

Country Report on School-based Management in Hong Kong SAR

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Executive Summary

The Hong Kong society is undergoing rapid changes in political, social, economic, demographic and global aspects. The government has mandated a large bundle of educational reforms. One of the major changes influencing Hong Kong schools is the implementation of school-based management (SBM) in the public sector schools.

Section 1: Concept and Definition of SBM in Hong Kong

In the Education Commission Report No. 7, the concept of SBM has been clearly defined. First, SBM is a means to achieve quality education by the involvement of school stakeholders. Second, under SBM, Hong Kong schools aim to “build a quality culture which is student-centred, school-based, open and accountable” (Education Commission, 1997, p. 17). Third, SBM should include some key elements that are in line with the spirit of School Management Initiative (SMI) for the enhancement of quality school education. To facilitate the implementation of SBM, the ED (now EMB) has streamlined administrative procedures and devolved more responsibilities to schools in three aspects, namely, personnel management, financial matters, and curriculum arrangement.

In Hong Kong, the majority of the school population is in the aided sector under the operation of school sponsoring bodies. In each sponsoring body, a school management committee consisting of a certain number of members is set up for the purpose of proper management of its school or schools. After the implementation of SBM, the decision-making authority of the EMB at the school level has been given to the school management committee of school sponsoring bodies.

Section 2: An Overview of the Process towards SBM during 1990-2003

The development of SBM in Hong Kong started in 1991. Since then, there have been three stages: initiation, implementation and institutionalization. The initiation of School Management Initiative (SMI) in 1991 was a significant step towards the development of SBM in Hong Kong. The SMI adopted the concept of an effective school system and suggested 18 recommendations. At the early stage of the implementation of SMI, schools were free to join the SMI scheme. Because of the attraction of gaining more resources and flexibility of using resources after joining the SMI scheme, the number of SMI schools increased drastically in 1997. The findings of the study of good practices and noticeable effects of the SMI implementation in some schools seemed quite promising.

The introduction of the SMI offered a framework for SBM proposed in the Commission Report No. 7 in 1997. In the report, it was recommended that all schools should implement SBM by the year 2000. Since 2000, government and subsidized schools in Hong Kong have started the implementation. In February 2000, the government issued a consultation document, entitled “Transforming Schools into Dynamic and Accountable Professional Learning Communities: School-based Management Consultation Document”, aiming to solicit views and comments from the public on the new structure and formation of school-based council in schools. The proposal has been published in the form of a blueprint, entitled “Education (Amendment) Bill 2002”, which is currently undergoing the process of enactment by the Hong Kong Legislative Council and will be passed at the end of this year.

Section 3: Key Constraints to SBM in Hong Kong

Key constraints to SBM in Hong Kong were identified from some recent local research. Findings of the studies indicated the uncertainties and obstacles encountered in various stages in the process of implementing SBM in Hong Kong. Sponsoring bodies seem worrying about their future control of schools in the newly restructured of the school management committee. The preparedness of these stakeholders seems to be a question. Principals’ transformational and curriculum leadership seems to be weak. The culture of collegiality and collective decision making does not prevail in most schools. Teachers’ excessive time demands and middle managers’ difficulty in the workplace are also key hindrances to the implementation of SBM.

Section 4: Programmes Overcoming Constraints

In the government policy documents such as Commission Reports No. 4, 5 and 7, and Continuing Professional Development for School Excellence (Education Department, 2002), policy makers have suggested ways to cope with the implementation of SBM. Major ones clued the provision of training for school managers, promotion of home-school relation and professional development for principals.

Section 5: Future Trends and Plans

Hong Kong schools are facing great challenges in the years to come. The major challenges are the realization of the effectiveness of implementing SBM and the smooth transformation of the school management committee in each school. There are other issues that need more attention, e.g., school middle managers’ training, reduction of teachers’ workload and providing time and resources for them, and promotion of collegiality and shared decision-making in schools.

Introduction

“Change is ubiquitous and relentless, forcing itself on us at every turn” (Fullan, 1993, p. vii). We live in an era of change. Environment around us is changing and we have to adapt to these changes. In Hong Kong, the society is undergoing rapid changes in political, social, economic, demographic and global aspects. The government mandated a large bundle of educational reforms. One of the major changes influencing Hong Kong schools is the implementation of school-based management (SBM) in primary and secondary schools in the public sector. Fullan (1999) states: “It is time now to move even deeper into the analysis and action implications of studying the dynamics of change forces in educational reform” (p. ix). This paper aims to review the major concepts, trends and processes of SBM initiated in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of The People’s Republic of China.

