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Leading Educational Change in East Asian Schools:

The Case of Hong Kong

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Abstract

Observers claim that the rapid pace of change around the world is unprecedented. Nowhere is change more apparent than in the rapidly developing societies of East Asia. This is similarly true of the educational systems of East Asian nations. The pressures of global economic integration have forced heretofore largely closed systems to implement many changes in educational policy that would have been unthinkable even a decade ago. At the same time however, just as with school systems elsewhere, the degree of change inside the schoolhouses of East Asia has not matched the pace of changes in government policies and public expectations.

Using Hong Kong as an example, this paper first examines the types of changes with which East Asian schools are now grappling. Then the paper analyses how cultural dimensions of East Asian societies influence the process of change in schools. The paper concludes by presenting implications for leading changes in East Asia's educational systems.

Global economic integration has created a new context for national development throughout the world. Consequently, societies and their social and economic institutions are under unprecedented pressure to adapt to externally driven change. While change is an ever-present facet of human evolution, the scope and pace of change in the Asia Pacific since the mid-1980's has accelerated dramatically.

Moreover, unlike in past generations, citizens of East Asia have found that the consequences for not changing are rapid and severe. The Asian economic crisis during the late 1990's was a salient example of what happens when social systems fail to adapt quickly enough to changes in a globally interdependent economy. Among some of the Asian "dragons and tigers" the gap between the pace of economic development and adaptation of educational, political and governmental policies and norms grew too large. The economic system simply could not sustain itself at the new levels without a stronger foundation of support within the social-cultural systems.

The crisis also highlighted the importance of education to sustainable economic development. From the U.S. to Europe and Asia, policymakers now recognize that education holds a key to national development. The enhanced importance attributed to education comes, however, with the price of higher expectations and accountability.

Although the Asian public's expectations of schools are growing, education already consumes the largest part of government budgets in Asia. Significant increases are not likely in the near future. Without new resources, schools must increase learning effectiveness by making better use of the human resources already at their disposal. Given the rapid changes taking place in and around schools, educators at all levels will have to become more adept at leading change.

The purpose of this article is to examine the nature of the change process and to explore the role school leaders can play in transforming Asian educational systems. Hong Kong is used as a case study to illustrate connections between changes in Asian social and educational systems. The article begins by exploring briefly the context of educational change in Hong Kong's schools since 1990. The main portion is devoted to an exploration of the change process. The focus here is on how cultural dimensions of Hong Kong's culture influence the change process. The article concludes by presenting implications for leading change in East Asia's educational systems.

The Evolving Context of Hong Kong's Schools

The global era is challenging traditional ways of living and working throughout the world (Naisbitt, 1997; Ohmae, 1995, 2000; Rohwer, 1995). Notably, unlike in prior eras, these changes arrive -- often uninvited -- from outside one's national borders and from outside one's particular profession. Drucker has observed that is true for most fields, but suggests that it has special implications for education.

[I]t is a safe prediction that in the next 50 years, schools and universities will change more and more drastically than they have since they assumed their present form more than 300 years ago, when they reorganized around the printed book. What will force these changes is in part new technology, such as computers, videos, and telecasts via satellite; in part the demands of a knowledge-based society in which organized learning must become a lifelong process for knowledge workers; and in part new theory about how beings learn. (Drucker, 1995, p. 79)

These changes bring new challenges as well as opportunities to education. However, they also mean that educators face fundamental transformations at the very core of their

profession. The section of the article will examine some of the forms in which these changes arrive at the door of the schoolhouses of Hong Kong.

Globalization of an Educational Ideal

A key change force in this era has been the expansion of global information, communication, and transportation networks. Nations throughout the region now have ready access to global images and trends via HBO, BBC, CNN and the “Asian” Wall Street Journal. The same news reports, movies, advertisements, and sporting events, now beam into homes in Bangkok, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong and San Francisco. The internet has created a type of distributed connectivity among individuals and between organizations that never before existed. Japanese futurist Kenichi Ohmae (1995, 2000) contends that developments in information technology have combined with more fluid national boundaries to create a new context for all organizations.

