

Linkage between Innovative Management and Student-Centered Approach: Platform Theory for Effective Learning

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In current educational reforms in different parts of the world, how to ensure the relevance of school reforms to students' effective learning is a major concern in implementation. In particular, when school-based management is a major movement giving schools more autonomy and flexibility to procure and use resources in management and conduct educational activities at the site level, people are concerned with how education decentralization can be managed with a clear structure and direction for facilitating student-centred approach of teaching and effective learning of students. The international failing experiences of school reforms in the past decade alarm educators and reform leaders to pay serious attention to the linkages of education reforms with students' effective learning (Cheng & Cheung, in press; Caldwell and Spinks, 1998).

This presentation aims to show how to build up a strong linkage between innovative management and student-centred approach through the application of the paradigm shift in learning, the platform theory and the insights of implementation of school-based management in the past years.

Implications from Paradigm Shift in Learning

As highlighted by Cheng (2000, 2001), there is paradigm shift in learning from the traditional site-bounded learning to the new triplization learning in the century (see Table 1). In the new paradigm, learning should be individualized, localized, and globalized with aims to create unlimited opportunities for students' life long learning and for development of their contextualized multiple intelligence (CMI). Student is the centre of education. Students' learning should be facilitated to meet their needs and personal characteristics, and develop their potentials particularly CMI in an optimal way. Students can be self-motivated and self-learning with appropriate guidance and facilitation, and learning is a self-actualizing, discovering, experiencing, and reflecting process.

Therefore, teaching and schooling should be conducted in a student-centred approach.

Table 1: Paradigm Shifts in Learning

<i>New Triplization Paradigm</i>	<i>Traditional Site-Bounded Paradigm</i>
<p><u>Individualized Learning:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student is the centre of education • Individualized Programs • Self-Learning • Self-Actualizing Process • Focus on How to Learn • Self Rewarding 	<p><u>Reproduced Learning:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student is the follower of teacher • Standard Programs • Absorbing Knowledge • Receiving Process • Focus on How to Gain • External Rewarding
<p><u>Localized and Globalized Learning:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple Sources of Learning • Networked Learning • Life-long and Everywhere • Unlimited Opportunities • World-Class Learning • Local and International Outlook 	<p><u>Institution-Bounded Learning:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher-Based Learning • Separated Learning • Fixed Period and Within Institution • Limited Opportunities • Site-Bounded Learning • Mainly Institution-based Experiences

Innovative School Management Aiming at Effective Learning.

From the above paradigm shift in learning, some implications can be drawn for innovative school management aiming at promoting student-centred approach and effective learning in the new century, as shown in Table 2.

Innovative Management for Individualized Schooling. School should be managed as a facilitating place for students’ learning. School itself is developed as contextualized multiple intelligence environment for supporting students to develop their multiple intelligences. Each school has its own strengths, potential, and characteristics. Based on their strengths, different schools can manage schooling in different styles to maximize their own contributions to students’ learning. The focus of schooling is to arouse curiosity and motivation of both students and teachers to think, act, and learn in a multiple intelligence way. The

schooling is managed as an open process to initiate, facilitate, and sustain self-learning and self-actualization of students and teachers. It provides opportunities to share the joy of learning and teaching among teachers and students. To face up the challenges in the new century and pursue contextualized multiple intelligences, school is a continuously learning and developing organization, involving institutional continuous discovery, experimenting, actualization, reflection, and development.

Innovative Management for Localized and Globalized Schooling:
Schools and their schooling should be managed in such a way such that all types of transfer, adaptation, and development of related values, knowledge, technology, and norms can bring in local and global resources, supports, and networks to maximize the opportunities for their developments and their contributions to students' learning and teachers' teaching. There are multiple local and global sources of teaching and learning – self-learning programs and packages, web-based learning, outside experts, community experiential programs, etc. - inside and outside the school, locally and globally. Parents and communities, including social services, business, and industry, are actively involved in schooling. The partnership with them is necessary to support effective networked schooling and multiple sources of learning. Locally and globally networked schooling can provide a wide spectrum of learning experiences and maximize opportunities for teachers and students to benefit from various settings and cultures. With the help of globalized schooling, students can learn the world-class experiences from different parts of the world. Schools can maximize the opportunities for teachers and students to enhance the quality of teaching and learning from local and global networking and exposure. Schools in the new century paradigm are conceptualized as world-class and networked schools.