The Hong Kong Education Commission proposed SBM in its Report No. 7 in 1997 for the purpose of increasing effectiveness and improving the quality of education. In the report, it was recommended that all Hong Kong schools in the public sector should practise SBM by the year 2000 (Education Commission, 1997). Since then, all government and subsidized schools in Hong Kong have implemented SBM. They have been given more autonomy in decision-making in key areas such as resources, curriculum and personnel.

Section 1: Concept and Definition of SBM in Hong Kong

In the Education Commission Report No. 7, the concept of SBM has been clearly defined. First, SBM is a means to achieve quality education by the involvement of school stakeholders. The report states:

Quality assurance within schools can best be achieved through practising school-based management, which allows key players of school education to participate in setting school goals and developing quality indicators which best meet the needs of schools and students (p. 16).

Second, under SBM, Hong Kong schools aim to “build a quality culture which is student-centred, school-based, open and accountable” (Education Commission, 1997, p. 17). Third, according to the Education Commission Report 7, SBM should include some key elements that are in line with the spirit of School Management Initiative (SMI) for the enhancement of quality school education:

- (a) development of formal procedures for setting school goals and evaluating progress towards these goals;
- (b) provision of documents to outline the schools’ profiles, development plans and budgets, and means of evaluating progress;
- (c) preparation of written constitutions for the school management committees;
- (d) participation of teachers, parents and alumni in school management, development, planning, evaluation and decision-making; and
- (e) development of formal procedures and resources for staff appraisal and staff development according to teachers’ needs (p. 17).

Recently, the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) (previous known as the Education Department (ED)) (2000) summarized the concept and definition in its web site as follows:

SBM aims to devolve more responsibilities to schools and provide them with enhanced flexibility and autonomy in managing their own operation and resources and planning for school development, with increased accountability at the same time. Through SBM, schools will develop a management system to ensure the quality of learning and teaching. Hence, SBM is a management framework which is school-based, student-centred and quality-focused (p. 1).

Aspects of Education and Responsibilities Being Decentralized

To facilitate the implementation of SBM, the ED (now EMB) has streamlined administrative procedures and devolved more responsibilities to schools in three aspects, namely, personnel management, financial matters, and curriculum arrangement.

In personnel management, the ED used to approve appointment and promotion of teachers, employment of substitute teachers and teachers' leave applications by itself, but now all of these authorities have been given to schools. Also, additional resources have been provided to schools in this aspect to facilitate the implementation of SBM. With effect from the academic year of 1999 to 2000, all schools in the public sector have been granted a "Supplementary Grant" to pay for expenses on extra clerical and administrative support for the implementation of SBM. Starting from the academic year of 2000 to 2001, a "Block Grant" funding arrangement has been introduced to enable schools to consolidate various non-salary grants so that schools can deploy their resources flexibly and effectively.

In the financial aspect, from the academic year of 2000 to 2001 onwards, the Hong Kong government has approved a "Capacity Enhancement Grant" to schools to contract out services and employ additional staff to relieve teachers' workload in implementing school reforms such as school-based curriculum and students' language proficiency. In addition, tendering and purchasing procedures have been revised to suit the financial management of schools. Moreover, schools have been given the autonomy to use non-government funds for school purposes like teaching and staff development.

With regard to curriculum arrangement, the concept of school-based curriculum development has been promoted. Schools have been encouraged to decide on the contents that suit their students. When schools design their own school-based curriculum, they are encouraged to develop a whole-school plan based on their school mission, school strengths and the targets of the current curriculum reform. In 2002, the Hong Kong Curriculum Development Council developed a basic education curriculum guideline on curriculum planning, learning and teaching and assessment.

Responsibilities Being Given

In Hong Kong, the majority of the school population is in the aided sector under the operation of school sponsoring bodies. There are many types of sponsoring bodies such as religious bodies (Protestant, Catholic, Buddhist, Taoist, etc.), welfare bodies, clan associations, rural schools, alumni associations, and trade associations. Many of these sponsoring bodies managed a number of primary and secondary schools. In each sponsoring body, a school management committee (or school council) consisting of a certain number of members is set up for the purpose of proper management of its school or schools. After the implementation of SBM, the decision-

making authority of the EMB (previously ED) such as personnel management, financial matters, and curriculum arrangement has been given to the school management committee of school sponsoring bodies. The principal is “the paid chief executive responsible for the overall management of the school” (Education Commission, 1997, p. 40) and s/he is the person who gets the authority decentralized from the EMB.

