

# Parallel leadership for school improvement in Singapore: A case study on the perceived roles of school principals

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*Abstract: Educational leadership for the 21<sup>st</sup> century calls for a new and different working relationship between educators. In addition to well-known approaches to educational leadership such as transformational, strategic, educative and organizational styles, the notion of parallel leadership is receiving much attention with growing evidence from Australian schools that this leadership style facilitates school improvement.*

*Parallel leadership challenges teachers and members of the school management to establish a more collaborative working relationship. Such leadership entails mutualism between administrator leaders and teacher leaders, a sense of shared purpose and an allowance of individual expression and action by respective leaders (Andrews & Crowther, 2002). Nurturing parallel leadership involves a change in the roles and responsibilities of principals – to lead in metastrategic development – and of teachers – to lead in pedagogical development. Such leadership is an impetus for essential processes of school-wide professional learning, culture building and approach to pedagogy which will enhance and sustain school outcomes, thus giving IDEAS schools a cutting edge. This enables the knowledge-generating capacity of schools to be enhanced and sustained.*

*Based on data obtained from interviews and fieldwork observations we introduce an elaborated version of the 'black box' (Crowther, Hann & Andrews, 2002) and provide a discussion on how three principals in Singapore schools, as part of the IDEAS project, embrace the role of 'strategic leaders' in the context of parallel leadership. As these principals progress with developing parallel leadership, we expect valuable insight to emerge as to how parallel leadership is functioning in these schools, thus enabling us to provide at a later stage, a more conclusive answer as to what a parallel relationship between teachers and principals looks like in the Singapore context.*

## Introduction

The notion that school leaders make critical improvement decisions and then promote adherence to those decisions among staff, has failed to adequately explain the process of school improvement. Even in cases where traditional leadership approaches have brought about significant change, such changes are not sustained once the identified leader moves on. This paper introduces initial findings from a study of school improvement efforts in three Singapore schools built on the concept of parallel leadership that runs decidedly counter to the prevailing hierarchical model of school leaders leading school reform. More significantly, this paper expanded on the model of parallel leadership proposed by Crowther, Hann and Andrews (2002).

The concept of parallel leadership emerged through a five year study by Crowther, Hann and Andrews (2002) in nine Australian schools that were considered successful in the state of Queensland. The study centred on the style of educational leadership, factors and the processes that contributed to these schools' apparent enhancement in school outcomes. Their findings suggest that in these successful schools, the leadership that drove the schools were characterised by a working relationship between principal and teachers, where both parties demonstrated mutual trust and respect for the role of the other, had a shared sense of purpose and made allowance for individual expression. As a result of this longitudinal study, Crowther, Hann & Andrews (2002) conceptualised how leadership operates to impact school capacity and provides the key that unlocks the 'black box in school reform'. In addition, Andrews and Crowther (2002) proposed parallel leadership to be the 'key' which unlocks the mystery behind the link between leadership and processes involved in successful school reform, which is hidden the 'black box' referred to by Hallinger and Heck (1996), "the process by which administrators achieve an impact is hidden in a so called black box. A relationship is empirically tested but the findings reveal little about how leadership operates." (pg. 11).

Parallel leadership asserts that principals and teachers need to establish a working relationship where both principals and teachers engage in collective thought and action. This working relationship

is premised upon the “purpose of wanting to make a positive and lasting contribution to the improvement of teaching and learning” (Wasley, cited in Sherril, 1999, pg. 57). In such a working environment, the traditional hierarchical leadership operated through the separation between principals and teachers and even between teachers themselves is re-examined. This leadership style sees the principal as a strategic leader “walking in parallel” with teachers leading in pedagogical development. This working relationship empowers teachers to emerge as “experts” in their own right and instils upon them a newborn sense of value equivalent to that of principals (Andrews & Crowther, 2002).

It is asserted that through parallel leadership, school communities are driven towards cultivating a revitalized “living school culture”, one that is characterised by schoolwide professional learning, schoolwide culture-building and schoolwide approach to pedagogy. With the integration and alignment of these three processes school communities are able to enhance whole school capacity (Andrews, Conway, Dawson, Lewis, McMaster, Morgan, Starr, 2004).

### **Parallel Leadership and IDEAS in the Singapore Context**

The IDEAS (Innovative Designs for Enhancing Achievement in Schools; Andrews, et al., 2004) Project was launched in three Singapore schools in June 2004. This approach towards school revitalisation recognizes pedagogical issues and harnesses the hidden capacity of the teaching profession as crucial elements of school revitalization.

