

Instructional leadership in Indonesian school reform: overcoming the problems to move forward

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Submission date: 12-Jul-2021 10:55AM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 1618511301

File name: nesian_school_reform_overcoming_the_problems_to_move_forward.pdf (275.38K)

Word count: 10868

Character count: 64601

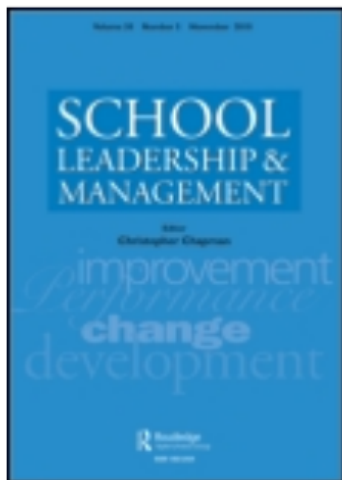
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Publisher: Routledge

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School Leadership & Management: Formerly School Organisation

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cslm20>

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Published online: 16 Oct 2012.

To cite this article: Francesco Sofo, Robert Fitzgerald & Umiati Jawas (2012) Instructional leadership in Indonesian school reform: overcoming the problems to move forward, *School Leadership & Management: Formerly School Organisation*, 32:5, 503-522, DOI: [10.1080/13632434.2012.723616](https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2012.723616)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2012.723616>

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Instructional leadership in Indonesian school reform: overcoming the problems to move forward

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The paper reviews the research on instructional leadership and, through identifying problems emerging in Indonesian school reform, suggests some sustainable solutions. There are some discrepancies in the processes of Indonesia's school reform, and the objectives of the national education reform do not seem to have been reflected in the actual implementation. School leadership is suggested to be a decisive factor in student attainment. There is a scarcity of research on Indonesian school reform, and this paper's study of instructional leadership emphasises the need to identify and overcome problems in order to move towards optimising student achievement.

Keywords: school reform; instructional leadership; Indonesia; learning outcomes; student attainment

Introduction: the problem

The decentralisation of education autonomy and particularly the booming of school-based management (SBM) have marked the global approach in reforming schools worldwide. A key assumption of SBM is that decisions about educational programmes such as curriculum, instruction and organisation of time, people, facilities and other resources for students should be made by people who are closest to the students because they are the ones who best understand the contexts and cultures of the school (Murphy and Beck 1995). This change of education autonomy from a central authority to local school management was predicted by Caldwell and Spinks (1992) as one of the mega-trends in education where public schools would become self-managing and the differences between public and private schools would gradually disappear. SBM requires that schools be provided with roles and responsibilities for operational decision-making regarding national education policies (Bandur 2009). Schools are the fundamental decision-making unit within the educational system; therefore, they have to be given the capacity to identify and respond to student needs. Greater decision-making authority at the school level will enable schools to respond more efficiently, effectively and flexibly to the needs of their students (Abu-Duhou 2003; Azra 2002; Fattah 2012; Malen, Ogawa, and Kranz 1993; Murphy and Beck 1995; Nurkolis 2003; Sagala 2004).

In Indonesia, SBM is seen not only as an alternative, but also as a critique of centralised educational management. A former minister of national education, Mr Fadjar, maintained that the Indonesian government did not educate school leaders to be independent in many aspects of school administration, such as in school

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leadership, instructional and curriculum development, learning facilities, school resource allocation and school stakeholder empowerment (2002). These issues of educational leadership and school reform in Indonesia are important, but to date they have been relatively neglected in the published literature. Consequently, national policy-makers often have to rely on results and practices from Western school systems (Bjork 2005) rather than learning from culturally specific research and dialogue. This tendency to adopt the educational practices of Western systems has ignored the context and cultural differences between the systems (Chan and Sam 2007; Hadiyanto 2004; Irawan, Eriyanto, and Sunaryanto 2004; Surakhmad 2002; Zainuddin 2008), thus reports on Indonesian schooling have generally focused on technical issues rather than on education reform. As a result, assessments and predictions of the education reforms often provide only limited insights into the causes and effects of those efforts (Bjork 2005).

In 2003, Indonesia began to experience a fundamental redefinition and restructuring of education through the enactment of the *National Education System Law Number 20 Year 2003*. A significant result of this national reform is the introduction of autonomy, which means that local governments can manage schools within their geographical locations to promote local characteristics and potentials. The practice of SBM in Indonesian primary and secondary schools is expected to become the hallmark of this education autonomy. School principals are expected to exercise greater control in developing capacity for reform in their schools and in improving academic performance. Principals also need to adopt a new role as change agents in order to empower others to recognise and contribute their potential to increase organisational capacity to restructure schools (Chen 2008; Hallinger and Heck 2010a, 2010b; Leitwood and Day 2008; Mulford and Silins 2011; Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe 2008). Yet, many Indonesian principals still do not know how to use the new authority to manage their schools and are afraid to make changes (Chan and Sam 2007; Mulyasa 2011; Silverius 2002; Surakhmad 2002; Zainuddin 2008). An additional concern relates to the empowerment of Indonesian teachers. The underlying principle of SBM is to develop schools' independence in constructing and designing curricula and instruction that best suit students' needs and local requirements. As teachers play the leading role in this area, their abilities in improving the quality of teaching and learning processes and in undertaking initiatives aimed at improving student academic performance are critically important. There has been a lack of political will from the Indonesian government to appreciate the teaching profession, to organise and manage teacher training institutes to attract suitable candidates to produce qualified teachers, and to protect and empower teachers through teacher professional bodies (Sapari 2003; Tilaar 2009). The protection and freedom given to teachers to be creative, to develop their teaching competencies and to focus on their profession have been rarely considered by superiors (Chan and Sam 2007; Kintamani 2002; Tilaar 2009). It appears the government had displayed little interest in teachers' classroom performance, so the responsibility to improve the quality of teaching was neglected by both the government and teachers themselves (Azra 2002; Bjork 2005; Tilaar 2009). These unfavourable conditions for principals and teachers can be quite detrimental to the efforts to improve the quality of national education in Indonesia. Further, the statistical evidence has revealed disappointing figures. At international levels, Indonesian student learning outcomes have been falling short of the standards