Table 2: Innovative School Management for New Learning

<i>Innovative School Management</i>	<i>Traditional School Management</i>
<p><u>Individualized Schooling</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School As the Facilitating Place for Students’ Learning • School as a Multiple Intelligence Environment • Individualized Schooling Style • Place for Curiosity • Open Process • Sharing Joy of Actualization • As a Learning Organization 	<p><u>Reproduced Schooling</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School As the Central Place of Education • School as Source of Knowledge and Qualifications • Standard Schooling Style • Place for Transfer • Qualifying Process • Achieving Standard • As a Bureaucracy
<p><u>Localized and Globalized Schooling:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Coupled with Multiple Local and Global Sources for Learning • Community and Parental Involvement • Networked Schooling • World-Class Schooling • Unlimited Opportunities for learning 	<p><u>Site-Bounded Schooling:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Isolated from the outside world • Weak Community Linkage • Separated Schooling • Site-Bounded Schooling • Limited Opportunities for learning

Implications from High Value-Added Competencies in the New Century

In facing the challenges from a new era of globalization and knowledge-based economy, students need to be equipped with a new set of quality and competencies to be surviving and excelling in the future in such a fast changing environment. According to Levin (1997), there are 12 personal competencies for high value-added industries in the new century, including initiative, cooperation, working in groups, peer training, evaluation, reasoning, problem-

solving, decision-making, obtaining and using information, planning, learning skills and multicultural skills. In order to facilitate students to achieve these high value-added competencies for their future, teaching approach, educational practices, and school management should be changed from the traditional mode of education that emphasizes on achievements in examination, repeated exercises and practices, memory of knowledge delivered by teachers. The key implications for innovative management of learning and teaching activities are summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3:
High Value-Added Competencies and Implications for
Educational Practices and Innovative Management**

High Value-Added Competencies	Implications for Educational Practices & Innovative Management
1. Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater school focus on independent endeavors for students
2. Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased emphasis on cooperative learning where rewards are provided for cooperative process and its outcomes
3. Working in Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize learning tasks into group endeavors rather than the extreme emphasis on individualism and individual competition
4. Peer Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise students' experience in peer tutoring in the schools.
5. Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student is given more experience in developing and applying evaluative criteria and in grading and evaluating their own work and that of student colleagues.
6. Reasoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require the development, application, and sharpening of reasoning skills of students in classrooms and schools.
7. Problem-Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise students' experience in solving problems that are situated in realistic situations

8. Decision-Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for students to have continued practice in problem-solving for choosing among alternatives.
9. Obtaining & Using Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise students' experience in seeking and selecting the types of information that are needed for problem-solving and decision-making, obtaining it, and using it properly.
10. Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise students' experience in choosing activities and objectives and in setting out activities to meet those goals over a specific time horizon.
11. Learning Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require an orientation on how to embrace new learning situations as well as the inculcation of styles of learning that work effectively for mastering new skills and knowledge.
12. Multicultural Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize the study of foreign languages and cultures as well as experiences in human relations activities among different groups.

Adapted from Levin (1997)

As a whole, the implications are quite consistent with those above from the paradigm shift in learning, with strong emphasis on student-centred approach and clear linkage of innovative management and practice to each type of value-added competencies. For example, “self initiative” refers to students’ drive and creative ability to think and perform independently in learning. According to Levin (1997), the implication from this value-added competence for innovative practice is to put greater school focus on independent endeavors for students in learning activities in comparison with the present emphasis on school and teacher-directed activity.

“Working in groups” refers to the competence on social interaction in group work, that can direct towards both achieving the assigned task and developing the group relationship. The implication for innovative management of educational practice is to organize learning tasks into group endeavors rather than the extreme emphasis on individualism and individual competition in traditional practices of school management.

Similarly, the implications from all these 12 high value-added competencies can provide clear and concrete linkages of innovative

management of educational practices to facilitate students' active and effective learning and develop such competencies that are important to their future.

