

Paper presented

**Accelerating Development of a Knowledge Base
for Educational Leadership and Management in East Asia**

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East Asia has witnessed a period of transformational change such that children entering primary school today, “cannot even imagine the world in which their grandparents lived and into which their own parents were born” (Drucker, 1995, p. 75). Since 1990, East Asian nations have embraced greater political openness as well as more significant integration into the global economy. A largely unforeseen consequence of these trends has been increased demands on the region’s educational systems as means of leveraging social, political and economic change.

Yet, those who would reform educational systems in the region have encountered cultural norms that have proven surprisingly resistant to the forces of global change. As Kenichi 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). This perspective on cultural (and educational) change frames the challenge of reform in which educational systems are struggling to keep pace with and digest rapidly changing environmental demands (Cheng & Walker, 2008; Fullan, 2003; Hallinger, 1998).

In this global context of educational reform, policymakers have increasingly focused their attention on school leaders as agents of change. Simply stated, there is today a global consensus among policymakers that “leadership makes a difference” in the quality of school education, the capacity of schools to implement change, and in student learning outcomes. These conclusions ring equally true in East Asia where school systems have, over the past 15 years, implemented a broad range of new policies, systems, and programs aimed at increasing the capacity for leadership, especially at the school level (Cheng & Walker, 2008; Hallinger, 2003; Huber, 2003; Walker & Kwan, 2008). Yet, it should be noted that both the assumption that ‘leadership makes a difference’ and related education policy solutions derive from research conducted largely in Western cultural contexts (Bajunid, 1996; Cheng, 1995; Hallinger, 1995; Hallinger & Leithwood, 1998; Hallinger, Walker & Bajunid, 2005; Walker & Dimmick, 2002). This limitation of the research on educational leadership and management and its implications for research that can inform policy, practice and leadership development in Asia represent the focus for this paper.

The first part of the paper briefly restates the argument that the field of educational leadership and management in East Asia (and other parts of the developing world) relies heavily upon theory and empirical findings generated from Western socio-cultural contexts. I assert that leadership and management are socially constructed processes embedded in the normative cultures of particular societies. This suggests the need to test the validity of theory and empirical findings generated in one culture against their application in other cultural contexts in order to understand and establish the boundaries of the applicable knowledge base.

In the second part of the paper, I consider the more specific question: “How can we accelerate the development of an empirically supported knowledge base underlying the practice of educational leadership and management in East Asia.” This portion of the paper reflects on experience in Western contexts where a theoretically informed, empirical knowledge base in the field has gradually evolved in over the past 60 years. I then suggest strategies designed to accelerate the development of a relevant knowledge base in the region. The goal of this exercise is to formulate an approach that will reduce the amount of time needed to develop a stronger, more relevant knowledge base underlying the practice of educational leadership and management in East Asian societies.

Educational Leadership and Management in Global and Local Perspective

As noted above, globalization has resulted in the rapid expansion of educational systems around the world over the past two decades (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2002; Walker & Dimmock, 2002). Among the effects has been a concerted global effort by education policymakers to focus on leadership as a policy tool for the reform and improvement of education systems. This has, in turn, led to the initiation of new policies, standards, and systems for the preparation, selection, and in-service training development of school leaders (Hallinger, 2003; Huber, 2003; Leithwood & Day, 2007; Walker, Hallinger, & Haiyan, 2007; Walker & Kwan, 2008).

The ‘Global’ Knowledge Base

One rationale for focusing on leadership as a policy solution in the global movement towards educational reform lies in the emergence of an empirically supported knowledge base for the field as practiced in Western societies (e.g., see Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008). In 2010 we can point to a wide range of empirical studies that support the conclusion that ‘leadership makes a difference’ both in the quality of learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson et al., 2008) and their capacity to implement change (Fullan, 2001; Hallinger & Hord, 2002; Harris et al., 2007). Indeed, the theoretical and empirical ‘knowledge base’ used to inform policy and practice in educational leadership and management has made significant progress over the past 60 years.