Table 1. Indonesia's 2006 and 2009 PISA profiles.

Domain	2006 PISA	2009 PISA
Mathematics	391	371
Reading	392	402
Science	393	383

Source: OECD PISA 2009 and 2006 database.

(Table 1). Statistics released by UNDP and the OECD have shown the sub-standard achievement of Indonesian students. Compared with its neighbouring countries, Indonesia's Human Development Index (HDI) has been the lowest for almost three and a half decades (UNDP 2009). The Education Index (EI) of Indonesia's HDI has also been the smallest (UNDP 2009). In addition, Indonesian students' performance on PISA tests has been among those countries that are statistically significantly below the average PISA score and lower than the PISA scores of its neighbouring countries (OECD 2011). Other unsatisfactory performance areas of Indonesian students are their profiles on the 2007 TIMSS and the 2006 PIRLS, which were in the lower part of the rank for both tests (TIMSS and PIRLS 2009). It appears that school reform in Indonesia has not enabled appropriate student achievement in comparative terms (Nandika 2007).

At the national level, the education indicator is measured mainly by illiteracy rate and schooling participation ratio. Based on the statistics issued by the Bureau of National Statistics, the number of illiterate Indonesian students has reduced significantly; however, the participation ratio keeps showing a declining trend across education levels (Badan Pusat Statistik 2009). The percentages of students in schools represented by gross enrolment ratio and net enrolment ratio show a dramatic decrease where the number of students in tertiary education is the smallest. Primary school graduates constitute the largest percentage in the areas of education attainment and the workforce. This condition may have a deleterious implication for national development because it will be difficult to expect poorly educated youth to be agents of social change (Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, cited in Kunandar 2005).

School reform aims for a change in pedagogy, an approach to teaching and learning that is oriented towards high expectations of student achievement (Dalin 2005). To attain this, there has been an increased demand for public accountability of schools (Hallinger and Murphy 1987; Leithwood and Day 2008; Pont, Nusche, and David 2008; Robinson 2010). This demand has brought the recognition of the importance of school leadership (Leithwood and Day 2008). Accumulating research evidence has shown that leadership is a decisive factor for variation across schools in many important student learning outcomes (Leithwood and Day 2008). Literature on sustainable school organisational learning and improvement also acknowledges the quality of school leadership as a determining key (Datnow 2005; Hargreaves and Fink 2006; Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe 2008). Specifically, Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) concluded that total leadership accounted for 27% of the variation in student achievement across schools, which is significantly higher than the usual 20% or less reported effects from studies on school principals generally (Creemers and Reezigt 1996; Hallinger and Heck 1998).

This paper reviews changes in accountability and the accompanying problems that have arisen in Indonesia. It argues for the adoption of instructional leadership roles, practices and influences in the context of Indonesia's school reform. The paper examines the literature on instructional leadership by presenting an overview of school reform efforts and subsequent impacts on student learning in Indonesia as well as the questionable learning achievement of Indonesian students using OECD performance measures. A three-pronged model summarising the factors that are negatively impacting student attainment and learning outcomes in Indonesia is presented before solutions are proposed from the published literature. Finally, we discuss the conclusion that the discrepancies in the processes of Indonesia's school reform mean that the objectives of the national education reform are not reflected in its implementation.

Literature review: the impact of leadership

Leadership is complex and has many forms. It is an issue commonly explored through empirical studies on school reform, and the practice of leadership has gained substantial recognition as a catalyst in the management of school change. This is because leadership fulfils a basic function for a group or an organisation, which is to mobilise members to think, believe and behave in a manner that satisfies emerging organisational needs and the demands of society (Donaldson 2006). Persistent positive consequences continue to emerge when leadership is linked to constructive outcomes for individuals, teams and organisations. Accumulating research evidence also shows a growing confidence in the role of effective school leadership in school reform programmes (Bush 2003; Leithwood and Riehl 2003; Southworth 2005). In these settings, humans can influence processes that achieve individual, team and organisational improvement through change. Improvement in instructional leadership is said to be focused on emerging leaders and their ability to lead change that results in better learning.

