

# Professional Development

# 5

William K. W. Choy and Paul M. H. Chua

## Abstract

As a consequence of globalization, many countries are embarking on educational reform to enhance the performance of schools. School leadership is a key factor of success of schools and educational system reforms. Furthermore, the quality of a school system rests on the quality of its school leaders and teachers, that is, high-performing school systems are good at focusing on three fundamental aspects of the education system: (1) Effective mechanism for teacher selection; (2) Effective processes for training and development of teachers; and (3) Effective systems and support structures. This chapter presents two case studies that describe the professional development initiatives at the school level. The insights espoused by the school principals provide the rationale for professional development to bring about greater enhancement of the teaching quality of the respective schools' teachers. Their perspectives about professional development in their respective schools reinforce the need for promoting growth and development amongst school leaders and teachers, endorsing greater recognition for excellence in teaching and leadership, establishing high standards for professional teaching status, and reducing timelines for improvement, with the purpose of enhancing student learning, growth, and achievement, and school performance.

---

W. K. W. Choy (✉)  
Institute of Technical Education, Singapore, Singapore  
e-mail: [william\\_k\\_w\\_choy@ite.edu.sg](mailto:william_k_w_choy@ite.edu.sg)

P. M. H. Chua  
Ministry of Education, Singapore, Singapore

© Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2019  
B. Wong et al. (eds.), *School Leadership and Educational Change in Singapore*, Springer Texts in Education,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-74746-0\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-74746-0_5)

## 5.1 Introduction

As a consequence of globalization, many countries are embarking on educational reform to enhance the performance of schools. Policymakers have acknowledged that the ability of countries—both developed and developing—to compete in the globalized knowledge economy is increasingly dependent on their capacity to meet the fast-growing demands for high-level skills. This hinges on how countries are making significant progress in improving the quality of education of their people and providing equitable learning opportunities for all (Barber and Mourshed 2007). Education has the second largest portion of the national budget (MOF 2014), reflecting the government's commitment to maximize the development of human resources. Within the education sector, it is also understandable why the development of leadership is a continual priority, and the link between leadership development and education policies are closely inter-twined. That school leadership is a key factor of success of schools and educational system reforms around the world has been extensively researched and well established (Hargreaves 1994, 2003; Blase and Blase 2000; Joyce and Showers 2002; Hallinger 2003; Leithwood et al. 2006; Fullan 2007; Harris and Spillane 2008; Bush 2009; Sergiovanni 2009; Hargreaves and Shirley 2012; Senge et al. 2012; National Institute of Education 2014).

School leaders have always been regarded as a major educational asset as they are key contributors to the success of the school system. Their quality development serves as a means to position Singapore for the future, which is becoming increasingly complex and uncertain, thus requiring highly skilled and knowledgeable leaders. Today, Singapore school leaders see the need to design holistic improvement efforts to effect purposeful and sustainable change towards achieving school effectiveness and educational excellence for teacher-level performance, and desired student-level outcomes in learning that are more holistic in nature.

In the current global competitive context of education, Singapore has caught the eyes of many educational policymakers, educators and researchers around the world. It has consistently done relatively well for both TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) and PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) results. The Singapore education system also spends less on primary education than 27 out of the 30 countries in the OECD (Mourshed et al. 2010). The education system has been ranked highly in terms of sustained improvement, and has been singled out as one of five 'great' education systems in the world (Mourshed et al. 2010). In fact, Barber and Mourshed (2007) have emphasized that the quality of a school system rests on the quality of its teachers; that is, high-performing school systems are good at focusing on three fundamental aspects of the education system:

1. *Effective mechanism* for teacher selection such that the right people are employed to become teachers (i.e. the quality of the education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers);
2. *Effective processes for training and development* with strong emphasis on ensuring teachers are professionally developed to be effective instructors (i.e. the best way to achieve excellent outcomes is to improve the instruction); and

3. *Effective systems and support structures* are put in place to ensure that every student will benefit from the excellent instruction (i.e. the best way for schools to achieve the best performance is to raise the standard of every student).

No doubt, school leadership practices centred on sound strategic planning, proper resource management, enhancing teaching and learning, promoting staff development and close leadership support can help school leaders design organizational change and development initiatives that are purposeful and sustainable towards achieving school improvement and educational excellence through teacher and organizational capacity building. One important aspect of school leadership practices is the focus on professional development of the educators in schools. Furthermore, as commented by Craft (2002), “professional development has attracted increasing attention in recent years. Faced with rapid change, demands for high standards and calls for improving quality, teachers have a need, as never before, to update and improve their skills through professional development” (p. 5). So, what exactly is Professional Development about?

