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Developing a knowledge base for educational leadership and management in East Asia

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The role of school leadership in educational reform has reached the status of a truism, and led to major changes in school leader recruitment, selection, training and appraisal. While similar policy trends are evident in East Asia, the empirical knowledge base underlying these measures is distorted and lacking in validation. This paper begins by offering evidence in support of this assertion. Then it examines the process of knowledge production as it has unfolded in Western academic contexts. Finally, it assesses the context in East Asia and offers recommendations for accelerating the development of a regionally valid knowledge base.

Keywords: Asia; leadership; educational change; knowledge base

Over the past decade, policy-makers in East Asia have implemented a broad range of new policies and programmes aimed at increasing the capacity for leadership at the school level (Cheng and Walker 2008; Walker and Kwan 2008).[1] The rationale both for overhauling school management systems (e.g., school based management, distributed leadership roles, accountability structures) and for the development of new approaches to the recruitment, selection, training and evaluation of school leaders is based upon an increasingly substantial knowledge base that supports the measurable contributions of leadership to school performance (Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe 2008). Yet, scholars have noted that this knowledge base consists largely of theory and empirical research from western cultural contexts (Cheng 1995; Hallinger 1995; Hallinger and Leithwood 1998; Hallinger, Walker, and Bajunid 2005; Walker and Dimmock 2002a). This limitation of the knowledge base and its implications for the use of research to inform policy, practice and school leadership development in East Asia represent the foci for this paper. More specifically, the paper addresses the question: 'Can we accelerate the development of a valid knowledge base for the practice of educational leadership and management in the East Asia region?'

The first part of the paper revisits the proposition that the field of educational leadership and management in East Asia (and other parts of the developing world) relies far too heavily upon theory and empirical findings from western socio-cultural contexts. This argument asserts that leadership, management and organisational change are socially constructed processes embedded in the normative cultures of particular societies (Hallinger 1995; Hallinger and Leithwood 1998; Hallinger et al. 2005; House et al. 2004; Walker and Dimmock 2002a). This implies the need to test the validity of theory and empirical findings generated in one culture against their

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application in other cultural contexts in order to understand and establish the boundaries of the applicable knowledge base (Belchetz and Leithwood 2007; Hallinger 1995; House et al. 2004). We assert that validation across cultural contexts is a basic requirement in applied fields such as education where findings are employed in the formulation and implementation of social policy.

The second part of the paper reflects on the process of knowledge production. We take particular note of efforts of western scholars to develop a valid knowledge base in educational leadership, and seek to learn from their experience. By way of illustration, we briefly trace the intellectual journey of knowledge production in the study of school leadership effects over the past 50 years. This metaphorical journey is employed as means of illuminating features of knowledge production and accumulation (Bridges 1982; Haller 1979; Kiley 1973; Landry and Amara 1998; Moore 1974) in applied fields of study.

The third section of the paper discusses the normative and structural environments in which academic research is conducted in East Asian institutions of higher education. With these features in mind, we synthesise lessons that can be applied to crafting a vision and strategy for accelerating the development of a valid knowledge base in educational leadership and management in this region.

Within the scope of this paper, we neither identify research questions nor propose a specific strategy for achieving this goal. Rather the purpose of the paper is to frame the issues that will bear upon the development of a successful strategy for accelerating the development of a valid knowledge for practice in this region. Finally, we suggest that this process of conceptualising how to craft a strategy for building a regionally relevant knowledge base capable of informing policy and practice may be equally relevant for education in other parts of the world.

Educational leadership and management in global and local perspective

Globalisation has spurred the development and global dissemination of new educational reform policies over the past two decades (Hallinger et al. 2005; Walker and Dimmock 2002a). These include policies designed to decentralise decision-making in education systems, empower teachers, raise learning and accountability standards, and develop more productive relationships between schools and their communities. In the context of these policy-driven reforms, education systems globally have concurrently undertaken efforts to strengthen capacity for school-level leadership (Fullan 2007). There is today a widely accepted belief among policy-makers and practitioners that effective school-level leadership is necessary in order to attain the desired effects of reform policies (Fullan 2007; Hall and Hord 2002). This has, in turn, led to the initiation of new standards, roles, programmes and systems for the preparation, selection, appraisal and in-service training and development of school leaders around the world (Hallinger 2003; Huber 2003; Leithwood and Day 2007; Walker and Kwan 2008).

