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The role of school principal in transforming an Indonesian institution

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Abstract

This paper aims to understand the role of a school principal, and the principal's strategies in helping a school transform from a low to a high performing institutions. This paper reviews the nine characteristics of high-performance schools and twelve strategies of a school principal as the key focus in helping an Indonesian school; MA SMK. Findings confirmed that a school principal played the most essential role and dominated the impact on transforming schools more than any other elements. Transforming the MA SMK into a high-performance school, the school principal enacted her strategies by using the framework of nine characteristics of high-performance schools based on the proposed framework.

Keywords: school principal; performing school; Indonesia; literary review; document analysis

The role of school principal in transforming an Indonesian institution

1. Introduction

According to Morrissey (2000), a school principal played the most influential role in transforming a school community by furnishing conditions and resources to foster the efforts of teachers, students and staff in their unending learning. Also, a principal's willingness to share decision making with teachers and to consider them as participative leaders in school improvement efforts is crucial. Moreover, Morrissey (2000) said that a school principal was closely linked to the progress of school structures for teachers to implement systems in a school community.

In Morrissey's study, the principal kept the school vision alive and the limelight of attention by announcing the vision statement each morning before class. The principal engaged the vision to guide the school community in making decisions about the on-going formation of students learning and the improvement of the school. Furthermore, the principal also empowered teachers to get involved in leadership roles to design new programs and activities. To monitor the whole school community, the principal frequently interacted with teachers, students in the hallways, praised them, and visited classrooms. Besides that, the principal gave support and encouragement to foster partnerships with other organizations and institutions so that the school community had an opportunity to improve its professionalism. Eventually, the principal promoted and enhanced communication "through written and oral daily announcements, school newsletters, and postings on bulletin boards" (Morrissey, 2000, p. 37).

McCreight and Salinas (2002) also briefly stated that a school principal was the most essential determinant impacting the achievement or breakdown of schools. "Principals must assume roles of leader, facilitator, team builder, visionary, communicator, advocate, and moral agent. The person must be knowledgeable about crisis management, community affairs, and social services (pp. 14-15)". Other perspectives were advanced by Everard, Morris, and Wilson (2004). According to them, school improvement in their project of research depended on the principal collaborating with teachers and staff to achieve shared values and vision by faithfully adjusting the values and vision to the school program of study. The principal also used frequent evaluations with a view to improving the program of study and students' achievements. Besides, they said that the principal's role was to provide an administrative plan of action, to be reliable, to create a climate of respect, to have the ability to set clear objectives, to internalize and to realize objectives, to expose flexibility, and to take on initiatives. Furthermore, the principal showed confidence, managed the school finances efficiently, counseled students and imposed discipline, had the ability to influence the members of school community and to guide them to positive results, enlarged a collection of flourishing information, and collaborated with students, parents, other school personnel, and people in other institutions.

The findings of previous researches stressed the role of school principals in improving schools (Brookover & Lezotte, 1977; Edmonds, 1979; Sergiovanni, 2001) pointed that school principals had a greater impact on transforming schools than any other element (Egley & Jones, 2005). Moreover, Lezotte and McKee (2006) specified that many researches documented school principals exert tremendous intervention in transforming schools.

In sum, the role of the school principal as transformational leader, manager and administrator is all-round and versatile. In other words, the principal-ship requires a person who is blessed with many skills and carries out numerous roles, including teacher supervisor, parent educator, disciplinarian, enforcer of district rules and obligations, negotiator, and facilitator of change. As a manager, he or she must possess the skills or talents to effectively supervise the daily workings of the school and staff. Additionally, a school principal must guide and focus the school community's attention on goal attainment through the process of change.

2. The Role of a High-Performance School principal

The article “Role of Principal Leadership in Improving Student Achievement” from Reading Rockets (2005) stated that a school principal was the most influential educational leader. Even, Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) claimed that without a powerful leader, troubled schools were probably unable to be transformed (p. 7). Specifically, the Wallace Foundation (2004) conducted an empirical study on 180-school study of the links between student achievement and educational leadership practices. The results of the research gave some suggestions to principals about how to fulfill the role of a high-performance school principal to improve student achievement and transform low-performance schools to high-performance schools.

A high-performance school principal should possess 3 basic cores in her/his role, namely (1) setting direction, (2) developing people, and (3) redesigning the school (p. 8).

2.1 Setting Direction

The findings of the study stated that leaders who set a clear sense of direction had the greatest impact. If these leaders helped to develop among their staff members a shared understanding of the school organization, its goals and activities, this understanding became the basis for a sense of purpose or vision. The researchers emphasized that "having such goals helps people make sense of their work and enables them to find a sense of identity for themselves within their work context" (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 8). In addition, the researchers suggested that school improvement plans which were a rational model about how to act purposefully in schools could be a means of setting direction. In this case, Leithwood et al. (2004) stated significantly that it was helpless for schools to make progress without something to focus their attention, and without any goals (p. 8).

The Center for Collaborative Education (2003) stated that effective principals were able to conduct direction setting. Research showed they knew that an investment of time was required to develop a shared focus and understanding of what the school should "look like" and what needed to be done to get it there. They knew that teachers and other staff included in identifying goals were much more likely to be motivated to achieve those goals. By setting the school goals together, individual goals, and team goals, these principals built community and spirit around goals. Besides, in addition, the center stated that teachers who were asked to engage in open and honest communication with the principal, to contribute some suggestions, and to voice concerns were much more likely to follow the direction set by their leader.

In addition, McColl-Kennedy and Anderson (2002) mentioned that helping set directions could empower others to identify and articulate a vision, foster common goals and create expectations for high performance. Furthermore, monitoring school performance and promoting effective collaboration and communication could fulfill our vision and goals.