IDEAS grew out of a desire to ensure that school improvement initiatives – especially in an environment where power was being devolved more and more to school sites – resulted in classroom improvements. Thus, it aims to impact positively on student learning outcomes and the professional satisfaction of teachers. The IDEAS Project has already achieved success in Queensland, where it was first started in 1997. It has attracted an Australian Research Council SPIRT grant, which is recognition of its place at the cutting edge of school revitalization internationally.

The Research-Based Framework for Enhancing School Outcomes (Andrews et. al., 2004, pg. 8) in IDEAS highlights the significance of strategic vision and direction, engaging community to accept collective responsibility for student outcomes, and using structures and processes that support alignment and relationships.

Two of the key concepts underpinning IDEAS are parallel leadership – which acknowledges the pivotal role of teachers and their classroom practice in improving student outcomes – and the alignment of the components of the Research-Based Framework.

According to Andrews et. al. (2004), IDEAS can be seen as a ‘stimulus’ that allows for three processes that contribute towards enhancing school capacity to ‘be activated and integrated’. These schoolwide processes are culture building, professional learning and developing a schoolwide approach to pedagogy. The link between these processes and the underlying concepts of parallel leadership and alignment in IDEAS are described figuratively in a ‘black box’ diagram (Andrews & Crowther, 2002; Andrews et. al., 2004, pg. 24).

Based on preliminary findings since August 2004, the research team has recognised the importance of adapting the concept of IDEAS in Singapore because of differences in culture and context. Through the research team’s observations and interactions with the principals, staff and pupils, it became apparent that an elaboration of the proposed concepts and processes featured in the original ‘black box diagram’ (Andrews & Crowther, 2002) was needed for the Singapore context.

The elaborated diagram (See Figure 2) depicts how parallel leadership is perceived to impact school capacity in the Singapore context. The additions were made to surface possible underlying processes associated with the conception of the roles of pedagogical and strategic leaders in parallel leadership.

The strategic development role of a principal, as described by Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson & Hann (2002), involves:

1. Engaging the staff and community in a process that creates a shared vision;
2. Identity-generation – establishing ownership and being a respected and contributing member of the school and community;
3. Alignment of organisational elements. Ensuring that organizational structures and resources are aligned to fulfil the shared vision;
4. Distribution of power and leadership. Ensuring that teachers will be empowered to make pedagogical decisions that are aligned to the shared vision; and
5. Building external alliances and networking to increase the social capital of the organization and to involve critical stakeholders to contribute to school improvement.

In essence, the role of a teacher leader in pedagogical development as described in the Teachers as Leaders Framework (Crowther et. al., 2002) is to:

1. convey convictions about a better world,

2. strive for authenticity in their teaching, learning and assessment practices,
3. facilitate communities of learning through organisation-wide processes,
4. confront barriers in the school's culture and structures,
5. translate ideas into systems of action,
6. nurture a culture of success.

As Crowther et. al. confesses, the Framework “presents an idealised image of teacher leaders”. They have not come across a teacher leader in their research who fulfils all six elements, but all teacher leaders they have observed, “exhibit aspects of these elements in some way at some point in time in their work”.

For leadership to be approached in a parallel manner in the Singapore context, we assert that the respective parties need to operationalise three underlying factors – attitude, role perception and management of resources – that will help define for teachers, the role of ‘pedagogical developer’ and for the principal, the role of ‘strategic developer’. As a mean to operationalising these factors, the concept of professional sharing is seen by the research team as a vital component in allowing teachers and principals to communicate their understandings of their roles. In addition, external factors would also affect how the three schoolwide processes would lead to enhanced school capacity. The three underlying factors, concept of professional sharing and external factors constitutes our elaboration of the original ‘black box’ diagram.

### Attitudes

It is imperative that both principal and teachers approach parallel leadership with complementary attitudes and align their understanding of the concept and characteristics of parallel leadership in the same manner. Each party's attitudes should enable parallel leadership to be nurtured rather than be constrained – in essence adopting a more egalitarian attitude as opposed to an authoritarian attitude, an attitude that is not constrained by positional authority, and an attitude of ‘no blame’ when things go wrong..

The attributes of these attitudes are premised upon a high respect for each other. This respect is borne out of trust and respect between the principal and teachers and among teachers. The outcome of trust will promote professionalism among staff because the egalitarian attitude allows the staff to make decisions related to their work and to take ownership in the process of teaching and learning.