The 'global knowledge base' in educational leadership and management

The rationale for focusing on leadership in the global movement towards the reform of educational systems lies in the emergence of an empirically supported knowledge base for the field as practiced in western societies (see Hallinger and Heck 1996; Leithwood

et al. 2004; Robinson et al. 2008). In 2011, findings from a series of influential research reviews conducted over the previous 15 years support the conclusion that 'leadership makes a difference' in the quality of student learning (Hallinger and Heck 1996; Leithwood et al. 2004; Robinson et al. 2008). Consequently, Leithwood and colleagues recently concluded that researchers have made significant progress in identifying a 'core set of leadership practices' that foster school improvement and student learning (Leithwood, Patten, and Jantzi 2010).

At the same time, however, this conclusion has been qualified with the caveat that the interpretation and application of these core leadership practices do vary across different 'contexts' (Belchetz and Leithwood 2007). One type of context that impacts the application of leadership practice is what we will term the national or social culture (Belchetz and Leithwood 2007; Cheng 1995; Hallinger 1995; Hallinger et al. 2005; House et al. 2004; Lee and Hallinger in press; Walker and Dimmock 2002a). Simply stated, the values and norms of behaviours which vary across social cultures are believed to shape the meaning, expression and interpretation of leadership practices. Thus, the same leadership behaviours demonstrated in one culture could be interpreted quite differently in another culture, and thereby produce different effects on people and the organisation (House et al. 2004).

Yet, this perspective is not apparent in the textbooks used in education management training programmes for school leaders in East Asia. We therefore suggest that the taught knowledge base in our field takes little account of differences in the cultural norms that are so important in the life of leaders, teachers, children, schools, communities and education systems. Fifteen years after scholars first began to raise this issue in the published literature in educational leadership and management (e.g. Bajunid 1996; Cheng 1995; Hallinger 1995), the knowledge base taught to practitioners in East Asia continues to reflect perspectives and practices derived from theorising and empirical research conducted largely in North America, Northern Europe and Australia and New Zealand (ANZ) (Hallinger et al. 2005).

Thus, we begin this paper by asserting that the 'global knowledge base' accessed by scholars, teachers and practitioners in the field of educational leadership and management is highly distorted. This distortion in the knowledge base is evidenced not only in the texts employed for teaching and learning, but also in the underlying research on which these texts are based. More specifically, we assert that the published theory and empirical reports derive from research conducted in a limited set of western, primarily English-speaking cultural contexts.

In order to verify the validity of this assertion, we undertook an analysis of the published literature which focused on identifying the sources of the extant knowledge base. In order to accomplish this, we analysed the distribution of manuscripts published in international journals focusing on educational leadership and management by the country of origin of the manuscripts. Since the purpose of this analytical exercise was illustrative, we limited the scope of our effort to four of the field's top-tier journals. These were identified on the basis of geographic origin of the journal, duration of the journal's publication and citation impact.

We wished to include journals that had been in print for at least 20 years and to cover different regions of the world. With respect to citation impact, we employed the *h-index* located on the 'Publish or Perish' website.[2] The journals selected for analysis were the *Educational Administration Quarterly* published in the USA (*h-index*, 74), *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* published in the Netherlands (*h-index*,

Table 1. Publication comparison: research on leadership in English-speaking, Asia and other non-English-speaking societies published in key journals in 1990–1991 and 2008–2009.

Publication/time period	1990–1991				2008–2009			
Journal	Total	English	Non-English	Asia	Total	English	Non-English	Asia
Educational Administration Quarterly	38	36	1	1	52	45	6	1
Journal of Educational Administration	48	36	8	4	86	61	19	6
School Effectiveness and School Improvement	33	24	7	2	45	12	24	9
Educational Management Administration and Leadership	67	63	4	0	71	44	21	6
Raw total	186	159	20	7	254	162	70	22
Per cent	100	85.48	10.75	3.76	100	63.78	27.56	8.66

53), *Journal of Education Administration* (*h-index*, 42) published in Australia, and *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* (*h-index*, 34) published in the UK.

