sponsoring body had been generous in giving donations to the school, she would need to do fund raising activities and invite parents and alumni to take part. She was prepared to attend more meetings with various parties and to handle more administrative work. She hoped to have more time to do better planning and preparations for the NSS. The priority was to do more on students' life education, career planning, self-confidence, and other learning experiences.

She adopted a democratic, facilitative and collaborative approach. Some teachers considered her 'soft-hearted'. She thought that her style was related to her personality. No structured principal training was provided to prepare Principal B for the post. At the beginning stage, she performed her role by 'trial and error' and applied what she learnt from experienced principals, including those she had worked with. She had met some 'role models' in her church and activities organised by the government, principal associations, and other educational bodies. She also selectively attended professional development activities to cater for her needs. She found their quality varied, and some programmes, like counseling and therapy courses, inspiring. She also participated in study tours for other principals to mainland China. They had broadened her perspectives and facilitated professional sharing, collaboration and mutual support among the participants. She found sharing of practices most useful and practical. She believed that principals and teachers needed to sustain their passion and commitment in education and the school.

She had keen interests in conducting action research and undergoing leadership courses but could not afford the time. She always made her work her priority. Still, she tried to go on a trip with her family during the summer vacation, which had actually become shorter due to increased administrative work, like employing new staff. She sympathised with younger principals struggling to find time for their family, children and the school.

Appendix E3: Summary of Findings of Principal C

Beliefs and Understandings of Principal C

Principal C completely agreed with the direction of education reform and the framework of curriculum reform in Hong Kong. She showed a comprehensive understanding of the reforms. She found the ten-year curriculum reform schedule reasonable and could keep the momentum of change. Yet, she was disappointed with the government's preparations, consultation stages and implementation strategies, such as in the case of implementing school-based assessment under the New Senior Secondary (NSS) reform. She felt that the government had presented a negative image of lacking thorough planning and under-estimating the complexity of the reform process and the difficulties stakeholders were facing during the reform. As different schools had their different problems, she opined that more time should be allowed for schools to implement the numerous changes introduced one after another within the few years.

She believed that principals and teachers who did not fully understand the curriculum reform, and did not have a firm foundation or a clear focus, would be swept away by the 'waves' of reform. They would not get benefits from the reform. She stressed that principals should 'do the right things', not just 'do things right.' She remarked that principals were like CEOs shouldering multiple roles, increasing responsibilities and expectations on them. All these added together had exceeded principals' capacity. She pointed out her conflicting roles in ensuring accountability, promoting creativity and continuing professional development, and at the same time evaluating and assessing the staff. Much time was spent on pastoral care and explaining the reform initiatives to teachers, students and parents. Paper work had to be done during weekends and holidays. She remarked that many principals were on the verge of burnout.

She observed that most teachers accepted the curriculum reform and were striving to implement changes for the sake of students, despite increasing workload and requirements for professional development brought by the reforms. She believed that it was difficult for teachers to survive in schools if they did not want to change. She encouraged teachers to pursue professional development. Teacher leadership and collaboration were also given due emphasis.

Principal C put students at the centre of consideration. She believed it was necessary to provide opportunities to widen students' perspectives and learning experiences, and initiated relevant activities such as study tours and a "Toastmaster Programme".

She found it more difficult to cope with parents' resistance to the reform than teachers'. Many parents did not understand the rationale and details of reform initiatives. Not having had these learning experiences, many parents did not know how to help their children learn. Treating stakeholders of the school as partners, she found it important to communicate with them through various means to get their understanding and support. She also stressed the need to strategically solicit adequate and appropriate resources to support the school development, as well as to ensure that they were appropriately used.

Principal C thought that curriculum leaders should thoroughly understand the framework and details of curriculum reform, identify the focus, select and prioritise changes aligning with school development, and have 'the guts' to cut redundant work to make way for new initiatives. They should be professional, visionary, decisive, focused, calm and sharp. Good interpersonal skills and communication skills were also considered important.

Principal C commented that the staff were collaborative with a good culture of having trust and respect among them. However, she found some of them rather traditional, lacking the courage to take risks and make changes. She believed that teachers needed theoretical knowledge to back up the reform and hoped to see more professional support, apart from financial support, from the government and other educational organisations.

Leadership Behaviours of Principal C

When Principal C took up principalship in the current school, major reform plans had already been made, which she found were on the right track. Respecting the work done and the school culture of stressing trust and autonomy among staff, she focused on fine tuning the reform initiatives and supporting the implementation. She found the vice principals very capable with a good understanding of the curriculum reform, and so she did not adopt strong leadership approach as in her previous school. Instead, she worked closely with the vice principal, sharing their vision, information and ideas relating to curriculum reform. Principal C provided major directions and guidance, communicated with the school's stakeholders, and allocated resources to support the implementation of curriculum changes.