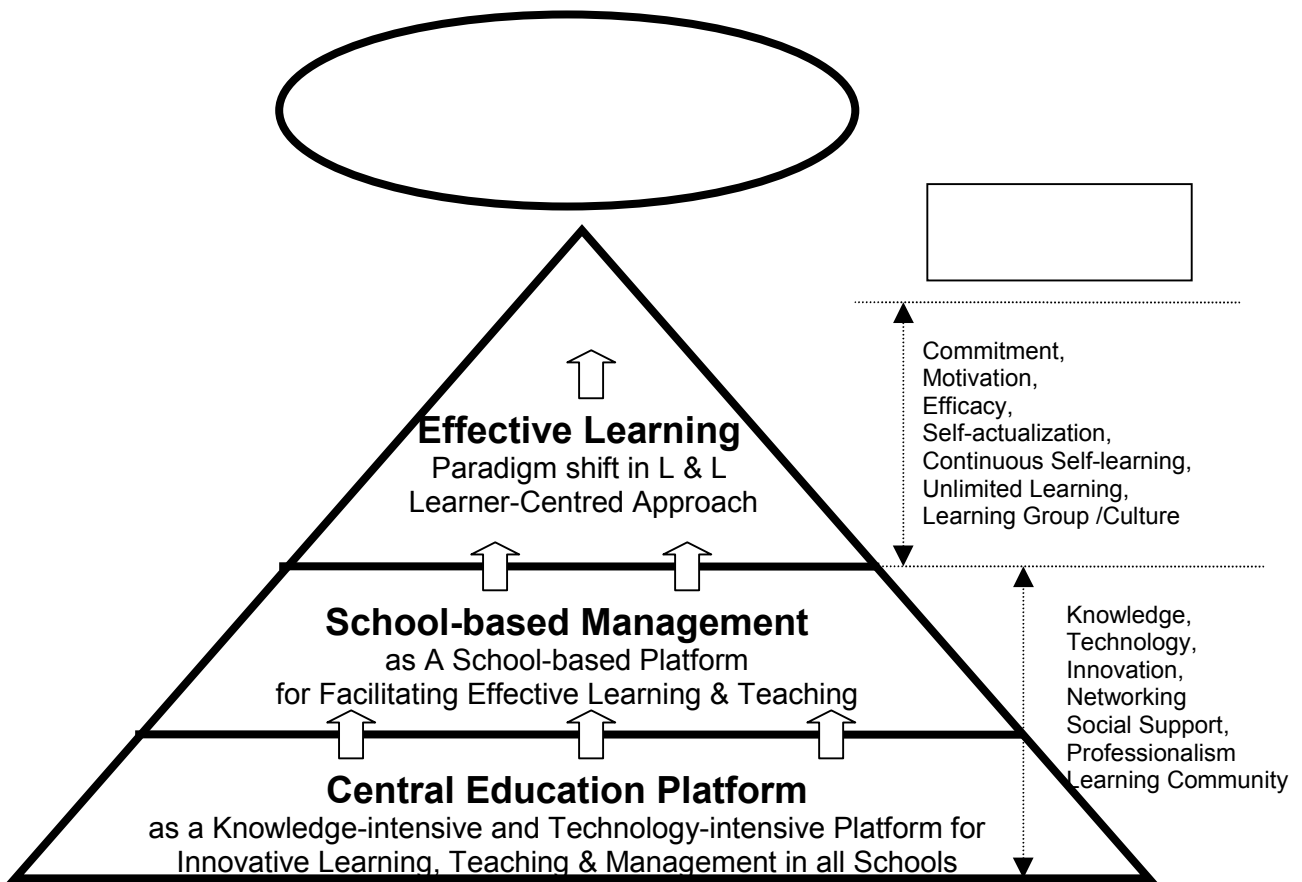
Platform Theory: Building Up Linkages for Effective Learning

The platform theory proposed by Cheng (2001b, c) can provide a comprehensive theoretical framework to review and conceptualize the linkage of innovative management with effective learning, teaching and schooling as shown in Figure 1.

Platform is a new powerful concept in conceptualizing and organizing various types of existing resources, technology, knowledge, and even social and cultural capital to form an intelligence-intensive and technology-intensive platform or supporting environment, that can enable and facilitate people to work and perform in a smart and optimal way. Unlike the traditional concept of organizational structure with focus on control and coordination, platform is mainly for supporting people with the necessary knowledge, technology and social environment such that they can have the maximum opportunity to develop themselves and perform at their highest potential in their work.

School-based management or educational decentralization should aim at developing as a *school-based platform* that can accumulate, organize and apply the necessary knowledge and technology, useful experiences, networks, various types of internal and external resources, and social support to support educational practice and innovation for effective teaching and learning, facilitate organizational learning, and develop a culture of professionalism within a school. For the detail of how school-based management can be developed such a platform or mechanism for continuous development and effectiveness, please refer to Cheng (1996).

**Figure 1:
Platform Theory for Effective Learning, Teaching and Schooling**



At the system or regional level, a *central education platform* should be formed with the support of information technology and various types of local and global networking. This central platform aims to pool up the most powerful and relevant knowledge, expertise and resources from local and global sources to create a more knowledge-intensive, technology-intensive and intelligence-intensive central base for supporting the development of all types of school-based platform and related initiatives. On this central platform, schools, teachers, and students can work on a higher level of knowledge to develop their school-based initiatives and avoid unnecessary wastage of time, resources and efforts due to repeated “re-inventing a wheel” or “start from scratch”. This central platform is also a huge network or learning community for sharing the advanced knowledge, best practices and experiences of success and failure among schools, educators and experts (Mok & Cheng, 2001).

The key elements of the school-based platform and central education platform are accumulation, dissemination, and application of knowledge

and technology to promote various types of innovation, networking and social support and develop a culture of professionalism and learning community in education, that can support paradigm shift in education and effective learning, teaching and schooling.

