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## Abstract

Over the past decade, researchers have begun to make excellent progress in understanding how classrooms and schools can better provide quality instruction for all children. Research in classroom pedagogies in Singapore through the Office of Education Research, National Institute of Education, and Nanyang Technological University has also yielded significant results in the typical classroom practices in Singapore. Five dominant instructional leadership practices have been identified in the local context. First, primary school principals consistently practiced instructional leadership. Second, instructional leaders are distributed in nature. Third, school principals seem to display a greater range of instructional leadership domains. Fourth, instructional leadership tends to align with the national contextual uniqueness of the Singapore state. Fifth, school principals may adopt the instructional goals of their predecessors if these goals are still relevant. In this case study, greater understanding on a principal's beliefs and practices of instructional leadership is provided as the reader "follow" the principal, and as she applies various dimensions of instructional leadership in her interactions and meetings with school staff, pupils, and parents.

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## 2.1 Introduction

As a consequence of globalization, many countries are competing in the globalized knowledge economy in which their state of competitiveness is increasingly dependent on their capacity to meet the fast-growing demands for employees with

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high-level skills and knowledge. Thus, many countries are embarking on extensive educational reform in the effort to enhance the performances of their schools that develop such vital human capital (Barber and Mourshed 2007). Moreover, with the continuous education reform, government policy-makers and the public are demanding greater public school accountability and assessment in the hope of improving academic and nonacademic school outcomes, as well as decreasing the achievement gaps among the subpopulations of pupils (Heck and Moriyama 2010).

The interest of school policy-makers in educational accountability has focused the public's attention increasingly upon the performance of schools. Previous reform advocates and the public has emphasized on school performance that is largely interpreted in terms of examination results. However, in recent years, school performance has taken on a wider interpretation to include various domains such as values-based learning, academic value-added, physical and aesthetics, and character development. While this expansion provides schools greater choice in developing pupils, the direct effect on student achievement is not clear. This is highlighted in an editorial that states that political leaders and the business community feel that the city-state needs more than just smart people.

Singaporean pupils are known all over the world for their smartness such as gaining top scores on international assessments... it needs entrepreneurs and leaders - people who do not merely work for the multitude of the locally based transnational firms - who have the vision and courage to start and nurture them. (Borja 2004)

To satisfy those needs, Ministry of Education Singapore officials acknowledge that the education system must change from a traditional teacher-directed to a student-centered approach. This involves moving toward self-directed, engaged, and creative ways of learning. Other Asian countries, such as Japan and Korea, are also slowly transforming their education systems in that way. Much of the concern for school reform in Singapore has stemmed from the overemphasis on academic achievement and examination results.

Over the past decade, researchers have begun to make excellent progress in understanding how classrooms and schools can better provide quality instruction for all children. Research in classroom pedagogies in Singapore through the Office of Educational Research, National Institute of Education, and Nanyang Technological University has also yielded significant results in the typical classroom practices in Singapore.

In this case study, the reader will have the opportunity to understand the principal's beliefs and practices of Instructional Leadership. The reader will also "follow" the principal as she applies various dimensions of Instructional Leadership in her interactions and meetings with school staff, pupils, and parents.

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## 2.2 Overview of Instructional Leadership Literature

There are two general concepts of instructional leadership—one is narrow while the other is broad. The narrow concept defines instructional leadership as actions that are directly related to teaching and learning, such as conducting classroom

observations. This was the conceptualization of instructional leadership used in the 1980s and was normally applied within the context of small, poor urban elementary schools (Hallinger 2003). The broad view of instructional leadership includes all leadership activities that indirectly affect student learning such as school culture and timetabling procedures. These might be considered to be aspects of leadership that have impact on the quality of curriculum and instruction delivered to pupils. This conceptualization acknowledges that principals as instructional leaders have a positive impact on pupils' learning but this influence is mediated (Goldring and Greenfield 2002).

A comprehensive model of instructional leadership was developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985, 1986). This dominant model proposes three broad dimensions of the instructional leadership construct: defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school-learning climate. These dimensions are further delineated into ten instructional leadership functions as follows: (1) framing the school's goals, (2) communicating the school's goals, (3) coordinating the curriculum, (4) supervising and evaluating instruction, (5) monitoring student progress, (6) protecting instructional time, (7) providing incentives for teachers, (8) providing incentives for learning, (9) promoting professional development, and (10) maintaining high visibility.

The first two tasks: framing the school's goals and communicating the school's goals are incorporated into the first broad dimension, defining the school's mission. These two leadership practices emphasize the principal's role in establishing and articulating a clear school vision with the focus on enhanced student learning. This dimension is developed to reflect the principal's responsibility for collaboratively building an appropriately context-based vision, ensuring it is widely known by other school stakeholders, and ascertaining that teaching and learning processes are aligned with the vision.

The second dimension comprises three leadership tasks, namely, supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, and monitoring student progress. This dimension assumes the principal's engagement in supervising, monitoring, and evaluating instruction-and-curriculum-based activities in the school. These roles of principals are treated as the key leadership responsibilities in the present model.

The third dimension comprises five leadership tasks, that is, protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers, and providing incentives for learning. Compared with the two former dimensions, this dimension is broader in scope and intent. Leadership functions included in this dimension are assumed to be highly influential principal practices. This dimension points to the importance of creating and maintaining a school climate that supports teaching and learning practices and promotes teachers' professional development.

The model presented above is assessed to be the most fully tested among existing models of instructional leadership. Over 110 empirical studies were

completed using this model until 2005 (Hallinger 2005, p. 227). Several alternative models of instructional leadership have been proposed, yet all of these models identified three major dimensions similar to those in Hallinger and Murphy (1985, 1986).

Current literature shows that the instructional leadership does not require the principal be a model or exemplary teacher, but he/she must have the capacity to create the organizational conditions necessary to build pedagogical capacity, expand opportunities for innovation, supply and allocate resources, give instructional direction and support to teachers, and enable teachers to assume individual and collective responsibility for instructional improvement. From this perspective, the principal is a conductor of processes of instructional innovation rather than its composer or business manager. Accordingly, the concept of the principal as instructional leader should focus on the principal's role in the development and distribution of the understandings, skills, and attributes across the school organizational spectrum. As Gronn (1986, 1999, 2003) has argued, the term "school leadership" does not refer to the leadership of the principal alone. Although the principal remains a key player in organizational change, schools cannot rely on the "power of one". Rather, concepts such as leader-teacher relationship, collegiality, collaborative culture, learning organization, teacher leadership, and personal leadership all suggest that the power to make decisions in order to improve teaching and learning in the classrooms must be distributed throughout the organization.

