Key Qualities of the Principalship in HK

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A. Foreword

Leadership plays a key role in a policy environment of school-based management aimed at school improvement and better student learning outcomes. It is through leadership that direction, focus and motivation is provided for school-based management to lead to school improvement and improved learning outcomes for all students. This presents a formidable challenge for school leaders at all stages of their career - whether they be aspiring, newly-appointed or experienced principals.

In meeting these challenges, schools deserve the best quality leadership available. Leaders, in turn, need and should expect the highest quality preparation and support in order to rise to these challenges and expectations. Professional development and the nurturing of leadership talent thus assume high importance. Provision of relevant professional development and support to aspiring, newly-appointed and experienced principals is crucial in achieving a quality education system. Relevance of professional development is ensured by taking account of the policy aims and contexts, as well as the school characteristics within which principals work. Relevance is also achieved through knowledge of the background experiences, interests, and abilities of leaders at all stages of their development. This is the function of principal needs assessment - to consider the strengths and areas of development needed by leaders in the current and future policy and school environments. This knowledge enables individual leaders themselves to gain insight into their abilities and to take responsibility for their own development, and providers to aid them in this process by providing targeted professional development.

The identification of Key Qualities as a foundation of leadership in Hong Kong schools is an essential stage in the needs assessment process. Key Qualities are a composite of meaningful and professionally relevant values, knowledge, skills and attributes possessed by effective principals in Hong Kong. They provide a baseline reference against which the present knowledge, skills, abilities and attributes of school leaders can be gauged, and future needed development charted. The Key Qualities presented in this booklet do not purport to be comprehensive. They do, however, present a sound base on which to build a needs assessment and professional development system and promote the principalship to its justified level of pre-eminence in achieving quality schools in Hong Kong.

The aims of the Key Qualities are to:

- Establish a definition and clarification of the role of principal;
- Present a set of expectations regarding the performance of principals;
- Focus leadership and management on the key goals of school improvement and student learning;
- Provide a framework and specification for the needs assessment of leaders at all three stages of their careers - aspiring, newly appointed and experienced.
B. Introduction

The role and associated tasks of principals in school-based management and school improvement can be clustered into six core areas. These six areas are:

1. Strategic Direction and Policy Environment
2. Teaching, Learning and Curriculum
3. Leader and Teacher Growth and Development
4. Staff and Resource Management
5. Quality Assurance and Accountability
6. External Communication and Connection

Meeting the leadership expectations implicit in the six core areas involves the commitment to relevant values and the practice and application of knowledge, skills and attributes. The values, knowledge, skills and attributes form the basis of the Key Qualities. In exercising effective leadership principals apply the Key Qualities to the six core areas. The Key Qualities comprise four interrelated elements:

- Educational Values
- Professional Knowledge
- Leadership Skills
- Personal Attributes

Clarification of Terms

Student Achievement and Student Learning Outcomes are taken to mean both academic and non-academic outcomes.

Informed Practice means teaching, learning and leadership referenced to research and other evidence as to what is effective in the classroom and the broader school environment.

School Improvement implies that each school has developed a set of policies, priorities, programmes and practices targeting improvement in student learning outcomes.

School Community includes teachers, students, parents, sponsoring body and other groups with interests in the school.
C. Core Areas of School Leadership

The Six Core Areas of Leadership are definitions of the substantive areas or parameters of school leadership. Principals’ leadership for school and student improvement centres on:

1. Strategic Direction and Policy Environment
   Principals, in concert with their school communities, develop a strategic view of vision for their schools as a means of guiding future direction and planning. Their strategic visions and plans incorporate those features of the social, political and educational environments relevant to school improvement and student achievement.

2. Teaching, Learning and Curriculum
   Principals co-ordinate to achieve coherence across the curriculum and to ensure alignment between the curriculum, teaching and learning. Together with their school communities, they ensure that all students experience a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum through formal, informal and extra-curricular activities.

3. Leader and Teacher Growth and Development
   Principals promote and enable continuing professional and career development for teachers and themselves. They foster the sharing of up-to-date professional knowledge and informed practice aimed at accommodating the diverse needs of students within a general commitment to school improvement and student achievement.

4. Staff and Resource Management
   Principals create a collaborative team management ethos focused on using human, physical and fiscal resources effectively and efficiently towards the goals of school improvement and student achievement.

5. Quality Assurance and Accountability
   Principals build quality assurance and accountability systems in concert with their school communities that provide feedback to students, teachers, School Management Committees (SMC) and sponsoring bodies with a view to securing school improvement. These systems also meet the information requirements of external agencies, such as the government, regarding school performance.