---

## 5.2 Research Initiatives in Teacher Professional Development

In many workplaces, professional development refers to the acquisition of skills and knowledge, both for personal development and for career advancement. Professional development encompasses all forms of facilitated learning opportunities, ranging from college degrees and formal coursework to conferences and informal learning opportunities situated in practice. It has been described as intensive and collaborative, ideally incorporating an evaluative stage (Speck and Knipe 2005). A wide variety of professionals, such as teachers, military officers, healthcare professionals, lawyers, accountants and engineers engage in professional development. Individuals may participate in professional development for a variety of reasons: interest in lifelong learning, a sense of moral obligation, a desire to maintain and improve professional competence, an aspiration to enhance career prospects, a professional obligation to keep abreast of new technology and practices or to comply with professional regulatory regimes. Indeed, many are often obliged to participate in professional development courses as part of an organization’s human resource requirements (Golding and Gray 2006; Jasper 2006).

In the field of education reform and development, according to Guskey (2000), professional development refers to all the processes, actions and activities that have been planned to enhance the professional knowledge, skills and competencies of teachers that will lead to the improvement of the learning outcomes of students. Craft (2002) compiled a list of the many reasons for undertaking professional development in education. These reasons include:

1. To improve the job performance skills of the whole staff or groups of staff;
2. To improve the job performance skills of an individual teacher;
3. To extend the experience of an individual teacher for career development or promotion purposes;
4. To develop the professional knowledge and understanding of an individual teacher;
5. To extend the personal or general education of an individual;
6. To make staff feel valued;
7. To promote job satisfaction;
8. To develop an enhanced view of the job;
9. To enable teachers to anticipate and prepare for change; and
10. To clarify the school or department's policy.

There is a wide range of methods of professional learning. They include:

1. Action research;
2. Self-directed study as well as teacher research linked to awards such as the education doctorate;
3. Using distance-learning materials;
4. Receiving and/or giving on-the-job coaching, mentoring or tutoring;
5. School-based and off-site courses of various lengths;
6. Job shadowing and rotation;
7. Peer networks;
8. Membership of a working party or task group (these may include what are sometimes called 'professional learning communities or teams');
9. School cluster projects involving collaboration, development and sharing of experience/skills;
10. Teacher placement in other schools and even in business or public organizations;
11. Personal reflection;
12. Experiential 'assignments';
13. Collaborative learning; and
14. Information technology-mediated learning (e.g. through email discussion groups, or self-study using multimedia resources).

Craft (2002) proposes that ultimately all teacher development will have as one of its aims the improvement of pupil learning. In fact, researchers such as Creemers et al. (2013), and Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) have acknowledged that teacher training and professional development are considered an integral part of their careers for improving teachers' content knowledge and developing their personal pedagogies so as to maintain high teaching quality in the classrooms. Indeed, over the decades, the demands and expectations for better quality teaching and learning, and for greater accountability and improved standards have been receiving more emphasis and attention. Because of such developments, research on

teacher training and professional development have been high on the agenda for policymakers, education researchers and school leaders.

According to Craft (2002) and Guskey (2000), for a school to have effective teachers, it is essential that professional development be provided to teachers in such ways that they are able to directly apply what they have learned to their classroom teaching. Research has shown that effective professional development had led to better instruction and improved student learning outcomes in the classroom when it is connected to the curriculum materials that teachers use, the district and state or national academic standards that guided their work, and the assessment and accountability measures that evaluated their success (Cohen and Hill 2001). Not only that Garet et al. (2001) have strongly emphasized that there needs to be more systematic research to examine the effectiveness of the professional development of teaching and learning. Furthermore, Bransford et al. (1999) have called for more attention to the need for more studies to determine the efficacy of the various types of professional development initiatives.

To affirm this aspect of professional development, based on systematic and thorough evaluation of the focus, methods and data sources of 137 key publications on teacher educators, Lunenberg et al. (2014) have provided insights into the various roles of teacher educators and the complexity of their work, as well as examined the essential building blocks for ongoing structured and in-depth professional development. It has been noted that although the number of studies on teacher educators was growing, the research in the field is still scattered. They stressed the need to create a comprehensive research programme on teacher educators and provide concrete recommendations for such a programme if school leaders and teachers hope to be taken seriously in the profession.

---

### **5.3 Teacher Professional Development in the Singapore: The Teacher Growth Model**

The Teacher Growth Model (TGM) was launched by Mr. Heng Swee Keat, the then Minister for Education, at the 6th Teachers' Conference organized by the Academy of Singapore Teachers (AST), Ministry of Education (MOE). The TGM is a professional development model<sup>1</sup> aimed at encouraging and helping teachers to develop holistically in the twenty-first century, by engaging in continual learning, and taking ownership of their professional growth and personal well-being. The TGM reflects the multi-faceted nature of teachers' work and presents a holistic portrait of the twenty-first-century Singapore teacher with the following five desired outcomes:

---

<sup>1</sup>The TGM is built upon the philosophy that teachers are student-centric professionals who take ownership of their growth. It is a learning framework to guide teachers towards professional excellence in teaching experience leading to enhanced student learning. It does this through providing holistic growth in teachers, building a shared understanding of the ethos and values of the teaching profession, while reflecting the philosophy of Singapore's education system and by fostering a culture of continual and collaborative learning, teacher ownership and leadership.