For example, Leithwood and colleagues recently concluded that researchers have, in the past 20 years made progress in identifying a core set of leadership practices that foster school improvement and student learning (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2007). At the same time, however, this conclusion has been qualified with the caveat that the application of these core leadership practices varies across different organizational and cultural contexts (Belchetz & Leithwood, 2007; Leithwood et al., 2007; Walker & Dimmock, 2002). One key contextual variable that impacts the application of leadership practice is the societal culture (Bajunid, 1995; Hallinger, 1995; Hallinger & Leithwood, 1998; Hallinger, Walker & Bajunid, 2005; Hofstede, 1983, 2001; Walker & Dimmock, 2002). Yet, a perusal of management textbooks used in East Asia suggests that *the taught knowledge base in leadership and management takes little account of differences in the cultural norms that are so important in the life of schools and other organizations.*

With this point in mind, I contend that the “global knowledge base” accessed by scholars, teachers and practitioners in the field of educational leadership and management is highly distorted. Most published theory and empirical reports come from research conducted in ‘Western cultural contexts’ – more specifically North America, the UK, Australia and New Zealand (ANZ). This distortion in the knowledge base is clearly reflected in the manuscript distribution in major international refereed journals in the field of educational leadership and management. Table 1 shows the trend in the data source of manuscripts on educational leadership and management published in four major international refereed journals in 1990-91 and 2008-09. The Table compares the raw number of manuscripts in each of the four journals that came from English-speaking societies (i.e., North America, UK, ANZ), from Asia, and from ‘other non-English-speaking societies’ (i.e., excluding Asia). The purpose of this analysis is to examine the sources of which the internationally accessible, refereed research-driven knowledge base and the extent to which this has changed over the past 20 years.

Table 1: Publication Comparison: Research on Leadership in English-Speaking, Asia, and other Non-English Speaking Societies 1990-91 and 2008-09

Journal	1990-91			2008-09		
	English	Non-Eng	Asia	English	Non-Eng	Asia
<i>Educational Administration Quarterly</i>	36	1	1	45	6	1
<i>Journal of Educational Administration</i>	36	8	4	61	19	6
<i>School Effectiveness and School Improvement</i>	24	7	2	12	24	9
<i>Educational Management Administration and Leadership</i>	63	4	0	44	21	6

The table shows the number of articles published during each of the two periods that came from English speaking, Asian and other non-English speaking societies.

A perusal of Table 1 suggests that 20 years ago the publication of theoretical or empirical research focused on educational leadership and management from outside of the UK, North

America and ANZ in these four key international refereed journals was well outside the norm.¹ The overall picture seems to have improved in 2009 with respect to the production and distribution of knowledge in educational leadership and management across a wider set of societies internationally. In particular, there is a marked increase in the number of articles using data from outside North America, the UK and ANZ in three of the major journals. I note, however, that the trend in *Educational Administration Quarterly* continues to lag significantly behind the other selected journals.

If we turn our attention to articles reporting on educational leadership and management from Asia, the contrast is even more striking. Though some improvement is evident over the 20 years, during both periods, the number of papers based on educational leadership in Asia was relatively small. The representation of international refereed publications that highlight leadership theory and empirical research from Asia hardly qualifies as the foundation for a relevant knowledge base for policy or practice.

These four journals do not of course contain the full corpus of published theory and empirical research in the field. Nonetheless, they do represent core journals in the sub-discipline of educational leadership and management. As such, they set a standard for the quality of disseminated knowledge on educational leadership and management. These trends lend empirical weight to my contention that the knowledge base on which we draw for the purposes of developing educational policy, designing programs for leadership preparation and development, and informing leadership practice in Asia is limited and highly distorted.

¹ Even the relatively stronger representation of such publications in *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* may actually overstate the case. Most of the 1990-91 articles from non-English speaking countries published in *SESI* came from the Netherlands.

Social Context Matters

This paper starts with the assumption that the ‘socio-cultural context matters’ when it comes to leading organizations, especially educational organizations whose work is centrally bound to the transmission of social values and norms (Hallinger, 1995; Hallinger & Leithwood, 1998; Hallinger et al., 2005). While some parts of the ‘global’ (i.e., Western) knowledge base may be 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 begun to explore how cultural factors impact the utilization of leadership practices outside of the originating environment (Cheng, 1995; Hallinger & Leithwood, 1998; Hofstede, 1983, 2001; Walker & Dimmock, 2002). Nonetheless, at this point in time, I suggest that we know enough to conclude that research-based policies and practices concerning school leadership cannot be blindly applied without validation across different societies.

As suggested above, this conclusion has taken on more than academic significance in recent years with the global expansion of educational programs. The pace of international expansion among university-based education and professional development programs has accelerated dramatically in the past 15 years. It is not an exaggeration to state that most of this expansion has been driven by institutions from the UK, ANZ, and North America.