An unanticipated consequence of this information revolution is that consumers now define the meaning of *quality education* globally, rather than locally or even nationally. Concerns over national competitiveness now shape education policy decisions made from Ottawa to Sydney and Hong Kong. Increasingly, policymakers (and parents) throughout the Asia Pacific region view a quality education in similar terms.

Moses Cheng, Chairman of the Hong Kong Education Commission, has observed: “Young people must have a global perspective. . . They need to have high personal integrity, strong language ability, be computer literate, able to think independently, and be creative” (1998, p. 24). This statement of Hong Kong’s educational aims is notable in several respects. First, essentially the same statement of aims could be found in Shanghai, London, New York, or Bangkok. Second, this is an expanded and highly

ambitious agenda for educational systems that have been under criticism globally. Third, it is an agenda that will require substantial change in the capacities of the people who work in the educational system.

The Evolution of Educational Policies and Practices in Hong Kong

Hong Kong's evolving educational goals have already begun to redirect the methods of education. It is notable that virtually all of Hong Kong's educational policy reforms of the past decade were imported from or emerged from forces originating outside of Hong Kong. These include School-based Management (SMI), Information Technology (IT), Quality Education, Target-oriented Curriculum (TOC), Teaching with Chinese as the Medium of Instruction (TCMI).

School-based management. The adoption of school-based management in Hong Kong is notable because of its dramatic contrast with the traditions of Hong Kong education. School-based management assumes that participation of staff and parents is a positive and necessary factor in building commitment to change in the educational system. Yet both the institutional structure of the Education Department and local norms of the Hong Kong Chinese culture have presented formidable obstacles to its implementation. Both reinforce a centralized top-down approach to decision-making that is at odds with the norms of school-based management. Ten years after its introduction, school-based management has become a part of the Hong Kong educational system, though the quality of implementation remains in question.

Learning technologies. Surprisingly, the large-scale introduction of learning technology in Hong Kong has lagged behind some of its regional competitors (e.g., Singapore, Malaysia). Even as recently as 1999, learning technology was conspicuous by

its absence in Hong Kong classrooms. In fact, when coming to Hong Kong from Singapore or the U.S. the absence of any discernable system-wide focus on learning technology was eerie. Moreover, this contrasted with the situation in Hong Kong *outside* of the schools, where the same technologies were the object of desire among entrepreneurs and corporations. Although this began to change with the introduction of a system-wide initiative in 1998, it will be some years before the system develops its technology infrastructure and staff skills.

Quality education. A third major change in educational policy initiated over the past decade has been the introduction of the *Quality Education* concept.

Whereas SMI primarily aims to introduce a system of school-based management, founded on the body of school effectiveness research, the strong thrust of ECR7 (EC, 1997) is to develop quality schools possessing quality cultures, and to introduce a framework by which to monitor and assure quality. The marked change in nomenclature from 'effective schools' to 'quality schools' is in line with shifts in English-speaking Western countries, and with recent developments in relevant academic literature. (Dimmock & Walker, 1996, p. 481)

Again, a concept drawn from the business world and from outside of education was adopted as policy by Hong Kong's education department. As Dimmock and Walker have noted, this policy was grafted onto school-based management because of a perceived gap between the characteristics of the local educational culture and its capacity to adapt to prior changes (i.e., SMI) and emerging goals.