As Murphy and Beck (1995) point out, the SBM may at least take three different forms: administrative control, professional control and community control. According to Cheng and Chan (2000), most SMI schools in Hong Kong “maintain a form of administrative control SBM in which the authority decentralized mainly goes to the school sponsoring body (SSB), school management committee and principals but not too much to teachers and parents” (p. 211).

Section 2: An Overview of the Process Towards SBM During 1990-2003

In Hong Kong, compulsory education began in the 1970s and there was a great need of extending rapidly from primary education to junior secondary education. During the 1970s and 1980s, the Hong Kong government had put much effort to the provision of sufficient places for every child of compulsory school age. A large number of primary and secondary schools were built to meet the great demand of educational opportunities (Education Commission, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1990). The development of SBM in Hong Kong started in 1991. Since then, there have been three stages: initiation, implementation and institutionalization (Fullan, 1991).

Initiation Stage: The SMI

During the last decade, the government turned its attention towards the improvement of educational quality in schools. Policy makers were aware that “the success of individual quality improvement measures will be limited if schools are not able to draw effectively on the skills, energy and commitment of every member of the school community” (Education and Manpower Branch and Education Department, 1991, p. 1). A policy document entitled “The School Management Initiative (SMI): Setting the framework for quality in Hong Kong schools” was issued in 1991.

The initiation of SMI in 1991 was a significant step towards the development of SBM in Hong Kong. Cheng (1996) agrees that SMI as a school-based approach “can be developed as an effective mechanism for monitoring and enhancing education quality in Hong Kong” (xvii). The SMI adopted the concept of an effective school system. Its characteristics were depicted in the document (Education and Manpower Branch and Education Department, 1991, pp. 27-28). They included clearly stated educational goals, a well-organized school-based curriculum development scheme, a systematic process for determining educational needs, high expectation of students’ performance, high involvement of teachers in making decisions, a teaching force with team spirit, and principal’s assurance of regular evaluation of programmes.

The document painted a bleak picture of the school education in Hong Kong. It pointed out that the outcomes of school education were less effective than they should be. Problems in schools were identified; major ones included: “inadequate management structures and processes; poorly defined roles and responsibilities; the absence or inadequacy of performance measures; an emphasis on detailed controls rather than frameworks of responsibilities and accountabilities, an emphasis on cost control at the margins rather than cost effectiveness and value for money” (Education

and Manpower Branch and Education Department, 1991, p. 9). The document suggested 18 recommendations to define the roles and responsibilities throughout the education system and improve management systems for defining objectives and evaluating results. Recommendations 1, 3 to 10 define an appropriate management framework for schools:

1. The emphasis in ED's relations with aided sector should change from detailed control and advice, within a framework defining responsibilities and accountabilities at all levels in the education system.

3. ED should obtain expert help to define the information needs of the schools education programme and develop appropriate management information systems.

4. The roles of those responsible for delivering education in schools should be defined more clearly.

5. Every school management committee should be required to prepare a constitution setting out the aims and objectives of the school and the procedures and practices by which it will be managed.

6. The role and the legal/contractual position of the sponsor in respect of school management should be clarified.

7. The role and duties of the Supervisor in relation to the school management committee and Principal should be reviewed.

8. The role and responsibilities of the Principal should be set out in a Principal's Manual.

9. Formal staff reporting procedures should be required in all aided schools.

10. School management frameworks should allow for participation in decision making, according to formal procedures, by all concerned parties including: all teaching staff; the principal; the school management committee; and (to an appropriate degree) parents and students.

Recommendations 11 to 15 focus on the financial management of schools:

11. Funds for aided schools should be provided as far as possible in the form of a block grant. Each school should have authority to decide its own spending pattern in the light of central education policies and its own defined needs.

12. As a first in encouraging more awareness among school managers of all their resources, schools should have discretion to use savings from up to 5% vacancies for any staff or non-staff purpose.

13. While government grants should be sufficient for a school to provide an acceptable standard of education, schools should have more flexibility to tap sources of non-government funding for above standard items. In particular, they should be permitted to charge Tong Fai to all pupils, up to a reasonable amount.