### Perceptions of roles

For both parties to be able to take on their respective roles, their role perceptions should be aligned to that of parallel leadership. Principals and teachers would have to perceive themselves as part of a collaborative relationship in a community that works towards enhancing the capacity of the school and not as individuals working in isolated pockets.

The role perception should also break away from that of perceiving the capacity to lead as belonging only to those who hold formally appointed leadership positions in the school. This perception of the principal's and teachers' roles in leadership should reinforce principals taking steps back to allow teachers the space to lead and for teachers to step up and have a say in the school's pedagogical matters.

### Management of Resources

In addition to having the right attitudes and perceptions of their roles, both principals and teachers need to manage resources well. Resources are defined as the tangible and intangible entities available to the school that enable it to produce efficiently and/or effectively programs and services that have value for their stakeholders. As such, resources are not restricted to a school's tangible assets, but are anything available to the school that has an enabling capacity (Hunt and Morgan, 1995).

Resources can be financial (e.g., cash reserves), physical (e.g., buildings, facilities, and equipment), legal (e.g., trademarks and licenses), human (e.g., the skills and knowledge of staff members), organizational (e.g., competencies, controls, routines, and cultures), informational (e.g., knowledge about stakeholders and technology), and relational (e.g., relationships with suppliers, and stakeholders). All these entities would have to be carefully managed in the development of the 3-Dimensional Pedagogy that incorporates authoritative pedagogies, personal pedagogies and schoolwide pedagogy (Andrews, Crowther, Hann & McMaster, 2002).

### Professional Sharing

We have included the purpose of professional sharing between pedagogical and strategic leaders, which is to build a collaborative work environment in the school. This collaboration eventuates into a relationship characterised by mutual respect and trust, shared sense of purpose and the allowance for individual expression – characteristics of parallel leadership as described by Andrews and Crowther (2002).

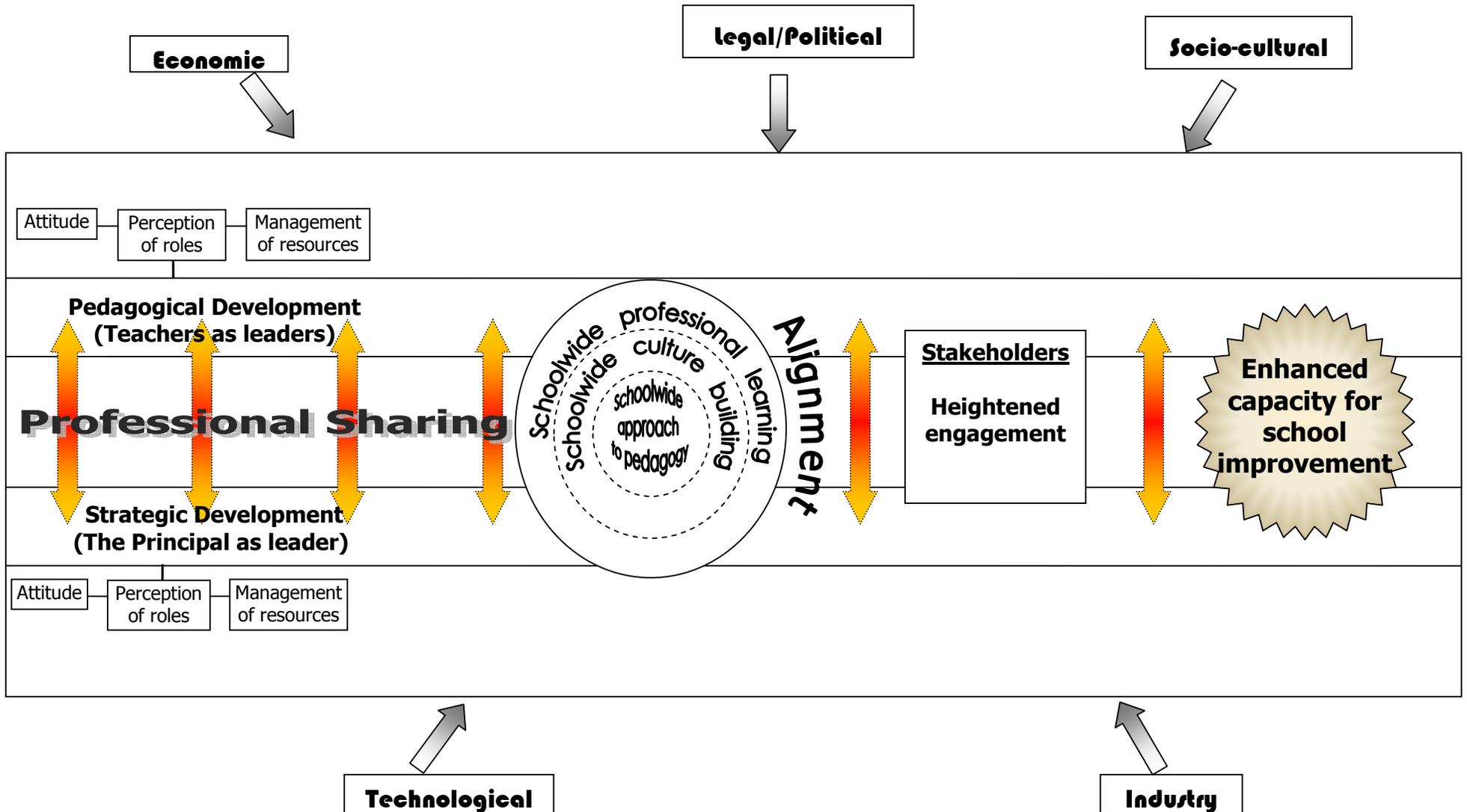
Professional sharing will progressively develop and become focused and directed towards addressing “core” matters of the school, in particular how to align school vision with pedagogical practices. As a result of professional sharing, the school community will eventually engage in three schoolwide processes of professional learning, culture building and approach to pedagogy.