Target-oriented curriculum and student-centered learning. Teaching is the core process of schooling and the one that remains highly resistant to change throughout the world. In Hong Kong it faces a special challenge since these "global" reforms originated in cultures that operate from different assumptions than those of Hong Kong. In fact, the

very meaning of *learning and teaching* encompassed in the constructivist tenets of the target-oriented curriculum differs from the traditional model in Asian schools. As Sin-ming Shaw has observed:

Blaming Asian schools for focusing on memorization -- as opposed to “thinking” – is too pat an excuse, as schools reflect the basic values of a society. It is ingrained in the Asian psyche that “correct” answers always exist and are to be found in books or from authorities. Teachers dispense truth, parents are always right and political leaders know better. In executive-led societies such as China and Hong Kong, leaders act like philosopher-kings, often uttering unchallenged banalities. Senior officials sometimes resemble the powerful palace eunuchs of the past dynasties: imperial, unaccountable, incompetent. Questioning authority, especially in public life, disrespectful, un-Asian, un-Confucian. (Shaw, 1999, p. 23)

Viewing educational reform in Hong Kong from this perspective, it is possible to view reform in the schools is part and parcel of a transformational change in the society at-large. Proposed changes in classroom curriculum and teaching mirror proposed changes in decision-making at the school and system levels. These in turn mirror patterns of citizen participation in the society as a whole. Therefore, students, teachers, administrators and parents together face the same challenge of changing their “mental models” of teaching and learning before they can implement these practices successfully (Senge, 1990).

Reference to educational reform in Singapore is instructive here. Singapore’s schools have adopted the mission: “Thinking schools, a learning society.” This mission emphasizes the connection between schools and society. It reflects the belief that thinking schools involve various stakeholder groups – students, teachers, administrators, parents, community –in decision-making. A thinking school serves students who are learning to

think for themselves and to create knowledge. A thinking school develops graduates who are motivated and able to learn throughout their lives, thereby creating a learning society. Thinking schools empower learners, transforming them into leaders who can take responsibility for themselves and the social institutions of their society. This sets the context for the next section of the article which considers the task of leading change in Hong Kong's schools.

Conceptualizing Change Strategies for Schools: East and West

This is an age of paradox. Societies throughout the Asia Pacific region are straining to accommodate new values, norms and standards of practice emanating from the global culture. At the same time, resistance to change has never been greater. O'Toole has noted:

In all instances in modern society, change is exceptional. When it comes about, it does so primarily as a response to outside forces. . . In no case does it come readily. . . A world in which change is the rule would be characterized by chaos, leading to social collapse. Therefore, a society must have one foot permanently on the brake; it must have a predisposition to tradition and conservatism. (1995, p. 253)

This begins to explain *why* resistance is greatest when facing a seemingly irresistible tide of change. Too much change too quickly causes confusion and the breakdown of individuals, organizations and societies. In the extreme case, an individual loses his/her capacity to function effectively, an organization will grind to a halt or fail to survive, and a society can become extinct.

This perspective also suggests that resistance to change – the bane of organizational leaders – is not wholly negative. Rather, it emphasizes the positive side of resistance, the

aspect that helps maintain equilibrium within systems. This represents a paradigm shift in change management. Today instead of viewing resistance simply as something to be overcome, effective change leaders view it as a source of information as to what needs to be re-balanced in the organizational system.

Thus, even with the introduction of massive political and economic changes in East Asia over the past decade, counter-balancing mechanisms that resist rapid change maintain cultural integrity and continuity. As the Ohmae has observed: “The contents of kitchens and closets may change, but the core mechanisms by which cultures maintain their identity and socialize their young remain untouched” (1995, p. 30). Cultural change seldom proceeds as rapidly as changes in the surface features of society. This is especially salient for school leaders.

Schools -- along with the family and religious organizations -- represent one of the primary social institutions responsible for cultural transmission. Throughout the world schools remain bastions of conservatism, not centers of social experimentation. Tyack and Hansot (1982) referred to the schoolhouse as the community’s “museum of virtue.” Schools are guardians of the culture’s most cherished values and traditions.

Thus, public rhetoric to the contrary, schools are designed to maintain and honor the past, not lead the way into the future. Schools do not change easily because that is not what societies want for their youth. Consequently, societal changes only filter through to the schoolhouse once they have been deemed safe and necessary. This is borne out by global experiences with educational reform over the past several decades.