1. The Ethical Educator;
2. The Competent Professional;
3. The Collaborative Learner;
4. The Transformational Leader; and
5. The Community Builder.

The model is developed by the AST in consultation with educators of diverse profiles from across the ministry to envision the learning needs of the twenty-first-century Singapore teacher. The Ministry strongly believes that the growth and personal well-being of teachers are essential to their professional development, which in turn has an impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Thus, it is a demonstration of the commitment to the professional growth and continual learning of teachers throughout their careers. Like their students, teachers have diverse learning needs. The TGM recognizes that teachers need to (1) be equipped with the relevant knowledge and skills to develop students holistically, and (2) pursue their development through multiple modes of learning, including going for training, mentoring, research-based practice, networked and experiential learning (MOE 2012a, b).

---

## **5.4 Five Desired Outcomes of the Twenty-First-Century Singapore Teacher**

### **The TGM Learning Continuum and Multiple Modes of Learning**

The design of the TGM recognizes teachers as professionals who engage in continual learning and growth. The TGM Learning Continuum recommends learning areas that will facilitate their professional growth in the five desired outcomes, according to the stages in their career (e.g. beginning teacher, experienced teachers, senior teachers, lead teachers, master teachers and principal master teachers). Within the learning areas are learning sub-areas and possible professional development learning opportunities. Using the TGM Learning Continuum, teachers have the flexibility and autonomy to plan their learning relevant to their professional needs and interest. Their learning will be aligned to the knowledge and skills needed to nurture students in twenty-first-century competencies.

Like their students, teachers in the twenty-first century have diverse learning modalities. The TGM encourages teachers to pursue professional development through multiple modes of learning, including face-to-face and ICT-based courses, conferences, mentoring and research-based practice, networked learning, reflective practice and experiential learning. MOE is committed to investing in the professional growth of teachers and will continue to support teachers as they engage in continual learning throughout their careers. Eventually, every teacher has the opportunity to grow through various learning modes and platforms. There is a

growing consensus that teacher educators largely determine the quality of teachers, and hence, the quality of education. The following section highlights some of the features essential for teacher professional development.

### **Features of Teacher Professional Development**

In their work that involved a review of more than 20 years of international research on teacher educators, Lunenberg et al. (2014) have identified critical characteristics regarding the professional development of teachers and the particular behaviours in the roles of teachers, namely, Context, Building on personal qualities of the teacher educator, Support and Research.

1. *Context*. This refers to the availability of a frame of reference, such as a professional standard or knowledge base, which is essential in facilitating the professional development of the teacher educator as a teacher of teachers, and in promoting self-confidence. Lunenberg et al. (2014) stress the importance of a national frame of reference or professional standard as they serve to promote better understanding of the complex work of the teacher educator and in supporting deeper professional development. Consequently, the frame of reference has positive effects as it contributes to the self-esteem, moral development and enthusiasm for the profession amongst the teacher educators.
2. *Building on personal qualities of the teacher educator*. This refers to the personal qualities of teacher educators. Example of some of the qualities with possible links to improving professional development include the teacher educators' zeal or willingness to learn and openness to new ideas, enjoyment of sharing in ideas, interest in technological advancements that have impacts on classroom teaching and learning, student-oriented focus with interest in the subject–discipline and in students' outcomes, and last but not least, (gaps in) prior knowledge and experience in classroom teaching and management.
3. *Support*. This refers to the various support structures or arrangements organized within the school setting that promote learning opportunities for teacher educators. Examples of such support in schools include coaching by a mentor (usually an experienced colleague), informal learning from and with fellow teacher educators in daily practices at the micro-level within the department or team, and other forms of support such as peer-coaching, attending seminars and conferences, and participation within professional learning communities.
4. *Research*. This refers to the studying of personal practices, whereby teacher educators seek to improve their roles, behaviours and performance, as part of their professional development efforts. This approach is considered an excellent way for teacher educators to proactively reflect on their theoretical and practical knowledge, and about teaching and learning in a systematic way so as to improve their practice more professionally.

The abovementioned features are quite evident in the two case studies presented in this chapter. The comments of the school principals reflect the four features of teacher professional development. All in all, their perspectives about professional development in their respective schools reinforce the need for promoting growth and development amongst school leaders and teachers, endorsing greater recognition for excellence in teaching and leadership, establishing high standards for professional teaching status, and reducing timelines for improvement, with the purpose of enhancing student learning, growth and achievement. The following two cases below highlight a few of the issues and challenges facing school principals.

---

## 5.5 Method

The purpose of these case studies is to describe the professional development initiatives based on the perspectives of two Singaporean school principals: one primary and one secondary. The principals were selected based on a purposive sampling approach. Both schools have school-wide professional development framework and approach. Furthermore, each is unique in terms of school type. It is intended that insights about professional development initiatives are sought from a principal from a primary school and secondary school. As the culture of primary and secondary schools may be different, it would be interesting to investigate differences and similarities. Consent was sought from the principals before they participated in a one-to-one interview in March 2015. Their insights were recorded and analysed according to the questions below.