Under the curriculum reform, she firstly identified a clear focus and wisely selected initiatives that aligned with school development. Believing that good language skills are essential to students' future learning and career, she initiated a single school priority in the 5-year school development plan, focusing on 'Reading'. The school

development plan was formulated through thorough discussion in Staff Consultative Committee meetings and full staff meetings. Building on their previous work on students' self and collaborative learning, project-based learning and information technology infrastructure, a whole-school approach was adopted to promote reading and integrate elements of the four key tasks into its school-based curriculum. She collaborated with the senior management team and middle managers to draw up coherent implementation plans to promote reading step by step. The focus gradually progressed from quantity of reading to quality of reading, thinking and creative writing. She was firm in explaining her beliefs and successfully convinced the government's External School Review Team about her school development plans.

Principal C stressed the importance of early and careful planning, especially in preparing for the New Senior Secondary curriculum reform, to avoid causing worry and frustrations among the teachers. Staff employment and professional development were well planned in advance taking into consideration of views from teachers, students and parents, as well as the school goal and development. Principal C had weekly meetings with her two vice principals and several committed teachers, to look into the school's curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Principal C gave major directions and delegated responsibilities of implementation to the vice principal and middle managers concerned. While many schools created a new curriculum of Integrated Humanities (merging History, Geography and Social Studies into one subject) at junior secondary levels to prepare students for studying Liberal Studies to be launched in 2009, Principal C did not do the same. As the proposed Liberal Studies curriculum was yet to be finalised, she did not want to risk making drastic changes that might be found unnecessary or inappropriate in the future. She decided to encourage teachers to apply in all subjects the learning and teaching strategies for Liberal Studies to prepare both students and teachers for the new subject.

Recognising the importance of assessment, Principal C led a special team to study how to use existing tools and data to analyse student performance and learning, and to review their assessments. Improvement measures were implemented, such as the introduction of informal assessments to pave the way for implementing the school-based assessment initiative of the New Senior Secondary curriculum, and changes made to the school's grading system and students' report to better inform students' performance.

Regarding leadership style, Principal C considered herself liberal, which she attributed to her upbringing. She did not adopt a stereotype approach but would deal with teachers and matters differently, depending on teachers' personalities and abilities, as

well as the situations. She emphasised consultation and collaborative decision-making, and encouraged a 'bottom-up' and gradual approach. She wished to sustain the harmonious and collaborative school culture established. Before launching new initiatives, Principal C, and sometimes the vice principal, shared their visions and ideas with a small group of identified teachers and lobbied them to form a critical mass to pioneer the initiatives. Principal C was patient and spent much time in coordinating and negotiating with the staff, trying to steer teachers' thinking to the same direction as hers. She believed that this would enhance teacher commitment and ownership, and in turn achieve better results. She often raised ideas for discussion with staff, encouraged teachers to 'make dreams', and provided resources and support to turn their ideas into reality. If teacher resistance was strong, she would postpone the initiative and put it up again at another right time, such as in the cases of organising a Chinese creative writing project and a 'Toastmaster' training programme for students, and lesson observation for staff development.

Principal C played a key role in building a strong link and partnership between the parents and alumni through well-established the Parent-Teacher Association and the Alumni Association. Information about school development and reform initiatives were disseminated through formal and informal meetings, school activities, newsletters, the school website and intranet. She gave talks to parents at seminars and workshops, and met with individual parents to address their concerns regarding the curriculum, school development, their children's learning, and even family problems. She solicited resources and support from school's stakeholders and various external resources, such as Quality Education Funds, tertiary institutions, and social service agencies to support activities for students' all-round development.

No structured principalship training programmes were provided before she took up the post. She attended various in-service professional development programmes organised by the government and various educational bodies, like tertiary institutions and principals' associations. Due to time and workload constraints, she selected the programmes carefully to suit her needs. She found the programmes on the whole useful but the quality and effectiveness varied. The programmes being mostly on reform initiatives and administrative issues, she hoped to see inspiring programmes pertaining to principals' spiritual development and mental health, such as how to sustain passion and commitment, and how to cope with pressure.

She volunteered to provide assistance in principals' training programmes as assessors in needs analysis workshops, assessors of principals' portfolios (a certificate requirement),

and mentor of beginning principals.   She also served on principals' associations as an office bearer and participated in activities organised by principals' networks.   Through the above activities, she kept up with the educational trends and gained inspirations, as well as mutual support from peer principals.   Though she wished to pursue an MEd degree, she could not afford the time as she made her work her top priority.

Appendix E4: Summary of Findings of Principal D

Beliefs and Understandings of Principal D

Principal D had a thorough understanding of the education and curriculum reforms in Hong Kong. She agreed with the rationale for the curriculum reform in meeting the changing needs of the society, and considered it a mile-stone in the history of Hong Kong's education. She welcomed the new curriculum structure and its emphasis on developing students' attitudes and values besides knowledge and skills. Though believing that reforms took time, she found it necessary to maintain the momentum of change. Otherwise, the immediate needs could not be met and the required time-line could not be achieved. No matter how much time was allowed for the reforms, she thought some teachers still had difficulties in facing change while some were more proactive and ready to meet the challenges.