2.2 Developing People

Much of the focus in education literature regarding the principal's role in developing staff members had been on instructional leadership, which emphasized the principal's role in providing guidance that improved teachers' classroom practices. Philip Hallinger's instructional leadership model had been the most researched. It consisted of three sets of leadership dimensions: defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive learning climate (Leithwood et al., 2004). Now, in addition to instructional leadership, researchers were also paying close attention to the emotional intelligence of leaders (their ability and willingness to be "tuned in" to employees as people). Recent research recommended that:

> *emotional intelligence displayed, such as a leader's personal attention to an employee and the utilization of the employee's capacities, increased the employee's enthusiasm and optimism, reduced frustration, transmitted a sense of mission and indirectly increased performance* (McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, as cited in Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 24).

Moreover, Leithwood et al. (2004) mentioned some more specific leadership practices that helped develop people: to stimulate them intellectually, support them in person, and lead them by example. These research findings had been interpreted in a variety of practical ways, such as group book studies, lesson study in critical friends' groups, professional development sessions at conferences, or visits to high-performance schools. For example, at Deborah Hoffman's Franklin Elementary School in Madison, Wisconsin, teachers participated in book groups that focused on race and student achievement. They were also encouraged to grow intellectually by pursuing additional certification in English as a second language.

Developing people through individualized support can take many forms in schools. For instance, give space to design creative lessons, class observation and worthwhile feedback to teachers. Teachers are also fostered from peer observation, debriefing sessions with colleagues, and feedback from the principal. Particularly, new teachers gain support from mentor teachers who are gingerly assigned to assist them in the first few years of teaching. At East-gate Middle School in Kansas City, Missouri, Principal Tim Mattson created a new position for an instructional coach whose job was to serve as a mentor for new teachers and help experienced teachers to develop strong leadership skills as well as implement effective reading strategies based on examination of student work (data from Center for Collaborative Education, 2003).

2.3 Redesigning the Organization

Observing various contexts, Leithwood et al. (2004) noted that successful educational leaders were purposeful about turning their schools into effective organizations. They did this by developing and counting on contributions from many others in their organizations to do the following: strengthen the school culture, modify organizational structures, and build collaborative processes (cited in The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2005, p. 1).

What does this process of redesigning the organization look like on the ground? Leithwood et al. (2004) observed that principals strengthened school culture when they clearly and consistently articulated high expectations for all students, including subgroups that were too often marginalized and blamed for schools not making adequate yearly progress. Principals could modify organizational structures, for example, by changing schedules to ensure that teachers shared common planning time and used that time to discuss improving instruction. This kind of restructuring also reinforced the use of collaborative processes among teachers. Given sufficient time and consistent messages about the value of collaboration, teachers learnt to trust their colleagues and were more willing to share their best practices and challenges. Redesigning the organization from the inside out required that leaders identified and capitalized on the competence of others and required collaboration (cited in The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2005, p. 1).

3. The Strategy of School Principal

Wayman, Spring, Lemke, and Lehr (2012) presented twelve principal strategies that assisted principals in their efforts to improve schools.

3.1 Asking the Right Questions

Obviously, research revealed that teachers needed the ability to solve problems that were pertinent to their practice and close to their experience (Halverson, Prichett, Grigg, & Thomas, 2005; Wayman & Stringfield, 2006; Datnow, Park, & Wohlstetter, 2007). According to Wayman et al. (2012), asking right questions could assist teachers comprehend a certain problem and share information about it (p. 4). In fact, research findings indicated that without a guiding question, the information that teachers used would diffuse and blur (Wayman, Cho, & Johnston, 2007; Wayman, Cho, Jimerson, & Snodgrass Rangel, 2010). Some ways could help school principals asking the right questions to the teachers:

- Conducting clear instructions on how to formulate insightful and practical questions (Wayman & Stringfield, 2006).
- Designing effective questions based on their own experiences (Datnow et al., 2007; Supovitz & Klein, 2003).
- Developing collaborative activities that provide teachers solve problems together (Halverson et al., 2005; Wayman, Cho, & Shaw, 2009).
- Keeping teachers liable even though they are not good in questioning (Wayman & Stringfield, 2006).

3.2 Communication

Literature has represented that clear communication can foster more effective information use. By communicating their expectations clearly, principals could assist teachers and staffs to focus on efforts to use information well (Deike, 2009; Wayman, Brewer, & Stringfield, 2006). Principals should calculate the following communication strategies to assure solid information use on their schools:

- Expecting staff use different information to improve the way of communication and productivity (Datnow et al., 2007; Wayman, Cho & Shaw, 2011).
- Preserving ongoing involvement in reviewing data at the meetings (Copland, 2003; Datnow et al., 2007; Halverson et al., 2005).
- Effectively communicating with parents about the purpose of information use at school, and what data reports mean (Wayman et al., 2007).

3.3 Delegating Leadership

Foregoing research acknowledged that school principals who effectively delegated information use activities that normally done under the field of the administrator were usually more successful in using effective information in their schools (Copland, 2003; Halverson et al., 2005; Park & Datnow, 2009). Due to limited time, school principals who had abilities to delegate their support staff to work with teachers and administrators might embody more fulfilled information use school-wide (Copland, 2003; Wayman et al., 2010). There were some directions that school principals could delegate leadership:

- Promoting teamwork within the formation of administration in each level (Datnow et al., 2007; Lachat & Smith, 2005).
- Preparing knowledgeable staff to help teachers in their skilled information use (Knapp, Swinnerton, Copland, & Monpas-Huber, 2006; Marsh, McCombs, & Martorell, 2010).
- Employing support staff to help teachers in curriculum, instruction and assessment (Knapp et al., 2006; Marsh et al., 2010).