Gunter and Fitzgerald (2008) argue that the future of educational leadership research should focus on producing knowledge that is evidence-based and genuinely oriented in the public interest. Critical leadership studies need to serve the public interest and need to be practical. To accomplish this task, sound theories of teaching and learning must constitute the foundation for leadership research and for educational practice encountered by students, teachers and school systems (Gunter and Fitzgerald 2008).

Inherent to any school system is the need for the school to be effective and for students to attain certain levels of learning and developmental outcomes. Some efforts to improve school effectiveness and student attainment derive from educational policy-makers' initiatives to reform schools through increased public accountability as a means of improving student achievement (Leithwood and Day 2008; Pont, Nusche, and David 2008; Robinson 2010). The increased demand on school accountability has brought substantial pressure on principals, whose contributions to accomplishing the intended improvements are scrutinised. Paradoxically, the stricter demands on accountability provide an additional opportunity to demonstrate the importance of school leadership (Leithwood and Day 2008), particularly the opportunity to treat principal deficits in instructional leadership not as a deficit but as an organisational responsibility (Hallinger and Heck 2010a,

2010b). This accountability can be satisfied in three ways: reducing barriers that prevent principals from performing their instructional leadership role; identifying observable practices and behaviours of instructional leadership that principals can implement; and using assessment methods that generate reliable, valid data on instructional leadership behaviours that principals can use (Hallinger and Murphy 1987).

School leadership is a critical determinant of important student learning outcomes (Leithwood and Day 2008) and quality of schooling (Leithwood and Riehl 2003). The existing empirical studies aimed at understanding the contribution of leadership to school improvement and student learning and conducted in many different school contexts have supported the conclusion that leadership affects learning by creating the structural and sociocultural processes that develop the capacity of schools for academic improvement (Hallinger and Heck 2010a, 2010b). Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) describe this role of school leadership as a catalyst for every change taking place in improvement programmes where it provides the means for actualising the potential capacities that schools already have. This catalytic function of leadership strengthens the relevance of leadership to school reform. Within various national contexts (e.g. the Dutch context, Grift and Houtveen 1999, and the US context, Blase and Blase 1999) there is credible evidence that primary school leadership practices changed over a 10-year period because principals' repertoire of behaviours were expanded to include behaviours directly related to pupil achievement, such as principals interacting with and influencing teachers (instructional management), e.g. principals observing classrooms, showing interest in what happens in class, stimulating teachers about new methods and informing them of new pedagogy and materials to improve student achievement.

Leadership is a broad and highly contested concept as is the concept of instructional leadership. The definition of instructional leadership has developed into as many different versions as the number of people who propose it (Alig-Mielcarek and Hoy 2005). The existing literature also fails to provide explicit descriptions of leadership theory (Bush 2003). The complex nature of leadership implies many conceptions of leadership which naturally lack a consensus of definition. Blase and Blase (1999, 350–1) asserted that instructional leadership is often defined as a blend of integrated tasks (supervision, staff, group and curriculum development, planning, organising, facilitating change, motivating staff and action research), and a myriad of approaches were identified (democratic, collaborative, human resource-based, developmental, transformational) as well as new emerging approaches that focused on equity, reflection and growth.

Since there is no agreed-upon definition of the concept of instructional leadership, it is useful to clarify that in this paper the term refers to leadership practices that emphasise students and their learning as the core purpose of schools (defining the school mission) and that provide enhanced educational opportunities for students (instructional management) through influencing the behaviours of teachers, that is, promoting the school learning climate (Davies 2005; Hallinger and Murphy 1987; Southworth 2005). Hallinger and Murphy (1987, 57) emphasised three key dimensions of instructional leadership which form the basis of the definition used in this paper. These dimensions include: defining the school mission, managing the instructional programme and promoting the school learning climate. Instructional leadership here is viewed as a form of distributed leadership which involves

inspiring and motivating others (Printy and Marks 2006) about the school's mission and teaching processes to promote innovation and growth in student learning as well as having a positive impact on student and school outcomes. Printy and Marks (2006) confirm the existence of a strong relationship between leading, learning and teaching. They highlight that teaching is a social practice that provides opportunities for teacher leadership and informal learning, both of which are often emergent, especially when teachers are open to multiple perspectives. Principals are pivotal in establishing teaching as a social practice and in encouraging teachers to be mutually accountable. Principals create fertile conditions for teacher interactions by establishing structures and processes as well as by setting goals and expectations for the school and closely monitoring the efficacy of implementation, that is, managing instruction.

Student learning and instructional leadership

The literature on educational leadership tracks how the role of school principals has changed over the past decades towards increased expectations of management, sometimes at the expense of leadership. Simultaneously, there is ample evidence that leadership is critically important in improving student learning and educational equity in schools. For example, Douglas Reeves' (2008) new 7R framework (recognition, research, results, reflection, reinforcement, resilience or rejection) for reframing leadership by teachers is one of many new approaches available to promote effective change. Leadership in schools needs to be the key driver of high-quality teaching and learning, in particular the type of leadership that empowers individuals and groups to co-destruct and co-create. Effective school leadership then presents schools, teachers, students and communities with ample opportunities to imagine and to create collaborative structures and to participate in work processes that facilitate student success.