1. How does a principal plan professional development policies and opportunities in his/her school that create, shape and sustain student achievement?
2. How does a principal evaluate the effectiveness of his/her school's professional development initiatives?
3. What further expertise, knowledge and skills does a principal need to raise the level of professional development in his/her school?
4. How does a principal encourage a culture of valuing professional development in his/her school? What are the challenges that a principal face when he/she is promoting a culture of professional development in his/her school?
5. What are the main learning experiences, and what advice does the principal give to other school leaders from his/her leadership experience with professional development?
6. How does a principal determine and manage his/her own professional development?
7. What are the challenges for the principal in managing his/her own professional development?

### Case Study 1: Yang Min Primary School<sup>2</sup>

Mrs. Pang is the principal of a well-established primary school. The school has a mission to create a strong school community where all school staff members will work together for the promotion of truth, justice, freedom and love, with special reference to the needs of the pupils who are disadvantaged. Furthermore, the school has established itself as a centre for excellence for teaching and learning with a strong mission to establish a community of reflective teacher practitioners. The school also fosters a culture of collaboration in the area of teaching and learning where stakeholders such as MOE officers and NIE lecturers and researchers can exchange practices and innovative ideas with the aim of responding to the demands of the ever-changing educational landscape in Singapore. To accomplish the centre's vision and mission, the school crafted the following objectives:

1. To provide a networking platform for the sharing of good and/or innovative pedagogical practices through demo lessons and reflections and presentations by teachers at the cluster or zonal levels<sup>3</sup>;
2. To develop teachers professionally through the organization of workshops and courses;
3. To develop and use the school's strength in cooperative learning; and
4. To provide teachers with a range of teaching resources.

Regarding the question how the school principal plans the professional development policies and opportunities for teachers, Ms. Pang first undertook to survey the school environment to ascertain the level of commitment and competence teachers before she set the course of direction for the school. She believes that by understanding and appreciating teachers' aspirations—that is, what they wanted for themselves, the kind of job fulfilment they wanted, their level of commitment to the school, their sense of job motivation and satisfaction, their sense of belonging and other job related factors—she will be in a better position to make informed decisions relating to the professional development of teachers.

In addition, Ms. Pang consults the Heads of Departments (HODs) and Reporting Officers (ROs) to find out more about the level of competence of the various teachers under their charge. She does this in order to assess the strengths and

---

<sup>2</sup>A different name is given for the primary school to conceal its identity.

<sup>3</sup>All the schools in Singapore are arranged into four zones—North/South/East/West. The schools are grouped into clusters and each cluster is facilitated by a Cluster Superintendent. The Cluster Superintendents in each Zonal Branch develop, guide and supervise the school leadership teams to ensure that schools are effectively run. They ensure that there is networking, sharing and collaboration among the member schools within the cluster so as to raise the capacity of the leadership teams and the level of performance in each school. Cluster Superintendents also play a key role in personnel and financial management. They develop personnel in their clusters according to training needs and identify personnel with potential for career development. They ensure the effective and optimal use of cluster financial resources such as funding worthwhile school projects and activities that help schools to achieve the Desired Outcomes of Education (MOE 2015a).

weaknesses of the jobholders so that she can work closely with the HODs and ROs to consider ways to enhance the quality of teachers' teaching competencies (while minimizing any weaknesses). She is prepared to provide adequate support and resources (such as the school training fund) towards the development of teachers so that they may improve their teaching. Ms. Pang believes that there is a strong correlation between the standard of teaching and learning, and the quality of students' performance and achievement at her school.

Another initiative reflecting how Ms. Pang plans the professional development opportunities within the school is her policy of encouraging teachers to specialize in two core teaching subjects. She first consults with teachers. The rationale for such an arrangement is that teachers can then concentrate their teaching efforts on subjects they are good at. Ms. Pang also believes that this arrangement will better enhance the quality of the teaching as teachers will be able to hone their skills and knowledge in classroom facilitation.

A third initiative introduced by Ms. Pang is the establishment of learning platforms—both external and internal, for teachers to capitalize on. These learning platforms provide opportunities for teachers to develop their learning capacities through close interactive engagements with each other, and occasionally with experts brought in by the school. An example of the learning platform is the Professional Learning Community (PLC). She believes that this arrangement will help develop greater level of commitment and cooperative learning amongst teachers towards shared ideas and purposes regarding best teaching practices. Most promisingly, this professional learning platform will create a dynamic interplay of learning from three knowledge sources: (1) from the strong public knowledge base, (2) knowledge derived from appreciating school best practices, and last but not least, (3) from the collaborative development of new knowledge between the participating staff members. It is important to know that this initiative is underpinned by four learning processes within the community of teachers—(1) learning from, (2) learning with, (3) learning on behalf of one another and (4) meta-learning. The benefits of the PLC initiative are that it serves to develop and maintain connections with teachers about information on best teaching practices and enhances the quality of communication in such a way so as to support one another's learning and professional development. All in all, the PLC is considered a viable initiative that creates a very conducive environment that fosters interdependent working and professional collaboration towards enhancing the quality of teaching and learning.