However, Principal D found the government policies disappointing and the pace of the reform worrying. She observed a negative atmosphere developed in the education sector due to various factors, like distrust between schools and the government, closure of schools because of decreasing birth rates, and teacher complaints on increasing workload and additional requirements for teacher qualifications. Principal D was worried that the education sector had presented to the society a negative image. She observed a growing trend of local students going to international schools or studying abroad, which was a great loss to the local schools.

Principal D recognised her important role as a curriculum leader among her other responsibilities. She believed that curriculum leaders should possess vision, mission, commitment, courage, and calibre. They should understand the changing needs of the world and their students, and strive to cater for their needs. They should show their commitment and 'walking through' the reform process with the teachers through participation, not just giving instructions. They also needed to continuously equip themselves through life-long learning.

Principal D had her reform plans in mind to address the needs of her students and teachers, not simply for the sake of having reforms. She hoped the school could help students broaden their perspectives and prepare for the challenges of the 21st century. She had a strong sense of mission and commitment, believing that what she was currently doing would affect the future of the school and the students. She thought that the school had the responsibility to create opportunities for students to enrich their

learning experiences and broaden their perspectives. They could not rely on the parents, who mostly belonged to the working class and lacked the learning experiences themselves. She promoted invitational education and self-access learning, and encouraged students to participate in various extra-curricular activities both within and outside the school and Hong Kong.

Principal D was confident of her positive impacts on the school, as evidenced in the value added in the past ten years, like recruiting all Band 1 students and achieving excellent public examination results, as well as affirmations from the government's External School Review.

She thanked the strong support from the school's sponsoring body, staff, parents and alumni. The increasing government funding and support services as well as school autonomy in using them enabled her to create space for teachers and support student learning activities. Having due emphasis on broadening teacher perspectives and building their capacity, she was pleased with the great variety of training opportunities and professional support provided by the government, tertiary institutions and other educational organisations.

Yet she had difficulties finding qualified teachers and retaining additional staff employed on a temporary basis. These problems affected the stability of her staff force, teacher deployment and professional development plans, and ultimately the quality of learning and teaching. Other constraints included space for implementing split-class and small-class teaching time, and time. She believed that different schools had difficulties and constraints specific to their school context.

She showed great concern for teachers' health and emotional well-being. She pointed out an irony that, while the Hong Kong education reforms aimed at providing qualify education for students, the quality of life of teachers and principals was being exploited. She had been reflecting on how to maintain a balance between the well-being of herself and her staff, and school improvement.

She considered herself lucky as she enjoyed what she had been doing, and her family had given her the space. Most importantly, she said her passion and commitment originated from her religion, i.e. Christianity. She was thankful for the abilities, mission, opportunities and assurances she possessed, which supported her to whole-heartedly serve the school and students.

Leadership Behaviours of Principal D

Principal D displayed strong leadership adopting an open approach in school administration and curriculum development. Important data-driven policies and curriculum plans were drawn up from the SWOT analysis through an open discussion and consultation processes. The staff had developed a consensus of adopting a student-centred and total approach in educating their students, and designed a slogan for the current year, i.e. "Let Our Students Shine'. The major concerns were relating to the preparations for New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum, further enhancement of students' abilities, in-depth civic and moral education, and students' international outlooks.

Principal D worked closely with the Academic Team and the Administrative Advisory Committee, including the two vice-principals and middle leaders, to discuss and plan curriculum initiatives. She adopted different compositions of team members depending on teachers' talents and expertise. They did not always have the same views as the principal. Principal D appreciated having different views from various perspectives for consideration. Having got the consensus, they helped the principal explain the initiatives and frameworks to the staff.

Principal D was keen in initiating and promoting curriculum initiatives, such as collaborative lesson planning, peer lesson observation, and small-class teaching. She encouraged collaboration within and across subjects. Apart from the four key tasks (i.e. Project Learning, Reading to Learn, Information Technology, and Moral and Civic Education), various school-based integrated curriculums were developed, like Living with Innovations, Information Technology, Humanities, and Drama Education. Not all of the reforms were initiated by Principal D. She believed that by adopting a bottom-up approach the initiatives would be more readily accepted and successfully implemented. She encouraged initiations from teachers and sought the right time for implementation, as in the case of musical productions. The idea came from a past student. As it was in line with the school statement of nurturing students' moral, intellectual, physical, social, aesthetic and spiritual skills, Principal D put it up for discussion. It then developed into an integrated curriculum since 2001, through which students learnt and applied various skills, such as creating scripts, lyrics and music, as well as acting and singing. It also helped them cultivate positive values and attitudes.