3.4 Data System Support

Many researches stated that a powerful and accessible data system was significant for supporting information use at school. Actualizing the data system support properly could be valuable for improving student data (Long, Rivas, Light, & Mandinach, 2008; Wayman, Stringfield, & Yakimowski, 2004). Nevertheless, this data system support did not guarantee it was significant to teachers (Wayman et al., 2011). School principals could be facilitators by giving support and guidance in using this information system (Wayman & Cho, 2008; Wayman & Stringfield, 2006). Wayman et al. (2012, p. 5) proposed school principals to facilitate the use of data system in the following means:

- Assisting teachers to select what data system that fosters their teaching practice (Long et al., 2008).
- Assuring teachers have chances to use relevant systems in their daily work (Choppin, 2002; Wayman et al., 2004).
- Guiding school staffs to learn how to use data systems based on their capacity skill level (Long et al., 2008; Mason, 2003; Wayman & Cho, 2008).
- Fostering different ways of learning for teachers based on roles (Wayman & Cho 2008; Wayman et al., 2004).

3.5 Engaging in Personal Learning Opportunities

To foster effective information use and leadership skills, principals once in a while should engage in their own learning opportunities and select potential issues to study which have genuine impact (Copland, 2003; Supovitz & Klein, 2003; Deike, 2009). School principals should consider these ensuing ways to obtain effective professional learning:

- Keeping well-informed of literature and research on effective leadership as regards the use of data, and refers to the research when engaging with staff and district personnel (Knapp et al., 2006).
- Taking part in professional development activities with specific topic on information use and target leaders (Wayman & Cho, 2008).
  Taking part in training on how to effectively facilitate discussions around information use (Datnow et al., 2007; Wayman et al., 2007).

3.6 Ensuring Adequate Professional Learning Opportunities

To improve their skills in using information, school principals should support teachers by giving more opportunities to learn adequate professional skills (Datnow et al., 2007; Ingram, Louis, & Schroeder, 2004). Adequate professional learning opportunities were not only granted in large-scale settings, but also in small settings at school level (Jimerson, 2011; Wayman et al., 2011). At school level, the availability of school principals was a crucial element in determining such opportunities (Halverson et al., 2007; Knapp et al., 2006; Wayman et al., 2007). School principals could utilize effective professional learning opportunities in the following ways:

- Setting teamwork commitment for information use that allows teachers to collaborate in learning from and with each other (Datnow et al., 2007; Jimerson, 2011; Wayman et al., 2010; Young, 2006).
- Awakening professional development and information systems in an adequate way for teacher practice (Wayman & Cho, 2008; Wayman et al., 2010).

3.7 Facilitating Collaboration around Information

Collaboration should be irradiated and cherished as a fundamental component for information use, professional learning development and practice transformation (Datnow et al., 2007; Kerr, Marsh, Ikemoto, Darilek, & Barney, 2006; Supovitz & Klein, 2003; Wayman et al., 2010). Furthermore, collaboration could create a school-wide vision for information use and in patterning guidelines (Knapp et al., 2008). Wayman et al. (2012) proposed some guidelines for school principals how to facilitate collaboration around information (p. 8):

- Constructing efficient, devoted time for collaboration around information use (Deike, 2009; Wayman, Brewer, & Stringfield, 2009; Wayman et al., 2010).
- Setting up some guidelines how to use collaborative time (Datnow et al., 2007; Wayman et al., 2010).

- Partaking in collaborative staff meetings (Copland, 2003; Datnow et al., 2007; Lachat & Smith, 2005, Wayman et al., 2009; Young, 2006).

3.8 Fostering Common Understandings

Wayman et al. (2012) recommended that school principals and staff should possess a prevalent understanding of how information use could minister their school and students in the best way (p. 9). Fostering common understandings had three advantages, namely: (1) assist educators learn better from each other, (2) abridge the work of information use, and (3) facilitate effective collaboration (Knapp, 2003; Copland, 2003; Datnow et al., 2007). In this case, to administer common understandings, school principals should:

- Innovate collaborative opportunities around information so staff could practice and gradually examine common understandings (Datnow et al., 2007; Wayman et al., 2011; Wayman et al., 2012).

- Guide staff in processes of establishing "shared mental models" information for their teaching and learning support (Wayman et al., 2012, p. 9).

3.9 Goal-Setting

A recommendation was given to educators who worked on cultivating goal settings should effectively develop information use (Wayman & Stringfield, 2006; Datnow et al., 2007; Lachat & Smith, 2005). Meaning to say, school goal settings can facilitate information use to explore specific questions. Doing this, school principals should take some considerations:

- Conducting staff in using information to specify level for their own performance (Datnow et al., 2007; Halverson et al., 2005; Wayman & Stringfield, 2006)

- Empowering staff to use level goal-settings information for student achievement at the individual and subgroup level (Halverson et al., 2005).

3.10 Modeling Information Use

School principals who performed information use as part of their jobs could lead the schools succeed in using information (Copland, 2003; Datnow et al., 2007; Lachat & Smith, 2005). Modeling information use could give staff examples on how to integrate information use into concrete practice (Copland, 2003; Wayman et al., 2009). There were several ways that school principals could perform information use:

- Presenting information use to all meetings and bolstering them in conclusions (Lachat & Smith, 2005; Wayman & Stringfield, 2006).

- Performing teamwork with staff how to model information use into their practice (Wayman et al., 2009; Wayman et al., 2010)

- Giving examples to the teachers how to use information in showing their practice (Copland, 2003; Datnow et al., 2007; Lachat & Smith, 2005; Wayman et al., 2011; Wayman et al., 2009; Wayman & Stringfield, 2006)

3.11 Focus Information Use on a Larger Context

The use of information could enlarge test scores of the "whole" student, such as disciplinary data, grades, or teacher observations (Wayman et al., 2012, p, 8). Triangulating such information could help state test scores put in context and let on the teaching practice in more effective ways (Datnow et al., 2007; Ingram et al., 2004; Wayman & Stringfield, 2006). To focus information use on the larger context, school principals should assure the following means:

- Employing staff support to assist teachers with teaching strategies (Datnow et al., 2007; Marsh et al., 2010).
- Collecting information beyond state accountability measures (Halverson et al., 2005; Supovitz & Klein, 2003; Wayman & Stringfield, 2006.)
- Constructing time for teachers to team up in student data analysis (Datnow et al., 2007; Lachat & Smith, 2005; Supovitz & Klein, 2003; Young, 2006).
- Expecting after several meetings teachers could set up clear lesson plans or new assessments (Wayman & Stringfield, 2006).