As to how she will evaluate the effectiveness of her school's professional development initiatives, Ms. Pang replies that, together with the HODs and ROs, she will conduct formative assessment of teachers' performance. They will consider how teachers have value-added their classroom teaching in terms of both academic and non-academic achievements. The HODs and ROs are instructed to look for strong content knowledge, and pedagogy in teachers, and how such teacher characteristics translate to strong curriculum leadership as well as consistent trends in their performance.

In terms of challenges in promoting a culture of professional development, Ms. Pang says that she faces the challenges of time management and work commitment. She acknowledges that different staff members have differing priorities between school and family. This has significant impact on their commitment levels towards engaging in professional development, especially if the sessions are conducted outside school hours. A number of teachers feel that they are already quite “stretched” and have found it rather difficult to balance their work and family commitments. Thus, Ms. Pang has made it a point to help manage the work priorities and expectations of her staff. Another challenge that Ms. Pang faces concerns parents. Many parents are well informed about school practices and often share views on the attitudes and competencies of school’s teachers through the ‘parental grapevine’. Thus, she has sought to manage parents’ expectations and create reliable communication channels for their use to engage with the school and its teachers.

Concerning sharing her insights and leadership experience on professional development with other principals, Ms. Pang suggests that a school leader should seek to know his/her staff members at a deeper level. This entails spending time listening to issues and ideas raised by teachers. Informal engagements with teachers enhance the quality of communication and build deeper trust between the school leaders and teachers. In this way, teachers will be more motivated in their work, and be satisfied with their jobs as well, as they know that their school leaders are interested in their personal and professional welfare.

As to how she will determine and manage her own professional development, Ms. Pang says that she collaborates with the School Superintendent and School Staff Developer (SSD)<sup>4</sup> to craft a comprehensive development plan to meet her professional learning needs. Two key areas of professional development she is interested in are people management.<sup>5</sup> and curriculum leadership<sup>6</sup> She also says that she will learn from other principals and external consultants to acquire more insights to school issues.

### **Case Study 2: Jing Hu Secondary School<sup>7</sup>**

With Mr. Lim as the principal of the secondary school, the school has a mission to develop responsible and thinking students with good character and a healthy appreciation for life. The school leaders have envisioned that students will eventually grow to be a complete person, who is rational, independent, moral,

---

<sup>4</sup>The School Staff Developer is senior personnel whose job is to ensure that the training and professional development programmes are customized to the teacher’s needs, while supporting the school’s goals. The SSD may be a more senior teacher or a Head of Department. The SSD will also work with other Senior Teachers and Heads of Departments to mentor and coach teachers in the areas of teaching and career development (MOE 2006).

<sup>5</sup>She is taking external courses on people management.

<sup>6</sup>She is pursuing a higher degree on curriculum leadership at the National Institute of Singapore (NIE).

<sup>7</sup>A different name is given for the secondary school to conceal its identity.

contributor to society, and a lifelong learner, and is predisposed to lead healthy lifestyle and have an appreciation of the arts.

Concerning how the school principal plans the professional development policies and opportunities of the school, Mr. Lim passionately believes that the school should focus on the professional development of staff members—starting from the senior management level with the vice-principals, and proceeding to the middle management level with the key personnel such as the Heads of departments (HODs), Level Heads (LHs), Subject Heads (SHs), Senior Teachers (STs) and teaching staff.

Mr. Lim believes that teachers should be able to nurture the whole child and to teach creatively. Like other school leaders, he also believes that additional competencies such as the understanding of the larger environment and the ability to collaborate with fellow teachers are important attributes of a good classroom teacher. As a professional, a good teacher should be able to help improve the capabilities of his or her colleagues, and to contribute to better teamwork in his or her department.

Mr. Lim rationalizes that the quality of the school teaching staff will have direct impact on the quality of student performance. Hence, he has made it his priority to train and develop his staff to level up, and raise the capacity of staff at all levels. One of Mr. Lim's leadership practices in developing his staff is the utilization of the on-the-job training<sup>8</sup> (OJT) which is a form of training taking place in normal working situations. On-the-job training, sometimes called direct instruction, is one of the earliest forms of training. It is a one-on-one training located at the job site, where someone who knows how to do a task demonstrates to another how to perform it. Mr. Lim finds that this approach is most practical as it allows him to concentrate on developing three areas of the school competencies for the senior management, namely, school administration, operations and managerial skills.