Theoretically, instructional leadership is an important foundation for the dynamic development of broader school leadership. It is driven by the desire to understand the capacity of educational leaders to make substantial contributions to student learning outcomes (Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe 2008) and to school improvement generally (Datnow 2005; Hargreaves and Ink 2006; Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe 2008). Empirical studies in the USA, the UK, France and the Netherlands have shown a positive relationship between school leadership and student outcomes (Bush 2003; Leithwood and Riehl 2003; Opdenakker and Van Damme 2007; Southworth 2005). In Australia, research evidence has emphasised the indirect relationship between educational leadership and student outcomes with teachers playing the part of mediating variable (Silins and Mulford 2004; Gurr, Drysdale, and Mulford 2007), and empirical studies have also shown that indirect models have a greater impact on student performance than do direct models (Gurr, Drysdale, and Mulford 2007; Opdenakker and Van Damme 2007; Southworth 2005).

Researchers have shown that the quality of school leadership impacts student learning (Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins 2008; Waters, Marzano, and McNulty 2003). A decade earlier, Hallinger and Heck (1998) concluded that the combined direct and indirect effects of school leadership on pupil outcomes were small but educationally significant. Creemers and Reezigt (1996) at the same time found that while leadership explains only 3–5% of the variation in student learning across

schools, this amounts to one-fifth of the total variation (10–20%) explained by all school-level variables – after controlling for student intake factors. More recently, Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) found that teaching explains only about one-third of the variation in student achievement. In sum, leadership is second to teaching as the major school-based influence on student learning.

Accountability is demonstrated through increasing evidence that instructional leadership roles and practices are important. A significant amount of research has accumulated evidence that principals do actually have an effect on student learning outcomes (Louis, Dretzke, and Wahlstrom 2010). Some research emphasises the knowledge of curriculum content and instructional materials (Stein and Nelson 2003; Louis, Dretzke, and Wahlstrom 2010), whereas other research highlights the presence of support for improved instruction (Leithwood 2001; Louis, Dretzke, and Wahlstrom 2010; O'Donnell and White 2005). Still other studies have continuously shown the relationship between principal leadership and a variety of school outcomes (Hallinger 2003; Hallinger and Heck 1998; Hallinger and Heck 2010a, 2010b; Heck and Hallinger 2009; Leithwood and Jantzi 1999, 2000, 2005), and some research has also signified instructional leadership as a core responsibility for principals (Mangin 2007; Reitzug, West, and Angel 2008).

Instructional leadership has been conceptualised as 'an organisational property aimed at school improvement' (Hallinger and Heck 2010b, 656). Hallinger and Heck (2010a, 2010b) define collaborative leadership as team-oriented and as shared leadership which encompasses both formal and informal sources of leadership, organisationally bound and aimed at school improvement. To the extent that school improvement is directed primarily at student achievement then collaborative leadership is an example of instructional leadership. Their research found that collaborative leadership contributes in significant and direct ways to school improvement and in indirect ways to rates of growth in student reading achievement. This latter finding corroborates a plethora of international research which shows that various aspects of school leadership can have a significant indirect impact on student learning outcomes (Hallinger and Heck 1998; Louis, Dretzke, and Wahlstrom 2010; Opdenakker and Van Damme 2007; Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe 2008). The unique longitudinal study of Hallinger and Heck (2010a, 2010b) offers convincing evidence of the power of varied forms of what the researchers call 'collaborative leadership' (leadership beyond the school principal), on instructional improvement and student achievement. Their study is distinctive because it is the first which identified statistically significant indirect effects of collaborative school leadership on student attainment over four years and based on a dynamic model of school improvement. The dynamic aspect means that students depend upon a consistent quality of teaching such as a breadth and a density of instructional expertise across teachers.

Leadership and change in Southeast Asia

The last decade has seen an increasing interest in the comparative study of education systems in Western and Asian contexts (Chen 2008; Cheng 2000; Hallinger 2010; Hallinger and Kantamara 2000). There are many reasons for this interest, not the least are the sizable achievement differences between students in favour of particular Asian countries. Results from international studies such as PISA 2009 consistently show China, Hong Kong, Singapore and South Korea outperforming other OECD

countries in maths, sciences and reading (OECD 2010). Furthermore, the active promotion of China by the government of the People's Republic of China through the establishment of Confucius institutes around the world has not only signalled China's desire to actively engage with the world but also the West's combined academic and economic interest in promoting dialogue and exchange. Academics, educators and policy-makers alike have shown a renewed interest in the role different models of leadership play in educational change in the Southeast Asian context. Somewhat surprisingly there has been little empirical work in this area and even fewer longitudinal studies (Hallinger and Heck 2010a, 2010b).

Over a decade ago, Cheng (2000) argued strongly for a more holistic understanding of the cultural factors at play in educational reform, suggesting that any framework should specifically account for societal, community, school and classroom influences. Identifying the importance of developing an empirical base, Cheng (2000) proposed comparative studies as an effective way of linking practice and results. In a more recent study, Chen (2008) proposed strategic leadership combining strong leadership and a participative mechanism for comprehensive reform agendas. Yet, cross-comparison is needed to find out both successful and unsuccessful practices in different cultural and organisational contexts (Chen 2008).