Leading Change in Asian Schools

Given the rapidly changing educational context, learning to lead change

represents one of the central challenges facing Asia's educational leaders. School leaders must understand the demands and opportunities of the global context and be able to articulate these to their constituents. Yet leaders must also recognize that even in the midst of rapid global change, people are still subject to the norms, values and customs of their traditional cultures.

Asia's organizational leaders are operating at the confluence of rapidly converging streams of change and tradition. Consequently, they must have dual capacities. They must be able to employ their understanding of local norms in concert with new managerial and educational practices. While the demand for such leadership is clear, the knowledge base that might underlie effective change leadership in Asian schools is not. Managers working in North American and European schools have recourse to a relatively well-developed – though still incomplete -- knowledge base concerning change management (e.g., Fullan, 1992, 1993; Hall & Hord, 1987; Kotter, 1995; O'Toole, 1995; Rogers, 1971; Senge, 1990). While this knowledge base remains limited in its prescriptive ability, at the level of principles and strategy it provides useful assistance.

Unfortunately, the empirically-tested knowledge base in Hong Kong and other Asian nations is less extensive. Thus, local school leaders tend either to be guided by tradition, or they struggle to employ management theories developed abroad. Neither approach is wholly satisfactory.

During a period of rapid change, the practices that were successful in the prior era do not guarantee success (Drucker, 1995). They may even prove counterproductive! This was apparent in the United States during the early 1990's when school-based

management was in the full throes of implementation. Many principals accustomed to a unitary form of decision-making found it difficult to make the transition to working in teams with teachers and parents. Some highly successful veteran principals chose to retire rather than adjust their leadership styles to the demands of the new context.

Theory also has its limitations. Most popular management theories – learning organizations, situational leadership, school-based management -- originated in Western societies and are predicated on normative assumptions of those cultures (Cheng, 1995). While there is no reason to reject these theories outright, it does make sense to subject them to analysis and empirical verification (e.g., see Cheng, 1996).

Assumptions about Change in “Western” Schools

Figure One presents a graphic illustration of the change process as conceptualized in Western societies. At the beginning of the change process, there is little information available about the change, often just rumors. Even at the point at which a complex innovation (e.g., IT, SMI, TOC) is adopted for trial or full implementation, nothing has really “changed”. People are not yet informed, committed to the change, or prepared to implement it. The figure depicts stages in the change process and suggests the types of support needed by people as they encounter and seek to cope with the change.

[Insert Figure One about here]

This depiction of the change process encompasses a number of “assumptions” about how change takes place. These are listed in Figure Two. Many of these have been empirically tested in Western societies and form the basis of principles leaders might use

to develop strategies for leading change in schools (e.g., Fullan, 1992, 1993; Hall & Hord, 1987).

Figure Two

Assumptions About Change

- Change is a process, not an event.
 - Change takes place in individuals before it takes place in organizations.
 - The process of change involves a gradual growth in both skills and feelings.
 - Individual members of a social system will each react differently to the same change.
 - People will implement change more effectively if they understand why they are undertaking a new policy or innovation and are committed to it.
 - There are institutional components that support the capacity of individual learning
 - Leaders play a key role both through their role as organizational gatekeepers and through the emotional and technical support they provide during the change process.
 - Change takes place within a social system as well as within an institutional structure.
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As broad assumptions these statements have been validated in the context of

educational change efforts in the US, Europe and Australia. Starting with these assumptions, this paper asks: “How and why might the cultural context of Hong Kong (or Asian) schools and society influence the change process?”

The Impact of Asian Culture on Change

In viewing the graphic in Figure One, the change process can be conceived as three stages: adoption, implementation and institutionalization. These represent the organizing framework for this discussion.