As Principal D had not majored in curriculum development, she adopted an explorative approach for reform initiatives. She firstly discussed the initiatives with the staff to

seek their views, provided the resources, and sought professional advice and support when needed. She allowed time for new initiatives to evolve gradually by varying their mode and scale, adjusting the involvement and duties of students and teachers according to their readiness and expertise, and making improvements in the developmental process. This could be exemplified by Project Learning, in that basic project skills were developed in Secondary 1, generic skills and creativity in Secondary 2, and consolidation with a cross-curricular approach in Secondary 3. Drama Education had also matured in a few years' time. Musicals were produced in a whole-school approach in alternate years, involving a large number of students from various levels, teaching and non-teaching staff, and even parents. The process and success of the productions had brought much benefits and pride to the whole school.

To prepare for the NSS curriculum in advance, she set up a special team to plan appropriate and timely measures, such as early staff employment and deployment plans, and offering Humanities in the junior levels to prepare students and teachers for the new subject of Liberal Studies in 2009.

In facing teacher resistance, for example, when project learning was first implemented, she discussed with the leaders and teachers concerned to find out the root of problems, and work out the solutions, e.g. adjusting the requirements or expectations, and rotating teachers' duties to reduce workload. Sometimes, the vice-principals or other teachers were assigned to do this for her. Principal D then gradually stepped back and let the respective teams carry out implementation. She managed the whole-school development from a macro perspective, provided the human and financial resources, monitored the implementation processes, solved problems and settled staff conflicts when needed.

She continuously informed teachers of the educational trends through staff meetings and staff development activities. She introduced peer lesson observation for teacher development adopting a 'soft-landing' and gradual approach, and provided administrative support like timetabling to facilitate its implementation. She publicly showed appreciation of teachers' good practices and efforts, and encouraged teachers to learn with and from each other. Emphasising teachers' continuous development, she nominated them to undergo relevant training, including long courses taking a few months or no-paid study leave for a year. Teacher deployment and professional development plans aligning with school development were made. To help broaden teachers' perspectives, she organised visits to and by local and overseas schools, and encouraged frequent professional sharing within and outside the school.

Principal D maintained close communication with stakeholders of the school through formal and informal meetings, Newsletters, 'Letter from the House', handbooks for students and parents, and the school homepage. A Parent Resource Centre was established for hosting gatherings and courses on parent education. She also solicited their financial, professional expertise, as well as physical involvement in organising student learning activities, such as study tours to overseas. Her strong linkage with outside bodies enabled her to tap resources and professional support to enhance learning and teaching.

Though adopting an open and democratic style, she realised her role as the leader and the 'gate-keeper' of the school. She would decide when to hold on to her views and when to make concessions. In some cases, Principal D agreed to halt some schemes after considering teachers' views and balancing the pros and cons of various aspects. She thought her leadership style was more related to her upbringing and present family backgrounds than the influence of former principals she had worked with.

No structured principal training programme was provided to prepare Principal D for the post. She participated in various in-service professional programmes organised by the government, tertiary institutions and principal associations, which she found very useful. Being a member of various principal associations, she actively attended and organised activities for professional development and on various educational issues. She voluntarily served as needs analysis assessor and mentor in training programmes for aspiring and new principals. She valued the experience though it was not as important and useful as the informal sharing and mutual support among the peers in her personal network.

Appendix E5: Summary of Findings of Principal E

Beliefs and Understandings of Principal E

Having extensive experience in serving on the government's educational committees and developing an Integrated Science curriculum since the 1980's, Principal E fully understood the rationale and details of education reform and curriculum reform in Hong Kong. He agreed that Hong Kong should follow the global trends of educational changes but would like to see more emphasis on human elements in the aims of education and the government's concern, love and care for its people. He believed that education should not be entirely instrumental just to help the society in meeting the challenges of the 21st century.

He pointed out that the educational policy making process in Hong Kong very often lacked the policy formulation stage and careful planning, which created problems and complaints from teachers when implemented, such as the policy of Language Proficiency Requirements on English and Putonghua language teachers. He pointed out that the current curriculum reform was started with some created slogans without sufficient research-based evidence or careful planning. Examples of successful implementation of new curriculum initiatives in some schools were used by the government to persuade other schools to follow suit without realising the difficulties and problems of teachers and schools territory-wide. More thorough considerations should be made in the planning stage, for example, the extent of changes, how to help able students to excel, and how to enable weak students to continue their study in the new curriculum. Seeing that the new curriculum placed higher demand on students' language skills, he worried that many students would have difficulties completing senior secondary education. Provision of alternative curriculums should have been more thoroughly planned.

He had followed the education reforms instituted in China, Taiwan, and Singapore with reference to Hong Kong. In contrast with Hong Kong, he found that Singapore's educational policies and reforms were well planned to align with its national goals, led by professionals with internationally recognised professional knowledge, and supported by the teachers' union. The reforms in Taiwan and mainland China were less successful for different reasons. He remarked that curriculum reform was a continuous and slow process and could not be hastened. Western education principles that seemed good might not necessarily be applicable in Eastern countries and cultures.