14. The government should ensure that the sponsor's contribution continues to represent a reasonable proportion of the cost of setting up a school.

15. In the longer term, serious consideration should be given to the merging of salary and non-salary grants.

Recommendations 17 and 18 set an assurance mechanism for schools:

17. Each school in the public sector should produce an annual School Plan to guide its activities during the year.

18. Each school should prepare an annual School Profile covering its activities in the previous year and detailing school performance in a number of key areas.

As mentioned above, the implementation of SBM in 2000 in Hong Kong must be in line with the spirit of SMI. Hence, SMI is still an important policy document to refer to.

Implementation Stage

At the early stage of the implementation of SMI, schools were free to join the SMI scheme. Cheng (1992) did a large-scale survey involving 241 aided secondary schools in February 1992. Findings indicated that teachers, principals and supervisors showed positive attitudes toward all the recommendations except Recommendation 15 which was related to the merging of salary and non-salary grants. There was positive and negative feedback. According to Cheng and Cheung (1999), respondents slightly agreed that the SMI recommendations would be practical. However, they were not sure that the SMI recommendations would improve the quality of classroom instruction. Also, Cheng and Cheung (1999) found that “at the beginning stage of the SMI implementation, the school key actors had a number of perceived uncertainties about the meaning, functions, and the rationale of SMI and of the difficulties and hindrances in implementation” (p. 29).

Because of the attraction of gaining more resources and flexibility of using resources after joining the SMI scheme, the number of SMI schools increased from 21 secondary schools in 1992 to 148 secondary and 199 primary and 18 special schools in 1997. The total number of schools was about 30% of the whole school population (nearly 1300 schools) in Hong Kong. In between 1992 to 1997, the Task Group of Evaluation of the SMI of the Advisory Committee on SMI conducted a series of studies to investigate the induction, implementation and impacts of this policy: The first survey of evaluation of Phase 1 of the SMI scheme (1993); the second survey of evaluation of Phase 1 of the SMI scheme (1994); the evaluation of Phase 3 of the SMI scheme (1995); the study of good practices and noticeable effects of the SMI implementation in some schools. According to Cheng and Cheung (1999), pilot schools joined in 1992 (Phase 1) and schools participated in 1995 (Phase 3) tended to have positive responses towards the scheme in spite of the difficulties and problems they met in the process of change. The findings of the study of good practices and noticeable effects of the SMI implementation in some schools seemed quite promising. They indicated that “the major components of SMI, 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” (Cheng & Cheung, 1999, p. 33).

Institutionalization Stage I: Compulsory Implementation of SBM in 2000

The introduction of SMI in 1991 offered a framework for SBM proposed in the Commission Report No. 7 in 1997 for the purpose of increasing the effectiveness and improving the quality of education in schools. In the report (Education Commission, 1997), it was recommended that “all schools should have put in place school-based management by the year 2000, so that they can develop quality school education with greater flexibility in the use of resources, and according to the needs and characteristics of their students” (p. 17). Since 2000, government and subsidized schools in Hong Kong have started the implementation.

Institutionalization Stage II: SBM Consultation Document in 2000 and Education (Amendment) Bill 2002

In February 2000, the government issued a consultation document, entitled “Transforming Schools into Dynamic and Accountable Professional Learning Communities: School-based Management Consultation Document”, aiming to solicit views and comments from the public on the new structure and formation of school-based council in schools. It was stated that schools “have to work in partnership with parents and the wider community in order to harness their support and tap their resources in providing every student with learning experiences suited to individual aptitude and needs” (p. 1). Thus, through a new spirit of professionalism from teachers, enhanced leadership from principals and deeper commitments from parents and the community, the quality of education in schools the education quality would be improved. In order to put into practice the idea of involving the stakeholders into the school-based council, the Advisory Committee on SBM proposed a school management framework, recommendations on the composition and legal status of School Management Committees and responsibilities of school managers. The proposal was particularly sought on responses from the following areas: constitution on school management committees, membership of school management committees, registration of school management committees as incorporated bodies, maximum number of schools to be served by each school manager, disclosure of personal data and declaration of interests by school managers, attendance of school managers at school management committee meetings, qualifications of school managers, transition period for restructuring school management committees. The summarized proposals (Advisory Committee on SBM, 2000) were as follows:

- Each school management committee to be registered as an incorporated body under the Education Ordinance;
- Membership of a School Management Committee:
 - Up to 60% of the total membership nominated by the SSB;
 - The principal;
 - 2 or more teacher managers, to be elected by the teaching staff;
 - 2 or more parent managers, to be elected by the parent-teacher association;
 - 1 or more alumni managers, to be elected by the alumni association; and
 - 1 or more independent managers, to be elected by the school management committee from among community members and relevant professionals.
- Each School Management Committee to draft its own constitution, stipulating the composition and responsibilities of the school management committee and the ways in which the school will be managed;
 - the number of schools which managers may serve on to be limited to five – in order to ensure that managers have sufficient energy and time to perform their function properly;
 - the names of school managers, their tenure and the sector they represent to be public information;
 - school managers to declare any personal interests which may be in conflict with the best interests of the school (including the interests of relatives, friends and business associates) and anything which may be construed to confer financial advantage or other benefits; and
 - school managers to be eligible for office between the ages of 21 and 70.

The consultation period for the new structure of school management committee lasted for three months. After considering various views and suggestions, it was decided to reduce the number of teacher managers and parent managers from “2 or more” to “one or more”. Finally, the proposal has been published in the form of a blueprint, entitled “Education (Amendment) Bill 2002”, which is currently undergoing the process of enactment by the Hong Kong Legislative Council and will probably be passed at the end of this year.

Section 3: Key Constraints to SBM in Hong Kong

Key constraints to SBM in Hong Kong are identified from some recent local research. They are classified and discussed in the following five areas: school sponsoring bodies’ concern, parents’ preparedness, principals’ leadership, teachers’ collegiality and collaboration, and atmosphere of collective decision making.

Sponsoring Bodies’ Concern

In the consultation process, the ED has endeavored to communicate with different sponsoring bodies to gain their support of its proposal and the future structure of the school management committee in implementing SBM. At present, many sponsoring bodies do not have teacher and parent representatives in their school management committees or school councils. Cheng and Chan (2000) believe that the implementation of the SBM in Hong Kong will create competition for power and resources among key school actors. Sponsoring bodies share the same view. If there are too many representatives from teachers, parents, and alumni, who do not have the vision, values and beliefs as their sponsoring bodies, power struggles and political conflict may happen in the new school management committees (Flinspach & Ryan, 1994). This was one big reservation that they had about the whole proposal.

Another challenge sponsoring bodies are facing in future is that it will be more difficult for them to invite people to be members of their school management committees. Under the new bill, each subsidized school will establish an incorporated management committee to manage the school and each school will be treated as a unique organization. Civil disputes arising from, for example, teacher’s negligence in school may cause members of the school management committee to bear a certain degree of civil legal liability. To avoid the possibility of being in trouble, people may refuse to be nominated as members of school management committees.

In Hong Kong, at present, each sponsoring body has only one school management committee (or school council) to manage its school or schools. A small number of people (usually between ten to thirty) are invited to be members of the school management committee (or managers of the school). But under the new bill, each school must set up a school management committee of its own. That is to say, if a sponsoring body has fifty schools, then it has to set up fifty school management committees. The more schools a sponsoring body possesses, the more managers it has to invite. In addition, according to the new bill, up to 60% of the total membership in the school management committee can be nominated by the school sponsoring body, but a manager is not allowed to serve over five schools. This new arrangement affects large sponsoring bodies most because it will be a great challenge for them to invite a large number of managers who share the same or similar vision, values and beliefs to serve their schools.

Parents' Preparation

The government of Hong Kong is prepared to pass the Education (Amendment) Bill 2002 in order to involve all stakeholders in school management. However, Cheng (1995) agreed to a research finding that "Hong Kong parents, for example, are highly concerned with school affairs, but were reluctant to participate in detailed school decision making" (p. 97). Recently, Ng (1999) has conducted a study in Hong Kong about the perception of both parents and school personnel on parents' participation at different levels of school activities. He found that most of the school personnel demonstrated unwelcome attitudes towards parental involvement and parents themselves did not like to become managers. He concluded that "[t]he intent of involving parents in school management recommended in SMI has not yet been fully realized" (p. 557). Walker (2002) has similar view that "parents in Hong Kong are often reluctant to actively participate in school-level decision-making" (p. 131).