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### 2.3 Summary of Instructional Leadership in Singapore

A review of Instructional Leadership research in Singapore from 1985 to 2012 have highlighted five dominant practices of instructional leadership in Singapore and shed light on the strategies adopted by Singapore principals in the implementation of instructional leadership (Ng et al. 2015a, b). First, principals in primary schools seem to display more instructional leadership roles than those in secondary schools. Masdawood (1990) claims that Singapore primary school principals spend "around 50% of their official work time" exercising their instructional leadership, though this study does not explicitly indicate the areas of practiced instructional leadership. This corresponds with the findings in the international literature (e.g., Louis et al. 2010; Hallinger 2005, Harris 2002). Second, Singapore principals seem to realize that they cannot successfully perform instructional leadership alone. Instead, principals make good use of the knowledge and skills of nonteaching and teaching staff within the school community as well as the external resources. While it is true that Singapore principals tend to perform more top-down instructional leadership in the initial stage of a school change process, they subsequently empower heads of departments (middle managers) with direct instructional roles when teachers, staff, and students are more accustomed to the change. The studies reviewed here showed that top school leaders were very appreciative of the effectiveness of their middle management (Ng et al. 2015a, b). In other words, principals exercise a transformational

leadership approach, instead of instructional leadership, in the later stages of school change by facilitating and sustaining the process. The skillful management of role changes in the course of a school-wide reform prevents principals from being overburned by the demands of change in a large and complex school system. In addition, the strategy of involving multiple stakeholders in creating and implementing the school vision is a good example of lateral capacity building. In lateral capacity building, two change forces are unleashed, namely, knowledge (learning) and motivation. In terms of knowledge, principals wisely tap on the knowledge capital of stakeholders as they participate in creating the vision and establishing the specific goals related to the vision. Stakeholders are also motivated as they are involved in the theory of action—individually and collectively.

Third, Singapore principals appear to exercise quite a number of domains of instructional leadership; nevertheless, the degree of instructional leadership practiced in each domain varies. This review reveals that principals focus much attention on developing the school vision, creating a good learning climate, and developing and improving the school-wide curriculum (Ng et al. 2015a, b). This finding concurs with Hallinger (2007) who suggests that principals, in reality, tend to emphasize the two dimensions of instructional leaders: defining the vision and supporting the school climate. With regard to other practices, Hallinger (2007) has called attention to the lack of empirical data demonstrating that principals spend more time on direct classroom observation and supervision.

Singapore principals, however, share the task of instruction evaluation and supervision with middle managers. These include classroom observation and giving post-observation feedback to individual teachers. Traditionally oriented literature on instructional leadership, nonetheless, stresses the importance of the principal's role in the dimension of the coordination and control of instruction. The principal's actual practice of classroom evaluation of teaching and learning is essential for effective schools, particularly enhanced student learning (Hargreaves et al. 2001; Hallinger 2005; Leithwood et al. 2004). In this view, principals are thought to be able to augment the quality of teaching and learning by mentoring teachers through observing, providing feedback, and even modeling instruction in specific cases. An emerging question is whether Singapore principals need to exert more instructional leadership on instructional evaluation and supervision, and whether this is feasible in the context of Singapore schools. According to Horng and Loeb's (2010) review of empirical studies, the traditional model mentioned above is ideal, but it is "actually poorly suited to the reality of many of today's schools" (p. 66). Horng and Loeb (2010) add that the principal's involvement in the classroom only has a marginal impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Even principals who are very determined to be more heavily involved in classrooms meet many varied challenges (Hallinger 2000). Instead, principals can improve instruction by strategically managing organizational management activities such as recruiting and retaining highly qualified staff, allocating budgets and resources, assigning classrooms with the most suitable teachers, and building a friendly and positive school climate.

Fourth, Singapore principals' practice of instructional leadership tends to be greatly aligned to contextual factors, in particular, policies and initiatives from the Ministry of Education. The alignment is most noticeable in the dimensions of the school vision and managing the instructional program. This is understandable as Singapore adopts a centralized educational system, in which the Ministry of Education plays a very active role in influencing how each school is run. Elmore (2004) emphasizes that educators must learn to do new things in "the setting in which they work". This is evident in how Singapore principals articulate their own vision of the school within the constraint of the framework imposed by the ministry. While the Ministry's initiatives and mandates loom large in the background, principals have consistently created their own school vision together with the stakeholders in the school according to the school's setting and context. This was reflected in the strategies of alignment of the curriculum implementation and instruction with the desired outcomes of education. Among the learning opportunities created are involvement of staff's constructive inputs and establishing departmental and subject-based goals.

Last but not least, while change appears to be a constant (with principals' rotation and frequent new initiatives), there is an element of continuity in that many principals chose to endorse or adapt the vision set by their predecessor. There is a strong practice of staying the course to achieve the established school goals. At the same time, there is flexibility where principals refined, reviewed, and changed goals through a systematic process involving stakeholders, in particular, the middle-level leaders. These two factors most probably have helped schools to maintain or continuously improve student achievement. Rigidity alone (by continuing the predecessor's vision) would have either maintained or cause student achievement to decline. At the same time, frequent change without establishing practices would amount to nothing in the end (Fullan 2006).

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## 2.4 Method

Southworth Primary School was established prior to the 1965 as a Chinese medium public school with a handful of pupils. 50 years after its establishment, it became an English-medium, government-aided school and took in its first batch of Malay pupils. Over the years, Southworth has preserved the "hardworking yet simple" school tradition of her founders while continuing to take huge strides forward in providing a good and supportive environment for its pupils. The Social Economic Status (SES) profile of the school shows that 24.3% of the pupils are on financial assistance. In general, middle-class parents are more actively involved in the schools. They do not, however, form the largest portion of the school board membership (three of nine). In 2014, there were 1,561 pupils and 89 teachers in the school. The principal joined the school at the start of 2011 while the vice-principal joined the school in June. The School Climate Survey in 2013 improved over the year before. The school was selected based on the school leader's familiarity and

experience in the practices of instructional leadership. Participation was based on informed consent given by the principal.