These Western institutions mostly ‘export’ their own curricula for application in other settings with minimal adaptation to local conditions. Indeed, even program designers who would see the value of incorporating validated ‘local knowledge’ into their programs would find it difficult to do so given the paucity of published knowledge deriving from sources outside the primary English-speaking societies. From this perspective, the distortion of the ‘global knowledge base’ accessible in management education generally is increasingly recognized as a problem (Hallinger

& Bridges, 2007). The long-term solution to this problem lies in the development of a more comprehensive, refined and balanced knowledge base. This demands that we take proactive steps to clarify the boundaries of the extant theoretical and empirical knowledge base in our field, and elaborate on the applicability of various policies and practices in different socio-cultural contexts.

Accelerating the Development of a Relevant Knowledge Base in East Asia

In this section of the paper, I will reflect *briefly* on the process of knowledge development that has taken place over the past 60 years in the field of educational leadership and management in Western nations.² I then discuss the implications for developing a valid knowledge base for the field in East Asia. Despite this delimitation of focus to East Asia, I suggest that this effort could be relevant for other parts of the world where local values and norms depart from those that predominate in North America, the UK and ANZ. The purpose of this analysis is to inform the an approach to research that might enable us to accelerate the development of a locally valid knowledge base for leadership theory and practice in the East Asia region.

Development of the Field of Educational Leadership and Management: 1950-2010

Given space limitations, the ensuing picture of the process of knowledge development in our field is painted in broad strokes rather than in depth. In my view, the knowledge base underlying our professional practice encompasses development and testing of theory as well as the description and codification of administrative and leadership practices. As suggested earlier, in our field this process has in recent years begun to yield a stronger set of principles, frameworks and practices that describe successful leadership in schools.

² Most of my examples will come from the USA since I am most familiar with that particular context. However, I believe that the observations largely apply equally to development of the field in the Australia, New Zealand and the UK with some local variation.

To date, throughout the world, the process of knowledge development in educational leadership and management has proceeded in a highly “decentralized” and somewhat idiosyncratic fashion. This typifies the development of knowledge in other professional fields. Scholars, whether university faculty members or research students, typically form a loose community with both shared values and diverse interests. Different theoretical and methodological approaches have been developed and applied with varying degrees of success in terms of knowledge development. It is unrealistic to believe that we can dictate either the foci or methods by which scholars in our field undertake their research. Global norms of the academic community have produced a tradition of academic freedom in this regard that we are loathe to disregard. Nonetheless, it is also the case that within every field of study certain lines of inquiry, research questions and methods of investigation emerge over time as favored by scholars. As groups of scholars begin to explore these certain lines of inquiry, some approaches are discarded while others are embraced; some questions attain greater importance, while others fall aside.

This is evident in the intellectual journey that characterizes educational leadership and management. Over the past 40 years, a series of reviews of the field of educational leadership and management have been conducted by influential scholars (e.g., Bell, Bolam, & Cubillio, 2003; Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Boyan, 1988; Bridges, 1982; Erickson, 1967; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood, Begley & Cousins, 1990; Leithwood et al., 2007; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; March, 1978; Pitner, 1988; Robinson et al., 2008; Southworth, 2002; Witziers, Bosker, & Kruger, 2003). These published reviews have sought to map intellectual progress in various domains of administrative and leadership theory and practice. An important feature of these published research reviews has been to recommend certain research topics and approaches to inquiry as deserving greater priority, and to declare others as

intellectual *cul de sacs* or dead ends. These reviews have, in a sense, laid down markers along the road the uncertain journey of intellectual progress.

By way of example, allow me to offer a ‘high-ground view’ of knowledge development in the area of principal leadership effects. In 1982, Edwin Bridges published a review of research in the *Educational Administration Quarterly* which focused specifically on research topics and methods that were being employed in the field of educational leadership and management. Bridges systematically reviewed empirical studies conducted over the prior 13 year period since a major review conducted by Donald Erickson in 1967. Based on his analysis of the published literature, Bridges (1982) recommended, among other things, that future researchers reduce their focus on studying the traits of school administrators and shift their efforts towards understanding how administrators impact the school organization.