3.12 Structuring Time to Use Information

Using information or data for structuring staff time was crucial (Ingram et al., 2004; Lachat & Smith, 2005; Kerr et al., 2006; Park & Datnow, 2009). Indeed, constructing creative time for information use and reformatting the time were already set up for information use. Structuring time for effective information use was needed by both staff and team in their meetings or professional development sessions (Lachat & Smith, 2005; Wayman et al., 2010). In this regard, school principals should integrate the time structure with expectancy on how to use the distributed time (Copland, 2003; Halverson et al., 2005; Young, 2006). Expecting teachers to use time structure, there were some means that school principals should arrange information use time:

- Arranging time for teacher teams to explore information (Ingram et al., 2004; Lachat & Smith, 2005; Kerr et al., 2006; Park et al., 2009; Wayman & Stringfield, 2006; Wayman et al., 2009; Young, 2006).
- Examining the existing time structures then take efforts to creatively organize team planning time for information use during school meetings or conference hours (Datnow et al., 2007; Wayman & Stringfield, 2006).
- Composing clear expectations and goals for the future structuring time (Copland, 2003; Datnow et al., 2007; Halverson et al., 2005; Lachat & Smith, 2005; Supovitz & Klein, 2003; Wayman & Stringfield, 2006; Young, 2006).

Table 1

Principal Leadership Strategies that Facilitate School Information Use

Strategy	Description
Asking the right questions	Providing support that enables educators to identify relevant problems and choose appropriate approaches to these problems.
Communication	Using a variety of strategies that clarify for staff and parents how data are used. Strategies may include informal discussion, memos, letters, speeches, etc.
Data system support	Providing opportunities for staff to learn how to use data systems in ways that help get information from the data and improve their practice.
Delegating leadership	Creating opportunities and structures that allow other educators to perform data-related tasks that are typically done by the principal or that enable educators to create new data-related processes and activities.
Engaging in personal learning opportunities	Principals themselves improving their personal data skills. Examples may include literature and reports on effective data use, learning from other leaders, or attending workshops.

Table 1 … continued

Strategy	Description
Ensuring adequate professional learning opportunities	Making sure that educators engage in frequent professional learning opportunities that are immediately relevant to work. These may be on-/off-school and may be conducted by school-based individuals.
Facilitating collaboration around data	Working directly with school to use data to solve problems and structuring ways for teachers to work together on data issues specific to their practice.
Focus data on larger context	Ensuring that data use school-wide goes beyond high-stakes tests to examine the broad spectrum of student learning and deals directly with practice, pedagogy, and content knowledge.
Fostering common understandings	Creating opportunities to build shared definitions and ideas regarding teaching, learning, and how data serve these.

Note. Adapted from "Using Data to Inform Practice: Effective Principal Leadership Strategies," by J. C. Wayman, S. D. Spring, M. A. Lemke, and M. D. Lehr, 2012, *Paper presented at the 2012 annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada*, pp. 37-38. Copyright 2012 by the AERA website.

4. The Nine Characteristics of High-Performance School

In 1999, the Education Trust, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and the U.S. Department of Education undertook a survey of 1200 high-poverty schools that turned into high-performance schools with top scoring on standardized tests. Some 366 rural and urban schools responded to the questionnaire. As a result, strategies these schools used to greatly improve students' performance were none other than the use of standards to design curriculum; monitoring and adjusting instruction to fulfill student academic skill needs; funneling financial resources to develop professional skills for teachers in needed areas; and involving parents in school academic activities to assist student learning at home (Borsuk, 1999; Hopkins, 1999). Moreover, as a matter of fact, the research of Carter (2000) on high-performance schools declared common characteristics, namely:

> *(1) Principals must be free to spend their budgets as they see fit. Without freedom, school principals are powerless, but innovation and flexibility are the keys to their success; (2) Principals set measurable goals to create a culture of achievement; (3) Master teachers bring out better improvement in a school by designing and implementing curriculum. Teacher quality is the most accurate indicator of a student's performance; (4) High expectations with a means of measurement that is regular testing to lead student achievement; (5) Achievement is the key to discipline. Clearly teaching by example in self-control, self-reliance, and self-esteem anchored in achievement are the means to success which inspire confidence, order, and discipline in students. Effective principals hope to create life-long rewards for their students; (6) Principals collaborate with parents to make their home a center of learning; (7) Effort creates ability. Time on task is the key to success in school* (pp. 8-11).

Consequently, transforming MA SMK into a high-performance school, the school principal enacts the framework of the nine characteristics of high-performance schools based on the research of Shannon and Bylsma (2007) which is similar to the previous research noted above.

4.1 A Clear and Shared Focus

> *A shared vision connects people in the school community around a common idea. A strong, shared vision actually helps us focus our attention on the possibilities and Potentials—not the problems and pitfalls. The vision lays the foundation block for the culture of the school; it has great power to energize and mobilize.* J. A. Walsh and B. D. Sattes, Inside School Improvement (2000)