The purpose of this exercise was to examine the extent to which theory and empirical reports in the global knowledge base in educational leadership and management were representative of different cultural contexts. Table 1 displays the trend in the data source of manuscripts published in the four journals for two periods, 1990–1991 and 2008–2009. Given the focus of this paper, we employed three categories with respect to country of origin: (1) English-speaking societies (i.e., North America, UK, ANZ); (2) 'Non-English-speaking societies' (excluding Asia); and (3) Asia. We chose two time periods in order to provide a comparative assessment of change in the trend over time.

This analysis is intended to illuminate the predominant sources of internationally accessible, research-based knowledge in educational leadership and management, and the extent to which these have changed over the past 20 years. The data indicate that 20 years ago less than 15% of the papers published in the field's major international journals focused on the practice of educational leadership and management outside of a small set of predominantly English-speaking societies. If we narrow the focus to Asia, 20 years ago research publications on the practice of educational leadership and management in the region could be characterised as rare events. Less than 4% of the studies reported on educational leadership and management in this region of the world.

Although the overall picture had improved somewhat by 2008–2009, there is still evidence of substantial distortion. During the latter time period, 35% of the papers published in these journals originated in non-western societal contexts. However, most of this growth can be accounted for by an increase in research published from non-English-speaking European countries (e.g., the Netherlands). Thus, we note that less than 9% of the papers originated in Asian education contexts during the 2008–2009 time period.

While these four journals do not reflect the full corpus of published theory and empirical research in the field, they represent widely accepted core journals in the field. This assertion is supported by their *h*-index ratings which were the highest among educational leadership and management journals at the time that this analysis was conducted.[3] As such, they set an 'international standard' for the quality of disseminated knowledge in educational leadership and management. Moreover, research published in these journals informs the theoretical and empirical knowledge base contained in major textbooks used in the education and training of prospective and practicing school leaders. This analysis of publication trends lends empirical weight to assertions that the knowledge base underlying educational leadership policy, preparation and practice in Asia is limited in scope and subject to considerable distortion in its application (see Bajunid 1996; Cheng 1995; Walker and Dimmock 2002b; Hallinger 1995; Hallinger et al. 2005).

Socio-cultural context matters

This paper started by declaring the proposition that the 'socio-cultural context matters' when it comes to the enactment of leadership in organisations (Cheng 1995; Hallinger 1995; Hallinger et al. 2005; Hallinger and Leithwood 1998; House et al. 2004; Walker and Dimmock 2002a). While some parts of the 'global' (i.e., western) knowledge base are undoubtedly highly relevant across national and cultural contexts, we know little about which features (i.e., theories and findings) are 'universally' applicable and which are context dependent. Researchers have only recently begun to explore empirically how cultural factors impact the utilisation of educational leadership practices outside of so-called 'western' cultural contexts.

These conclusions have taken on more than academic significance in recent years with the global expansion of higher education programmes in educational leadership and management. British and Australian universities have been particularly active in developing educational services as export products. Indeed, there is not a single nation in East Asia that does not 'host' educational programmes offered by western universities (Altbach 2004). This trend extends to leadership development programmes as well. For example, Malaysia and other former Commonwealth countries have been active consumers of leadership development programmes designed for British school leaders by the National College for School Leadership in the UK. Moreover, the pace of growth in the export of leadership education and development programmes has accelerated dramatically over the past 15 years. This has been spurred on by the dual trends of increased focus on school leadership as a policy enabler for the implementation of educational reforms in the region and globalisation.

We have observed that western institutions generally 'export' their existing curricula to other settings with minimal adaptation to local conditions. Indeed, even those programme designers who would see the value of adapting the educational leadership and management curriculum generally lack sufficient experience in the local environment. This is compounded by the paucity of published knowledge deriving from sources outside western societies.