Fifteen years onwards, Hallinger and Heck (1996) published another review of research in the *Educational Administration Quarterly* that focused on a limited subset of the educational leadership and management literature, studies of principal effects on student achievement. Building on Bridges’ earlier assessment of the empirical literature, they were interested to examine whether researchers had heeded Bridges’ admonition and if there had been substantive progress in understanding the issue of how administrators produce an impact in schools. After reviewing more than 45 studies of principal leadership effects on student achievement conducted between 1980 and 1995, they concluded that progress had been made in this domain since the period of Bridges’ review. While noting this progress, they also made recommendations both concerning the direction, models and methods that would yield greatest benefit in the next generation of studies. More specifically they advised scholars to abandon studies that used the ‘direct effects’ models of leadership and student achievement that predominated during the

1980s and early 1990s. They contended that the use of ‘mediated effects’ and ‘reciprocal effects’ models along with more advanced inferential statistical techniques represented more productive approaches to inquiry in this domain.³

Twelve years later, Hallinger (2008) conducted a subsequent review of studies of principal leadership conducted between 1983 and 2008 that had used the principal instructional management rating scale. This review was *not* limited to studies of principal leadership effects. However, among the 125 studies reviewed in the paper, Hallinger noted that a substantial number had examined principal leadership effects on student achievement. After comparing the trend of studies conducted prior to the 1996 review in *Educational Administration Quarterly* with those conducted subsequently, he concluded that researchers had appeared to heed the earlier recommendations. That is, during the post 1998 period, there was a marked *decrease* in the number of studies employing direct effects models and bi-variate statistical procedures and a concomitant *increase* in the number of mediated-effects studies employing more advanced statistical methods.

In a separate review published in the *Educational Administration Quarterly* in 2008, Robinson and her colleagues (2008) also built on the 1996 review, but proceeded in a different fashion. They employed a meta-analytic methodology in order to more scientifically test the strength of findings from studies of principal leadership effects. Using this more robust methodology for comparing results across studies, they were able to draw more refined conclusions concerning the extent of effects as well as the means by which school leaders impact student learning. Thus,

³ The authors acknowledged their debt to the work of Nancy Pitner (1988) in the *Handbook of Research in Educational Administration* which outlined alternative conceptual models for studying administrator effects.

in 2010, the field has achieved a level of empirically supported understanding, if not certainty, about the nature of leadership effects in schools that did not exist 30 years ago.

The above examples taken from a series of reviews of research conducted over the past 30 years were given with the intention of providing a broad view of how knowledge develops in an academic domain. While scholarship proceeds in a highly distributed fashion, a field is not without intellectual markers that define its current boundaries, priority destinations, and preferred paths. While earlier in the paper I criticized the blind application of research across cultural borders, I 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 my 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, the idea of following a somewhat more coordinated strategy for accelerating knowledge development has also been raised by others (Ogawa, Goldring & Conley, 2000). In the words of Google Scholar website, we have the opportunity to accelerate the development of an East Asian knowledge base by ‘standing on the shoulders of giants.’

A Strategy for Accelerating Development of the Knowledge Base in East Asia

In this section of the paper I will suggest a set of strategies for accelerating the development of a locally validated and relevant knowledge base for the practice of educational leadership and management in East Asia. Before discussing the strategies, however, I would like to briefly clarify what I see as important features of the university-based research context as it exists today in the East Asia region. This brief analysis leads to an important assumption that underlies the strategies that I will recommend.

Two decades of experience as an academic in East Asia lead me to conclude that relatively few universities in the region have succeeded in building a sustainable research culture. This is supported by anecdotal evidence in the experience of others as well. For example, take the institution (unnamed) that I consider the strongest in the region with respect to research capacity in education. Even at this well-funded institution, the Director of Research recently bemoaned to me both a ‘lack of capacity in the field of educational leadership and management’ and a serious problem in building a sustainable research culture (personal communication, 2008).

Note that these anecdotal conclusions are bolstered by the evidence displayed earlier in Table 1. The paucity of published manuscripts in high quality international refereed journals suggests the lack of a critical mass of active researchers in the region. In a sense, this is rather remarkable given that there is an abundance of faculty in the region who graduated with doctoral degrees and first-rate research training from well-recognized universities around the world.

The lack of a strong research culture in regional institutions is endemic and deserves a more in-depth analysis than I can provide here. For the purposes of this paper, suffice it to say that the problem emerges when young faculty members return to regional institutions with their newly minted doctorates. In most cases, they enter environments that lack a culture able to support further development of their research capacity. In particular, junior faculty members may encounter heavy demands for direct service, few colleagues working in the same academic area, and a lack of mentorship from senior colleagues. As time passes, the newly gained research skills and enthusiasm of young faculty members wither on the vine.