### **2.4.1 Data Collection**

#### *1st Stage: Interviews*

Southworth Primary School Principal was invited to participate in the study based on two criteria. First, reviews of instructional leadership literature found that the effects of principal instructional leadership are most substantial at the primary school level (e.g., Louis et al. 2010). Second, we invited participants, including Southworth Primary School Principal on the basis of willingness to contribute to the study. Data were collected in two iterative stages. In the first stage, we conducted in-depth interviews with Southworth Primary School Principal from January 2014 to March 2014. The researchers targeted questions that took into consideration Singapore's educational context. The purpose of the interview was to establish the principal's individual views of her work and school. Her prior professional, personal experiences and current position, and leadership style were explored in relation to Singapore's context. The interview lasted between 60 and 90 min in the principal's office.

#### *2nd Stage: Observations and Reflections*

Data collection in this stage entailed: observations of the principal's activities and reflective interviews (Dwyer et al. 1983). This second stage of observation and reflective interviews was conducted over the course of 5 working days in a period of about 8 weeks. Each observation day in the school lasted from 4 to 8 h. Descriptive fieldnotes were generated and organized to record the principal's activities and happenings around her after each occasion of observation.

The researchers conducted observations of the practices of the principal as she interacted with staff, teachers, parents, students, and visitors (Dwyer et al. 1983; Lofland 2006; Spradley 1979). The other activities included observing classes, recesses, lunch periods, meetings, and talking informally to teachers and students about their work and the school. Critical documents such as school plans, test score reports, descriptions of special programs, and other documents were examined, collected, and recorded into the fieldnotes that accrued for the principal and school.

At the end of the day or on the day following each observation, the researchers conducted a short interview (when appropriate) with the principal about some of the activities and interactions (Dwyer et al. 1983; Denzin 2001; Lofland 2006). The principal was asked to clarify actions when the intent was not clear, and encouraged to reflect on her decisions and activities. The following section provides the summarized details of one typical day for the principal.

## 2.5 Findings

### 2.5.1 The Principal in Action: A Day as an Instructional Leader

What is a typical day like for an Instructional Leader? The following actual events provide the reader with an in-depth view of events and people that the principal interacts with in the course of a day in school.

Monday	
7.35 a.m.	<p>Walked with principal (P) to canteen and had coffee. Observed school has values prominently displayed at various places in school including canteen (School values: Creativity, Respect, Loyalty, Empathy, and Responsibility). School canteen also displayed Chinese history of emperors, Science Wall. Purpose of these murals meant to encourage students to learn at all times</p> <p>Pointed out indoor sports hall building in progress</p> <p>P talks about holding teachers accountable for results using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in School Excellence Model<sup>a</sup> (SEM). The goals are co-created with teachers. P explained that teachers are happier with clear direction through the goals. P has set stretched goals and compares school with K** school. Reason is that school achievements have already surpassed comparable schools</p> <p>P says that the School Climate Survey shows staff are happier and engaged. Morale of staff is high. Teachers are busy, and school has many good staff. Her style is to have lots of conversations with staff. And she often uses classroom observation to identify potential school leaders, groom, and develop them and deploy them according to strengths—“put right people in the right place”</p>
8.45 a.m.	<p>Vice-principal (VP) walks into P’s office to talk about various matters:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Data report in the system—submission of returns to the Ministry as a routine procedure and</li> <li>2. School’s request for Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science staff member.</li> </ol> <p>In the midst of the conversation, the Superintendent called and offered congratulations to both the principal and vice-principal on their promotion</p>
8.55 a.m.	<p>Head of Department (HOD) Physical Education (PE) comes in and wants to finalize his decision to convert from PE to ART as his main professional responsibility. He had spoken to the P the previous month as part of the professional development and capacity building dialogue that P initiates regularly with staff. The conversion would require the HOD to attend a 4 month long course. The P affirmed the decision and asks the HOD to proceed to identify the handover procedure and also to suggest personnel to take over his responsibilities and duties during the 4 month absence</p>
9.15 a.m.	<p>VP Administration comes in to discuss with P on the request of the Administrative Manager (AM) to bring forward her transfer to another school from August 2014 to April 2014</p> <p>P shares she had already “interviewed” a potential AM from a polytechnic to replace the current AM but will require the potential AM to go through the application process when the school puts up an advertisement. The P reiterated that it is important for the potential AM to follow proper</p>

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Monday	
	procedure even though she feels that this is an urgent matter for the school operation to proceed efficiently
9.25 a.m.	Interrupted by a staff informing P that Marshall Cavendish visitors from UK are in school for a planned visit P finished discussing with VP Admin on the AM matter and proceeds to meet the visitors
9.25 a.m.	P walks to the meeting room to greet the visitors. Visitors asked about school staff's engagement with parents P explains that there are many platforms: Parent-Teacher (PT) meetings, organizing self-help mathematics workshop (e.g., How to avoid careless mistakes) for parents so that they can help their children at home with mathematics homework, newsletters, and individual teachers contacting parents
9.40 a.m.	Walkabout by P—through the Primary 2 and Primary 3 classes P goes on walkabouts at different times throughout the week, and is of the belief that “walkabouts” reveal more about classroom practices than planned classroom observation. The “better”—as streamed through academic achievement—academic pupils have been allotted classrooms that are furthest away from the office. Her rationale is that these pupils are less likely to have disciplinary problems especially during the changeover of period when teachers might take slightly longer time to reach the classroom P believes that structures drive behavior—especially arrangement of the classroom. She gives an example that if the classroom is arranged like an examination setting it tends to promote individual and passive learning among pupils
9.55 a.m.	VP enters P's office to discuss a parent's request for the VP son to take foundation level for a certain subject for Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE). P asked VP for the rationale and was told that the pupil has difficulty coping with learning the subject. P has some questions regarding this matter and requests the office staff to ask the subject teacher to come in for consultation. The teacher walks in and explains some details of the matter to the P. P thanks the teacher
10.10 a.m.	P spends time reading and replying to emails AM walks into discuss payment for T-shirts for pupils' upcoming school outing. P approves the payment
10.35 a.m.	P meets with a transferred teacher from another school. The transferred teacher has indicated that he sees the school as a good place to further develop his own professional practices. P requests the School Staff Developer (SSD) <sup>b</sup> to be present SSD comes into P's office. P asks the SSD to share with the transferred teacher about her own progress and development as a teacher. P walks out of the office. SSD starts to share with the transferred teacher. SSD was appointed as a Key Personnel in 2010 and thereafter appointed as SSD in 2012. SSD reveals that she will be promoted to VP at the end of 2014 SSD shares on the P's role in developing her. She says she has learned a lot from the P who sees potential in her and internally promoted her, and entrusted her with responsibilities. She spent a lot of time with the P—shadowing and understanding P's thinking. P shared a lot about staff matters, how a leader needs to have moral courage, clear rationale, and be