With the linkage and support of the school-based platform as well as the central platform, the key elements in effective learning and teaching are students and teachers' commitment, motivation and efficacy to promote and achieve learning as continuous self-actualization and self-learning and create unlimited opportunity for learning, developing learning groups, and evolving learning culture among students and teachers (Cheng, 2001b,c; Mok & Cheng, 2001).

Example of Linkage between School-Based Management and Student-Centred Approach in Hong Kong

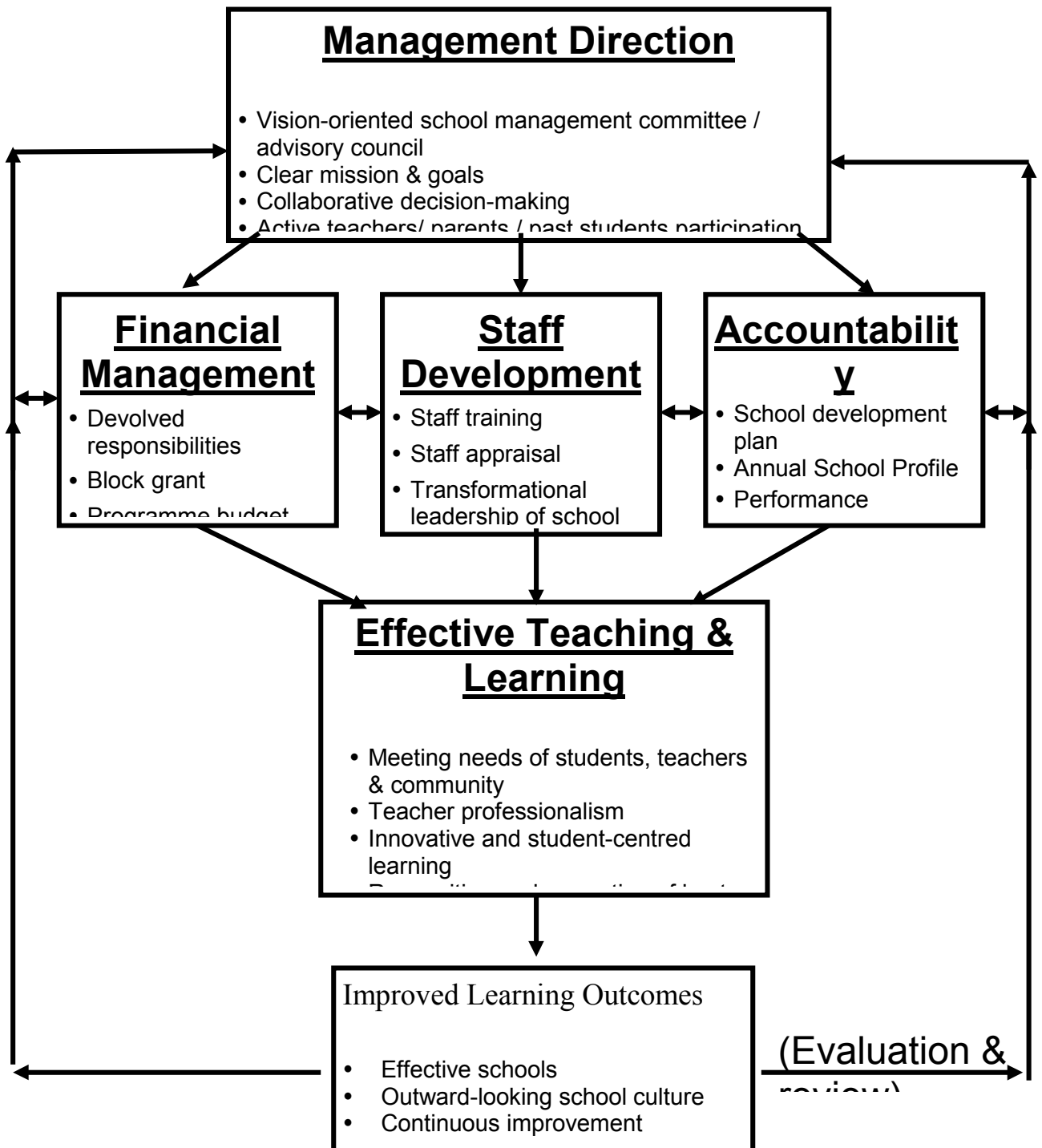
Hong Kong started the school reform towards school-based management in 1992. After a few years in successful implementation in over hundreds schools, all one thousand and two hundred public schools had to implement school-based management in 2000 (Education Commission, 1997). After reviewing the rationale, progress and experiences in December 1995, the Advisory Committee understood the importance to explicitly spell out and establish the linkage of school-based management to facilitating effective learning in the framework of school-based management. As shown in Figure 2, this framework sets closer linkages of management direction, financial management, staff development, and accountability converging to effective teaching and learning and improved learning outcomes (SMI Advisory Committee, 1995).