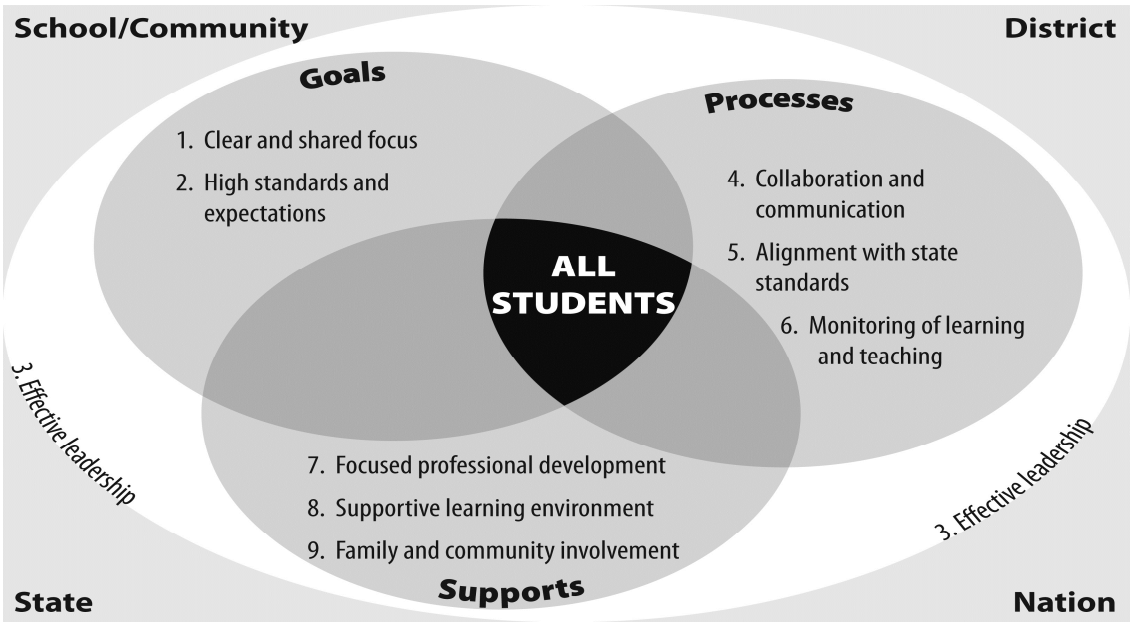

Figure 1. Interrelationships of the nine characteristics. Adapted from *The Nine Characteristics of High-Performing Schools: A Research-Based Resource for Schools and Districts to Assist with Improving Student Learning* (2nd ed., p. 4), by G. S. Shannon and P. Bylsma, 2007. Copyright 2007 by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Olympia, Washington.

Bamburg (1994) observed that when a school community had a clear focus on what was essential and crucial, we could say that the school proceeded well. Clarity of goals that were founded on a shared set of core values and beliefs could turnaround a low-performance school into becoming a high-performance school. The vital factor in qualified school systems was the ascertaining of the core purpose of an organization. Additionally, Sergiovanni (1995) emphasized that key to high-performance was the presence of purposing. Therefore, principals need to be clear about what they want and allowing others to share the focus on vision and commitment as agents of change. Even, in the last two decades, the business-world has increased attention to vision – mission in making strategic planning. Moreover, Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, and Byrk (2001) emphasized that school improvement literature had given priority to the importance of a clear shared focus in the context of reformulating and educational transformation. Faithful to the focus, the firm integration of programs and practices can give a positive impact to the student achievement.

An important first step for developing schools was for school principals to construct a focus on learning in many ways (Knapp, Swinnerton, Copland, & Monpas-Huber, 2006). But first of all, they might put the focus into practice in their own daily routines or through strategic actions. Principals integrated a process through which a board of trustees evolved a focus. Shared emphasis in a school gave direction and purpose for teacher teamwork and upgraded teaching practice (Rosenholtz, 1989). According to the study results of McCreight and Salinas (2002), the respondents ranked a shared school vision and mission as the most important item for school high performance. Furthermore, Shannon and Bylsma (2007) advanced the notion that a clear focus contributed to straightening programs and activities for school development. A clear and shared focus accommodated specific goals and a vision that grasped the imagination and desire of the school community. A vision was embedded in "a vivid, detailed word picture" that portrayed what the school could and should become (p. 27). A school is considered as a high-performance school if it succeeds in shaping shared goals, which echo the goals of the board of trustees.

4.2 High Standards and Expectations for All Students

The standards movement has illuminated academic purpose for schools. Performance levels have increased

the quality of students' achievement. The school principal and teacher teamwork sustain more affiliated in student class work, so students will be well-prepared for work in a challenging workplace. Elevating student learning demands the students and the teachers have self-confidence in their ability to learn to meet high academic standards.

> *Teachers and staff believe that all students can learn and meet high standards. While recognizing that some students must overcome significant barriers, these obstacles are not seen as insurmountable. Students are offered an ambitious and rigorous course of study.* (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007, p. 33)

Shannon and Bylsma (2007) noted that standards and expectations involved several perceptions:

> *… content standards, which are the learning targets performance standards, which answer the question "how good is good enough?" and expectations, which is confidence that students will meet both the content and performance standards that have been set* (p. 33).

According to Saphier (2005), students who had a belief on "effort-based ability" could improve their abilities and endure to push themselves in reaching high academic standards in their study. Students with a capacity to persevere would not give up easily (p. 86). But usually student behavior was affected by opinions and perceptions that others had of them, so what they learnt and the quality of their learning opportunities simply depended on educators' expectations of how to develop competencies for the workplace, lifelong learning, personal growth, and health (Wagner, 2002). Conley (2005) posited that all educators expected students to achieve high performance in school. Thereto, Clark and Cookson (2012) revealed evidence that "high standards – when tied to high performance expectations – carry several benefits for students who are most academically challenged" (p. 7).

4.3 Effective Leadership

> *Effective instructional and administrative leadership is supposed to carry out processes of change. Effective leaders are proactive and seek help that is needed. They also nourish an instructional program and school culture conducive to learning and professional growth.* (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007, p. 43)

In order to motivate others to attain school goals, principals should embrace staff and teachers, and involve them in the school goals and activities. By working together and committing themselves to carrying out school goals, faculty and staff invested trust, reliability, a spirit of community and active participation within the school. School principals who asked their teachers to engage in truthful and open dialogue and also value and heartily welcome teachers' proposals and suggestions received more trust from teachers and staff; furthermore, teachers and staff would wholeheartedly follow the direction set by them (Lezotte & McKee, 2006).