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Monday	
	<p>decisive in decision-making. P always asked her lots of “why” questions. SSD stated that the probing questions helped her think deeper, wider, and understand the links to policy and school strategic plans. This has helped her to develop her leadership roles—in particular skills in visioning</p> <p>SSD speaks about the school’s transition from a departmental to a level system of management. The transition has helped her to work with colleagues better and understand common teaching and learning challenges and goals</p> <p>She shares about her involvement in team learning and team support as a result of the level system. Various team learning platforms such as Professional Learning Communities (PLC), mass staff conversation on topics such as Future Readiness, Desired Culture, What is a good school? SSD also reveals that P spends time conversing with small groups of staff members on a regular basis</p> <p>SSD speaks about P’s flexibility in staff deployment taking into consideration work–life balance for some teachers (e.g., some teachers requested to be slightly late for school on certain days because they have to send their children to the child-care center)</p> <p>SSD and teacher leave the office</p>
11.00 a.m.	<p>P comes back to the office. Chinese teacher comes in and P discusses in Chinese about communicating with parents and the reading program. P wants to ensure that the Chinese teacher will inform parents about the program and explain its rationale to them as well. P stresses that she hopes that the parents will support the program</p>
11.10 a.m.	<p>P meets with a teacher to discuss the Zoological program for Primary 4 pupils. This program will involve students visiting the zoo for a planned learning journey. At the same time, P and teacher talk about the leadership camp for Primary 4 and 5 appointed leaders. P wants to leverage on the Zoological program: appointed leaders will have the opportunity to learn leadership skills while at the same time participating in the program for their learning journey. P reiterates that conducting two programs through the same platform will save time. She says that it will also according to the MOE’s advice (MOE has advised against visiting a certain destination for camping trips). P discusses with the teacher the details of camp goals and activities. P questions teacher on feasibility and rationale for activities and even objectives of the camp. P also raised details such as budget, T-shirts, and asks the teacher to incorporate current songs used in the school assembly to inculcate values to the pupils at the camp (school staff have used pop songs such as Michael Jackson’s “Beat It” to discuss values with pupils. P reported that latecomers have decreased since introducing pop songs to pupils. These songs are played during preassembly time and during the assembly the appointed teacher will discuss current affairs such as drought, haze, the need to save water, etc.</p>
11.40 a.m.	<p>SSD comes in to see P to discuss the Professional Learning Community (PLC) meeting (which will be held at 12.30 p.m.) and the following day’s Executive Committee Meeting (EXCO)<sup>c</sup></p> <p>SSD talks about the specific feedback received from staff where they have raised concerns about the “unpredictable and demanding” aspects of the PLC’s objectives and projects. P says that SSD will need to find out more about what teachers mean by those phrases. P reminds SSD about PLC</p>

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Monday	
	<p>meeting—the importance of shared goals and the school vision in driving learning and discussion</p> <p>P talks about the coming EXCO meeting where SSD will be taking the lead. P goes through the agenda details. P talks with SSD on “what we have learned, already done, not ready, need to do.” SSD talks about providing a helicopter view to teachers. P asks SSD how she will go about doing it. SSD shares that she will use the Political, Economic, Social, and Technology framework (PEST). P suggests that SSD links the framework to sustainability, importance of cohesion, and to deal with mental models</p> <p>P reminds SSD of the need to cast the vision in more practical terms—of what is the desired state rather than presenting a grand vision (Notice that P asks a lot of “why” questions)</p>
12.30 p.m.	<p>P sits in and listens to PLC team discuss their analysis of pupils’ comprehension errors. PLC team wants to discuss the need to teach comprehension strategies. P interjects and question teachers about the purpose of the assessment. She asks “Is it assessment for learning or just assessment to identify issues?”</p> <p>P explains that the purpose of questioning is to encourage teachers to focus on the assessment outcome for their own development—such as changing pedagogical practices instead of just attempting to correct pupils</p>
12.45 p.m.	<p>P meets with an NIE researcher in the office. P talks about the School Excellence Model (SEM) report. The SEM is used as a tool for developing strategic thinking for middle-level leaders. Various appointed school leaders will lead learning at EXCO meetings using the SEM as the basis for learning and discussion</p> <p>P talks about her decision to move away from using “Comparable Schools” as a benchmark within the SEM framework. Instead, she has chosen to benchmark Southworth Primary with the best/most popular primary school in the West of Singapore. These schools are accorded Best Practice in Teaching and Learning Awards and the School Excellence Award. This broader benchmark will enable the school staff to see and compare the school’s performance with a wider set of schools</p>
2.05 p.m.– 5.00 p.m.	<p>P attends the EXCO meeting</p> <p>All Key Personnel (KPs), including VP, are in attendance</p> <p>VP goes through the minutes of the previous EXCO meeting</p> <p>P asks the Head of Departments (HOD) for brief updates</p> <p>Each head gives a succinct update on events</p> <p>P asks HOD English to share the “Collective Lesson Planning” with staff</p> <p>HOD English shares that English teachers implemented the collective lesson planning through the Google Doc platform. During the first week of implementation, the teachers were spending about half an hour each posting and reading shared strategies, resources, and links. By the third weekend, the time taken was reduced to 15 min. This was an exceptional improvement from the typical 1 or 2 h teachers spent during weekends planning lesson on their own</p> <p>She also states that she followed the Strategies for English Language Learning and Reading (STELLAR) guidelines for the topics and Specific Instructional Objectives (SIO) in the lesson planning</p> <p>P interjects and asks if the teachers are sharing more on approaches rather than planning lesson for the week. HOD English replies that it is both—</p>

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Monday

because although the pace and sequence may differ per class, the approaches are adopted by teachers and this does indeed help to shorten the time for preparing the lessons

P replies that she will leave it to the Level Heads to lead and decide on the focus and the adoption of the collective lesson planning procedure. She stresses that it should also be used as a learning platform for beginning teachers—as a way to shorten their learning curve. P also reminds teachers that concepts of PETALS<sup>d</sup> should also be included in the lesson plan

P talks about assessment for learning from the book by Dylan Wiliam. This book has been given to teachers for their reading at the beginning of the year. She reminds teachers that they should not just focus on the strategies suggested by the author but understand the purpose—it is about why and how to use assessment for learning—a changing of mindset from the traditional summative assessment. She reminds the Heads to allow teachers to scope and try it

SSD shares from the article/book on Change Management and Change Leadership

Using slides, she goes through the internal and external scans and then talks about first- and second-order changes. She proceeds to get teachers to think and suggest what might be some of the first- and second-order changes they would initiate in the school

Announcement of three groups of facilitators to lead in the sharing of the topics in the Change Management book in the subsequent EXCO meetings

P reminds EXCO that it is not just the sharing and facilitation but that the focus should be on learning and development of themselves—deeper understanding that would bring about deeper change

EXCO meeting ends

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5.00 p.m.–  
6.00 p.m.