From this perspective, the distortion of the 'global knowledge base' accessible in management education is increasingly recognised as a problem (Hallinger et al. 2005). The long-term solution to this problem lies in the development of a refined and validated knowledge base that is truly global in scope. This demands that we take

proactive steps to clarify the boundaries of the extant theoretical and empirical knowledge base in our field. The remainder of this paper explores the process of knowledge production (Kuhn 1996), and its application to this challenge in the field of educational leadership and management.

Global norms of knowledge production in applied research

The subject of knowledge production has long been of interest to scholars generally (see Kuhn 1996; Landry and Amara 1996; Wilson 1998) as well as in the field of educational administration (see Bridges 1982; Donmoyer, Imber, and Scheurich 1995; Griffiths 1979; Haller 1979; Eidel and Kitchel 1968; Kiley 1973; Ogawa, Goldring, and Conley 2000). Knowledge production refers to the processes by which knowledge advances in a field of scholarly inquiry (Bridges 1982). These processes are deemed important since they revolve around the normative and instrumental conditions by which scholars organise and work individually and collectively (Kuhn 1996). Although often accepted as givens, scholars have noted that these processes are indeed normative and subject to change (Donmoyer, Imber, and Scheurich 1995; Ogawa et al. 2000).

The knowledge base underlying professional practice encompasses the development and testing of theory as well as the description, codification and validation of administrative and leadership practices (Donmoyer, Imber, and Scheurich 1995; Griffiths 1979). Throughout academia the process of knowledge development has generally proceeded in a highly 'decentralised' fashion (Kuhn 1996; Wilson 1998). Scholars within a discipline form a loose community that shares values concerning the nature of academic inquiry, but who hold diverse perspectives, values, interests, and goals concerning the foci of inquiry (Wilson 1998). In educational leadership and management, different theoretical and methodological approaches have been applied to knowledge production with varying degrees of success as judged by knowledge accumulation (Bridges 1982). Indeed, over the past 50 years, scholars have critiqued the rate, validity and utility of knowledge accumulation in educational leadership and management (Bell, Bolam, and Cubillo 2003; Bridges 1982; Donmoyer, Imber, and Scheurich 1995; Eidel and Kitchel 1968; Erickson 1967; Griffiths 1979; Haller 1979; Kiley 1973; Lipham 1961, 1964; Moore 1974).

We would also suggest that normative approaches to the testing of new knowledge across different contexts vary in different disciplines. For example, when compared with the 'sister discipline' of business management, the perspective of scholars in educational leadership and management could be considered more local and less international in orientation. Education scholars have been much slower to embrace international or cross-cultural perspectives in their research. By way of example, we note that the field of business management includes many more journals whose aims are explicitly international in nature and scope.

It is unrealistic to believe that one could dictate either the foci or methods by which scholars undertake empirical research in either western or eastern societies. Nonetheless, an insufficient and often fluctuating focus on core issues in the field has been posited as a long-standing obstacle to knowledge accumulation in educational leadership and management (Bridges 1982; Erickson 1967; Haller 1979; Ogawa, Goldring, and Conley 2000). For example, Ogawa and colleagues (2000) observed considerable variation in the selection of topics as well as a tendency for scholars to shift their attention from topic to topic based on changing perceptions of importance

in the environment. They suggested that the latter trend was at odds with the persistence of focus needed either to gain traction on important problems of policy and practice or to advance theoretical knowledge. The authors concluded that, 'Our examination of the ways in which the field of educational administration is organised reveals that existing practices and structures may not be well suited to advancing the knowledge base' (Ogawa, Goldring, and Conley 2000, 351).

It is also the case that within every field of study certain lines of inquiry and methods of investigation emerge over time as favoured by scholars (Bridges 1982; Ogawa, Goldring, and Conley 2000). As groups of scholars begin to explore these lines of inquiry, some approaches are discarded while others are embraced. Some questions attain greater importance, while others fall aside (Kuhn 1996; Landry and Amara 1996). With this in mind, we suggest that published reviews of research play an important role in this process of formulating and refining research questions and lines of inquiry.