Much research and literature pointed to the important role of the principal in developing schools and boosting student achievement. A school principal who had effective leadership skills would advance school development (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007). This statement was in line with the empirical study of Waters and Marzano (2006), which found that there was a significant relationship between the effectiveness of school leadership and the performance of student learning. However, a school transforms itself into a high performance institution due to the efforts of a school principal and the school community. In this regard, McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) affirmed that schools gained robust improvement when principals learnt to trust by giving others space to grow and help them "participate in building leadership throughout the schools" (p. 81).

Cultivating an effective principal leadership needs a process and efforts described by Yukl (2010). Yukl defined leadership as "the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives" (p.

8). In other words, Yukl's definition stated that leadership was a process, and a combination of efforts to influence and facilitate others. Leadership also assured that staff and teachers were ready to face future challenges.

Regarding effective leadership, Lussier and Achua (2013) had similar to Yukl's ideas. They explained that leadership was "the influencing process of leaders and followers to achieve organizational objectives through change" (p. 6). Additionally, Morrison (2013) wrote in Forbes magazine that "effective principals also need to have a high level of emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills…often, the power of school leaders is vested in their capacity to persuade and influence, rather than to direct" (p. 1).

Effective educational leadership involved seven characteristics of educational leadership which required transformation in all aspects of educational values that were likely to affect student learning: knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; intellectual stimulation; monitoring and evaluating; attitudes, ideals and beliefs; change agent; flexibility; and optimizer meant "inspire(s) and lead(s) new and challenging innovations" (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005, p. 43).

4.4 Collaboration and Communication

> *Solid teamwork among teachers and other staff are needed to build mutual involvement and connectedness, including parents and members of the community, to identify problems and work on solutions.* (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007, p. 54)

The full definition of "collaborate" in *Merriam-Webster's dictionary* includes the idea of working together with another person or group in order to achieve or do something. Collaboration is a popular term for describing a partnership or interconnection in improving a school. For example: teamwork among teachers, linkup among schools and business firms for financial support and partnerships among schools and other public agencies to team up in social services (Johnson, 2000). But the research of Shannon and Bylsma (2007) only focused on specific areas of collaboration among school staff, teachers and principals, in order to improve student learning. A definition of "collaboration" from Little (as cited in Shannon & Bylsma, 2007) was relevant:

> *Collegiality is the presence of four specific behaviors, as follows: Adults in schools talk about practice. These conversations about teaching and learning are frequent, continuous, concrete, and precise. Adults in schools observe each other engaged in the practice of teaching and administration. These observations become the practice to reflect on and talk about. Adults engage together in work on curriculum by planning, designing, researching, and evaluating curriculum. Finally, adults in schools teach each other what they know about teaching, learning, and leading. Craft knowledge is revealed, articulated, and shared* (p. 54).

The research of Rosenholtz (1989) on teacher work environment underlined the essential need for collaboration for teacher competence and student performance. Rosenholtz wrote of research that school improvements were identified by concurrence on purposes, mutual help and the sharing of teachers, getting involved in making decision on work issue, and chances to promote self-learning. In developing schools, teachers vocalized an optimistic viewpoint of themselves and their ability – that "everything was possible" (p. 210). The results of the Rosenholtz's study also boosted the hypothesis that there were more advantages than disadvantages to collaboration for either teachers or students as well (p. 210).

The findings from Newmann and Wehlage's research (1995) emphasized that to improve student learning, educators should focus on teaching-learning process, work-team, and mutual accountability. In addition, according to DuFour, Eaker, and DuFour (2005) and confirmed by the statements of Schmoker (2006), McLaughlin and Talbert (2006), collaboration and communication of professional learning communities worked effectively if educators collaborated with each other for cultivating curriculums, engaged in further learning and achievement for the sake of the students, composed and provided common formative assessments, evaluated the

expectations and outcome data of students, reviewed and scored student work together, characterized the strengths and the weaknesses in student learning based on the work.

Related to collaboration, there are many barometers that give opportunities to change: lessening alienation, escalating staff capacity (insert strategies that provide larger autonomy, improvement, and participation in decision-making), furnishing a caring, productive environment (contains positive teacher attitudes, students' elevated interests and learning service), healthy and caring relationships among the school community members, boosting heightened quality (Hall & Hord, 2001). Besides, Morrison (2013) cited what Sir David Carter, a chief executive of the Cabot Learning Federation said, "You have got to build collaboration and get people to work together" (p. 1).

Working together to improve a school needs communication skills. Hoy and Miskel (1996) referred to the fact that principals spent the majority of their time communicating. In a real sense, teachers, students, and administrators earned their livings by communicating (p. 341). Moreover, M. T. Myers and G. Myers (1982) stated that in schools, the interpretation of school goals into concrete actions and accomplishments relied on effective information exchanges. Goals of schools got accomplished only when they were communicated, which allowed professional learning communities to organize and to coordinate their activities.

The word "communication" is descended from the Latin root word which means "common." The main purpose of communication was to create a common understanding among people. The foundation of commonness was based on trust, mutual respect, regular exchanges of ideas, and chances to partake in discussions of important issues (Joekel, Wendel, & Hoke, as cited in Fawcett, 2008, p. 21). In addition, Fawcett (2008) determined that effective principals who put into practice their interpersonal communication skills were willing to listen and to respond to everybody. Meaning to say, they were available, supportive, approachable, visible in order to be able to implant connections and relationships through the "management by walking around" principle (p. 21).

4.5 Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Aligned with Standards

In research on high-performance school principals, Keller (1998) discovered that principals of high-performance schools assumed that curriculum and instruction were the main enterprise of a school. The alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment with standards increased the integrity and the power of teaching and learning processes.