In order to ensure the effectiveness of educational decentralization to learning, a task group was established to evaluate the impacts of school-based management on educational practices since 1993. In 1997, the task group reported that the findings of the study of good practices and noticeable effects of school-based management implementation in some schools have summarized some important observations, as shown in Figure 3 (Task Group on Evaluation of SMI, 1997).

The findings indicate that the major components of school-based management -- including participation of teachers and parents in school

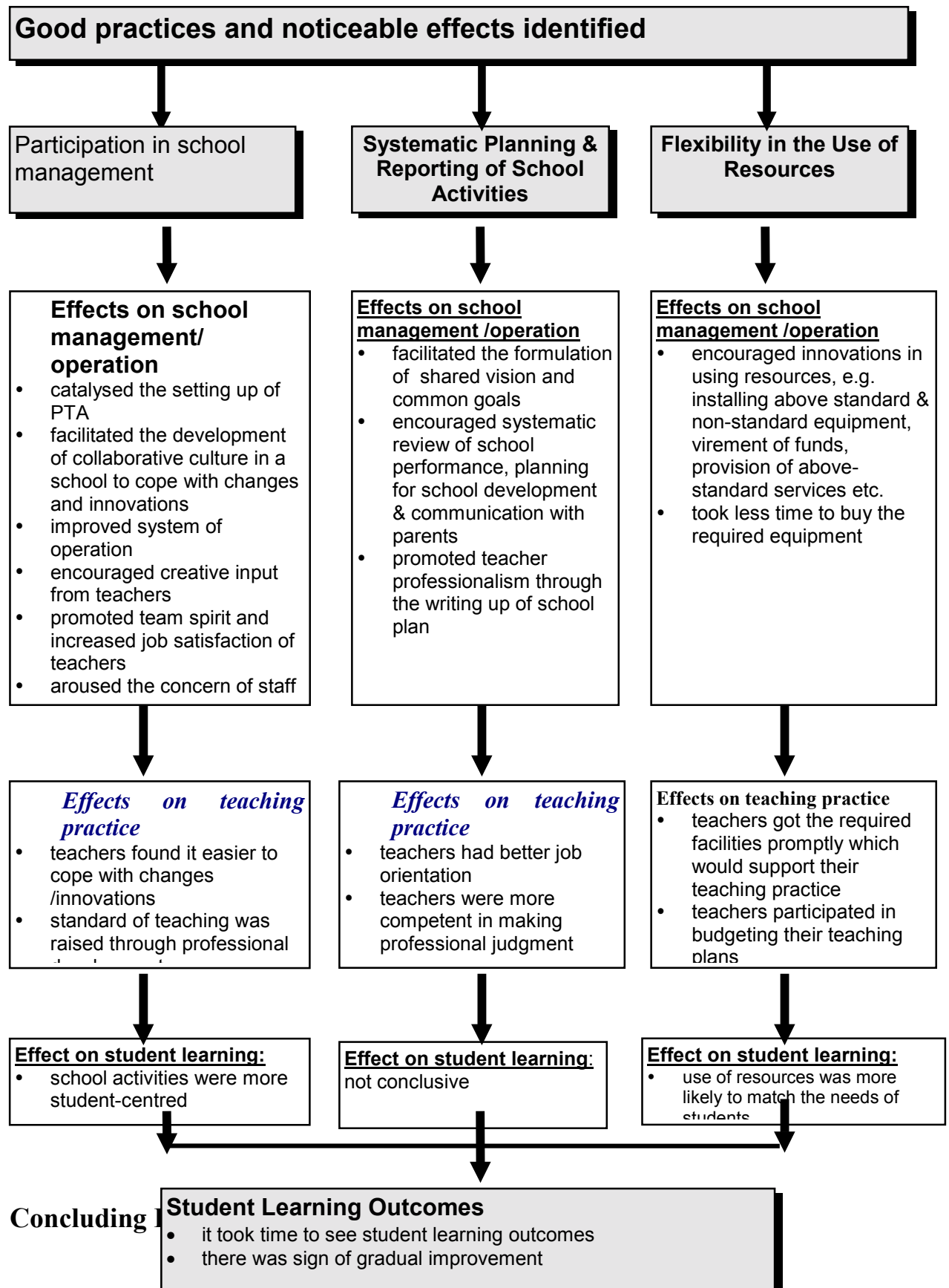
management, systematic planning and reporting of school activities, and flexibility in the use of resources -- can make a contribution to school management and operation, staff's teaching practice, and students' learning activities and outcomes. It is also clear that SBM provides better opportunities and school conditions for facilitating human initiative in such a way that key school actors are more motivated to develop their own effective practices in activities of managing, teaching, and learning to serve their school-based needs (Cheng & Cheung, 1999).