For example, over the past 50 years, a series of reviews of research have been published in the field of educational leadership (see Bell, Bolam, and Cubillo 2003; Bossert et al. 1982; Bridges 1982; Erickson 1967; Haller 1979; Hallinger 2011a, 2011b; Hallinger and Heck 1996; Hallinger and Leithwood 1994; Leithwood, Begley, and Cousins 1990; Leithwood et al. 2004; Leithwood and Montgomery 1982; Lipham 1964; Mulford and Silins 2003; Pitner 1988; Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe 2008; Southworth 2002; Witziers, Bosker, and Kruger 2003). These reviews identified milestones of progress and suggested more and less desirable directions to take at various forks in the road. By 'desirable directions' we refer to recommendations of more productive conceptualisations, research questions, designs and methodologies, as well as the identification of blind spots, blank spots and intellectual 'dry wells' (Hallinger and Heck 1996). Thus, research reviews play an important role in the process of knowledge production in any field of scholarly inquiry (Eidel and Kitchel 1968; Haller 1979; Kiley 1973; Moore 1974; Ogawa, Goldring, and Conley 2000).

A case of knowledge production in educational leadership and management

In concert with Ogawa and colleagues, however, we would suggest that when scholars have been able to maintain focus on a core issue for an extended period of time, greater evidence of progress can be demonstrated. We offer the case of global research that has sought to understand the relationship between leadership and learning as an example of the benefits of sustaining a long-term focus on a specific line of inquiry. During the middle years of the twentieth century, practical wisdom shared by principals, school superintendents, teachers and parents in many parts of the world conveyed the belief that 'good schools have good principals' (see Grobman and Hynes 1956; Lipham 1961; Miller 1960; Uhls 1962). However, this practical wisdom, though widely accepted, lacked an empirical knowledge base that could offer reliable guidance for policy-makers, educators or school leaders (Bridges 1967; Erickson 1967).

Indeed, it was not until the 1960s that scholars began to more actively explore the validity of this practical wisdom through conceptual analysis (see Bridges 1967), empirical inquiry (see Gross and Herriot 1965) and research reviews (see Lipham 1961, 1964). During the 1970s and 1980s scholars built upon this critical foundation through a series of reviews that examined conceptualisations (Pitner 1988), methodologies (Bridges 1982; Haller 1979; Murphy, Hallinger, and Mitman 1983)

and results (Bossert et al. 1982; Leithwood and Montgomery 1982; Purkey and Smith 1983) in studies of school leadership. These reviewers laid down markers in the uncertain journey of knowledge accumulation that characterises programmatic research.

Evidence of 'progress' in the development and enactment of this emergent programme of research on leadership and learning could be observed over time, though it was often slow and uncertain. For example, in 1967 Bridges highlighted the need to bring greater conceptual clarity to the study of 'instructional leadership'. While observed responses to this recommendation were not apparent in the empirical literature of the 1970s, various researchers did heed this call during the 1980s (see Bossert et al. 1982; Hallinger and Murphy 1985; Villanova et al. 1981).

In a similar fashion, the response to calls for the use of stronger research designs and methods by Erickson (1967), Haller (1979) and Bridges (1982) was not immediate. Yet, over time, reviewers have noted changes that aligned with at least some of these methodological recommendations. For example, in a series of research reviews conducted in the mid-1990s, Ron Heck and I (see Hallinger and Heck 1996) concluded that the field had demonstrated some progress in applying more comprehensive conceptual frameworks as well as more sophisticated methodologies in the study of school leadership and learning.

Despite this observed progress, we also made recommendations for fine-tuning research questions, conceptual models and methodologies for the next generation of studies (Hallinger and Heck 1996). Analysis of empirical studies conducted over the subsequent 15 years suggests that at least some of these recommendations were incorporated into the most recent generation of research in this field (see Day et al. 2009; Hallinger and Heck 2010; Heck and Hallinger 2009; Leithwood and Jantzi 2000; Marks and Printy 2003; Mulford and Silins 2009; Opdenakker and Van Damme 2007; Wiley 2001). Finally, research reviews conducted during the past several years have pointed to substantial progress with respect to the consistency of *findings* about the relationship of school leadership and learning gained from a 40 year programmatic research effort (Hallinger 2011a, 2011b; Leithwood, Patten, and Jantzi 2010; Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe 2008).