6. External Communication and Connection
   Principals build connections between their schools and the local, national and global communities. By doing so, they enable their school communities to contribute to the wider society and its development.
## D. Educational Values

Principals develop a coherent set of educational values on which to base leadership for school improvement. These values serve as fundamental principles on which to develop and design their schools and to provide consistency across all aspects of their leadership. Eight pivotal values are identified, as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>1. Learning-centredness</td>
<td>A belief in the primacy of learning as the focus of all that happens in the school.</td>
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<td>2. Innovativeness</td>
<td>A belief in experimentation with new ideas and with change as a means of school improvement.</td>
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<td>3. Lifelong Learning</td>
<td>A belief that a major goal of the school is to develop among its community members a view of learning as a continuous and ongoing process.</td>
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<td>4. Education-for-all</td>
<td>A conviction that all students have a right to a relevant and meaningful education.</td>
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<td>5. Service-orientation</td>
<td>A belief that the school be flexible and responsive in meeting the diverse needs of its community.</td>
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<td>6. Empowerment</td>
<td>A commitment to the meaningful involvement and participation of school community members in the life of the school.</td>
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<td>7. Equity and Fairness</td>
<td>A belief that the rights of all in the school community are duly recognised and that individuals be treated with justice and integrity.</td>
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<td>8. Whole-person Development</td>
<td>A commitment to producing students with a well-rounded, balanced education.</td>
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E. Professional Knowledge

Principals’ leadership for school improvement and student achievement centres on a clearly conceptualised and shared body of knowledge which together with the educational values, guides and informs professional practice. This body of knowledge relates to each of the core areas.

1. Strategic Direction and Policy Environment*

   Knowledge of:
   - Current and emerging education and education-related policies as guides to planning and future intent.
   - New theories, ideas and trends in education with potential for informing strategic thinking and planning.
   - The legal context and its implications for the rights, responsibilities and duties of school members, and for the formulation and implementation of school policy and planning.

2. Teaching, Learning and Curriculum*

   Knowledge of:
   - Curriculum design and evaluation in fashioning an innovative, relevant and balanced curriculum.
   - Pedagogy and informed teaching and learning approaches geared to appropriate learning outcomes for all students.
   - Social and child psychology necessary for understanding the needs and behaviours of individuals and groups of students.
   - Psychology of learning as it underpins the teaching and learning processes.
   - Coaching and counselling for providing a supportive and safe environment in which teaching and learning are practised and experienced in a caring and enjoyable fashion.
   - Management, organisation and leadership as they support informed teaching and learning practices.
   - Student assessment as it relates to informed curriculum practice.
   - Computer technology embedded in teaching, learning and curriculum.

* The knowledge listed under each key area is not exclusive to that area.
3. Leader and Teacher

Growth and Development*

(i) Knowledge of:

- Models of, and approaches to, professional development and training leading to improved understanding of school and classroom practice.

- Coaching and counselling techniques useful for supporting staff in embracing student-centred and lifelong learning.

- Personal health and stress management as means of sustaining high levels of professional performance.

- Technology as a tool for supporting professional development.

(ii) Knowledge of the theory and implementation of cutting-edge professional development pertaining to: Curriculum design and evaluation consistent with current theories and principles.

- Pedagogy and informed teaching-learning approaches.

- Social and child psychology.

- Psychology of child and adult learning.

- Management, organisation and leadership.

- Student assessment.

* The knowledge listed under each key area is not exclusive to that area.
### 4. Staff and Resource Management*

Knowledge of:

- Budgeting and financial management as ways of resourcing the school’s academic and non-academic programme.

- Allocating and deploying human, financial and physical resources to support the priorities of the school with respect to teaching, learning and curriculum.

- Management and organisation for the efficient and effective day-to-day operation of the school.

- Management and organisation of school resources consistent with principles underpinning school policy and informed teaching, learning and curriculum practices.

- Computer technology for financial and organisational management.

### 5. Quality Assurance and Accountability*

Knowledge of:

- The policy context with respect to quality assurance and accountability and their relationship with school performance.

- Evaluation processes pertaining to students, teachers, departments and the whole school and the benefits that follow for improved performance.

- Data collection and analysis techniques relating to individual, department and school performance.

- Computer technology as it relates to data collection and analysis.

* The knowledge listed under each key area is not exclusive to that area.
6. External Communication and Connection *

Knowledge of:

☐ Social, economic and political conditions as they relate to the local, national and global contexts.

☐ The purpose of parental and community involvement and participation in school life.

☐ Computer technology as it relates to furthering connections with local, national and global communities and involving parents in school life.

* The knowledge listed under each key area is not exclusive to that area.
Leadership skills are grounded in principals’ educational values and professional knowledge. The skills involved in principals’ leadership for school and student improvement are expressed using two dimensions: the first dimension consists of the six core areas; the second comprises skills grouped into four major categories, as outlined below.

1. Personal
   - This set of skills relates to how individual principals manage their own behaviours and thoughts in their professional lives.

2. Communicative
   - This set of skills relates to how principals interact at an interpersonal level with colleagues and other members of the community.

3. Organizational
   - This set of skills relates to how principals lead and manage the tasks associated with running the whole school and securing school improvement.

4. Influencing
   - This set of skills relates to how principals mobilise colleagues and other members of the school community toward sustained commitment to school improvement.