In a landmark study, Hallinger (2010) surveyed 35 educational experts about the process of reform across Thailand, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Malaysia from 1995 to 2007. He concluded that while educational reform shares many similarities across West and East, power gaps and value mismatches were two challenges to reform that appeared to be unique to the Asian context. Hallinger and Kantamara (2000) argued that large power gaps can serve to accelerate change in some circumstances through enhanced compliance or take-up of initiatives; however, this may not be the case when the reforms are more complex and require a greater degree of autonomy.

One of the few longitudinal studies exploring the impact of educational change on instructional practices found some evidence to suggest that more collaborative models of leadership that focus on specific school-level practices can result in changes in the ways teachers teach (Hallinger and Heck 2010a, 2010b). Gamage and Sooksomchitra's (2004) study on SBM in Thailand highlights the commonality of problems faced by educational reformers, especially with regard to the low status of teaching and the need to improve salaries and associated conditions in education. Their work with respect to SBM highlights the importance of ongoing professional development for leaders, educators and administrators.

Lee, Walker, and Chui's (2012) study illuminated principal instructional leadership in Hong Kong where high accountability was embedded in an SBM reform milieu. Hong Kong schools have a performativity agenda and an accountability framework which promote the quality of student outcomes. Walker and Ko (2011) suggested that accountability requirements have encouraged schools to adopt instructional leadership practices. Lee, Walker, and Chui's (2012) research found that principal instructional leadership focusing on managing instruction boosts the positive effect of school attachment on student learning. However, in contrast to the positive effect of instructional management on student learning, principals' practices closely intertwined with direct supervision of instruction undermined student achievement through school attachment. The researchers highlighted that this result of the negative influence of principals' direct supervision of instruction supports

previous findings that teachers in East Asian societies value a reasonable level of autonomy, especially in terms of curriculum development.

Finally, in one of the few quantitative studies in this area, Walker and Kwan (2009) surveyed 803 Hong Kong vice principals about their leadership aspirations. They developed a regression model that found four factors (professional, school, demographic and motivational) interacted and explained vice principals' decisions to become principals. Of interest were factors that related to perceptions. Holding professional development levels constant, Walker and Kwan were able to show that those who valued personal growth were more likely to progress while those that valued harmonious relationships often did not advance. Perceptions matter and development strategies that work with aspirational leaders to show that personal growth and harmonious relations need not be contradictory values would seem to be of pressing need. A key conclusion of this work is that understanding the nuances of reform across East and West has much to teach us about the task of changing schools and improving practice.

School reform and student learning in Indonesia

The enactment of the *National Education System Law Number 20 Year 2003* in 2003 marked the beginning of school reform in Indonesia. This law considerably changed the basic perception of educational content, process and management in the country. One significant result of this reform was granting of autonomy to the local government to manage primary and secondary schools. Autonomy is a crucial factor in school improvement programmes because greater autonomy at the school level leads to greater efficiency in the use of school resources, more flexibility in designing and selecting professional development programmes, more informed stakeholders, better financial decision-making, and improved whole-school planning and implementation where priorities can be data-driven based on student outcomes and needs (OECD 1994, cited in Bush 2003).

The practice of SBM in Indonesian primary and secondary schools is the hallmark of the new education autonomy. SBM recognises individual schools as the most important unit of improvement (Abu-Duhou 2003; Azra 2002; Fattah 2012; Malen, Ogawa, and Kranz 1993; Murphy and Beck 1995; Nurkolis 2003; Sagala 2004). In SBM, formal decision-making authority is assigned to and distributed among school-level actors to promote site participation in school-wide decision-making (Bandur 2009; Malen, Ogawa, and Kranz 1993; Mulyasa 2011). Fadjar (2002) argued for granting greater autonomy to schools for operational decision-making regarding educational programmes, such as decisions on curriculum, instruction, and organisation of time, people, facilities and other resources for students. These decisions should be made ideally by school professionals closest to the students since they best appreciate the intricacies of the school.

The Indonesian Ministry of National Education defines SBM as a management model that grants autonomy to local schools and encourages school stakeholders' participation in decision-making to improve school quality in accordance with the national education policy (2004). There are four major objectives of the implementation of SBM in Indonesian schools:

- (1) SBM is expected to increase the quality of education through school independence and initiative in managing and empowering staff to use the available resources.
- (2) SBM is geared towards increasing school stakeholders' participation in education through shared decision-making.
- (3) SBM is the prescribed strategy to share school public accountability for quality outcomes by school leaders, parents, community and government.
- (4) SBM is seen as the way to increase healthy competition among schools to accomplish improved and better quality.

In summary, SBM implementation is set towards improving education quality at individual local schools through more intense involvement of stakeholders in school programmes and activities that can lead to more transparent, accountable, democratic, and responsive school management. SBM, then, is basically moving education accountability that used to be the privilege of central government to individual local schools.

Learning achievement of Indonesian students

Using PISA scores, it is thought-provoking to see how Indonesia has been progressing in achieving the new objectives of school reform. Table 1 shows that Indonesia's 2009 PISA scores in mathematics and science were lower by 20 and 10 points, respectively, compared with its scores in the 2006 PISA, while reading scores were up by 10%.