Sustaining a common research focus

This overview of how knowledge production unfolds in a field of applied inquiry highlights the importance of maintaining a sustained focus on key research issues or topics over a substantial period of time. We noted that the relationship between school leadership and learning has been framed through a variety of conceptual models. These include instructional leadership (Bossert et al. 1982; Bridges 1967; Dwyer 1986; Hallinger and Murphy 1985; Murphy 1988; Southworth 2002), transactional and transformational leadership (Leithwood 1994; Leithwood and Jantzi 1999; Silins 1994), shared leadership (Marks and Printy 2003; Heck and Hallinger 2009) and leadership for learning (MacBeath and Cheng 2008; Mulford and Silins 2003). Yet, even so, scholarly efforts to explore educational leadership can be viewed as a broadly framed, sustained programme of research.

Ogawa and colleagues (2000) identified the ability to maintain a focus on 'enduring issues' as an important facet of knowledge production. For example, they observed:

> We speculate that embedded in the ever-changing topics that arise from policy and practice are enduring conceptual issues or problems. Those problems are more than likely characterized by the very ambiguity that, according to Wilson, lies at the center of important scholarship. If that is the case, then researchers in educational administration could continuously probe these enduring problems, using the more transitory topics of the field as particular manifestations. In that way, scholars could both give the prolonged attention necessary for advancing knowledge and respond to developments in the field. (Ogawa, Goldring, and Conley 2000, 353)

Thus, they state that the capacity to maintain the focus needed to gain traction on important issues can be linked to the identification of a common research agenda, at least at a relatively broad level of abstraction. This recommendation is relevant to our task of crafting a research agenda for East Asia. For example, their broadly defined conceptual foci for research (i.e., goals, hierarchy, task structure, profession-alism, boundaries, persistence, compliance) would presumably encompass many of the relevant education issues in East Asian societies. Fundamentally, we agree with these scholars who have argued that crafting a common research agenda for the field could foster a more rapid accumulation of knowledge.

Attempts to construct such an agenda should, however, be conducted with both humility and caution. As Kuhn's (1996) work on the sociology of knowledge has suggested, the development of knowledge, at least in scientific disciplines, is not linear in nature. That is, disruptive theories that have not built directly or cumulatively on prior findings can become the stimulus to major developments in a field. Thus, even as we suggest the possible utility of framing a common research agenda for the field, we must acknowledge potentially negative unanticipated consequences of this approach.

Coordinating strategies

Coordination represents a second important approach that could underlie a strategy for accelerating knowledge production. Ogawa and colleagues (2000) also examined this issue and concluded as follows:

> Drawing from the academic field of educational administration, we have cited clear examples of the six forms of research coordination... But, as we also noted, it is the tenacity of individual scholars that typically advances knowledge (Wilson 1998). However, this should not be taken to mean that organization and coordination are futile. Rather, it raises the question of how coordination can facilitate and encourage the work of individual scholars. (Ogawa, Goldring, and Conley 2000, 355)

In conceptualising coordination strategies, Ogawa and colleagues adapted a typology proposed by Landry and Amara (1998) and formulated three dimensions of coordination: (1) scale of the structure, (2) degree of formality, (3) degree of connection to a common research agenda. They employed this typology to categorise different coordinating strategies (e.g., national research centre, institute-level research centre, research teams, collaborative grant structures) and assess the relevant costs and benefits.

Given space limitations, here we wish to highlight knowledge production as arising from a community of scholars rather than from the effort of individuals (Donmoyer, Imber, and Scheurich 1995; Moore 1974). That is, knowledge production

can be conceptualised as learning that takes place within a loosely-coupled global community of scholars engaged in the study of a common research issue. In support of this contention, we note that references cited in the prior paragraphs concerning knowledge production in school leadership included multiple examples of scholars who *each collaborated with two or more different researchers* within an international community of scholars.