Principal Leadership

"Rightly or wrongly, the principal often stands at the centre of school level reform" (Walker, 2002, 120). Much recent literature emphasized principal leadership as a crucial factor in recent educational change and school reforms (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Cheng, 1997; Fullan, 1991; Hallinger & Murphy, 1991; Hunt, 1999; Leithwood, Jantzi & Fernandez, 1999; Senge, 1990; Yu, Leithwood & Jantzi, 2002). In fact, the principal is the key person in the actual implementation of SBM. He plays a vital role in the successful implementation of SBM. Yu (2002) conducted a large-scale survey started in 1998 on teachers' perceptions of principal's transformational leadership and found that Hong Kong primary school principals' transformational leadership tendency was not strong. Among the eight transformational dimensions, the highest rated dimension was "holding high expectation" on teachers' professional growth and students' performance. Other dimensions were relatively low. Principals did not demonstrate enough appropriate practices for teachers to follow. Their effort made to share vision and build goals was insufficient. They did not take adequate initiative to change teachers' values, beliefs and attitude towards the implementation of change. Many of them did not know how to provide intellectual stimulation, and their support for teachers seemed to be inconsistent. Besides, in implementing school-based curriculum reform, principals were weak in direct involvement in curriculum leadership (Cheng, 2000). There is no surprise that, as mentioned above, many schools maintain a form of the administrative control SBM, the decentralized authority goes to the SSB, school management committees and principals but not too much to teachers and parents.

Teachers' Collegiality and Collaboration

Much evidence shows that school success depends on its organizational culture. Some aspects of school culture are conducive to the implementation of SBM such as shared vision and values, strong collaboration teamwork, student-centred style of teaching. In 2000, Yu and Yeung (2003) conducted a survey aiming to explore the culture of schools in Hong Kong. The final achieved sample included 285 teachers from 11 schools. The findings showed that there was a rather weak culture in the sampled schools. Teachers agreed that helping students learn was their important work and they engaged in ongoing professional development for themselves.

However, the data indicated the lack of collegiality and collaboration in teaching among teachers. Collaborative practices like co-planning, and sharing of professional experiences and pedagogical innovations were rare. The data showed school administrators' inadequacy in protection of teachers' classroom instructional time. The findings pointed out that the school administrators were poor in leading teachers to share their' values, beliefs and attitudes related to teaching and learning. The data also suggested that the schools were weak in providing the necessary organizational structures to enable a risk-taking and collaborative culture to emerge. It is argued that the goals of SBM will not be achieved unless and until the school culture become more productive and collaborative. A closely related challenge under SBM is how schools can create a collaborative and learning culture in them.

Atmosphere of Collective Decision-Making

SBM policy challenges schools to promote staff ownership by fostering the atmosphere of collective decision-making. Sarason (1990) highlights the advantage of greater teacher participation in decision making in schools: “[W]hen a process makes people feel that they have a voice in matters that affect them, they will have greater commitment to the overall enterprise and will take greater responsibility for what happens to the enterprise” (p. 61). However, recent local research in Hong Kong showed unfavorable results in this issue. Yu (2002) has conducted a teacher survey (952 respondents in 107 primary schools) in Hong Kong and found that the atmosphere of collective decision-making was not being fostered within schools. Similarly, the results of Chan's (2000) survey measuring the shared decision-making (294 teachers in over fifty SMI primary schools) indicated that only 41% of the teachers admitted that they had authority in important decision areas and 42% of them thought that they had influence in deciding the goals of the schools. Also, Dimmock and Walker's (1998) research in Hong Kong reached a similar conclusion that “[p]rincipal reserved the right to make final decision, and this was accepted by teachers. However, input to decision making was limited to senior staff and was mainly through formal than rather informal channels. ... Principals accepted the rhetoric more than the reality of teacher involvement in decision making” (p. 488). There are two possible reasons. First, principals were reluctant to promote that kind of atmosphere because some principals, like some leaders, might base it on the traditional concept that followers were incompetent, subjective and lacking in vision, so principals made most of the decisions in schools. Senge (1990) explains the crises: “At its heart, the traditional view of leadership is based on assumptions of people's powerless, their lack of personal vision and inability to master the forces of changes, deficits which can be remedied only by a few great leader (p. 340). Second, an alternative explanation for this phenomenon can be interpreted as a kind of culture. Norms such as seniority and obedience influenced by Confucian values, are still be prevailing in some organizations. As Hartog et al. (1999) point out that “in some cultures, one might need to take strong decisive action in order to be seen as a leader” (p. 225). Some principals might want to make final decisions to show that they were leaders of the schools. Under this condition, teachers' collective decision making is difficult to appear.