Alignment of these three schoolwide processes with the school’s vision (through professional sharing), will enable the school to enhance its capacity through strengthened collaborations with stakeholders. The stakeholders are defined as individuals and groups in the public and private sectors who are interested in and/or affected by the school’s activities, and they include students, parents, teaching faculty, administrators, board of trustees, government agencies, vendors, suppliers, alumni members, volunteers, prospective students and their parents, donors, business communities, competing schools, affiliated organizations, media publics and general public.

### External factors

External influences such as socio-cultural, legal/political, economic, industry and technological. These external factors are expected to influence the development of parallel leadership and the functionality of the remaining contents of the black box. The following example illustrates the influence of socio-cultural factors in the process of schooling in Singapore. In a collectivist society such as Singapore, communities value the respect of elders and regard those with positional authority highly. Such a mindset can affect the attitudes with which educators approach parallel leadership.

**Figure 2:** Inside the “Black Box”: Parallel Leadership and School Capacity – Elaborated version for Singapore context



## **Case Studies Of Three Singapore Schools In IDEAS: The Principal's Role In Strategic Development**

This research began with a documentation of the history and context of the three schools. The research team comprising of one principal investigator, two co-investigators, a research associate and two research assistants, was assigned to each of the three Singapore schools. The names of the schools, principals and staff have been changed to maintain anonymity for the purpose of this paper.

1. Taylor Primary School
2. Preston Secondary School
3. Oakville Primary School

To construct their case studies, the research team conducted interviews with each of the principals and focus group interviews with selected school leaders and teachers at the three schools. The purpose of the open-ended interviews was to explore the perceived attitudes, roles, and management of resources by principals in the strategic development of their schools and developing parallel leadership among staff. The interviews yielded more than 70 pages of single-spaced transcripts. The research team analyzed the transcripts to generate the three factors that guided this preliminary summary report: (a) attitudes, (b) roles, and (c) management of resources.

In this paper, we present an analysis of the interviews conducted.

### **Case Study 1: Taylor Primary School**

Taylor Primary School is a government-aided school with a long history. The school has a staff of about 70 and a student population of 1400. The principal, Mrs Wong has had 18 years of being a principal and has been at Taylor for slightly more than 2 years.

#### Attitudes

Inspired strongly by Living Values such as love, freedom, happiness and respect, Mrs Wong wants to see “love permeate throughout the whole environment”. She stated that she has to be a role model of the values herself if she is going to expect her staff and pupils to exhibit love. When asked about how she models such values towards the pupils, Mrs Wong replied, “When children come in late, for me as a principal, I’m not going to rant and rave at them. For me, I would have to role model and ask prefects not to just write down their names (but) show understanding (on why the child is late).” It appears that Mrs Wong adopts an attitude of respect to pupils that does not rely on positional authority alone. Her advice to the prefects to ‘show’ understanding on why the child is late appears to support the attitude of wanting to exercise love and use informal authority rather than rely on formal authority.