**Figure 3:
The Linkage between School-based Management and Effective Learning**



(Adapted From SMI Advisory Committee, 1995)

Figure 3: Summary of Findings of Practices and Effects
(from: Task Group on Evaluation of SMI, 1997)



The ongoing education reforms should aim at facilitating paradigm shift in learning and teaching and strengthening the linkage of innovative management or school-based management with student-centred approach for effective learning. The implications from the paradigm shift in education and pursuit of high value-added competencies ask for serious reconsideration and re-engineering of the process of learning, teaching and schooling. With the application of the platform theory, the school-based platform and the central education platform should be developed and built up to provide the intelligence-intensive, knowledge-intensive and technology-intensive platform and network for students and teachers to maximize their potential and create unlimited opportunity in achieving effective learning and teaching for students' future as life-long learners in the new century.

As an example, Hong Kong experience in school-based management may give some insights on building up the linkage between innovative management and student-centred approach in school education.

It is hoped that the implications from this paper will benefit those educators and leaders who are committed to building up a new education for their students to meet the challenges and pursue excellence in the future.

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Partnership with Key Stakeholders: Lessons Learned from the Thai Experiences

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The origins of Thai Schools began within the palace and the temples. Most of the early government schools were founded to train future government officials and courtiers. The temples, on the other hand, provided alternative education for the general public.

Over the years, the key stakeholders have expanded to include the following;

1. Religious leaders. Buddhist temples continued to play important roles in the Thai education system. Over 30 percent of the schools are situated within the temple grounds. More than 50 percent of the Thai schools receive financial supports from or through the temples. A popular practice is to make merits to the schools through the temples. Most schools benefit from religious teaching by the monks in nearby temples. One of the most effective anti-drug programmes for youth has been religious training camps organized by trained monks.

Other religious leaders have also been key supporters for education. Over 120 private religious schools in the South serving nearly 100,000 students are run by Muslim religious leaders. Around 80 private schools belong to the Catholic or Protestant Churches.

2. Community leaders. A large majority of rural schools were founded from the initiatives and the supports of local leaders. Generally, they provided the land and the first few buildings as well as lobbied the government for supports. In the past, once the schools had been formally established, the roles of community leaders gradually diminished to providing mainly financial supports and resources.

With the emerging trends towards community participation and the policy towards decentralization, however, community leaders have been more actively involved in school management. All the school boards are now required to appoint representatives from the community leaders as members.

The participation of community leaders, however, is not limited to board members or official matters. They help to enrich the learning and teaching processes with local wisdom, seek outside supports for the school, recruit students, serve as a buffer between the parents and the schools, look after the welfare of the students and monitor the overall management of the school.

3. Alumni Associations. For long established schools, the alumni associations serve as powerful supporters. They provide funds as well as technical assistance to both the teachers and the students. In many cases, the associations influence the policies of the schools as well as the

selections of the school principals, help to screen applicants to the schools, and serve as watchdogs for any changes impinging on the schools. One such powerful alumni association is the Suan Kularp Alumni Association which include 7 prime ministers. Through their nationwide network, they provide scholarships and help to subsidize a large number of extracurricular activities and academic programmes for students of the main school as well as the associated schools.

Alumni also return to help the schools individually or in small groups. Most of the schools marching bands, dance performance, cheer leading activities, and camps rely on alumni as trainers. Some university students also organize tutorial courses for secondary school graduates in their home towns.

4. The Parent and Teacher Association. Many secondary schools set up Parent and Teacher Association (PTA) to provide channels of communications between various stakeholders and the school leaderships. Over the years, the associations further serve as supporting bodies to provide more flexible mechanisms for soliciting funds and undertaking activities that may be restricted by the rigid government regulations.

5. School Committees. Since 1980, all primary schools are required to set up school committees to perform advisory functions. In 2000 all schools are required by the Education Act of 1999 to appoint school committee consisting of representatives from the parents, teachers, local government, community leaders, alumni and experts. One-third of the committee is required by regulation to be women. The committees are advisory in nature but they perform important functions such as approving the school development and financial plans as well as the curriculum. The present activities of the school committees are considered to be in the pilot phase. With the formation of the new Ministry, the present regulations which govern the selection process, the responsibilities and the operation of the committees will be revised, possibly with more authority entrusted to the committees.

6. Parent Network. An important development in secondary school within the past few years has been the establishment of parent networks to complement the more formal Parent and Teacher Associations. With the initiatives of the schools, the parents organize themselves into informal groups to meet regularly. Initially, their roles concentrate on assisting the schools to improve the learning and teaching process by providing resources, funds, contacts or their own professional services. Presently, their activities have been expanded to student welfare and protection. There are some clear indications that soon the parent networks will seek to take even more active roles in school management or even appointment of school principals.