Impact of culture at the adoption stage. At the adoption stage there are apparent differences between Western systems and Asia (recognizing that there are no “typical” Western systems per se). At the adoption stage in Western schools, leaders place a premium on informing people of the nature of the change, articulating a vision and process, and gaining the interest and commitment of the participants. The rationale for this approach emerges directly from the assumptions stated above. Western societies assume that an informed and committed participant will be a more effective learner and participant in the change process.

Numerous discussions with Asian school leaders – including in Hong Kong schools – suggest less concern over creating interest and building commitment among staff prior to proceeding with learning how to implement an innovation. The tradition of top-down change operates from a different assumption. Participants assume that orders from above are orders for all concerned.

When, for example, communicating the decision that IT will be implemented, principals treat it as a *fait accompli*. Their bosses already made the decision, so why expend a lot of energy informing and interesting the staff? Thus, there is a tendency

among the principals to simply communicate the decision and proceed on to the practicalities of implementation. This results in what has been termed a “compliance culture” at all levels of the system (F. Law, personal communication, May 1999).

There is a tendency for leaders in Asia to treat change as an *event rather than as a process*. This “do it” strategy of leading change is quite common in Asian organizations. It is consistent not only with the norms of highly centralized Asian institutional systems, but also with the norms of Asian cultures. As Hofstede (1980, 1991) found in his research, Asian societies are characterized by high “power distance” relationships within their social systems. This means that lower status persons naturally defer to those of higher status in terms of formal authority and age. Moreover they accept such differences in power as a normal feature of social relations.

This differs dramatically from the US, Australia or England where “power distance” in social relations is relatively small. In these societies, people expect greater equality in social relations regardless of age and formal status. These culturally-related differences in the social system carry over to the workplace and to the tasks of leading change.

Thus, when the Asian principal tells his staff to “do it” he gets a very different reaction from that of an American principal. An American principal’s staff would typically respond with the question, “Why?” This doesn’t imply disagreement. Rather it implies the staff’s expectation that they have a right to know why they are expected to do something, that they should have a voice in the decision, and that they will be able to “do it” better if they know why they are doing it. This reflects the low “power distance” relations that predominate within American culture.

There is no question that most Asian teachers would be reluctant to ask the principal Why? It runs against the traditional cultural norms of Asian society. The same normative environment shapes teacher – student relations in the classroom where it is difficult to break away from teacher-centered instruction and get students to ask “Why?”

Even 20 years ago it made sense for a few smart decision-makers at the top of Hong Kong’s Education Department to make system-wide decisions and pass these along through principals to the schools. Three factors make this an impractical approach to leading change today.

First, the pace of change today is too rapid for a few smart decision-makers to keep up. As Gary Hamel, a pioneer of reengineering has observed: “If anything, it’s at the top of the organization that people are most blind. One of the challenges I find in many companies is that top management is learning slower than the world is changing. So we have to look to others for that creative spark” (Hamel, 1998, p. 35).

Second, both educators and the population of Hong Kong at-large is more highly educated today than 20 years ago. They have more resources in terms of knowledge and skills to contribute. There is no question that schools (throughout the world) are not fully tapping the resources of their staff or communities.

Finally, contrary to tradition, the Hong Kong community at-large has *begun* to develop an expectation that they *should* have a voice in governance. Citizen participation has risen throughout the society and this carries over to schools. Hong Kong citizens are increasingly aware that their economic future depends on the capacity of schools to produce graduates with the capacities needed for a global economy. To the degree that they see this connection, their own stake in schooling rises.

These trends point to slow but discernable changes in the underlying culture of Hong Kong society. As one Hong Kong principal commented at a recent workshop, “You need to know that Hong Kong people are starting to ask, “Why?” as well. While the adoption of change in Hong Kong schools has not traditionally emphasized broad involvement, it will increasingly require skills that generate involvement and create interest among those who will implement reform.