Mrs Wong also exemplifies these values through the manner in which she relates to the teachers. She approaches her teachers with sensitivity and respect and is careful with the words she uses when communicating with the teachers and students so as not to hurt anyone’s feelings. A view which many other teachers echoed, “she doesn’t put the person down no matter how weak the person is”. She is also concerned about her teachers’ welfare, though she does not show it often or overtly. The Living Values are also reflected in the school’s core values.

These preliminary findings seem to support that Mrs Wong is adopting an egalitarian attitude as opposed to an authoritarian attitude. It also appears that her attitude is that of a colleague and ‘friend’ to her staff rather than exercising her positional authority. This was evident in the teachers’ perception of her.

#### Roles

A self-proclaimed “instructional leader”, Mrs Wong is very much involved in helping teachers to improve their pedagogical skills. She conducts classroom observations with Heads of Department (HODs) and has the HODs give feedback to the teachers on their teaching practices to help them improve their lessons. She believes that this is one of the ways in helping teachers grow to be in parallel with her as she interprets parallel leadership as closing the gap of teaching experience between less experienced teachers and her.

As Mrs Wong puts it, “I see it as the teachers becoming ultimately like me...They will take the lead...They will grow so fast that they become a teacher leader; teaching in a holistic approach; not waiting for the management to tell them you have to do this...that’s what I envision.”

It is interesting to note that in exercising her role as a leader in developing parallel leadership, Mrs Wong appears to see herself as demonstrating instructional leadership by ensuring that teachers will be able to develop expertise in pedagogical practices before assuming the role of teacher leaders. Her desire to develop her teachers to be “ultimately like me” appears to support this perception. This role of developing teacher leaders appears to limit the distribution of authority and power to make pedagogical decisions among staff in the initial stage. However, it does not necessarily indicate that she will maintain the same role in later stages where perhaps once she is able to ascertain that when her teachers are experts, then they may be given more power in

pedagogical decision making. Further observations and interviews will have to be conducted in the future to determine if there is a perceived change of role.

These preliminary findings also suggest that changes and development of pedagogical practices is still quite directed rather than allowed to emerge from the staff. Therefore, this leads to the initial conclusion that teacher leaders will not be able to strive for authenticity in their teaching since it is directed rather than evolved. In other words, the propensity for staff to take risks when required without settling for directed development appears to be low. In the long run, this could possibly inhibit the development of parallel leadership among staff in the area of pedagogical practices.

#### Management of Resources

Mrs Wong believes in the creation of structure and system in the school and that is seen by the teachers at Taylor to be one of her strengths. She crafts a detailed strategic plan with her school management team but due to its broad focus, teachers do not see a clear goal to work towards. Her structured approach has allowed the school to be more organised and has even helped them to identify their niche area and gain recognition for some of their initiatives. However, the broad strategic focus has not allowed for clarity in the school's strategic direction.

Mrs Wong values holistic excellence and that has resulted in the school taking on many of the Ministry's initiatives in addition to their own programmes. Some teachers opine that they were "taking every dish from the buffet (of programmes)", which they feel has resulted in them being overloaded with work. This has also led to them feeling that the Principal has set expectations which are a tall order for the school and the teachers.

Mrs Wong feels that parallel leadership can be developed in her school through professional sharing, role modelling and through the enhancement of teachers' pedagogy. She provides platforms for teachers to engage in professional sharing and attempts to nurture teacher leaders by giving teachers the freedom to initiate and facilitate various school projects. When teachers manage projects, monthly reports are submitted to allow for the progress of the projects to be tracked. To date, the teachers have initiated 20 projects, 10 more than what was expected and to her, this relates to a higher level of ownership and leadership being nurtured.

These findings suggest that Mrs Wong is a leader who can strategise well and make sense of the complex and varying nature of a school environment. She is a good planner and aligns school initiatives well, allowing for the identification of the school's strengths. However, her business-like approach towards her role as a principal results in a "lack of personal touch" when she relates to her teachers and a formal manner of communication. This seems to contrast to her perceived attitude of adopting an egalitarian attitude towards her staff. Her strategic intent is not well-communicated to her staff and her expectations may be of too tall an order for them.