In 2001, in cooperation on with the Department of Mental Health, the Department of General Education set up a student counseling and

assistance programmes in all schools. In such a scheme, the schools are required to assign every teacher to serve as advisor to the students in a ratio not exceeding 1:25. The advisor/teacher will meet regularly with the advisees in “homeroom” session. Moreover, the advisor will visit the students’ homes and invite the parents to come to classroom meeting every semester. The scheme has been highly successful in transforming the relationships among the teachers, the students and the parents.

In the cities, parents classroom meeting have led to the expansion of the parent networks. In the rural areas, however, home visits are more popular and have led to the formation of parent networks at the village level to help looking after the students outside the schools. Some schools even take the initiatives to organize mobile tutorial sessions into the village to teach students with earning disabilities and to help parents in assisting their children to do their homework.

7. Local government. According to the decentralization law of 1999, most of the government service functions including education will be gradually decentralized to local government within the year 2009. To be eligible for transfer of school ownership, however, the local government will have to pass assessment criteria in terms of capability and willingness to manage the schools. Due to the objections from certain teachers groups, some special schools will be exempted. The budget previously allocated through the various ministries will be channeled to local government, beginning with 20% in 2001 to 35% in 2006. Local governments also have representatives on the school committees.

Consequently, the relationships between the schools and the local government have gradually transformed. At present, local governments have helped to finance a variety of activities undertaken by the schools such as sports events, scholarships, construction of buildings and sports facilities and tutorial courses.

8. School leadership and Teachers. **In the past, the authority within the primary schools rest with the community or the district and the provincial offices while the authority within the secondary school belongs mostly to the school principals. The teachers generally were not involved in management and tended to work individually, concerning mainly on the learning and teaching process.**

With the new educational reform policies where participatory management and integration of disciplines are emphasized, the teachers are encouraged to work in teams. Various committees are formed to provide opportunities for teachers to share experiences and to participate in the management of the schools.

9. Students. Most secondary schools have long encouraged the formation of student councils. In the past, their roles and responsibilities have focused mainly on serving as the links between the school management and the student body and on assisting in the implementation of the school’s policies and activities. With the renewed concerned for

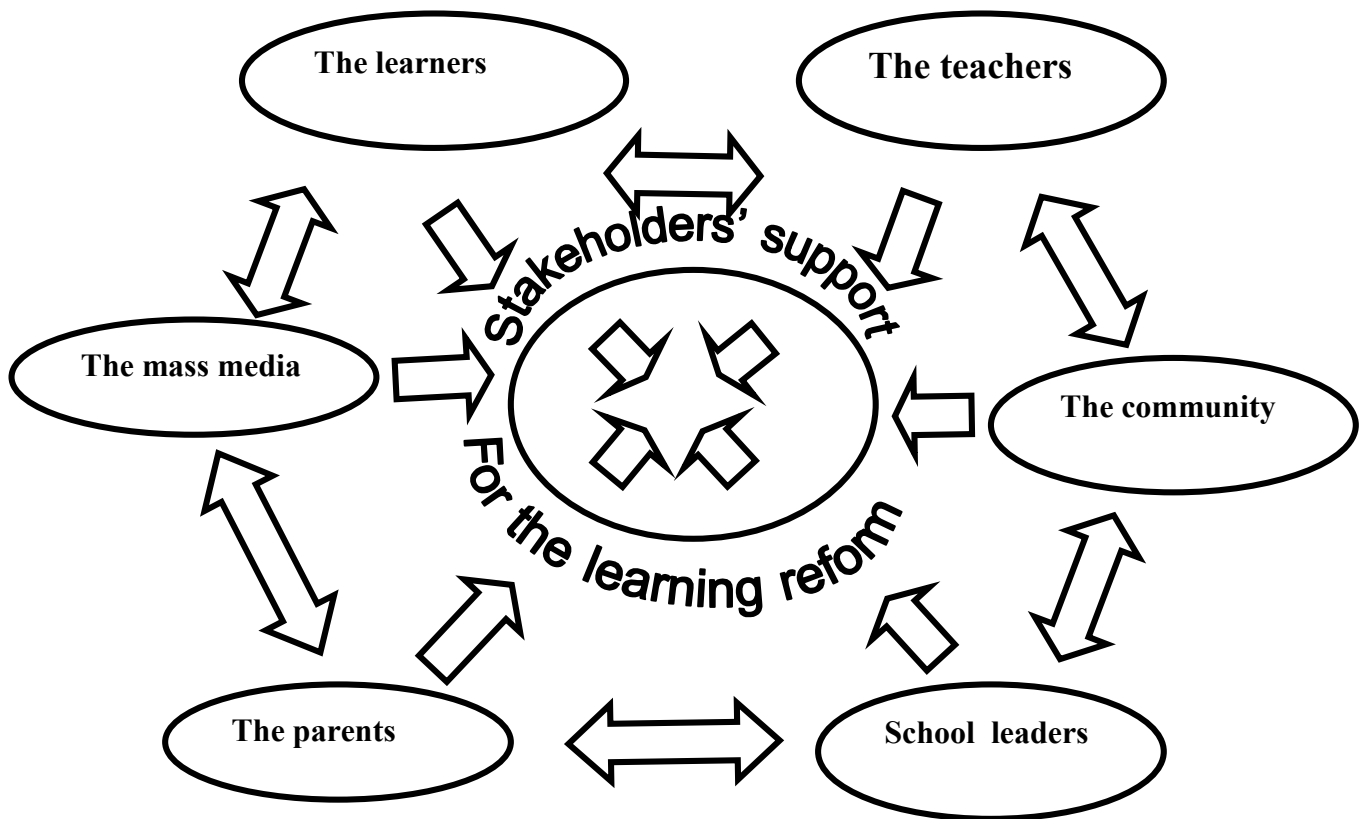
student centered educational approaches, there have been increasingly recognition for the needs to listen to the voices and opinion of the students as individuals and as groups.