Another leadership practice that Mr. Lim considers is the use of the School Excellence Model (SEM)<sup>9</sup> which serves as a guiding framework in the management of his staff. Among the enabler criteria stated in the SEM, Mr. Lim highlighted two essential ones, namely, (1) Strategic Planning and (2) Staff Management, as being key to the school's professional development initiatives. He emphasizes that the

---

<sup>8</sup>This approach that Mr. Lim has adopted for his school is due to his previous professional work in the private sector. OJT is still widely in use today. In fact, it is probably the most popular method of training because it requires only a person who knows how to do the task, and the equipment the person uses to do the task. It is normally the easiest to arrange and manage at the workplace and because the training takes place on the job, it can be highly realistic.

<sup>9</sup>The School Excellence Model (SEM) is a framework used to guide schools in the assessment of their management and education processes and overall school performance. The SEM helps schools to provide a holistic and quality education and continuous good performance. Implemented in 2000, the SEM is now used by all schools for their annual self-assessment and by the Ministry of Education (MOE) for the external validation of schools. In order to guide schools in their self-assessment, suggested indicators and examples of best practices in other organizations are provided. Schools are given the autonomy to chart their own progress and choose their own strategies according to the resources they have in order to achieve their desired outcomes and targets (adopted from Seah and Ow 2003).

criterion for Strategic Planning has allowed him to define how the school sets clear stakeholder-focused strategic directions towards realizing the Thinking Schools, Learning Nation vision, develop action plans to support its directions, deploy the plans and track performance. As for the criterion on Staff Management, he comments that the guidelines have provided the necessary perspectives on how the school can develop and utilize the full potential of its staff to create an excellent school.

All in all, Mr. Lim aspires to empower staff members to be individually engaged in the crafting of strategic plans, as well as planning the directions for their professional development (specifically, in relation to Staff Management) so that they may take full ownership of the SEM initiatives. The active utilization of the SEM framework has several benefits. First, it serves as a sound and integrated approach for systematic, continuous improvement towards the school strategic planning and the professional development of staff. Second, it ensures that there is a systematic prioritization and implementation of the strategic plans and professional development initiatives. Third, it provides guidelines on regular assessment and review of the measures and their implementation, based on continuous monitoring and analysis of student performance and school outcomes.

Following the implementation of the school's professional development initiatives, the question is posed to the principal about how he will evaluate the effectiveness of the initiatives. Mr. Lim acknowledges that there are many factors to consider when school leaders and reporting officers appraise teachers under their charge. These include the holistic development and accountability of teachers for their students through student outcomes, professional outcomes and organizational outcomes.

Much is at stake for the school and teachers during the appraisal and review sessions since the professional development of teachers has a certain bearing on their performance. Mr. Lim and ROs are mindful that it is no easy task conducting the staff annual appraisals and reviews. The Enhanced Performance Management System (EPMS)<sup>10</sup> has been designed to focus on the essential competencies of the teacher in the course of the individual's professional career. This has led Mr. Lim to incorporate the EPMS as the means of engaging staff members in more explicit assessments of their performance in specific areas, and in clearer identification of their training needs and development path. He rationalizes that the EPMS provides a systematic procedural process as well as a developmental framework with criteria that school leaders can refer to in the evaluation of their teachers.

Mr. Lim encourages teachers to continuously reflect on their personal pedagogies at three phases of the year: at the start of the school term, during the June holidays break and at the end of the year in December. Despite the measures that have been put in place to ensure that teachers are assessed on several competencies

---

<sup>10</sup>MOE HQ has also taken the lead to simplify processes. The authors have revised the School Excellence Model (SEM), Enhanced Performance Management System (EPMS) and Risk Assessment & Management (RAM) procedures to help us focus on the key outcomes. The SEM now has 24 sub-criteria, instead of the previous 31, and 30 key performance measures, instead of the original 78. Also, the revised EPMS form is now five pages instead of 15 (MOE 2015b).

and not just the academic results of students or what they do outside the classroom, the fundamentals of the performance assessment of teachers are still about the passion and commitment of the individuals to nurture the whole student. In other words, he is looking at whether teachers are able to teach creatively and effectively, and whether they will go out of the way to look after the learning needs of their students. As the EPMS is a robust performance management system that is designed to set work targets, review performance and plan the professional developments of teachers, Mr. Lim seeks to ensure that ROs are better equipped to use the system effectively so that more holistic assessments of teachers' performance are conducted.

Regarding the question of how he will promote a culture of professional development, Mr. Lim emphasizes that he has sought to build strong bonds, trust and collaboration amongst teachers. In order to do so, he stresses the need to assess the tone of the school environment—that is, to understand the attitude and behaviours of teachers. He introduced restorative practices as a form of proactive engagement to develop relationships and build a community. This practice has given staff opportunities to speak and listen to one another such as telling their stories and offering their own perspectives in an atmosphere of safety, decorum and equality.