Another important consequence of this situation is limited capacity for the mentorship of research students. Faculty members who themselves possess relatively weak research experience

find themselves mentoring large numbers of Master and Doctoral degree students. This situation has become exacerbated in recent years with a virtual explosion in the number of doctoral programs being started by institutions in the East Asia region. While the growth in doctoral students represents an opportunity to build a sound knowledge base for educational leadership and management in the region, past experience elsewhere suggests otherwise. Rapid growth of doctoral programs in the absence of high quality supervision and sound structural arrangements will result in a large number of weak research studies, but with little cumulative effect on the knowledge base.

Thus, any strategy aimed at building a stronger regional knowledge base in the field must take into account the relatively weak research culture that predominates among universities in the region.⁴ More specifically, I suggest that a successful strategy for accelerating development of the regional knowledge base should seek to reduce the ‘cognitive load’ on regional scholars and research students. One means of accomplishing this is by providing 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 clearly noted that in arguing for a ‘common strategy’ for research and development in the region, I am not discounting the viability of individual initiative or seeking to

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 for research 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 strategy. However, for the limited purpose of this paper, I have chosen to emphasize the need to provide greater structure for research scholars as a means of accelerating the development of research in the short to medium term.

limit research that falls outside of these markers. Even if we agree on any particular research agenda, individual scholars will unquestionably continue to select their own topics and conduct inquiry that ‘makes sense’ to them in their own contexts. Moreover, I am laying out this strategy as the starting point for discussion of a viable, focused, and relevant research agenda, not as ‘the final word.’ And, finally as the reader will note below, the research agenda that I am suggesting is actually quite broad.

I will suggest and briefly discuss a strategy aimed at accelerating the development of the knowledge base in educational leadership and management in East Asia that includes four categories of inquiry:

1. Replication of ‘classic studies’ that have yielded fruitful findings in other societies,
2. Indigenous research driven by locally-generated theory or issues particular to a given culture or society,
3. Validation of high impact findings that have emerged from research in the West,
4. Cross-cultural comparative research.

Replication of Classic Studies

While the classification of ‘classic studies’ undoubtedly lies in the eyes of the beholder, I believe that we can identify individual studies or sets of studies that have mined a particular line of inquiry with success in Western contexts. The purpose of this strategy would essentially be to repeat classic studies from the field as a means of establishing a foundation of knowledge about leadership and administrative processes in different societies. This set of studies would *not* be explicitly framed as cross-cultural comparative research. Rather the studies would aim at building a local knowledge base in the field for a given cultural context or society. By doing so, it would, however, concurrently add to our knowledge of how those administrative processes

unfold across different cultures. This essentially employs an *inductive* approach to building our understanding of how cultural factors impact leadership and management in educational organizations across societies in the region.

Classic studies could include both qualitative and quantitative studies. However, in this paper, I will limit my examples to qualitative studies in the belief that they may be well placed to build a foundation for understanding leadership as practiced in context. Moreover, I will mention some quantitative studies under the category of high impact studies. A few examples of classic qualitative studies aimed at building up a knowledge base within different societies might include the following:

- *Nature of managerial work in schools*: Henry Mintzberg (1973) used a qualitative methodology to study the on-the-job work activities of top executives in management in order to describe and understand the actual practice of managerial work and administrative decision-making. His study was subsequently replicated by several American scholars (e.g., see among others Kmetz & Willower, 1982; Martin & Willower, 1981; Peterson, 1977-78). While this line of inquiry has had some notable limitations (see Bridges, 1982), it did represent a useful means of establishing baseline patterns in the administrative practices of school leaders. I suggest that this line of work may hold potential for renewed vigor with the significant changes taking place in the nature of administrator roles and responsibilities under systems that are increasingly emphasizing school-based management and distributed leadership. Moreover, it would be fascinating to see if and how the nature of managerial work activities vary among administrators in the region and how it compares to Western societies.