Principal E said himself and department heads had to be curriculum leaders at the school level because he did not have the expertise to manage all the reform initiatives alone.   Two senior teachers were appointed to lead curriculum development and a vice principal to promote teachers' professional development.   He believed that curriculum leaders should have global perspectives of education, not merely adopting a micro view of details or confined to subject areas.   It was necessary to achieve a focused and balanced curriculum.   Leaders should be able to conduct data analysis to understand student and school development.   Other qualities included being observant and alert to problems, able to persuade and coordinate colleagues to work as a team, handle human conflicts and relationships, work under pressure and meet deadlines.   Curriculum leaders should possess expertise and competence to take the lead to carry out the plans. They should make decisions and set clear directions for the staff to move forward, such as deciding the role of the Native-speaking English Teacher (NET) in the school, whether to perform as an expert helping with curriculum development or one of the English teachers.

Principal E had a focus on students and saw the important role of teachers in promoting student-centred learning and school-based curriculum under the curriculum reform. Without teachers' understanding, commitment and collaboration, curriculum reform would not succeed.   He opined that teachers should pursue professional development, not just to enrich their subject knowledge, but also to gain a wider, national and international perspectives of education, curriculum and their relationship with societal and global development.   To achieve quality education, he also suggested the government provide incentives for teachers, such as promotion opportunities and formal recognition, and review the career ladder of graduate teachers.

Regarding the curriculum reform schedule laid down seven years ago, he believed it needed adjustments and fine-tuning to suit the current situations.   From his experience in developing the Integrated Science curriculum, he thought that ample time should be given to school to carry out the massive changes.

Principal E met great resistance from some teachers at the early stage of curriculum reforms against new concepts, such as the focus on student learning rather than teaching, and planning for Key Learning Areas rather than individual subjects.   He stressed the need to assign duties to the right staff because some teachers were not willing or capable of performing certain tasks for various reasons.   He had expanded teacher development and leadership training in recent years.   Also, as teachers gradually got adapted to change and with new teachers joining in, the staff had gradually turned more

positive towards the reform and become more supportive. Less teacher opposition was observed.

He appreciated the full support from the school's supervisor. Support from parents was limited by their low socio-economic backgrounds while support from the alumni was still at an initial stage. As for support from teachers, he remarked that it was usually the principal who supported the juniors, but it was important to build up a team of middle management committed to school development. He found the financial support from the government adequate and could help solve many problems. It was important to ensure proper and effective use of the resources. Still, he opined that committed and competent teachers were most needed to implement the reform for school development. Some teachers were still confined to their subject area. Some loopholes in legal aspects posed difficulties for school administration. He remarked that principals in Hong Kong faced many constraints, like their time and health. The problem of principal burnout was a issue that should be better attended to.

Leadership Behaviours of Principal E

To share school work covering academic, students and general affairs, Principal E appointed an assistant principal, in addition to the two vice principals in other secondary schools. He delegated responsibilities to a vice principal and two senior teachers to look after the school curriculum. He entrusted the vice principal with curriculum-related decisions. A senior teacher was appointed to coordinate the overall preparatory work for the implementation of the New Senior Secondary reform.

Being the school principal, he felt he should have his own visions and initial plans for the curriculum reform. In designing the school curriculum plans, Principal E adopted a three-stage procedure: positioning, planning and implementation. Firstly, he carefully analysed the school's current position, including students' abilities and needs, teachers' capacity, as well as parental support. Having students mostly of average ability territory-wide, Principal E decided to focus on how to help students gain confidence and strive for higher passing percentages in public examinations whereas prestigious schools aimed at scoring more distinctions or credits. Then he drew up evidence-based school policies and concrete plans for discussion among staff. He decided to continue adopting Chinese as the teaching medium in senior levels, though the policy allowed schools to switch to English. He believed it would help the students develop high-order skills so that they could achieve better public examination results. He also allowed Secondary 5 students to sit the minimum number of subjects

in the school certification examination to focus their energy.   In line with curriculum reform, measures for the four key learning tasks concerning reading, project learning, information technology, and moral and civic education should be implemented. Principal E also decided to place more emphasis on developing students' nationality awareness and helping them gain wider exposure.

He discussed with the middle management and informed teachers of the school goals, the evidence-based decisions and expectations and encouraged them to work out their teaching plans and strategies accordingly.   Individual subject departments and committees discussed the details before making final decisions and adjustments.   Their plans were considered by the School Development Committee chaired by the Principal. Having a macro view of the school curriculum, Principal E provided support and resources, monitored the implementation and reviewed the initiatives.   He was pleased that their students gained value added results in public examinations and became more interested in their studies.

Principal E stressed the importance of communication with middle managers.   He was alert to spot problems throughout the implementation and tried to be quick to clarify misunderstandings, solve problems, and handle disputes among teachers.   He found this process very important and effective though time-consuming.