P walks back to her office and attend to the day’s emails

P leaves office for home. It is yet another long drive to home that P has come to accept as part of her daily routine. She sees these long drives as an opportunity to reflect and to think

<sup>a</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

<sup>b</sup>The School Staff Developer is senior personnel whose job is to ensure that the training and professional development programs 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>c</sup>In many schools, the principal, vice-principals, and heads of department form an executive committee commonly referred to as “the EXCO”

<sup>d</sup>PETALS is a curriculum framework designed by the MOE. It comprises five dimensions of practice for engaged learning: Pedagogy, Experience of learning, Tone of Environment, Assessment, and Learning Content

## 2.5.2 Principal's Beliefs of Instructional Leadership

In the first stage interview, the aim was to establish the principal's individual views of her work and school. Her prior professional and personal experiences, current position, and leadership style were explored in relation to Singapore's context. Data from the first stage interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. The researchers adopted a grounded theory approach to analyze the data (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1998). This bottom-up coding approach best suits the primary purpose of this inductive study that aims to explore instructional leadership practices in Singapore. More specifically, the transcribed interview and descriptive fieldnotes underwent a coding process that comprises three iterative key stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

We followed two main steps to openly code the data with an attention to reflexivity. The researchers read the collected documents (mainly interviews and fieldnotes) in a careful manner. Each document was usually perused several times to ensure a thorough understanding of the incidents, statements, contexts, and others either explicitly or implicitly mentioned in the document. Next, the researchers flexibly used three strategies of open coding, that is, line-by-line analysis, whole-sentence analysis, and whole-paragraph analysis. This microanalytic approach helped us to generate initial categories quickly and effectively.

We reviewed all preliminary open codes and then selected "focused" codes to better manage the analyzed data. These focused codes contain the key ideas through the document or seem to have greater potential for category generation. Potential categories accordingly emerged from the focused codes.

The key aim of our axial coding stage is to systematically develop categories and link the identified categories in the open coding stage with their potential subcategories. A category represents a phenomenon while its subcategory elaborates on such questions "when, where, why, who, how, and with what consequences" of the phenomenon (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p. 125). The categories and their subcategories continued to be integrated and refined in the process of selective coding. This process happened in a nonlinear way with high reflexivity.

The following themes were identified as key aspects of the principal's beliefs of instructional leadership.

### *On Professional Journey*

"I started as a teacher teaching for about 5 years at a top secondary school. After that I went to MOE as a training officer, and then I got a scholarship and went away to do my Master's. I came back trained as an educational psychologist, and served as an Assistant Director in Psychological Assessment. Then I went back to school as a VP for 2 years, attended the Leaders in Education Programme (LEP) at the National Institute of education (NIE), and was subsequently promoted. This is my 10th year as a principal. This is my second school. I was in my first school for 7 years. This is my third year in this school. I think being a second term principal is very different. You learn. As a first term principal, I was more tentative about things and I was slower to move. I think it is an accumulation of experience. In my second term as principal, I think I am more confident. As I become more confident, I think the way I look at things and matters are also quite different. I must say that I am

enjoying myself very much as a second term principal. I do not know whether it is just this school, because there are a lot of things here that I enjoy, or I am enjoying it because it is my second term. I am enjoying my job here.”

### *On Leading a High Performing School*

“Our own indicators for seeing Southworth as a high performing school are narrow, but we look at the PSLE results. We benchmark ourselves against schools in the West (Zone)<sup>1</sup> of Singapore. We find that we are performing better than the MOE selected schools, and there has been an upward trend. We selected a smaller subset amongst the MOE schools, and see that we have also performed better. We chose the most popular schools here in the West... and we are still performing better. So we chose to compare ourselves with the most popular schools in the J\*\* cluster. We found that R\*\*Primary is way ahead. Although it is not a fair comparison because we have a lot more foundation pupils, I cannot just leave out R\*\*Primary. We are a little behind R\*\*Primary, probably because R\*\*Primary is way ahead of the rest of the schools in the cluster. However, if I leave R\*\*Primary out of the comparison, we are comparable with the rest of the schools in terms of PSLE results.”

“Then I chose to benchmark against schools led by principals that I am comfortable with. I chose W\*\*Primary. The SES of W\*\*Primary school is much higher than mine, albeit still considered low nationally. Southworth Primary does a little bit better in terms of results. I also chose to compare with K\*\*Primary. It is not a fair comparison because 43% of parents at K\*\*Primary are graduates, whereas over 20% of our parents have a highest education of Primary 6 and below, and 12% of our families are living in 1- to 2-room (low-income) flats. So I am using K\*\*Primary as a stretch goal. That is how we compare our performance.”

“At the end of the day it is about delivering results. Without the confidence of stakeholders in your school, it is very hard to do your job. So as a principal, I juggle many balls, from making meaning to synergy and so on. I have to take care that certain measures are always kept in place. Parents judge my school by the results, and it is about accountability. I have to put myself in the position of the parents – what do I want to achieve by sending my children to school? It is about meeting the needs and expectations of our customers too. At staff conversations we talk about producing people who are equipped with future-ready skills, because I also need the teachers to buy in. If we do not get teachers to buy in, teachers being teachers with good intentions will always focus on PSLE. We ask teachers to identify the skills that children will need to work well in life in future, so our teachers care that the kids will do well and triumph in life in future. That is how we try to convince teachers on the importance of holistic education. Otherwise it is very difficult; they would just want to see results.”