#### Case Study 2: Preston Secondary School

This is the fourth year that Mrs Wai has been the principal at Preston, a neighbourhood secondary school established in 1982 and with staff numbering at about 60 and student population of about a thousand.

#### Attitudes

Mrs Wai values teamwork and with her strong concern for her students, she encourages the teachers to focus on how best to enhance students' learning, rather than just on how to teach their respective subjects well. She views collaboration between teachers from various departments to integrate their teaching as a way to tailor lessons to maximise their benefit to the students. She believes that professional sharing and conversation between staff are vital in developing her teachers as curriculum designers and in moving towards parallel leadership. The involvement of every teacher in this process and the lack of "opportunity to be alienated" appear to strengthen her attitude towards developing teamwork among her staff.

The interpretation of these statements suggests that Mrs Wai adopts an egalitarian attitude in relation to teacher professionalism and pedagogical leadership among her staff. In addition the statements suggest that she perceived her attitude of trusting her teachers. This trust is seen as the expectations that her staff has the ability to leverage on collegiality in professional development.

#### Roles

Mrs Wai sees her role as supporting her teachers rather than directing her teachers. She views teachers as "playing totally different functions" from that of hers and the management's. She values her teachers' expertise and knowledge in their respective subject areas and perceives their role in a parallel leadership context to be that of "curriculum designers" while hers is to provide the support and structures needed for them to complement their roles. Therefore, she trusts her teachers to plan their lessons as they deem suitable and does

not impose her ideas on them where teaching is concerned. She sends a very clear message of “accountability” to her teachers with regards to the result of their implementation of ideas and projects, instilling a strong sense of responsibility for the students’ learning in them.

The above statements suggest that she sees her role of encouraging distributed leadership. Her perception of the role of supporting her teachers also suggests that she sees the distribution of power and decision-making in pedagogical practices as being entrusted to the teachers.

The Principal recognises the professionalism of teaching and perceives the role of a teacher to be influential. Thus, it is also of concern to her that she nurtures in her teachers a sense of pride in their job. Seeing herself in a “supporting role” and recognising her teachers to be experts in their respective subjects, Mrs Wai envisions all teachers to eventually become pedagogical leaders and sees that that can be achieved with parallel leadership. In line with this, teachers who were interviewed felt that she does give a lot of respect to their expertise in their respective subject areas.

In addition, Mrs Wai has incorporated staff and student inputs when setting the strategic direction for the school and communicates this very clearly to the school. The teachers have indicated that they know what she is moving the school towards and this understanding allows them to work in line with the set direction. These statements suggest that she sees her role in engaging the community in the process of creating a shared vision.

Overall, Mrs Wai is clear about her role and that of the teachers in a parallel leadership context. She approaches leadership valuing the competencies of her subordinates and having an open attitude towards letting them lead in their respective expert areas.

### Management of Resources

Believing that “servant leadership” for a principal entails bringing out the best in her teachers, Mrs Wai tries her best to help her teachers “to increase their market value” by developing them professionally through the deployment of her “staff in such a way that they are in a right position”. She deploys her teachers well, not bearing down on them to take on responsibilities if they do not want to yet at the same time, making sure that they take on their roles seriously by instilling a strong sense of accountability in her teachers. This appears to have had a positive effect as some teachers in the school can be seen to have taken on a proactive approach towards their professional development.

To enable the professional development of her teachers and building of school capacity, Mrs Wai believes that she needs to “create structure and system” and provide her teachers the resources that they need, “by hook or by crook”. For example, to allow professional sharing to occur for the building of a schoolwide pedagogy, Mrs Wai sets aside an hour during every staff meeting for dialogue sessions.

With the right attitudes and a clear undertaking of her role as a principal in the management of her resources, the future of Preston Secondary School is filled with much optimism and expectations. However, more observations and interviews on the school’s teachers and other stakeholders would be required for a wholesome picture of this school.

### Case Study 3: Oakville Primary School

This government primary school was established in 2001 and has staff strength of 96 and student population of about 2500. The current principal, Mr Chan, has been at the helm since then.

#### Attitudes

As a principal, Mr Chan does not see himself as being in a more privileged position than teachers. His teachers view him as “non-threatening” and “approachable” and valuing the need to be “close to your subordinates”, he attempts to “reach out” to every teaching and non-teaching staff member in his school by scheduling casual one-to-one “chit chat sessions” with them to know their personal side better. He believes that he and his school management should “go beyond the person and go into the inner being to reach out to the person.”