Principal E encouraged and supported teachers' initiations, such as participating in choral speaking competitions, and cross-curriculum project learning in junior forms. He promoted a cross-curricular English learning programme inviting all subject teachers to collaborate to enhance the learning and teaching of English.   He advocated building on success, and allowed time for new initiatives to develop into systematic practices and created a culture to aid the implementation of the reforms.

Communication with and support from school stakeholders was considered important. The principal and staff representatives met with the School Management Committee to provide channels for communication regarding work-related matters.   Formal and informal meetings between teachers and parents were held to help parents understand school development and student attainment.

Principal E considered himself rational and analytical, emphasising evidence.   He believed female leaders would be more humanistic and attending to emotions.   He was happy to work with a female vice-principal in that they complemented each other in arriving at balanced decisions.

Structured principalship training was not available before he became a principal. He had studied a higher diploma in school administration and attended relevant professional development programmes relating to leadership and curriculum reform. He said that he had learnt leadership skills by observing the principals he had worked with, which were useful. He voluntarily assisted in training programmes for principals and teachers by sharing his views and experiences relating to school management and the teaching of science subjects. He also participated in principals' associations and gained mutual support from the networks.

Appendix E6: Summary of Findings of Principal F

Beliefs and Understandings of Principal F

When he was the vice principal, Principal F mainly focused on students' affairs. After taking up principalship for two years, Principal F had grasped a more comprehensive view of the education and curriculum reforms in Hong Kong. He agreed with the broad aims and directions, which he thought were in line with global trends. He was convinced that previous modes of education were no longer appropriate, and students should be equipped with learning capabilities and generic skills for pursuing life-long learning so as to keep up with the changing needs of the society.

He opined that education reforms should not be rushed. He commented that the government had introduced many new initiatives and higher requirements in the past few years, making many teachers become 'breathless'. He felt that teachers of this era were operating under stress as they were required to teach skills they had not learnt or taught before. He worried that some teachers might be exploring and experimenting with the initiatives without thorough understanding, and that the reforms might be rather superficial.

Principal F saw his role as the overall curriculum leader but department heads and middle managers also played an important role. He adopted a broad definition of curriculum, which included all learning activities besides class teaching. He did not find any conflicts in his role but found the multiple responsibilities demanding, especially because he was new in the post. Administrative procedures under the new school-based management policy, like those regarding finance and staff management, consumed much of his time and energy. He thought that curriculum leaders should bring in new information from the outside and initiatives applicable to the school, encourage the staff to make plans, provide the support and resources, show understanding and appreciation of the staff, comfort them instead of blaming them for their mistakes or inadequacies, create space for teachers, and remove the barriers. They should be the role model and participate in the reform process.

Principal F found his staff professional, cooperative, and supportive. Nevertheless, some teachers, being rather conservative and lacking understanding of the educational trends, were not ready to meet the challenges of the reform. He considered it necessary, though difficult, to change teachers' paradigms. Due emphasis was put on teachers' professional development. Besides encouraging teachers to attend seminars

and courses outside the school, curriculum leaders should make efforts to sustain teachers' learning and put it into practice through organising school-based professional development activities. Evaluations and adjustments for improvement should be conducted so as to reap the benefits. Principal F was concerned about teacher collaboration and leadership. Perhaps due to the influence of authoritative principals in the past, some middle managers were rather passive and often relied on his decisions on curriculum issues. He hoped to develop their leadership and empower them to coordinate and lead reform initiatives, which would enhance the effectiveness and reduce his pressure.

Principal F found the government resources adequate, and appreciated the flexibility for schools' use to create space for teachers and support various initiatives. A great variety of professional development opportunities were available. Though various funds were available, he and the teachers sometimes had no time to prepare application proposals. Nevertheless, not all problems could be solved by money, such as the supply of qualified teachers. He showed concern about the effectiveness of hiring 'second-class' or untrained temporary teachers without passion or commitment to take up class teaching or conduct after-school learning activities. He observed that some conscientious teachers did not want to hand over their classes to others. He stressed the need to seek and allocate the resources appropriately and wisely to meet their needs.

Principal F had the respect of the staff, and trust and autonomy from the school council and managers, though not much monetary support. Student leadership was emphasised and nurtured through various activities within and outside school and the Student Union. He has established strong relationships with parents and alumni through the Parent-Teacher Association and Alumni Association, and various school activities. He also solicited their strong support, e.g. participation in and organisation of school activities.

He found it hard to comment on his impact on the school in the past two years. He was happy to observe that the staff had become more open in putting up their ideas. The development of teaching by using English as the medium of instruction (EMI), and students' excellent achievements in public examinations and various competitions were encouraging. He did not feel much pressure in performing his role and thanked his religion for giving him the strength. Deep inside, he was anxious and hoped to do more and better. Being a new principal, he found the structured training and support programmes very useful. He frankly said he was still exploring the learning process, and there was much to learn and do in taking the school forward.