Pertaining to the question on the learning experiences and advice he gives to other school leaders from his leadership experience on professional development, he has suggested that school leaders consider the 6Ps:

1. *Purpose*: What is the sense of purpose that the school has? This may be perceived as the vision and mission of the school.
2. *Positioning*: This refers to the school strategy, in the specific or tactical development phases of carrying out an objective to achieve the school's goals.
3. *People*: This concerns focusing on supporting, motivating and developing the people in the school and the relationships within.
4. *Processes*: This refers to the school systems that have been put in place that are delineated by the spatial and temporal boundaries, surrounded and influenced by the environment, described by the structures and purposes, and expressed in the interconnected operations of the components in the school.
5. *Performance*: This includes the alignment of the resources, systems and staff members to strategic objectives and priorities, and the implementation of such school activities to ensure that goals are consistently being met in an effective and efficient manner.
6. *Professionalism*: This describes the standards of training and development that prepare teachers with the essential knowledge and skills required to perform their respective roles.

## **5.6 Discussion and Conclusion**

### **5.6.1 A Culture of Professional Development in Singapore Schools**

Both the primary and secondary schools have reflected strong school culture that supports professional development for teachers. The school leaders are in the forefront of encouraging their teachers to take ownership of their growth. These leaders exemplify the philosophy of the MOE's TGM that serves as a learning framework to guide teachers towards professional excellence in teaching experience leading to enhanced student learning. The leaders strongly value the benefits of holistic growth in teachers through continual learning, and strongly encourage teachers to take ownership of their professional development. The school leaders have stressed that teacher preparation and professional development are considered an integral part of their careers which is essential for teachers to improve their content knowledge and enhance their personal pedagogies towards maintaining high teaching quality. The high expectations for better teaching and learning as expressed by the school leaders indicate that they understand that effective professional development leads to better instruction and improved student learning outcomes as teachers are able to directly apply what they have learned to the classroom teaching practices.

### **5.6.2 Strong Learning Platforms for Teachers**

One needs to take note that the MOE's TGM encourages teachers to pursue professional development through multiple modes of learning, including face-to-face and ICT-based courses, conferences, mentoring and research-based practice, networked learning, reflective practice and experiential learning. The school leaders of both schools have shown strong commitment in investing in the professional growth of their teachers. The school leaders' role model the need for professional development as well as seek to empower teachers to develop their teaching capacity. The school leaders have emphasized that they will continue to support their teachers as they engage in continual learning throughout their careers. The primary school has established a networking platform for the sharing of good and innovative pedagogical practices through lesson study, cooperative learning, reflections<sup>11</sup> and presentations by teachers as well as workshops and courses to develop teachers professionally. These learning platforms provide opportunities for teachers to develop their learning capacity through close interactive engagements with each other, with teachers from other schools, and occasionally with external experts.

---

<sup>11</sup>The tool of reflection played a prominent role in the development of a culture of the professional development of teachers.

The leadership of the secondary school has adopted a more personal, one-on-one training that involves a school leader–teacher partnership. The emphasis on professional development is to instil a highly realistic, contextualized form of training for teachers. The direct instruction allows the school leader to have more control on developing key areas of skills and competencies for teachers, as well as to monitor the progress of growth of teachers. Furthermore, the school leader is guided by the EPMS as the means of engaging staff members in more explicit assessments of their performance in specific areas, and identifying staff training needs and development paths. The systematic procedural process has helped the school leader evaluate teachers more objectively.

Lunenberg et al. (2014), in their systematic review of literature related to teacher educators or mentor teachers or teacher trainers, identified six roles of teacher educators: teacher of teachers, researcher, coach, curriculum developer, gatekeeper and broker. This research study has surfaced three of the six roles. Chief among them is the fact that the two principals exhibited the role of a teacher of teachers. According to Lunenberg et al. (2014), the teacher of teachers' roles include being a role model to other teachers, and encouraging and promoting teacher learning. Additionally, the two principals exhibit the role of being a gatekeeper. Lunenberg et al. (2014) highlighted a key gatekeeper's role, which is to use standards and profiles in the course of teacher professional development. One of the two principals uses some form of standards to aid in their development of teachers (e.g. SEM and EPMS). The second role that had surfaced in this study is the role of a coach (e.g. the secondary school principal who adopted a more personal one-on-one approach to training), and third is a broker (e.g. the primary school principal whose school has established a networking platform for schools to exchange good teaching practices). The role of a teacher educator as a researcher is glaringly absent from the data. This probably speaks of the lack of time for most schools to conduct research into their own effectiveness as teacher developers.

---

## 5.7 Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What in your views are 'competencies'?
2. What can school leaders do to ensure that transparency and objectivity are maintained in appraisal exercise?
3. In your own work context, how can development be integrated with performance appraisal?
4. What further research needs to be carried so as to help reporting officers do their work better?