Clearly, Indonesian students have not yet shown satisfactory progress. This unfavourable statistical result begs the question of education accountability, which is one of the highlighted aspects of Indonesian school reform. The inconsistency between the expectation and reality of school reform in Indonesia has captured the attention of both Indonesian and international scholars to examine why school reform has not yet yielded the expected outcomes, especially in improving student learning (Bjork 2003, 2005; Drost 2005; Kunandar 2007; Nandika 2007; Raihani 2007; Taruna 2007).

The model shown in Figure 1 summarises the identified problematic factors that are having a negative impact upon student attainment and learning outcomes in Indonesia, and each problem area is explained in more detail later.

Current research on school leadership has shown growing emphasis on the contribution of instructional leadership to reforming and improving school performance (Alig-Mielcarek and Hoy 2005; Bush 2003; Datnow 2005; Gurr, Drysdale, and Mulford 2007; Hargreaves and Fink 2006; Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe 2008; Silins and Mulford 2004; Southworth 2005; Supovitz, Sirinides, and May 2010). While teachers are held accountable for the improvement of student learning in schools, changing the organisational condition for improvement across schools remains the central task of principals. Instructional leadership shifts the debates between instructional, managerial and transformational practice to a new conception of creating accountable learning systems in schools (Halverson et al. 2005).

Comprehensive and systematic reviews of research evidence have given us considerable confidence that leadership is a critical determinant for important

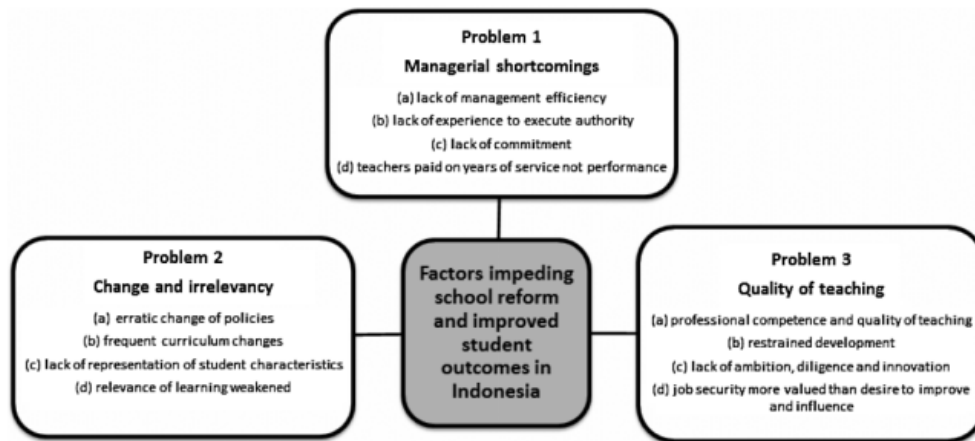


Figure 1. Problem areas impeding school reform and improved student attainment in Indonesian schools.

student ¹ outcomes (Day et al. 2008; Leithwood and Day 2008; Nettles and Herrington 2007; Penlington, Kington, and Day 2008; Robinson 2010; Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe 2008). It is therefore possible to alter the future direction of Indonesian SBM by addressing the problematic areas identified in Figure 1. Given the identified problems that impede student attainment and learning outcomes in Indonesia, it is useful to look to the literature to identify possible solutions and areas where sustainable improvements can be made in each problem area. Therefore, possible solutions from the literature are identified and discussed following the explanation of each problem area.

Problem area one: managerial shortcomings

In questioning the power and efficacy of reform, a key area identified was the ⁷ lack of ¹ management efficiency at both local government and local school levels. Local authorities, including school principals, have limited expertise and experiences in handling the consequences of education autonomy that calls for public participation ¹ and shared decision-making (Bjork 2005; Nandika 2007). This lack of experience has made local schools unprepared to execute their ⁷ authority, thus maintaining the status quo and resulting in inefficient management. Moreover, the central authority has lacked the commitment to empower local schools or to provide them with sufficient means and assistance (Bjork 2003, 2005). This condition has prevented many school principals from taking any initiative to make necessary changes as they continue to rely on directives from their superiors in their school districts (Irawan, Eriyanto, and Sunaryanto 2004).

Beyond having little experience in executing authority, a further ¹ shortcoming of management has been the poor direction provided to the teaching staff. Bjork summarised the discouraging condition and quality of Indonesian teachers with findings that showed how Indonesian teachers tended to value the security of their jobs more than opportunities to influence school policy or to make improvements in their students' academic performance (2003). Bjork's subsequent research on Indonesian teachers shows that in the Indonesian education system, teachers are

better appreciated for their ability to follow directives from their superiors than for their intellectual capacity for independent thought (2005). This situation suggests that Indonesian teachers prefer a conditional style to an independent or creative style of thinking when in the workplace (see for example Sofó 2008).