Leadership Behaviours of Principal F

Being a novice principal, Principal F found the role challenging. He spent much time and effort in handling multiple tasks, like handling correspondence and administrative work, ad hoc incidents like student problems and even crises such as a parent suicidal case. To share out his administrative work, he hired an administration assistant to handle secretarial work, and set up a Financial Committee to assist in finance management. In implementing the reform initiatives, he worked closely with the Academic Committee led by a vice principal, giving the directions and advice, collecting the staff's views and making adjustments for improvements. He usually discussed with the middle managers the reform schedule and pace as well as teachers' role before briefing the staff. Development plans were drawn up and implemented by respective subject panels or functional teams.

Principal F encouraged teachers to propose and try out new initiatives, and provided the resources and support to enhance learning and teaching. Unlike the former principals who were more authoritative, he adopted a consultative, facilitative, and participative approach. He wanted to 'walk' with the staff through the reforms, thinking that they were 'in the same boat'. Respecting his staff, he did not put too much pressure on them. He provided them with the space and time to meet the challenges, and to adapt to his leadership style. He did not adopt a 'hard sell' approach but spent time explaining to them the situation, the rationale for change, and the proposed plans to seek their views and agreement before implementation.

There was not a curriculum development team to oversee the school curriculum in a holistic manner. Principal F thought that split-class teaching, remedial and enhancement programmes should also be included in the school curriculum. In fact, many school practices had elements in line with the curriculum reform and were progressing at different paces. He hoped to develop a more comprehensive curriculum plan in a whole-school approach.

Special teams were set up to address the four major concerns regarding the quality of EMI learning and teaching, students' values and attitudes, academic excellence in public examinations, and the New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum. The NSS Committee, comprising a vice principal and a senior teacher with professional and operational knowledge, was entrusted to make early plans and preparations for the NSS reforms to assure smooth implementations and avoid causing teacher anxieties.

Principal F emphasised finding the entry points and the right timing to implement new initiatives. For example, he took the opportunity of the government's EMI policy on teacher qualifications to include EMI teaching as a major concern in the school development plan. Facing keen competitions among EMI schools in the district, he hoped to further enhance the English learning environment and to achieve excellence in public examinations. Though he understood teachers' concerns and difficulties, he requested them to comply with the policy. Adopting a gentle approach, he explained things to them, reminded them to draw up action plans, and urged them nearer the deadline to meet the requirements.

Believing that it was most important to improve class teaching, Principal F promoted lesson observation. It was gradually implemented in a three-year cycle, with the first year focusing on self-reflection, the second year on peer sharing, and in the third year, lessons observed by department heads and the principal for writing performance appraisals. Voluntary peer lesson observation for professional development was being implemented in some subject departments. He planned to promote this to all staff to nurture a school culture.

Principal F wanted to promote cross-KLA collaboration. However, progress was slow as some subject heads still held tight to their subject territories. Coordination and collaboration work was mainly done by him and the Academics Committee. Middle leaders expected him to be responsible for the whole task and turned to him for decisions when they had some ideas or problems. He hoped to change their mindset so that they could actively play a leadership role in the reform process. Admitting that he needed a better understanding of curriculum integration, he was advancing cautiously with his staff in the explorative journey. He observed that some schools were progressing systematically and smoothly, and had plans for improvements. Among many issues, he hoped to refine their documentation, and draw up evaluation mechanisms to facilitate on-going school improvement. In doing so, he stressed the need to set priorities so as not to overload teachers and cause worries.

Besides attending a structured programme for aspiring principals, he participated in a two-year induction programme for new principals. He actively sought advice and assistance from the instructors, his mentors and peer principals on the programmes, which he found very useful. As his two vice principals were also newly promoted to the post, his priority was to maintain internal stability during the transitional period of changes in school leaders and curriculum initiatives. He did not join any overseas visits or get too involved with community services in these two years so as to spend

more time on the school.   He selectively attended relevant professional development programmes to meet his needs.   He learnt a lot from the sharing by experienced principals, and found the network of peer principals beneficial in facilitating sharing of information and resources, as well as mutual support among them.