### *On the Successful Student*

“One thing would be results, but I define success as being the best that you can be. Realistically, not everybody will be able to go to Raffles Institution (one of the top schools in Singapore). Here at Southworth Primary, they aim for schools like River Valley High, but I do try to tell them that they must be open-minded and they must see a bigger world. I have to convince the children that not everybody will make it as a lawyer or a doctor. There are different jobs that would suit them better. You will be surprised, due to the character of this neighbourhood, some parents may be quite happy if their child manages to

<sup>1</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.

go to the 5-year Normal stream.<sup>2</sup> If their child can get into J\*\* Secondary, which they regard as a good school, they would be happy. To me, I communicate to parents that a successful student means he/she can go to their school of choice. And children are realistic; a person who cannot make it to RI will never think that they will want to go to RI, and their parents are also aware of that.”

### *On Vision, Values of Leadership*

“At every point we are guided by some fundamental beliefs. We have certain values and visions. But I think we only make meaning when we are able to actually live, direct and work out the vision.”

“When I was a VP, I could say that I was an educator with a certain vision. But it takes a different meaning when I am able to live it. I always thought that there were certain beliefs at every stage of my life, and I have very strong convictions, but it is only when I am able to get into a real position of leading that I begin to see how they have crystallized, and how I am able to enact these basic beliefs. So I started off as a first term principal with this belief in making meaning for the teachers, and this approach has evolved over time.”

“How so? It is because a principal’s job 5 or 10 years ago is different from now, and a teacher’s job 5 years ago is very different from now. And it will definitely be different 5 years in the future. So how do we get our teachers to be what they want to be? From when I led my first school till now, I can see that it is even worse now if we do not do something to make meaning for the job. Teachers on the ground tend to receive many directives from department heads, the school principal, MOE, and parents. As a principal, I appreciate the autonomy that I am given as a principal, where I am judged by my outcome rather than being managed in my processes.”

“Having worked in MOE, I know that when I want the schools to do something, it is my only goal for the schools. I do not know the other things that the schools are doing, so it seems to be the only thing. That is the impression of every department and everyone. I can understand, because they are just doing their jobs. But as a result, everyone ends up piling things onto the lowest end. So leadership is about making meaning. If teachers do not find meaning in their jobs because they cannot make decisions, they just find themselves doing a lot without any meaning. So I think it is very important that leadership is about making meaning, not just for the teachers but for everything.”

“As an instructional leader, if I do not tie everything together, everything runs about in all directions. So it is also about synergy in the things that we do. For example, we do modular CCAs as part of holistic development. Instead of regarding them as separate, we see how one initiative can fulfill multiple objectives and cater to a certain outcome. But most importantly, it is about giving teachers meaning in the job.”

“How do I give them meaning in the job? I am in the position to give them the autonomy to say that they can make professional decisions. The slogan ‘Teachers as Professionals’ was a major thrust in my previous school because I want them to feel they are professionals. Here we have evolved and name it ‘Competent and Engaged’ as one of the strategic thrusts. But basically the whole idea is that we recognize them as professionals, so that they can make local level decisions.”

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<sup>2</sup>There are three streams at the secondary level: Express, Normal (academic), and Normal (technical). The Normal stream is intended for academically weaker students. Students in the Normal stream generally spend an additional year to complete their secondary education.

### *On the Teaching and Learning Structure*

“In my previous school, I used the concept of ‘Schools within Schools’ and I started the level system. As a first term principal, I started very small and first piloted 2 levels. By starting small, I can be more involved, and it will always be a success because other people buy in and everyone will want to come in. The level system was very successful in C\*\* Primary and they loved it, because there was a lot of autonomy on the ground.”

“Why the level system? Because the school is a micro-system of society; there is MOE, and the various subject departments. Teachers are at the receiving end of multiple directives and they are tired. When I run the level system, the level head is a professional position. I find the level system so unique, and the teachers like it because they have autonomy on the ground. For example, as a Primary 4 level head, we synergize everything so teachers will not be with doing everything. The level head has the autonomy of the whole level and has the authority to decide on how they want to implement programmes and the curriculum. The level heads are also actively involved in contributing to staff deployment.”

“Deployment is important such that I can pull up the performance of the weaker teachers. 80% of my staff here may be very positive, but in another school it may be just 70%. What is important is the mixing and putting the same people together. This is another concept that we believe in here: team learning and team support. It stems from the phrase that the whole is more than the sum of the parts. I keep going back to this phrase, maybe because I come from a theoretical background.”

“Group lesson planning is timetabled into school events. It is put into the TTT, (Teachers Timetable Time), under the weekly level meetings. Group lesson planning is tied to PLC at the moment. We have not done it for other subjects yet because we want to get used to the culture first. So we are currently running our ‘Skillful Teacher’ PLC for the 2nd year. We have moved on to the topics that are more application based. Gradually we are slowly moving on to a culture of observing each other while in lesson. Again, we want to start small. We started PLC on the questioning technique, which came from the Chinese department’s action research. We got them to do group lesson planning, and later they went on to do group lesson observation—to observe a teacher delivering a lesson. Finally, they do a group critique.”

### *On Autonomy*

“I talked a lot about making meaning. I realized that enabling and structuring a routine for staff to reflect on is important. It is important because ultimately, when teachers find the connection between programmes/events and meaning, they will feel empowered to act. The structure for reflection is something like this. First of all, I must know what ‘something’ is, before I can make meaning of it. For example, in terms of rolling out CCE (Character and Citizenship Education), if I do not find it meaningful at my end, all I will do is to disseminate every circular from MOE, and the teachers carry out their plans in a perfunctory way. But CCE is the whole thing. I need to personally understand what I am trying to drive at with regards to Character and Citizenship Education. What is the end point? What do I want? I tie this to our school values. The key is to develop citizenry and rootedness to Singapore. This is not really new; it is everything that we have been doing! So I first get to understand what it all means from my end and communicate this to all the staff. Then when they implement and infuse it into the curriculum, it is meaningful to them and they have ownership of it. I share with staff the ‘procedures’ to make meaning using the example above.”