In Oakville Primary School, the importance of ‘family’ is highly stressed upon and this also reflects the perspective of the Principal. He likens the school to a ‘big family’, encouraging staff to bond with one another over group outings and providing platforms for professional sharing between teachers.

Despite seeing his school as a unit, Mr Chan values each teacher’s individuality and has a “positive and forward looking” attitude as a principal. He does not discriminate against teachers who perform poorly but encourages them and tries to build up their self-confidence. According to his staff, Mr Chan is “one person who tries to see someone as a fresh person, a new person” and in doing so, he gives “people a fair chance to perform”.

Integrity is very important to Mr Chan as a leader. He does not hesitate to own up to his mistakes and apologises to his staff should any be made. "To be seen as transparent", Mr Chan maintains an open and honest attitude as a principal and views mutual trust as an important factor in his relationship with his staff. This was affirmed by one of the teachers who were being interviewed, "By not coming in to observe us shows a level of trust he has for the teachers." The Principal demonstrates his trust in his teachers' capabilities by taking a step back from leading, giving them the freedom to initiate and carry out projects they want and not interfering in their lessons.

### Roles

As a principal, Mr Chan aims to motivate and inspire his colleagues to become "visionary leaders" who "think out of the box". In his opinion, a teacher leader is "someone who can see a problem, think of a solution and get things done with minimum guidance". He wants his teachers to be "bold...to take up challenges and dare to fail" and encourages his staff to take calculated risks. He takes a step back and does not interfere when teachers initiate and run projects or teach. Part of his approach towards developing teacher leadership is to "identify those who have more leadership quality and give them roles to play."

However, his way of developing teacher leaders has resulted in what some teachers see as an "imbalance in the allocation of jobs" thus resulting in the selected group of teachers being overburdened and taxed. To these identified teacher leaders, they feel that the Principal should also "play a greater role in the guiding process of nurturing teacher leaders." Due to these factors, it has resulted in unidentified talents who choose to "stay backstage" and not get "involved".

In general, Mr Chan is an approachable leader and has a good rapport with his staff. He perceives teachers to be working in the same direction as the school management in a parallel relationship and thus thinks that building on teachers' leadership potential is an important part of developing parallel leadership in his school. However, feedback from teachers indicates that he needs to communicate a clearer strategic direction and take less of a step back.

### Management of Resources

Being a "people-oriented" person, Mr Chan focuses on building "staff capacity". With the school's strategic goal of having "visionary leaders" and the attitudes he has in mind, Mr Chan works on building his staff's capacity with the help of his school management. In the process, he hopes that his teachers will be able to take calculated risks and "get things done with minimum guidance".

Described as one of the most "laissez faire" principals, the teachers that were interviewed have noted that the Principal's challenge is that he allows his teachers to work according to their own pace such that there is too much of a lack of time constraint in their deliverables. This gives the school the notion to be able to just "cruise and cruise and cruise" and thus resulting in a "stage of complacency".

While it is also reckoned that the Principal provides platforms for professional sharing between teachers, the teachers interviewed have admitted that they would usually "use this time to thrash out their administrative stuff instead of doing sharing".

As one of the most easy-going principal of the three schools, it is deemed that while the Principal does attempt to manage his resources wisely, his staff may lack the ability to respond to his approach appropriately. Effort to reach the right balance by both parties is needed in order for Oakville to advance to a greater school capacity.

### Future directions:

It can be gleaned from the case studies that the three principals have varying leadership styles and perceived roles. In addition they have different interpretations of parallel leadership. We have been able to arrive at initial conclusions from our preliminary findings, that for parallel leadership to be in place, a principal would have to have an open-minded attitude towards leadership, to take a step back and allow teachers to lead in the pedagogical areas. This involves principals having the right perception of their strategic leadership role and the ability to manage their resources effectively so as to create a suitable environment for teachers to take on the role of pedagogical leaders. Our findings have also indicated that communication between principals and teachers is vital in enabling a more parallel working relationship between both parties and professional sharing has been identified as an important tool to facilitate this.

Although our findings are in line with our theoretical extension of the "black box" diagram as indicated in Figure 1, a deeper insight with regards to the teacher's role as pedagogical leaders and the dynamics between the principal and teacher is required to allow us to gain a better understanding of parallel leadership in our local context. A "black box" that records the inner workings of how parallel leadership can lead to an enhanced capacity for school improvement in Singapore can then be 'constructed' to interpret the information gleaned.

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