- *Ethnographic studies of school leaders:* Almost 40 years ago, Henry Wolcott (1973) conducted a classic ethnographic study entitled “Man in the Principal’s Office.” This study explored the professional life of a single elementary school principal in-depth through observations and interviews over an extended period of time. The study sought to understand in a highly contextualized manner the nature of the elementary principalship as enacted at that time and place. While the generalizability of this type of study is obviously limited, the use of ethnographic techniques seems especially appropriate for the task of understanding how leadership is enacted in and influenced by the socio-cultural context. In-depth studies of leaders within different regional cultures (and including male and female school leaders) would rapidly produce a clearer picture of how leadership is situated in ‘Asian’ cultures.
- *Case studies of instructional leadership:* During the early 1980s, David Dwyer and his colleagues (1986) at the Far West Lab in the USA conducted a classic qualitative study of principal instructional leadership. The research team used a combination of day-long shadowing and reflective interviewing of principals conducted over a period of several weeks. Their case study research sought to identify patterns of instructional leadership practice and link these to personal antecedents as well as to contextual factors evident in the environment of their schools. Given recent renewed interest in instructional leadership and leadership for learning, this type of approach would lend itself to qualitative studies of instructional leadership as enacted in different countries in the region. Moreover, I suggest that the shadowing and reflective interview methodology employed in this research is quite accessible for regional scholars and research students and offers a good example of high quality case study research. Gronn’s (1983) study of

principal talk represents another useful approach to this type of work, though with a somewhat different method and focus.

- *Research on leader cognition:* Leithwood and Stager (1989) carried out a classic study that compared the problem-solving processes of expert and novice principals. This was part of a larger program of research on cognition in school leadership carried out by Leithwood and his colleagues at OISE during the 1980s and 1990s. This research directed scholars towards understanding the thought processes that underlie leader behavior and also highlighted importance of values as a tool in leadership practice. This line of inquiry also yielded findings with important implications for leadership development (e.g., Hallinger & Bridges, 2007; Hallinger, Leithwood & Murphy, 1993; Leithwood, Begley & Cousins, 1992). Therefore, I suggest that this could be a productive line of qualitative inquiry that could be replicated with relevance in the region.
- *Establishing a foundation of descriptive information about school administration:* During the late 1970s, James G. March one of the 21st century's most notable organizational theorists spent several years as a Chair Professor at Stanford University's School of Education. During this period, he turned his analytic eye on school administration and produced a number of classic works with continuing relevance today. One important published work was an historical, socio-organizational analysis of the American public school administrator. In this comprehensive essay, March described and synthesized an impressive variety of extant statistical data and research findings about public school administration in the USA. March then identified a number of themes about the nature of public school administration in the United States that laid the foundation for many subsequent developments in the field. If scholars in the East Asia region were to conduct

similar analyses of school administration in their respective societies, this would, in a relatively short time, provide a much clearer picture of key features of school administration across the region. I believe that we would begin to see patterns of differences as well as similarities which would help us gain leverage on ways in which cultural and institutional systems impact the practice of educational leadership and management in the region.

Again, I acknowledge that any list of supposedly ‘classic studies’ is highly subjective and leaves out other potentially useful studies and lines of inquiry. Nonetheless, I reemphasize that this paper is written to stimulate not close off discussion. If a year from now this list of ‘classic studies’ has been lengthened and changed, I will have counted myself successful.

Indigenous Research Driven by Contemporary Local Issues

This research strategy is driven by local factors including policies, problems, and theoretical challenges that derive from the particular cultural and institutional context in which leaders are working. As such, under this strategy scholars would explore issues of leadership policy and practice that emerge out of the local conditions that shape school organizations. It would also include the development of indigenous theories of leadership and change.

As such, issues could emerge in a manner that could be quite different across different cultures. For example, in Thailand the educational system has reoriented itself around a new set of three national education goals that seeks for school graduates to be capable, virtuous and happy. The latter two goals appear less frequently in the lists of educational goals in other countries. In this particular context, researchers may wish to examine the impact of these policy changes on

schools as organizations and the types of adjustments that school leaders make to achieve this mix of educational goals.

Educational leadership in Hong Kong offers another example. Hong Kong, because of its unique geographical, historical and political position, is seeking to become a trilingual city. Educational organizations will play an important role in making this change happen. Again, issues of educational leadership and change will emerge around this unique set of social, political and cultural circumstances.

Indigenous conceptions of leadership and change may also emerge from societies whose cultures differ quite dramatically from Western norms. Up to now it has been more common for researchers to “test” Western theories in other contexts as a means of assessing their validity. While this strategy remains useful I am suggesting that new theories of leadership may emerge out of these quite different cultural settings.