Appendix F: Profiles of Six Case Study Schools

School	A	B	C	D	E	F
Finance Type	Government	Caput	Grant	Aided	Aided	Aided
Approximate Age of School	20	60	100	30	30	30
Medium of Instruction	English	Chinese	English	English	Chinese	English
Gender of Students	Co-education	Co-education	Girls	Co-education	Co-education	Co-education
No. of Students	About 1,200	About 800	About 1,200	About 1,200	About 1,000	About 1,200
No. of Teaching staff	60	40+	60	60	50+	60

Appendix G: Profiles of Six Principals

Principal	A	B	C	D	E	F
Sex	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male
Age group	50-55	45-50	50-55	50-55	55+	55+
Highest Academic Qualification	Bachelors degree	Masters degree	Masters degree	Masters degree	Bachelors degree	Masters degree
Qualification in Education	Post grad. Cert.	Masters	Advanced Diploma	Masters	Post grad. Cert.	Post grad. Cert.
Teacher training	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Years of teaching experience (Including years as vice/deputy principal)	17+ (4)	15+ (5)	15+ (0)	18 (16)	25+ (8)	30+ (10+)
Years in the post of principal	10	10+	14	10	7	2 as Acting Principal while acquiring the Cert. for Principalship
Years in this school	6	15	5	26	7	30+
Received Prior Structured Principal training	No	No	No	No	No	Yes, completed in 2006, attained Cert. in 2008

GLOSSARY

334 structure	NSS Structure: 3-year junior secondary, plus 3-year senior secondary and 4-year tertiary education
AL	Advanced Level
AP	Aspiring principals
Blue skies	A twelve-month programme for Beginning Principals in Hong Kong, which matches them with experienced principals to learn about real issues within their school contexts.
C&A	Curriculum and Assessment
CAPUT school	Originally a private school of which some places were bought by the government in the 1970s due to expanding provision of education, now receives subsidies as aided or DSS school
CDC	Curriculum Development Council
CFP	Certification for Principalship
CMI	Chinese is used as the medium of instruction
COC	Career-Oriented Curriculum (pilot of the Career-oriented Studies)
Compulsory education	6 years of primary education plus 3 years of secondary education
COS	Career-oriented Studies
CPD Policy	Principals and teachers have to accumulate 150 CPD hours in a 3-year cycle

CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DSS school	School under the Direct Subsidy Scheme, funded by the government depending on the number of students in the school, enjoys maximum freedom with regards to curriculas, fees, and entrance requirements that is consistent with basic educational standards
EC	Education Commission
ECR7	Education Commission Report No. 7
ED	Education Department
EMB	Education and Manpower Bureau
EMI	English is used as the medium of instruction
ESL	English as a Second Language
Five essential learning experiences:	Include *Moral and Civic Education, Intellectual Development, Community Service, Physical and Aesthetic Development, Career-related Experiences*
Four Key Tasks	Advocated in the Curriculum Reform of Hong Kong, including *Moral and Civic Education, Reading to Learn, Project Learning*, and *Using Information Technology for Interactive Learning*
Government school	About 5 % of a total of approximately 1300 primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong, operated by the government, considered part of the civil service, staff promotion based on seniority and on the outcomes of a common appraisal process
Grant school	Secondary school established by missionaries and

	churches before 1 April 1973, receives subsidies in accordance with the Code of Aid for Secondary Schools
HKALE	Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination
HKCEE	Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination
HKDSE	Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education
HKEAA	Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority
HKSAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
IE	Integrated Education
Integrated Humanities	A new subject merged from previous subjects History, Geography and Social Studies at junior secondary levels to prepare students for studying Liberal Studies at senior levels
IT	Information technology
Key Stage 1	Primary 1-3
Key Stage 2	Primary 4-6
Key Stage 3	Secondary 1-3
Key Stage 4	Secondary 4-5
KLA	Key Learning Area
KS	See Key Stage
Liberal Studies	A new subject in the New Senior Secondary Curriculum
MOI	Medium of instruction
NAP	Newly appointed principal
NET	Native-speaking English Teacher
NSS	New Senior Secondary
NSS curriculum	Introduced in 2009 as extension of the curriculum in

	basic education, aiming to further promote students' Learning to Learn capabilities. It includes 3 Core subjects (Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics and Liberal Studies for all students), Elective subjects (2 or 3 subjects chosen from 20 elective subjects, a range of Applied Learning courses and other languages) and Other Learning Experiences (OLE).
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PTA	Parent-teacher Association
QA	Quality Assurance
RASIH	Review of the Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Interface with Higher Education
S1-5	Secondary 1-5
S6-7	Secondary 6-7 (Old system ending in 2012)
SBA	School-based Assessment
SES	Socio-economic Status
Seven learning goals	Goals of the Curriculum Reform, including *Healthy Lifestyle, Breadth of Knowledge, Learning Skills, Language Skills, Habit of Reading, National identity, and Responsibility*
SpNAP	Serving principals Needs Analysis Programme
SPs	Serving principals

SRA	Standards-referenced Assessment
SS1/2/3	Senior Secondary 1/2/3 or Secondary 4/5/6 under NSS
SSPA	Secondary School Places Allocation
Subsidised school	Also called aided school, constitutes the largest proportion of schools in Hong Kong, seen as publicly funded institutions being run by private agencies under agreement between the government and school sponsoring bodies and a Code of Aid
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
TOC	Target Oriented Curriculum
Website of Hong Kong EdCity	A website set up for enhancing learning and teaching in Hong Kong, accessed by Hong Kong students, teachers and parents