“Making meaning is not just about rolling out a programme or initiative. Actually ‘making meaning’ to me is about finding meaning in the job. If I always have to do things that MOE and the departments tell me to do, I will not find meaning in the job. I will be very tired at the end of the day. I believe that, if I ask people to go home at 1 o’clock, people will start looking at their watches at 12 o’clock. But if they find meaning in the job, they connect with the job, they believe that this is good, and they are in control of what they do. That is meaning. If they do not find meaning in this job, and their job is what other people are telling them to do, they do not find meaning. So meaning is more than just that. They have control. With the level system, they have control over what they want to do and how they want to do it. But it stems from my being confident that they will do their best. The way to do it is to be honest in a situation and put people together such that they will have a good influence on others.”

### *On Staff Appraisal*

“I allow staff to arrive at their own meaning instead of insisting on a shared meaning. It is my faith in them. In my previous school and current school, I am even confident enough to let the staff decide on their appraisal criteria because they did it ‘meaningfully.’ And you will be surprised! It turned out to be what EPMS (Enhanced Performance Management System) was. So it is my faith and belief that they want it like that too. We triangulated the ranking panel, staff and EPMS, and everything fell into place, plus they believe that it is theirs – that is why it is meaningful.”

### *On Teamwork and Staff Development*

“The whole is more than the sum of the parts. Teachers have a rich pool of expertise, so the problem is that the leader must always process information and make meaning. I am glad to have good people – the VPs (VP (EO), VP (Admin)), heads – very good people. If I am caught in the daily school operations, I cannot see the big picture. I do not have enough time and energy because time, energy and intelligence are limited. I spend a lot of time trying to see things. I think a lot during my long drive to work, so by the time I come to school, I have a lot of things formulated. For example only when I came to school this morning that I decided to ask VP if he would like to join us today because it is good for his development. I did not think about it earlier.”

“So I believe that teachers are a rich pool of expertise. The problem is that everybody pushes us to go for training. I am not saying that training is not good, but everyone returns with multiple, competing directives, and at the end of the day, again it is like the problem with the departments. Eventually you decide not to fight it because no one is able to help in the facilitation and implementation, and everything fizzles out. It is like what Michael Fullan says. So I think there must be synergy.”

“Of course I have good people, and a very good SSD. We started our PLC, because I always believe that every teacher must aim to be a ST (senior teacher). Teaching competencies are very important, so we chose ‘Skillful Teacher’ as our PLC, and the STs will lead. For instance, Chinese teachers learn action research and questioning techniques, and this is tied together into the ‘Skillful Teacher’ PLC. That is synergy. For ‘visible thinking’, I want to tie it to ‘learning to learn skills and behaviour’, where I am introducing metacognition. It is also tied. There must be synergy, so that the whole school moves together, and change is carefully paced.”

“The ‘Skillful Teacher’ PLC takes a certain approach to teachers’ learning. The Lead Teacher (LT) and the SSD drive it. You need to have very good people to start with, and obviously the LT is a very good teacher. We started with the first chapter on teachers’

belief. Then we went on to momentum and attention. So the STs, led by the LT and SSD, will first explore and internalize that topic. Then they share it with the rest of the staff on alternate Wednesdays at PLC. For example, if it is about momentum – momentum means that you must have a steady pace when you teach, and once there is a break in momentum children get distracted – and they share practical examples. The levels then go back and discuss, and STs facilitate. This year we took on the approach of group lesson planning.”

“Change happens together because of team learning and team support, and it is easiest to create change when everybody goes about as a team. So that is why it is my fundamental belief that the whole is more than the sum of the parts. Firstly, it is about expertise. If everybody tries to develop their own skills, putting them together is just a sum. But if we take it as a whole, there is knowledge creation. The whole is more than just the sum of individuals put together. So this is in our model. That is why we need team learning and team support.”

“So our teams are PLC teams, and our level teams. I use these teams because firstly as a group it is easier to bring everybody up. The people who are less motivated can get inspired by people who are more motivated. You feel change, and then change is more easily managed. They are also in touch with ground issues, because heads of departments do not always know what is going on at the lower levels. So at the lower levels, they can solve problems and have innovations at the local level. They feel that they can have a choice to decide what they want to do; for instance P1 learning journey, or how they would want to do this IPW, so long as we eventually come to this value. This is our assessment rubric. So there is a kind of autonomy as well. At the end of the day, it is about recognizing that teachers have a rich pool of resources and expertise.”

“To give you a very good example, there was this untrained teacher trainee and she was very ill prepared for the job. I said let us not waste her time and be unkind. Do not pass her because if she goes to NIE [National Institute of Education] and she does not pass, it would really be unkind to her. But the STs worked very closely with her and practically begged me to go for her lesson observation. So I went, and I was so impressed with what the STs did in leveling up a person. So when I talk about synergy, it is not just about the programmes; it is about synergy in our training and development, and everything else.”

“In implementing group lesson observation as a professional development practice, we leverage on ICT such as video. Some levels will have face-to-face meetings because they are willing to stay back for one afternoon a week, because they believe in it. Some levels took the video, but I think the P4 or P5 levels stayed back. A lot of things are well-received because it appears to be initiated from the group up, like this PLC initiative. After a while, I do not have to go in, though I am still very involved in the ‘learning to learn skills’ PLC at this point. Eventually I want it to evolve from the ground up such that they feel that they have ownership of it. I think at the end of the day, leadership is about getting people do things that are sustainable and they feel that they are the ones doing it. Only on further reflection then they may realize that it was my leadership that has made it possible for them to do this. But for something to be sustainable, people have to feel that they are the ones who are doing it, not the leader. So that is the thing that is very important.”

### *On Parents and Community*

“Our parental support is something that we struggle very hard for. We have plans to establish an alumni association. But the challenge has to do with the SES profile of families. I have over 12% of families from 1 to 2-room flats, and they do not provide much school support, but they also do not interfere in school matters. For example, other schools may face pressure from parents to give less homework. But for me, if I do not give homework,

parents will try to pay for private tuition outside, even though they can hardly afford it. But this is just like throwing money away. In regards to this, I am glad my teachers share the same belief and they provide a lot of extra lessons. But I try to strike a balance. During the school holidays, I do not want the teachers to give extra lessons, so I engage outside vendors to do holiday programmes, which are optional for children to attend. If parents have better holiday programmes or better after school remedial programmes for their children, they can opt not to attend. But then there are parents who try to stop the school from having this programme, because they have the mentality that other people cannot have it if their children cannot have it.”

“Anyway for my school, I do not have many parents who have the means to provide a lot of private tuition such that teachers need not do anything and children can still score well on exams. They usually do not interfere and leave us to do what we think is best for the children. I think this is our opportunity. Initially when I first entered the school, parents did not know me and they were the most difficult. But when they saw that I was able to do things, and they see their children very happy about school, they do not interfere with us very much.”