Possible solutions to managerial shortcomings

Hierarchical leadership models are less effective in producing quality school outcomes than more collaborative and distributed approaches (Harris 2008). Well-recognised problems in this area included a lack of efficiency in management processes, a lack of experience in executing authority and a lack of commitment, including teachers being paid based on their years of service rather than the quality of their performance. Frederick, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) assert that better student engagement could result in increased commitment levels that could reduce student apathy and enhance learning, and this in turn may have an impact positively upon a teacher's levels of commitment. Penlington, Kington, and Day's (2008) study found that teachers' capacities could be further developed if principals were to adopt more strategic approaches to professional development. Further, it was found that successful teacher professional development had to be aligned with specific school-wide priorities for teaching and learning development and subsequently directed towards developing teaching capacities across the team rather than just for individual teachers. The authors also found that building the capacities of teachers to learn, to lead and to teach well was an important leadership strategy. Further, Penlington, Kington, and Day (2008) found that the success of a school vision depends on its responsiveness to internal and external environments, including the local community and the broader policy context, and such a vision may assist teachers to experience greater commitment to their jobs and the quality of their work. The implementation of these strategies, and the allied development of both individual and organisational capacities, may go some way towards overcoming the identified managerial shortcomings in this problem area.

Further evidence of the power of effective leadership can be found in the work of Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008), who concluded that school leaders influence teachers' motivation, commitment and overall belief about their working conditions, which in turn can result in improvements in teaching and learning. The researchers presented evidence supporting the conclusion that leaders can influence teachers' motivation, including their levels of commitment, sense of efficacy, morale, job satisfaction and stress. Furthermore, the study found that teacher capacities, motivation and commitment all had subsequent effects on student learning and achievement, and that to lead successfully, school leaders need to develop an emotional understanding of teachers and actively work to develop these capacities.

Problem area two: change and irrelevancy

A second problematic area was the erratic change of education policies, especially those related to the national curriculum. The frequent curriculum changes due to poor instructional leadership have been seen as one of the major impediments to improving education quality. The curriculum has been criticised for not representing students' characteristics, voices and interests (Kunandar 2007; Taruna 2007) and for

its preference to accommodate the needs and interests of the high-achieving students (Drost 2005; Kunandar 2007; Taruna 2007). Only 30% of Indonesian students achieve the desired benefits from the curriculum (Drost 2005). The arguments also address the inability of the curriculum to generate learning excitement and provide students with freedom to learn (Taruna 2007). In addition, the demanding curriculum has led to practices of content-transfer learning that not only sacrifice the importance of meeting the needs and interests of the students, but also weaken the relevance of learning itself (Kunandar 2007; Taruna 2007).

Possible solutions to change and irrelevancy

Identified problems in this area included erratic and frequent changes of policies and curriculum, lack of student representation, and the weakened relevance of learning. With regard to lack of student representation, Newman (1981, in Frederick, Blumenfeld, and Paris 2004) found that schools that encouraged student participation in school policy and management and provided opportunities for teachers to be involved in school programmes and academic work leading to professional development could increase involvement, engagement and integration in the school. The role of the school leader is equally important in negotiating and managing changes to policies and curriculum. Penlington, Kington, and Day (2008) noted that the role of a principal is crucial in fostering a culture of change and leading the school to respond constructively to constant changes in local and national policy initiatives. Such action can create a climate that encourages school members to participate in change. Penlington, Kington, and Day (2008) also highlighted the ability of school principals to look far beyond the current context to prepare schools to react to future challenges and opportunities; thus, the ability of school principals to create strategic visions and plan effectively can demonstrate that the school is constantly moving forward and improving.

Problem area three: quality of teaching

The third problematic area was the professional competence and quality of Indonesia's teachers. The underlying principle of SBM is to develop schools' independence in constructing and designing curriculum and instruction that best suit students' needs and local characteristics. As teachers play the leading role in this area, their abilities to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to undertake initiatives aimed at improving students' academic performance are the key factors. The ingrained culture of civil service that strongly emphasises the values of loyalty, obedience, responsibility and cooperation has restrained the development of instructional leadership as Indonesian teachers were not encouraged to exercise their individual freedom to be active, creative and innovative teachers (Raihani 2007; Tilaar 2009). Indonesian teachers are shaped by this institutional culture that does not cultivate ambition or diligence (Bjork 2005; Chan and Sam 2007; Kintamani 2002). Therefore, the marked shift required of teachers from being loyal agents of policy directives to becoming self-directing and self-innovating individuals does not appear to be a promising possibility. Indonesian teachers tend to be reluctant to perform tasks outside their formal job descriptions (Bjork 2005). The government has shown little interest in teachers' performance in the classroom, so the responsibility to

improve the quality of teaching has been neglected by both government and teachers themselves (Azra 2002; Bjork 2005; Tilaar 2009). This condition is reflected in the salary and benefit system where teachers are assessed based not on their job performance, but rather on their years of public service (Bjork 2005).

Possible solutions to the quality of teaching

Identified problems in this area included restrained development, lack of ambition, low innovation and an emphasis on job security. Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) found that certain leadership practices had a positive effect on student outcomes and on the teachers themselves. Those practices involve leading by promoting and participating in teacher learning and development; by establishing goals and expectations; by planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and curriculum; by resourcing strategically; and by providing an orderly and supportive environment. Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) concluded that leaders who focused on the quality of teaching and learning had a greater influence on student outcomes than those who did not.