Thus, one difference between leading change from East to West concerns the initial stage of introducing the change. In Asian cultures such as Hong Kong it should be much easier to introduce the change than in the West. The staff expects decisions to be made at levels above them. This suggests that there will be less *overt* resistance to change at the outset in Hong Kong than in the West.

However, the passive acceptance of orders to implement the innovation is neither a guarantee of support nor a predictor of success. While many teachers will attempt to put the new policy or innovation into practice, Figure One indicates that there are many obstacles to implementation of a complex innovation.

Thus, the fact that the Hong Kong principal has a staff that is more likely to *comply* initially with his/her request can also become a handicap in practice. A staff that simply complies with the order to implement IT or school-based management may not take the time to understand the rationale for the innovation. Many will be ill-prepared for whole-hearted implementation of the innovation.

Thus, the principal who accepts silent assent as support may be making his/her first mistake. The absence of overt resistance to change at the outset may mean that change leaders do not obtain all of the information they need. By failing to take the time

to identify problems, articulate the need, vision and rationale, and to build genuine support among the staff, the principal unwittingly nurtures the illusion of successful adoption. In doing so, the principal may be laying a weak foundation for actual implementation of the change.

Impact of culture on the implementation stage. Schoolhouses are graveyards holding the remains of partially implemented educational innovations. As suggested above, many never make it beyond the adoption stage. During the implementation stage, staff move from knowing about the innovation to learning how to use it. Then they begin to apply it in practice. This is the stage where both individual and collective learning is of paramount importance (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000a, 2000b).

This requires attention and coordination from the leader(s) of the change process. Learning at workshops, discussing the innovation with colleagues, trying it out in practice, getting feedback on initial efforts at implementation, and trying it again all comprise typical activities during this stage of the change process. During this stage learning with one's colleagues is a key facet of the change process. As indicated in Figure One, this is the stage in which innovations are most likely to fail.

In a study of school change in Thailand, principals were asked to identify successful change strategies. One veteran noted: "To bring about change teachers must know that it is the supreme law of the land. Then as the administrator you must apply pressure to them constantly" (Hallinger, Chantarapanya, Sriboonma, & Kantamara, 1999). This suggests that the strategy of telling teachers to "do it" is not a complete strategy even within the traditional high power distance culture.

Although perhaps somewhat overstated, the Supreme Law strategy is actually

quite consistent with general norms of Asian culture. It reflects the tendency to give great weight to formal authority (i.e., high power distance) and to accept top-down commandments. However, implicit in this strategy is the limitation of constant application of pressure. This principal was essentially saying, “If they know it’s the law of the land they will comply with it, at least as long as they know I am watching.” Once those conditions are no longer met, behavior will return to the prior state.

In practice, principals typically arrange for the training of at least some of their teachers. In fact, workshops represent the major tool of most principals’ change strategies. Unfortunately, these workshops are often attended by staff who may not fully understand why they are attending the workshop. Or they may understand the reason, but lack commitment and enthusiasm.

Moreover, even training is not sufficient by itself to bring about change in practice (Fullan, 1992). As Figure One suggests, successful implementation of complex innovations requires skillful support of the group and the individuals who comprise it. Learning the new skills that lead to change entails an iterative process of training, coaching, feedback and support.

It is generally accepted that within Asian cultures there is a greater focus on the group as opposed to the individual. Thus, for example, Hofstede (1980, 1991) also found that the US, Australia and England differ from East Asian cultures on his theoretical dimension of communitarian vs. individualism. In East Asian cultures the group is the primary unit of change, while in these Western societies it is the individual West (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars. 1997). Thus at the level of a specific change strategy, we would likely see differences in *how* a leader provided support and used the social

network of the staff during the implementation process.

Pressure and support are key factors that influence change implementation. Asia's school leaders are advantaged here in several respects. First, because of the high power distance in social relations, administrative expectations and standards carry more weight with staff. When used judiciously, administrative expectations can help staff to persist through the difficulties of the change process. Since the group is a key factor within the local culture, *peer pressure* is likely to be even more important to generating support for change in Hong Kong than in the West (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1997).