“We do an open house for P1 orientation. Another thing we do is to invite parents to school during Mid-Autumn festival. For Meet the Parents sessions, I tend to just preach to the converted. Parents that you want to see do not come. Teachers are different nowadays, they also know how to work with parents well. So parents have confidence in them.”

“Our PSG [Parent Support Group] is made up of non-working parents, and they are not able to contribute in some ways – there are very few who can do things independently. Usually they accompany children for field trips, or help to sell things on Mother’s Day, or help us with Fruity Veggie Bites and so on. But it is not easy to initiate programmes or activities, or to get them to lead programmes.”

*On ‘What do staff say about you as a principal?’*

“Sometimes teachers dare not see me and they see the VPs instead, which is not so nice. I think very fast, and I am very clear, so sometimes I do not communicate as well, and they may see me as impatient. None of them have told me that, but I think they see me as impatient. Sometimes they say that they cannot follow my thoughts and may leave a meeting not completely sure of what I want, yet are afraid to ask for clarification. But I think they do appreciate the things that have been going on here. I think they feel that I care for them. As for students, Primary 6, Primary 5 children always have blank faces. For Primary 1 to 4 children, once I pay some attention to them, they will like me. Young children are like that. It is not hard to win children over. You can win them over by being friendly to them. It seems as though being a principal is very easy, right?” [Principal]

“I think my principal is very focused. There is always clarity of thought. In terms of strategic planning and thinking, she really engages our minds, our energy and our actions all towards that target, so we will not run around aimlessly. I think that is a key strength of our principal. And she does not do things just for the sake of doing; she focuses on the importance of teaching and learning, which is our core business. Once we get that right, I think the rest of the things will fall into place very nicely. I believe students and teachers will share the same sentiment as me. Surprisingly, the number of teachers getting pregnant has also gone up.” [Vice-Principal]

## 2.6 Discussion

Our study reiterates the forces or factors that influence Singapore principals' instructional leadership practices. These key forces are globalization, localization, and personalization.

### 2.6.1 Globalization

The influence of globalization on Singapore principals' leadership approach can be seen in the role of vision development. Singapore principals are acutely alert to the international educational trends in setting the vision and goals for their schools. They establish or revise the school vision and goals according to the needs of the twenty-first-century learners. The 2015b review of Ng et al. revealed some commonalities in defining vision for students in Singapore schools. These commonalities include an attention to holistic education and ICT proficiency. This current study further reinforces the findings of Ng and his colleagues. Moreover, we wish to argue that a focus on holistic education and developing students in the area of technology is aligned with the international educational trend. It should be noted as well that Singapore is a small country, which might be heavily susceptible to the forces of global change (OECD 2011). Being attuned, Singapore principals must adapt to the changes in the world.

### 2.6.2 Localization

*National culture: long-term vision, pragmatism, and consideration*

The previous studies have suggested culture as a noteworthy factor that influences leadership practices among Singapore principals (Stott and Low 2000; Sharpe and Gopinathan 2000; Ng et al. 2015a). The current study additionally specifies the leadership styles of Singapore principals that reflect the characteristics of the local culture: long-term vision, pragmatism, and consideration. These three characteristics go hand in hand to form Singapore principals' leadership styles. Interviewed principals emphasized vision development and setting a long-term direction, and simultaneously take a pragmatic perspective to establish yearly goals. For example, the long-term vision involves targeting at holistic education, while increased academic results are reflected in the year goals. It should be noted that benchmarking is a common practice in Singapore schools.

Despite adopting pragmatism through organized structures, principals regarded relationship building and care for staff and students as key to success. Moreover, relationship building and care for people pertain to "consideration". This finding, coupled with those in the previous studies (see Ng et al. 2015a), suggests that effective principals usually have a good balance between long-term vision and pragmatism, and initiation of structure and consideration. Although having such a

balance may create tensions or paradoxes for principals themselves, it can be feasibly implemented.

### *National Policies and Initiatives*

Another factor influencing principals' instructional leadership practices, particularly vision building, is "cornerstone" national policies and initiatives. These include broad-based holistic education, bilingual policy, Teach Less Learn More, and 21st Century Competencies. Principals emphasized the importance of a strong alignment between policies and their implementation at the school level. According to Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2011), there is less gap between policy-making and implementation in Singapore than that in many other countries, though the small size again seems to help the implementation of initiatives and policies more effectively.

### *School-Contextualization*

Principals exercised all identified broad roles of instructional leadership, irrespective of their school contexts (i.e., school location, student achievements, and student demographics). However, the enactment mode of such roles is influenced by contextual factors. This influence is particularly explicit in the role of mission and vision building. As mentioned in the "developing vision" subsection, principals who started their principalship in a school that had been consistently reputed for academic outcomes tended not to change the school vision, but tried to ensure the alignment between school activities and vision. Our study is not the only to assert this finding; well more than two decades ago, Bamburg and Andrews (1991) attributed school context as a notable factor influencing principals' roles in developing mission.

### *Personalization*

While "globalization" and "localization" forces are reported to have a substantial influence on principals' vision development, "personalization" factors are influential to a certain degree on principals' direct involvement in managing classroom instruction and teacher professional development. These "personalization" factors refer to principals' educational background, philosophy of leadership, and (previous) mentors/peers.

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## **2.7 Conclusion**

This chapter sets out to provide a first-hand account of principal instructional leadership in Singapore context. This was a deliberate effort to fill the knowledge gap of instructional leadership in non-Western societies. Singapore's model of instructional leadership suggests that principals maintain a high level of oversight on the school's direction and vision. This is reflected where all the school's

instructional processes, programs, and activities are deliberately organized to achieve the school vision, educational policies, and initiatives.

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## 2.8 Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. To what extent do you think the principal is or is not an effective instructional leader?
2. Is Southworth Primary an effective school? Give your reasons.
3. What can schools do to promote the overall achievement of all pupils (other than just examination results)? In addition, what are the limits of what schools can do?
4. How does the pressure for change enter into the need to implement a plan for action that takes into consideration the varying needs and interests of stakeholders (staff, students, and school administrative personnel)?
5. What ought to be the priorities for the principal in improving the school? Why?
6. What further research can be done to help school leaders function better as instructional leaders?

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