## References

- Blase, J., & Blase, J. (2000). Effective instructional leadership: teachers' perspectives on how principals promote teaching and learning in schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 38(2), 130–141.
- Bransford, J. D., Brown, A. L., & Cocking, R. R. (Eds.). (1999). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Barber, M., & Mourshed, M. (2007). How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top. Retrieved from [http://www.mckinsey.com/App\\_Media/Reports/SSO/Worlds\\_School\\_Systems\\_Final.pdf](http://www.mckinsey.com/App_Media/Reports/SSO/Worlds_School_Systems_Final.pdf).
- Bush, T. (2009). Leadership development and school improvement: contemporary issues in leadership development. *Educational Review*, 61(4), 375–389.
- Cohen, D. K., & Hill, H. (2001). *Learning policy: When state education reform works*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Craft, A. (2002). *Continuing professional development: A practical guide for teachers and schools*. London: Routledge.
- Creemers, B., Kyriakides, L., & Antoniou, P. (2013). *Teacher professional development for improving quality of teaching*. Netherlands, Verlag: Springer.
- Darling-Hammond, L., & McLaughlin, M. W. (1995). Policies that support professional development in an era of reform. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 76(8), 597–604.
- Day, C. (1999). *Developing teachers: The challenge of lifelong learning*. London: Falmer Press.
- Fullan, M. (2007). *The new meaning of educational change*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Garet, M. S., Porter, A. C., Desimone, L., Birman, B. F., & Yoon, K. S. (2001). What makes professional development effective? Results from a national sample of teachers. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(4), 915–945.
- Golding, L., & Gray, I. (2006). *Continuing professional development for clinical psychologists: A practical handbook*. Oxford: The British Psychological Society and Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Guskey, T. R. (2000). *Evaluating professional development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Hallinger, P. (2003). Leading educational change: Reflections on the practice of instructional and transformational leadership. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 33(3), 329–351.
- Hargreaves, A. (1994). *Changing teachers, changing times: Teachers' work and culture in the postmodern age*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hargreaves, A. (2003). *Teaching in the knowledge society: Education in the age of insecurity*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hargreaves, A., & Shirley, D. (2012). *The global fourth way: The quest for educational excellence*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.
- Harris, A., & Spillane, J. (2008). Distributed leadership through the looking glass. *Management in Education*, 22(1), 31–34.
- Jasper, M. (2006). *Professional development, reflection, and decision-making*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Joyce, B.R., & Showers, B. (2002). *Student achievement through staff development* (3rd ed.). Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).
- Leithwood, K., Day, C., Sammons, P., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2006). *Seven strong claims about successful school leadership*. Nottingham: National College for School Leadership.
- Lunenberg, M., Dengerink, J., & Korthagen, F. (2014). *The professional teacher educator: Roles, behaviour, and professional development of teacher educators*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- Mourshed, M., Chijioke, C., & Barber, M. (2010). How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better. Retrieved from [http://mckinseysociety.com/downloads/reports/Education/How-the-Worlds-Most-Improved-School-Systems-Keep-Getting-Better\\_Download-version\\_Final.pdf](http://mckinseysociety.com/downloads/reports/Education/How-the-Worlds-Most-Improved-School-Systems-Keep-Getting-Better_Download-version_Final.pdf).
- Ministry of Education [MOE] (2006). Press release: MOE unveils \$250 m plan to boost the teaching profession. Retrieved from <https://www.moe.gov.sg/media/press/2006/pr20060904.htm>.

- Ministry of Education [MOE] (2012a). New model for teachers' professional development launched. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/press/2012/05/new-model-for-teachers-profess.php>.
- Ministry of Education [MOE] (2012b). Fact sheet: the teacher growth model. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/press/files/2012/05/fact-sheet-teacher-growth-model.pdf>.
- Ministry of Education [MOE] (2015a). Organization structure: schools division. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.sg/about/org-structure/sd>.
- Ministry of Education [MOE] (2015b). Speech: ministry of education work plan seminar 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/speeches/2014/09/23/keynote-address-by-mr-heng-swee-keat-at-the-ministry-of-education-work-plan-seminar-2014.php>.
- Ministry of Finance [MOF] (2014). Singapore budget 2014. Retrieved from [http://www.singaporebudget.gov.sg/budget\\_2014/home.aspx](http://www.singaporebudget.gov.sg/budget_2014/home.aspx).
- National Institute of Education (2014). Leaders in education programme. Retrieved from <http://www.nie.edu.sg/studynie/leadership-programmes/leaders-education-programme>.
- Seah, J. C., & Ow, A. (2003). *The school excellence model*. Singapore: Civil Service College.
- Senge, P., Cambron-McCabe, N., Lucas, T., Smith, B., & Dutton, J. (2012). *Schools that learn: A fifth discipline field-book for educators, parents and everyone who cares about education*. New York: Crown Business.
- Sergiovanni, T. J. (2009). *The principalship: A reflective practice perspective*. Boston: Pearson.
- Speck, M., & Knipe, C. (Eds.). (2005). *Why can't we get it right? Designing high-quality professional development for standards-based schools* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.