Other constraints were excessive time demands for teachers. In Chan's (2000) study, 82% of teachers agreed that they were busier than before. In addition, school middle managers were working under great pressure in implementing the government's systemic reforms such as SBM and curriculum reform in Hong Kong.

They faced a great challenge to deal with difficulty of following principals' instructions and at the same time persuading peer teachers to implement school reforms. They hoped to better equip themselves and have more training in educational management and leadership (Yu, 2003).

Section 4: Programmes Overcoming Constraints

In the government policy documents such as Commission Reports No. 4, 5, and 7 (1990, 1992, 1997), and Continuing Professional Development for School Excellence (Education Department, 2002), policy makers have suggested ways to cope with the implementation of SBM. Major ones include the provision of training for school managers, promotion of home-school relation and professional development for principals.

Training for School Managers

Since 2000, the ED has been providing training for both newly appointed and serving school managers of aided primary and secondary schools. It has conducted a series of briefing sessions and experience sharing for members of Aided School Management Committees throughout the year. These training sessions cover topics on SBM and the roles and responsibilities of school managers, curriculum development and school-based curriculum, quality assurance inspection, planning and evaluation for school development, personnel management and staff development, financial management and legal aspects of managing a school, outlook of Hong Kong education reform, and thematic seminars such as clean school management and equal opportunities in school management, etc. Also, a booklet for school managers has been printed outlining the major responsibilities of school managers and the support from the ED. School managers' powers and responsibilities are identified. The major ones are as follows: To construct a shared school mission, to draw up school policies, to approve the annual school plan and annual report, to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum, to approve school budget, to set criteria and procedures for handling personnel matter, to maintain the school premises in safe and hygienic conditions, to be accountable to the ED, the sponsoring body, parents and the public, to encourage the participation of parents in school activities and their children's learning.

Home-School Relation Development

At present, nearly all government and aided schools in Hong Kong have organized parent associations or parent-teacher associations to promote home-school relation. In Hong Kong, the ED has started the promotion of home-school relation since 1991 as mentioned in the SMI policy document (Education and Manpower Branch and Education Department, 1991). According to Recommendation 10 (p. 37) in the document, schools are encouraged to organize parent-teacher associations and have parental representation on the school management committee. In the Education Commission Report No. 5 (Education Commission, 1992), the policy makers made recommendation to set up a standing committee with members from school councils, teacher organizations, parents' groups and the ED to advise on ways to promote home-school cooperation. Besides, both the Education Commission Report No. 7 and the Education (Amendment) Bill 2002 suggested the involvement of teacher and parent participation in school management. In order to promote an effective home-

school-community partnership, general principles are provided in the SBM web-site for reference.

Principal Continuous Professional Development

The transformation of the school management committees needs adequate professional development for principals. Principals are the key persons in implementing SBM in schools. They should strengthen their role in the building of shared vision and goals, teamwork with teachers, cooperation with parents, etc.

Traditionally, there was a training programme for newly appointed principals. It was a nine-day induction course for secondary school principals or ten-day induction course for primary school principals. These courses offered by the ED aimed to provide newly appointed principals with basic knowledge in school management.

By 1999, a task group on professional development of principals was set up to develop a conception of a comprehensive programme including preparatory components. This programme, “Leadership Training Programme for Principals”, was open for public consultation. However, the result seemed to be unfavourable. Subsequent to this consultation, the ED set up another group, “Working Group on the Professional Development of Principals”, in June 2001 and invited experts from the universities and experienced frontline practitioners to develop a continuous professional framework and different requirements for aspiring principals, newly appointed principals and serving principals. The Group worked out a proposal, entitled “Continuing Professional Development for School Excellence: Consultation Paper on Continuing Professional Development of Principals” (Education Department, 2002), and published it in February 2002. The proposal was given a period of three month’s public consultation. After considering various views and suggestions, the ED announced the full implementation of the principals’ continuous professional development framework at the end of June 2002.

The framework includes three interrelated components: beliefs, four leadership domains and six core areas of leadership. The statement of beliefs provides basic underpinnings for principals’ continuous professional development. The leadership domains include strategic leadership, instructional leadership, organizational leadership, and community leadership. The core areas of leadership needed by Hong Kong principals are values, knowledge, skills and attributes. These areas comprise strategic direction and policy environment, learning, teaching and curriculum, teacher professional growth and development, staff and resources management, quality assurance and accountability, and external communication and connection to the outside world.