The group is also a source of technical and emotional *support* during a period of change. It is the group that helps individuals make sense of the innovation in Asian schools. Group forums for learning together are even more necessary here than in Western nations. In addition, Asian cultures seem to naturally pay more attention to providing "moral support" to members of the group than in the West. This facet of Asian culture would have particular salience during the implementation stage since here is where staff will encounter valleys of frustration (Fullan, 1992).

Impact of culture at the institutionalization stage. Research on educational change in the West suggests that complex innovations take from three to five years to implement in a school (Fullan, 1992; Hall & Hord, 1987). When system-wide change is the goal, the timeframe is likely to be even longer. Experience suggests that this is the case in Hong Kong as well. For example, as noted earlier, school-based management has been in the process of implementation for ten years and TOC for eight years. While it is easy to start the process of change via a system mandate (e.g., Chinese as the medium of instruction), widespread, skillful implementation takes much longer.

It is at the institutionalization stage that processes are set in motion to “make the innovation stick” – to make it a permanent part of the organization. This is the period when gains in knowledge of implementing the innovation or policy are put to use. Policies or work processes may change in order to make the environment more friendly to the innovation. Or the innovation itself may undergo adaptation in order to make it more appropriate to the local setting. Thus, it is often the case that a curriculum or computer software program will need to undergo revision. While logically, it seems these adaptation would happen at the start of the change process, it is not until staff have had experience with the innovation that they know just what and how to change it.

Asian leaders are advantaged at this stage since, once again, staff expect and attend more obediently to policy directives. However, once again this strength can turn into a disadvantage if not used skillfully. The fact that it is easier to mandate change at the policy level does not mean that the process can take a short-cut! Policy change must be used in concert with strategies that build commitment and staff capacities to implement the change.

Conclusions

This goal of this review of educational change in Hong Kong was to clarify and illustrate the nature of challenges facing those who will lead Asia’s schools into the next century. The purpose of this article was to highlight patterns in the change process, rather than to recommend specific change strategies. Nonetheless, this analysis does suggest conclusions and implications that could prove useful in formulating change strategies for Asian school leaders. School leaders from outside the region may find aspects of this

analysis useful as well.

1. Conclusion: The pace and scope of change in schools has been rapid and far-reaching over the past decade. Most significant changes have and will continue to come from the outside-in. *Implication: Leaders must adapt to the fact that they will be implementing changes which were not of their choosing.*
2. Conclusion: The goals of Asia's educational systems are evolving and now largely match those of the "global educational ideal". These goals are ambitious and represent a major shift away from past educational aims. *Implication: Leaders must meet rising expectations around an educational agenda that will require building many new capacities into their schools.*
3. Conclusion: These goals and related policy reforms are ambitious, complex, and encompass all major sub-systems of the education bureaucracy: management, governance and decision-making, curriculum, assessment, teaching and learning. However, in many cases these reforms in educational policy and practice intended to meet the Asia's evolving goals are not well aligned to the local culture. *Implication: Leaders must examine closely the assumptions underlying imported reform policies and develop implementation strategies that build on the strengths of the local culture.*
4. Conclusion: These changes in the educational system mirror social, political and cultural changes in the society at-large. *Implication: Leaders of successful changes in schools will have to focus at least in part on developing stronger linkages between the schools and society at both the system and local school levels.*