By way of example, Thailand’s culture is, in Hofstede’s terms, a strongly feminine, collectivist and high power distance culture. Since leadership involves gaining results through people, we would expect different patterns of leadership practice could emerge in this culture (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2002; Holmes, & Tangtongtavy, 1996). Ruyaporn has, for example, developed a conception of ‘smile leadership’ based on descriptive case studies and empirical analyses of emotional intelligence among Thai people (Ruyaporn 2007). This leadership model explicitly takes account of the socio-emotional configuration of Thai’s as they interact in organizations embedded in Thai culture.

Validation of High Impact Findings or ‘Big Hairy Ideas’ Emerging from Western Contexts

Much as in the category of so-called ‘classic studies’, one’s notion of what constitutes ‘high impact research’ depends upon one’s own values and point of view. I offer just few examples:

- *Studies of principal and school effectiveness*: Though not without critics, over the past two decades these important lines of inquiry into the effects of schools has gained broader acceptance. A number of important studies within this domain serve as guides for replication in the region (Heck, Larson & Marcoulides, 1990; Leithwood, Jantzi, & McElheron-Hopkins, 2006; Marks & Printy, 2003; Rutter et al., 1979).
- *Research on school change and improvement*: With a longer pedigree, this line of research has explored processes of teacher change and development, school-level change and improvement, as well as systemic change (Fullan, 2003; Hall & Hord, 2002). Initial studies suggest that cultural norms in Asia do represent a different context for leading change (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2002; Walker & Dimmock, 2002). However, much important policy-relevant work remains to be done to test the principles for leading change that have emerged from Western research.
- *Nature and impact of teachers’ professional community*: Professional community represents a popular if still relatively unfulfilled line of inquiry in the West. Some important frameworks have, however, been developed (e.g., Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996) to guide research. This research takes on particular interest in Asia given the conclusion that Asian societies operate in a more collectivist fashion than in North America, the UK or ANZ.
- *Validation of research frameworks*: This line of research could include key leadership frameworks related to instructional leadership (e.g., Hallinger, 2008; Elliott et al., 2008),

transformational leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006), leader efficacy (Leithwood & Jantzi, in press) or organizational constructs such as school health (Hoy & Tarter, 1997).

- *Evaluations of leadership development*: Earlier I noted that there has been a rapidly increasing investment in school leadership development internationally (Hallinger, 2003; Huber, 2003). Despite this, it is only in recent years that scholars have begun to examine the impact of leadership development (Bickman et al., 2009; Hallinger, 1992; Leithwood, Bauer & Riedlinger, 2007; Leithwood, Riedlinger, Bauer, & Jantzi, 2003). While this line of inquiry remains relatively immature, its relevance to developments in the region is undeniable and therefore deserves attention.
- *Studies of social justice*: It could be argued that within the developing world examinations of social justice represent a particularly important line of inquiry in light of potentially greater inequities in the distribution of opportunities to learn and financial resources.
- *Distributed leadership*: Without question one of the most popular if poorly understood constructs to emerge in the past decade has been distributed leadership (Gronn, 2002). Indeed, even in Asia policy has outpaced research on distributed leadership with many countries climbing on the bandwagon. Research on distributed leadership in Asia should prove particularly interesting in light of the observation that Asian cultures are characterized by large 'power distance' (Hofstede, 1983, 2002).

Cross-cultural Comparative Studies

Most of the studies referred to above could be conducted within single societies or from a cross-cultural perspective. Useful examples of cross-cultural studies could be cited in the GLOBE study of leadership across cultures (House et al., 2004) and the International Successful Schools

Project (Leithwood & Day, 2007). Cross-cultural research generally requires more funding as well as more coordination. While I view it as a useful strategy, its application as a strategy may be somewhat less frequent.

Conclusion

In this paper I have addressed the need and offered an approach for accelerating the development of the knowledge base in educational leadership and management in the East Asia region. The paper took into account several important features of the current context including the following:

- Perceived importance of the role of school leaders in the eyes of regional policymakers in education;
- Reliance on findings about leadership practice that derive from Western contexts that differ in important ways from schools and school leadership in the regional environment,
- Relatively weak research cultures in many universities in the region,
- A need to develop a contextually valid knowledge base that can form the basis for policy and practice in educational, leadership, management, and change.

With these contextual factors in mind, I suggested that we could benefit from a more focused research strategy than has typified the field to date. The strategy 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. While I am not foolish enough to believe that the particular recommendations made in this paper will overly influence the direction of the field, I do hope that they will provide a vehicle for debate, discussion and a greater degree of common action.

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