There are different requirements for aspiring principals, newly appointed principals and serving principals. Aspiring principals are required to meet the requirements of Certification for Principalship. From 2004/05 academic year, aspirants will have to attain the Certificate before they can be considered for appointment to principalship. Newly appointed principals are required to undergo designated courses throughout the first two years of principalship. The courses include four parts: the needs assessment for principals in Hong Kong, an induction programme, a school leadership development programme, and an extended programme. Serving principals are required to undertake 50 hours professional development activities per year or adding up to a minimum of 150 hours every three years. The activities they undertake should cover all three modes: structured learning, action learning, and service to education and the community.

Section 5: Future Trends and Plans

In the above-mentioned sections, the concept and definition of SBM in Hong Kong have been introduced. The process towards the development of SBM has been reviewed. Key constraints to SBM have been identified. Programmes for enhancing SBM were described. In sum, there were good practices and noticeable effects of the SMI implementation in some schools (Task Group on Evaluation of SMI, 1997) as mentioned earlier. Also, in order to make SBM a success, it was obvious that the government has put much effort to the promotion of SBM by providing training for school managers, developing principals professionally, and encouraging home-school relation. However, the findings of some local studies indicated the uncertainties and obstacles encountered in various stages in the process of implementing SBM in Hong Kong. Sponsoring bodies seem worrying about their future control of schools in the newly restructured of the school management committee. Although the government is eager to involve other school stakeholders, e.g., parents, teachers and alumni, in the future school management committees; the preparedness of these stakeholders seems to be a question. Principals' leadership seems to be weak in transforming teachers' commitment and so is their curriculum leadership. The culture of collegiality and collective decision making does not prevail in most schools. Finally, teachers' excessive time demands and middle managers' difficulty in working between the principals and teachers are also key hindrances to the implementation of SBM.

Hong Kong schools are facing great challenges in the years to come. The major challenges are the realization of the effectiveness of implementing SBM and the smooth transformation of the school management committee in each school. The policy makers and schools' stakeholders in Hong Kong should be clear about the effectiveness of implementing SBM. Leithwood et al. (1999) point out that "[i]n the long run, effectiveness needs to be defined as improved student outcomes. In the short run, however, effectiveness may be defined as changes in classroom practice (p. 487). Cheng (2002) has similar view that "[t]he 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-centered approach for effective learning" (p. 11). Bearing these ideas in mind, schools should grasp firmly the effectiveness of implementing SBM and put all afford to the changes in classroom learning and the improvement of students' outcomes.

In the nearest future, Hong Kong government will pass the new bill for restructuring the school management committees of schools. Possibly, starting from the end of 2003, there will be five years' transition period granted to all school sponsoring bodies in Hong Kong to change the present mode of school management to the required one mandated by the government. These five years will be a critical time for school sponsoring bodies' transition. However, in their recent study on the effects of school councils on students' performance, Leithwood and his colleagues (1999) conclude that school councils do not make a difference. "School councils do not add value to the empowerment of parents, the technical work of schools, or the development of students" (p. 487). So how to form an effective school management committee will be a great challenge to school and school sponsoring bodies. In this aspect, the government should help sponsoring bodies solve their problems by inviting experts to provide consultancy. At present, the EMB has only provided training for school managers of the "sponsoring bodies". Will they offer training for parent, teacher and alumni managers as well? It is hoped that Hong Kong schools are able to find their own suitable model.

There are other issues that need more attention. Middle managers play a crucial role in bridging the gap between the principal and teachers. They need special training for this unique role so that they will be able to help the principal and lead their teaching teams effectively and efficiently. In addition, teachers in Hong Kong are currently undergoing great pressure in terms of demands of time and effort. Reducing teachers' workload and providing time and resources for them should be given higher priority so that change in classroom practices can be taken place. Moreover, the promotion of collegiality and shared decision-making in schools is very important because these aspects of culture are conducive to the improvement of the quality education in schools.

There is a famous Chinese saying by Deng Xiaoping, the former leader of The People's Republic of China and the architect of recent economic modernization in China: "To touch the stones in the water when crossing a river" (Yang, 1999, p. 519). In other words, if you cannot touch the stones in the river, you should not move on. What it really means is that in order to make the reform a success, you have to learn to take cautious steps in trying out the reform.

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