Various mechanisms have been set up to provide the opportunity for the students to express their opinions on various issues. They include workshops and roundtables at national, provincial, district, and school levels, youth camps, training of young reporters and setting up of youth newscenters, regular television programmes entitled “The Voice of the Future” and the use of e-mail of communication within the schools. It must be noted that the widespread use of e-mail and mobile telephone further increase the access of the students, views to policy makers beyond the schools.

In 2001, the Department of General Education organized a nationwide training workshop to train students leaders to become aware of the new roles and responsibilities in representing the interests and the concerns of fellow students, to be able to manage students’ organizations effectively and to incorporate the concept of good governance in their work. The network of students leaders have been most effective in creating awareness both among the students themselves and the school management in giving more weights to the concerns of the students and in transforming students organization from management centered organization to student centered organizations.

Example from a school

At the field level, the roles and responsibilities of the key partners will differ from place to place. The example provided below illustrates how Suratani School in the South tries to promote the new partnerships on learning reform. The school identifies the key stakeholders as follows



School management is responsible for collaborating with the students and the teachers in organizing the learning process, in supporting learner centered learning activities, and in incorporating the outcomes from learning assessment in setting up development policies.

The parents are responsible for collaborating with the teachers and the schools in the education of their children, in supporting the learning process and in providing the necessary supports to their children.

The learners are responsible for identifying their own learning needs, striving to learn to the best of their abilities, applying learning acquired in schools to their own lives outside the schools.

The teachers are responsible for getting to know their students individually, organizing the learning activities that are relevant to the interests and the potentials of the learners, facilitating the learning process of the students and encouraging learner participation.

The community is responsible for providing learning resources.

The mass media is responsible for promoting better understanding about the new learning process to the learners, teachers, parents and the community.

Problems and Obstacles

While it is possible to visualize the new partnerships in principle but in practice there are many problems and obstacles to be tackled, some of which are described as follows;

1. The long tradition of government controlled and top down management of the schools impede active participation from other stakeholders. The schools are seen as the black box inaccessible to outsiders.

2. The burdens of the parents and their feelings of inferiority in dealing with academic and technical issues.

3. Government's reputations which give full authority to school directors or to the provincial office.

4. Short-term collaboration based on personal relationships rather than long term partnership, resulting in disruption of collaboration or conflicts with the changes of school leaderships.

5. Conflicts of interests (financial, political, personal) impinging on the participation.

6. Inadequate preparation of those involved for meaningful participation.

In order to deal with these problems, the following measures have been found to be effective.

1. Clear government policy towards participatory management, inclusion of participatory management indicators in quality and standards assessments and exemplary conducts of key leadership at all levels.

2. Greater decentralization of authority in management, finance, personnel and technical matters from national offices, provincial offices and school directors to school committees as the parent network and student organizations to work alongside the more formal organizations.

4. Support of teacher networks, club and working committees within the schools, the school districts and within the provinces.

5. Block allocation of budget to the schools to be used under the scrutiny of the school committees.

6. Training programs to help school leadership to make transition to more participatory school management and to equip key representatives from stakeholders to undertake new responsibilities, provision of venue for sharing of experiences and voicing opinions, are concrete opportunity for various stakeholders to work together and to build up alliances.

Experiences in the past few years have brought about more collaboration in school development and closer relationships among the stakeholders which would in turn lead to more effective partnerships.