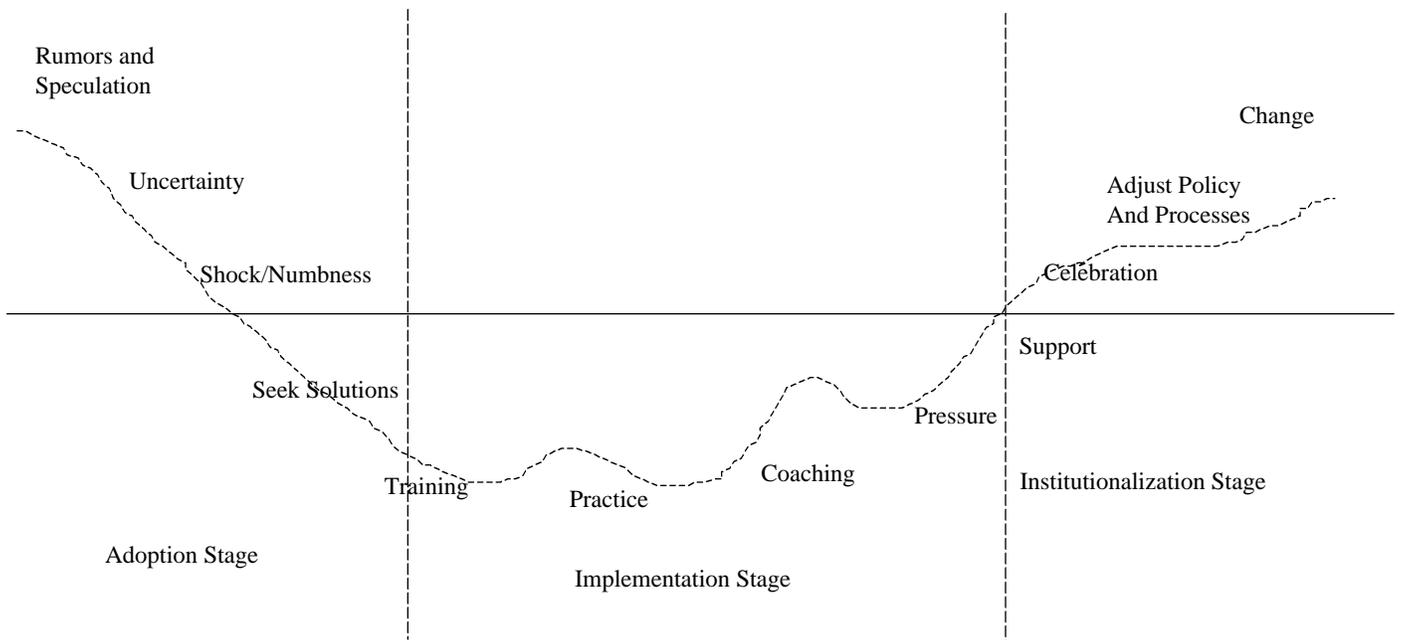
5. Conclusion: The tradition of top-down change implementation has created a compliance-oriented educational culture that does not make the full use of the human resources within the system. The normative practices associated with change implementation tend to short-cut important steps in the change process that develop an understanding of the policy or innovation, create interest, and generate commitment to change. *Implication: Leaders must take more time to build understanding, interest and support among staff and parents during the early stages of the change process.*
6. Conclusion: Effective leadership of change in Hong Kong's schools should build on the strengths of the traditional system while expanding leaders' repertoire of strategies. *Implication: Leaders of the future will require dual capacities to understand and work with imported, global educational practices while maintaining the capacity to work within the traditional local culture.*

Professor Milbrey McLaughlin, an astute observer of change in schools for the past 30 years, summarized a central lesson from the change literature by noting: "You can't mandate what matters to people, but what you mandate does matter" (1990, p. 13). This captures what I believe to be the greatest challenge of leading change in Asian schools today.

Asia's future school leaders will continue to play a key role by formulating a general vision and through judicious selection of the means for getting there. Yet they must also work differently in order to obtain staff commitment and tap staff potential for learning and change leaders. For this leaders must reach into their hearts. This facet of the evolving relationship between Asia's principals and its teachers is no different than the

relationship being sought between teachers and pupils. Empower a community of learners and you will develop a community of leaders.

Figure One: Overview of the Change Process



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Bio Notes

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