According to Hess (2007), in this context alignment meant a triad among "what to teach" (the planned curriculum based on learning standards), "how to teach" (instruction), and "what and how to assess/it is tested" (assessment). In this case, a curriculum-instruction-assessment triangle should stand solidly in order to achieve student learning improvement. However, Shannon and Bylsma (2007) asserted that profoundly straightening the content–context–cognitive demand of the curriculum– instruction–assessment triad could have a great impact on student learning. The counterpart between the curriculum and the tests given was crucial; nevertheless, "effective instruction could have the greatest impact on achievement" (p. 63).

Clearly, Pellegrino (2010) explained that:

> *Curriculum consists of knowledge and skills in subject matter areas which teachers teach and students are required to learn – Instruction refers to methods of teaching and the learning activities used to assist students master the content and objectives specified by the curriculum – Assessment is the means used to measure the outcomes of education and the achievement of students with regard to important competencies* (pp. 4–5).

From the past two decades, research studies had shown that the content of curriculum and the alignment of assessment significantly had correlation in increasing the test grades (Cohen, 1987). Some professionals in

education declared that test scoring should be matched in a "standards-based system". They stressed that the aim of scoring was to reveal what students had learnt. Hence, test scoring had to express student learning correctly (Guskey, 1996, p. 18).

4.6 Monitoring of Learning and Teaching

> *A steady cycle of different assessments identify students who need help. More support and instructional time is provided, either during the school day or outside normal school hours, to students who need more help. Teaching is adjusted based on frequent monitoring of student progress and needs. Assessment results are used to focus and improve instructional programs.* (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007, p. 86)

The American Heritage Dictionary defines "monitoring" as keeping close watch over/keeping track systematically with a view to collecting information; supervising. Cotton (1988) interpreted monitoring as the use of activities by teachers to check student learning for the purpose of making instructional decisions and giving feedback on the progress of students. On the other hand, Schmoker (1996) broadened the meaning of monitoring as "analyzing what we are doing against the results we are getting" (p. 6). Monitoring used measures which gave feedback to teachers and students, and which also routinely reviewed and refined the processes that most "directly contribute to designated results" (p. 7).

Good and Brophy (2000) said that the best way to monitor the teaching-learning process of a school community was to provide constant feedback for the purposes of school improvement. In a conducive, supportive school environment that focused on continual progress, feedback enabled teachers to make procedural corrections, re-teach, and encourage student efforts, as well as to change their practices. They emphasized that "mistakes are treated as learning opportunities, not test failures, and should lead to additional instruction and practice opportunities" (p. 230). Meaning to say, students should be given multiple opportunities to learn in order to encourage their persistence in overcoming initial failures. In addition, Canady and Hotchkiss (as cited in O'Connor, 2002) emphasized that students needed to be supported and encouraged, with additional instruction and feedback, when they tried new and more challenging work, not given "low marks" (p. 38).

Recognizing student accomplishment through test scoring and work practicum was a form of monitoring learning and teaching. Giving students opportunities to assess their own learning and consider their performance would guide students in having accountability for their learning (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 2005; Stiggins, 2005).

4.7 Focused Professional Development

Shannon and Bylsma (2007) acknowledged that professional development encompassed a broadness of learning opportunities for educators, generally on-the-job, following "pre-employment" or "pre-service" preparation and training. In-service was frequently used for staff development (p. 96). Collinson (as cited in Hawley & Valli, 1999) stated that effective professional development, when sighted as competency-based, was considered a shared, public process that encouraged sustained interaction; stressed actual issues of school; looked forward teachers to involve in participative leadership; emphasized the way of teaching; articulated "a theoretical research base"; and anticipated that transformation would be a sluggish process (p. 134).

On the other hand, Hawley and Valli (1999) confirmed that a study on school development had a significant connection with the transformation of professional development. Obviously, Sparks and Hirsh (1997) declared that:

> *"Job-embedded" professional development which occurs through multiple forms that are facilitated over-time is more effective than "go and get" training by outside experts with educators as "passive recipients"* (p. 14).

Applying the "new science of learning" into the design and implementation of learning opportunities for adults and children, Murphy and Alexander (2006) classified the main aspects of academic learning that consisted of "development" (includes experience and time that regularly and gradually transform our way of learning); "knowledge base" (includes one's mindset and point of view about everything); "motivation/affect" (includes an effect that energizes and directs behavior); and "strategic processing and executive functioning" (includes the capacity to integrate body, mind and spirit) (p. 4).

Relating to influence on student learning and teaching performance improvement, effective professional development must not only document participant satisfaction levels, but must be evaluated as well (Guskey, 2000). Pronouncedly, the National Staff Development Council developed three important standards for staff development that focused on the learning improvement of all students: *context, process,* and *content*.

> *Context standards include conducting adults into learning communities and requiring leadership and resources. Process standards include use of student data, multiple sources of information and research for decision making, and applying knowledge about human learning and change. Content standards address equity for all students, quality teaching, and family involvement* (NSDC, as cited in Shannon & Bylsma, 2007, p. 97).

Impressively, Lieberman and Miller (2001) in line with experts in the field summed up that professional development portrayed several common themes, which pertained to the essential relationship between teachers and student learning, sustaining "professional collaboration and collegial accountability with time and space for conversation, joint action, and critique"; linking "teaching and assessment practices", promoting effective communication or dialogue, improving structured tools and protocols to guide discussion and provide real-life experiences of teaching as the source of professional development (p. ix).

Based on several research studies, Hawley and Valli (2000, pp. 1-6) integrated nine principles for designing effective "learner-centered" professional development:

- The values focus on student learning to differentiate problems.
- The content is to navigate "the differences between the goals and standards for student learning and current student performance".
- The engagement is the needs - the process - the development of teacher learning.
  The embodiment is the integral composition in school implementations (e.g., "job-embedded").
- The management is to set up learning opportunities for individual needs and to conduct "collaborative problem solving".
- The process must be "continuous and ongoing, engaging follow-up, support for further learning and from sources external to the school that can provide necessary resources and outside perspectives".
- The integration is "evaluation of multiple sources" of information on outcomes for students and carrying out processes of the lessons.
- The opportunities are to involve in "developing a theoretical understanding of the knowledge and skills to be learned".
- The growth should be incorporated with a "comprehensive change process" that turns obstacles into facilitating student learning.