Indeed, most of the continuing contributors to this programme of research have, over time, collaborated with *more than one* other influential researcher in the field. This empirical trend argues against a view of knowledge production arising from either a single individual or institution and highlights the importance of a community of scholars working within a field of inquiry. We would further highlight the fact that these scholars were collaborating across borders, a trend that we suggest has increased substantially in recent years with development of communication technologies. Nonetheless, it is also notable that all of these scholars were continuing to conduct their empirical inquiries in a restricted set of English-speaking national contexts (e.g., the USA, Canada, the UK, Australia, New Zealand).

Normative culture and structural capacity for research in East Asia

The previous section sought to describe global norms of academic inquiry. Yet, it is an observable fact that education faculties within East Asian universities, taken as a group, have yet to succeed in building strong, sustainable research cultures as measured by knowledge production. This observation is supported by empirical analysis (e.g., Cheng 2010) as well as anecdotal evidence. For example, over the past two years the author has had conversations with senior academic leaders at three of the strongest education faculties in the East Asia region. At each of these well-funded higher education institutions, the academic leaders responsible for research lamented about deficits in research capacity in educational leadership and management. These deficits reflected more general problems in building sustainable research cultures in their faculties.

Indeed, it is somewhat ironic that this perception of a weak research culture is felt most acutely at those regional institutions that have demonstrated the greatest capacity. Nonetheless, it is clear that the broader set of institutions offering graduate degrees in educational leadership and management in East Asia lag even farther behind with respect to quality and quantity of research contributions to the global academic community. This anecdotal evidence is bolstered by the publication evidence displayed earlier in Table 1. The paucity of published research in the top international refereed journals of the field suggests the lack of a critical mass of active researchers in educational leadership and management in the region.

The lack of a strong research culture in regional institutions is endemic and deserves a more in-depth analysis than we are able to provide here. For the purposes of this paper, we note that the problem is highlighted in the experience of doctoral graduates who return to university environments that lack cultures capable of sustaining continued development of their research capacity. Junior faculty members typically confront heavy demands for teaching and direct service, often with relatively few colleagues working in the same academic area. Perhaps more importantly, they lack mentorship from senior research-active scholars. As time

passes, research skills learned during doctoral studies as well as enthusiasm for conducting empirical research wither on the vine.

A second-order effect of this situation can be observed in the limited institutional capacity for high quality mentorship of graduate research students. Faculty members, who are not active published researchers themselves, are responsible for mentoring large numbers of Master and Doctoral research students. Problems arising from this situation have become exacerbated in recent years with an explosion in the number of new doctoral programmes initiated by institutions of higher education in the East Asia region. While the growth in graduate research students represents a potential opportunity to enlarge the knowledge base for educational leadership and management in the region, experience suggests that this opportunity will be wasted. Rapid growth of doctoral programmes in the absence of high quality supervision and sound structural arrangements will simply result in a large number of new research studies of questionable quality. If past experience is a guide, these will neither result in a critical mass of publications nor yield any cumulative effect on the knowledge base (see Bridges 1982; Haller 1979; Hallinger 2011a).

This pessimistic assessment should not be read as indicating a bias against graduate student research conducted in the region. Rather it reflects conclusions drawn from assessments of graduate student research outside the region. For example, reviews of doctoral research conducted in the United States have drawn similar conclusions over a substantial period of time. Thirty years ago, Haller (1979) and Bridges (1982) identified poor quality in the design of doctoral research in the USA as a continuing problem of widespread proportions. More recently the author (Hallinger 2011a) analysed 135 doctoral studies in educational leadership and management conducted predominantly in the USA over the past 30 years and concluded as follows:

> We wish to highlight the finding that these doctoral studies seem to have made few substantial contributions to knowledge accumulation. While it remains possible, or even likely, that selected studies did produce potentially interesting and useful results, the citation analysis left no doubt on the finding of negligible impact... It was further noted that we were unable to distinguish the methodologies employed by doctoral scholars based on the type of degree program (i.e., EdD or PhD) or the level of research activity of the university... the finding that the PhD dissertations suffered from the same limitations as the EdD studies raises critical questions about the nature of research training in PhD programs. With this finding in mind, this review concludes that the PhD in educational leadership and management is just as ill as the EdD and the field must take steps to revitalize both. (Hallinger 2011a, 299)

The fact that this characterisation refers to the state of graduate education in largely American graduate programmes in educational leadership and management should give pause for East Asian institutions. It suggests the need to learn from the mistakes made in western institutions of higher education, not simply to copy their practices. Any strategy aimed at building a stronger regional knowledge base in the field must, therefore, take into account the relatively weak research culture that predominates among universities in the region as well as in our field more widely.[4] As suggested in the prior section of the paper, one means of accomplishing this is by developing a clear agenda of research topics, preferred lines of inquiry and specific models that can be followed in order to produce high quality research. By attending to these,

regional scholars can use the more limited financial and human resources available in their local settings towards greater medium and long term effect.[5]

It should, however, be noted that in arguing for a 'common agenda for' research and development in the region, we are not discounting the viability of individual initiative or seeking to limit research that falls outside of these markers. Even if some group of scholars agree on a particular research agenda, individual scholars will continue to select their own topics and conduct inquiry that 'makes sense' to them in their own contexts. Moreover, we are laying out this strategy as the starting point for discussion of a viable, focused and relevant research agenda, not as 'the final word'.

Earlier in the paper we criticised the blind application of research findings across cultural borders. Nonetheless, we also believe that there is much to be learned both in terms of substantive issues and from the process of knowledge development in the west. It is also our contention that the study of educational leadership and management in East Asia will benefit by proceeding with a more focused agenda than has typified knowledge development in the field in the past. Indeed, as noted, the idea of following a somewhat more coordinated strategy for accelerating knowledge development has also been raised by others (Ogawa, Goldring, and Conley 2000).

Conclusion

In this paper we have addressed the need and offered a challenge for accelerating the development of the knowledge base in educational leadership and management in the East Asia region. We have suggested that knowledge accumulation could benefit from greater coordination around a common research strategy than has typified the field to date. This entails pursuing a more focused research agenda and using established lines of inquiry as a means of more rapidly generating knowledge about educational leadership and management across societies in the region. The paper further highlighted the importance of proceeding through a systematic cycle of literature reviews and empirical inquiry as a path towards knowledge accumulation. It was the purpose of this paper to identify the challenge and highlight the possibility of accelerating knowledge development in our field of inquiry for East Asia and, by implication, other regions of the world. The next step will entail formulating more specific strategies for addressing this challenge.

Notes
1. This article was originally developed and presented at the Asia Leadership Roundtable 2010 held in Hong Kong at the Hong Kong Institute of Education. The author wishes to acknowledge the helpful critique of this paper offered by Professor Emeritus Edwin Bridges of Stanford University, as well as the support of the Research Grant Council (RGC) of Hong Kong for funding provided through the General Research Fund (GRF 840509).
2. The *h-index* is a widely used measure of citation impact derived from the Googlescholar database through the Publish or Perish tool available at www.harzing.com. While different metrics could have been used, for the purposes of this exercise, the *h-index* provided a well-defined and transparent means of identifying widely cited journals in this field. Note that the *h-index* ratings provided were accurate as of the date of writing this paper in 2010.
3. Note that this statement excludes policy journals (e.g., *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*), several of which had higher *h-index* ratings. However, our interest centred more on core educational leadership and management issues and somewhat less on policy.

4. This conclusion is not meant to suggest that regional universities are not trying hard to attack this issue. However, a realistic strategy for development as envisioned in this paper must take into account the current reality.
5. Obviously a capacity-building approach for research and development in the region must incorporate a broader set of strategies than this. Reward systems, professional development opportunities, opportunities for collaboration, internal and external research support, funding for conference presentations, etc., all represent pieces of a comprehensive capacity-building.

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