Other issues inherent to the problem of poor teaching quality can be addressed through the finding of Penlington, Kington, and Day (2008) that teachers' capacities can be developed through strategic approaches to professional development. By doing so, the lack of ambition, innovation and overall restrained development of teachers in Indonesian schools can be addressed more strategically and in a manner that is more targeted to their unique needs. To foster innovation, Penlington, Kington, and Day (2008) suggest that principals play an important role in establishing and communicating a clear strategic vision for the school and set an ethos or culture that encourages teachers to innovate to ensure continued improvement of student outcomes.

In considering the meta-analysis of the literature and extrapolating its findings to the current problems that the Indonesian school system faces, it is useful to highlight the powerful impact that instructional leadership may have on the teacher, on his or her students and on the school itself: 'The more leaders focus their relationships, their work and their learning on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their influence on student outcomes' (Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe 2008, 636).

Discussion and implications

The study has shown that Indonesia has experienced problems in its efforts to implement school reform and move to a model of SBM. Despite the identified problems, the literature provides a number of sustainable solutions which could help cement the vital connections between school leaders within a distributed leadership model whilst also fulfilling the primary purpose of schooling, which is to optimise student attainment. While many factors affect the quality of student attainment, this article attempts to highlight the responsibility that instructional leadership has for student learning and to emphasise the need to transcend the boundaries among leaders, managers and teachers so that the school as a whole optimises student achievement.

The paper has argued that teaching and leadership are inseparable and that instructional leadership is an important conceptual imperative that demonstrates vital connections among school leaders. Those connections exist within a distributed

leadership model aligned with the primary purpose of schooling, which is to optimise student attainment. While many factors influence the quality of student attainment, we have attempted to demonstrate, through support from the literature, that instructional leadership has a responsibility for student learning and that quality school leadership has a strong and favourable influence on student attainment, second only to quality teaching. There is a need to transcend the boundaries among leaders, managers and teachers so that the school as a whole optimises student achievement.

The paper has explored a practical problem-centred framework which can be used to discover how instructional leadership constructs and promotes accountability within schools. The focus is on a flow of ideas about the accountability of educational leaders and on *proving, moving, questioning and securing* leadership practices that optimise student attainment. Proving the accountability of instructional leadership means consolidating the links between diffuse school leadership and student attainment; it involves acknowledging the available evidence on the importance of instructional leadership. Moving the accountability to the school level means encouraging school reform to achieve diffuse (instructional) leadership which stimulates student attainment. Moving the accountability also refers to laws and policies that are formulated for the same purpose. Questioning the accountability raises issues about the power and efficacy of diffuse leadership practices and educational reform designed to spread the accountability among school stakeholders. There are questions about the effective implementation of new laws and policies, and about school principals persisting with existing behavioural habits such as relying on directives from superiors. There are also questions about ingrained school cultures based on loyalty and obedience that prevent teachers from exercising the new freedom provided by the law and policies and the new instructional leadership, and questions about the proliferation of an inappropriate and ineffective curriculum and stagnant or regressive student achievement. Securing accountability requires that instructional leaders have a practical capacity to implement effective and accountable learning systems and policies in schools. Securing various forms of instructional leadership also requires the capacity to shift the cultures in schools where diffuse models of leadership can maximally impact student attainment.

The enactment of a law in 2003 granting local governments greater autonomy to manage schools led to a new independence in Indonesian schools with enhanced opportunities for diffuse control, including instructional leadership. This paper has shown that there are some discrepancies in the processes of Indonesia's school reform. The objectives of the national education reform do not seem to have been reflected in the actual implementation. The lack of empowerment of local and school-level authorities seems to contradict the basic idea of education decentralisation, and the privilege of autonomy does not reflect the actual capacity of human resources in schools to embrace and put into practice this new role. While the decentralisation of education in Indonesia grants school-level autonomy for learning innovation, teachers are restricted from exercising their professionalism and innovative potentials, and there is evidence of restrained personal and professional development. Increasing education quality is hampered by impromptu curriculum policies, and while students are offered some new opportunities for learning in the new scheme of school reform, the curriculum mainly favours those who are academically superior.

² The paradoxical conditions of school reform in Indonesia as described above provoke the need to investigate the real conditions being faced at local school levels. There is a need to examine how local actors perceive the implementation of reform in their schools and what they do, particularly in proving their accountability for ensuring learning success for their students. Some opportunities for future research are therefore evident, and such an examination will also reveal how schools position the roles and practices of instructional leadership in securing accountability.

Instructional leadership focuses on students and their learning as a core purpose (Southworth 2005); thus this type of leadership is able to develop strategies to promote and sustain improved academic progress of the school as a whole and of students in particular. Strategic leadership can move a school forward from its current state when it provides enhanced educational opportunities for the students in that school (Davies 2005), while instructional leadership enables school principals working in schools traditionally characterised by a loose coupling of administration and instructional quality to meet policy expectations for tightened coupling of instructional goals and leadership practices (Halverson et al. 2005). Either of these scenarios would be desirable outcomes as Indonesia overcomes the problems associated with school reform to move forward in a successful and sustainable manner.

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