4.8 Supportive Learning Condition/Environment

> *The school has a safe, civil, healthy and intellectually stimulating learning environment. Students*

> *feel respected and connected with the staff, and are engaged in learning. Instruction is personalized and small learning environments increase student contact with teachers* (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007, p. 107).

It is absolutely necessary for school principals to create safe and supportive learning condition so that the school community grows in a sense of belonging and improves efforts to increase students' achievement. Holtz Frank (2006) defined a supportive learning condition as "the creation of a caring, rigorous and relevant learning community that provides support to all learners in aiding them to achieve at their highest potential" (pp. 1-2). According to Holtz Frank (2006), there were seven key research-based elements of supportive learning conditions:

> *(1) safety of the physical plant, (2) shared leadership practices, (3) structured personalized learning communities, (4) student centered learning practices, (5) caring relationships and sense of community, (6) school-wide positive discipline and self-management practices, (7) active student, staff, family, and community involvement (p. 2).*

Shannon and Bylsma (2007) expressed the idea that "mutual respect and trust are at the heart of a supportive learning environment" (p. 107). Additionally, as the implementation suggestions, Shannon and Bylsma (2007) also expressed that scrutinizing the school culture which a school community experiences was a significant "starting point in creating and sustaining learning environment" (p. 108).

To sum up this section, the researcher considers that the key to a supportive learning condition is the willingness of the whole school community to respond to the call of loving care for humanity to build a caring relationship with all students, learn about their needs and strengths, and provide support and encouragement of the students' desires to be successful learners.

4.9 Family and Community Involvement

> *There is a sense that all have a responsibility to educate students, not just the teachers and staff in schools. Families, as well as businesses, social service agencies, and community colleges/universities all play a vital role in this effort.* (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007, p. 119)

Epstein (2008) noted that successful students at all ability levels had families who kept contact with the school principal and teachers just by asking for information and involved themselves in their children's education. Moreover, Epstein (2008) mentioned that many studies confirmed that family involvement in a school community was crucial for student achievement. For example, the active involvement of families could encourage students to have spirit of learning, to behave in a healthy way, to enhance student learning quality, and to attend class with well-prepared (p. 10).

Besides, the research of Belfield and Levin (2007) found clear, consistent, and convincing results that there was a significant correlation between parent-family and community involvement in education with higher academic performance and school improvement. When schools, parents/families, and communities collaborated to support student learning, students tended to earn higher grades, to attend school more regularly, to stay in school longer, and to enroll in higher level programs (p. 1). Also, Barton (2003) emphasized that strong school-family-community partnerships stimulated higher educational aspirations and more motivated students.

Henderson and Mapp (2002) noted the research was obvious that "family involvement was a key factor in a student's improved academic performance" (p. 24). Family involvement is a way of thinking and doing that affirmed how important the role of families is in enhancing their children's education and ability of working in team. As a result, "children have advantages when their parents support and encourage school activities" (Constantino, 2003, pp. 7-8). Also, "programs and interventions that engage families in supporting their children's learning at home are linked to higher student achievement" (Henderson & Mapp, 2002, p. 25).

High-performance schools intentionally linked family involvement strategies to academic goals. They established family involvement as part of their school development plan and foster collaborative relationships among teachers, parents and the community (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007, p. 119). Building up a solid teamwork between family and school community is not easy. A school principal should design a variety of practices to encourage communication. Fortunately, according to Fawcett (2008, p. 25), the National Parent Teacher Association (National PTA, 1997) provided a meaningful communication design as a framework to accomplish a high level of family and school community involvement.

Table 2

Framework of a High Level Family and School Community Involvement

	Strategies
1.	Use a variety of communication tools on a regular basis
2.	Establish opportunities for parents and educators to share partnering and information regarding student strengths and learning preferences
3.	Provide clear information regarding course expectations and offerings, student placement, school activities and student services
4.	Mail report cards and regular progress reports to parents and offer follow-up conferences and support as needed
5.	Distribute information on school reforms, policies, disciplinary procedures, assessment tools and school goals, including parents in any related decision-making process
6.	Conduct conferences with parents at least twice a year, with follow-up as needed; conferences should accommodate the varied schedules of parents, language barriers, the need for child care
7.	Encourage immediate contact between parents and teachers when concerns arise
8.	Distribute student work for parental comment and review on a regular basis
9.	Translate all communication to assist non-English speaking parents
10.	Communicate with parents regarding positive student behavior and achievement, not just misbehavior or failure
11.	Provide opportunities for parents to communicate with the principal and other administrative staff
12.	Promote informal activities in which parents, staff, and community members can interact
13.	Provide staff development regarding effective communication techniques and the importance of regular, two-way communication between family and school community

Note. Adapted from "A Case Study of Leadership Practices of the Turnaround Principal," by Y. B. Fawcett, 2008, *Dissertation,* p. 25. Copyright 2008 by Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

5. Summary

The findings of previous researches which stressed the role of school principal in improving schools (Brookover & Lezotte, 1977; Edmonds, 1979; Sergiovanni, 2001) confirmed that a school principal played the most essential role and dominated the impact on transforming schools more than any other elements (Egley & Jones, 2005). Moreover, Lezotte and McKee (2006) specified that many researches documented how school principals performed tremendous intervention in transforming schools. Furthermore, Leithwood et al. (2004) mentioned the specific role of a high-performance school principal consisted of three basic cores acts, namely setting direction, developing people and redesigning the school. Transforming MA SMK into a high-performance school, the school principal enacted her strategies by using the framework of nine characteristics of high-performance schools based on the research of Shannon and Bylsma (2007). As a comparison, this chapter also presented the research presentation of Wayman et al. (2012) about the twelve strategies of a school principal.

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