The following process was used to identify leadership skills considered important:

1. The six core areas for school leadership were used as the framework.
2. The four skill categories outlined above were identified.
3. A list of skills was then developed for each of the four categories.
4. These skills were then selectively applied to each of the six core areas.
5. The skills were finally arranged under each of the six core leadership areas as follows.
1. Strategic Direction and Policy Environment

Principals plan for the future and ensure school community involvement in the process. They strategically integrate relevant aspects of policy from the social, educational and political environments into their planning for school and student improvement.

Principals:

- Establish personal professional priorities and goals in alignment with the general school strategic direction and the policy environment.
- Think critically and creatively in building a personalised vision of their school’s future and their own contribution to that future within the context of school improvement.
- Listen actively when interacting with colleagues to plan the school’s future.
- Identify, summarise and present key ideas, facts and arguments relevant to planning for school improvement.
- Speak and write effectively when communicating with colleagues and other members of the school community.
- Determine priorities, set goals and collaborate when establishing the strategic direction of the school.
- Design their schools and plan accordingly in a way that connects the constituent parts to achieve coherence in strategic direction.
- Practice shared decision making with colleagues when setting strategic direction and when planning.
- Secure the involvement of colleagues in developing a school-wide vision for school.
- Motivate school community members to commit to the school’s strategic direction.
- Negotiate to achieve agreement with school community members to commit to a school-wide vision geared to school improvement.
2. Teaching, Learning and Curriculum

Principals co-ordinate school programmes to achieve coherence across the curriculum and achieve articulation between the curriculum, teaching and learning. Together with their school communities, they ensure that all students experience a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum through formal, informal and extracurricular activities.

Principals:

- Establish personal and professional priorities and goals while learning in ways conducive to improving student outcomes.
- Provide constructive feedback to teachers and students based on informed practice for teaching, learning and curriculum programmes.
- Build teams of teachers to plan, organise, implement and evaluate the curriculum.
- Supervise and monitor teaching and learning in line with informed practice at the whole-school and classroom levels.
- Determine priorities, set goals and collaborate when planning and implementing the curriculum.
- Model behaviours conducive to innovative teaching and learning.
- Motivate teachers and students to apply informed teaching and learning practices in order to achieve improved student outcomes.
- Reinforce the primacy of informed teaching and learning practices in achieving improved student outcomes through symbolism, reward and resource allocation.
- Model and promote the uses and potentialities of computer technology in curriculum and informed teaching and learning practices.
3. Leader and Teacher Growth and Development

Principals promote and enable continuing professional and career development for teachers and themselves. They foster the sharing of up-to-date professional knowledge and informed practice aimed at accommodating the diverse needs of students within a general commitment to student and school improvement.

Principals:

- Reflect on their personal and professional strengths and needs in order to prioritise their professional goals.
- Are self-motivated towards continuous professional growth and development.
- Provide constructive feedback to teachers in support of their professional growth and development in line with the school’s policies and priorities for improvement.
- Actively seek and listen to teacher feelings and opinions regarding their professional needs.
- Organise, plan and design a professional development programme consistent with the aims of school improvement in collaboration with teachers.
- Appraise individual teachers and relate their needs to the professional development programme and student learning outcomes.
- Evaluate the professional development programme for consistency with school improvement aims.
- Motivate teachers to adopt continuous learning for improved professional practice.
- Model and reinforce among teachers a desire for ongoing and lifelong learning leading to improved practice.
- Provide counselling and coaching in support of teacher professional growth and development.
- Provide training for staff in using technology as a means of improving their teaching and enhancing their professional growth.
4. Staff and Resource Management

Principals create a collaborative team management ethos focused on using human, physical and fiscal resources efficiently and effectively towards the goals of school improvement and student achievement.

Principals:

- Set personal priorities and goals geared to effective and efficient staff and resource management.
- Build teams of teachers as a means of utilising staff and other resources effectively and efficiently.
- Interpret and understand the school budget and financial situation in order to plan the allocation and deployment of human and other resources in line with school improvement aims.
- Interpret and understand the school budget and financial situation in order to plan the allocation and deployment of human and other resources in line with meeting individual student needs.
- Delegate responsibility to colleagues, and empower them to manage and organise the school on a day-to-day basis.
- Model and reinforce equitable, efficient and effective staff and resource management as an integral part of school improvement.
- Motivate teachers to use resources so that all students have an opportunity to experience a relevant and meaningful education.
- Utilise computer technology to aid resource and financial management.
5. Quality Assurance and Accountability

Principals build quality assurance and accountability systems in concert with their school communities that provide feedback to students, teachers and others with a view to securing school improvement. These systems also meet the information requirements of external agencies regarding school performance.

Principals:

- Collect and analyse data as a means of evaluating their own performance and meeting accountability requirements.
- Provide constructive feedback to colleagues on their individual performance and their students’ performance, thereby rendering them accountable.
- Plan and organise the collection and analysis of data across all levels and areas of the school as a means of evaluating student and school performance and meeting accountability requirements.
- Use evaluation data as a basis for giving feedback to teachers and students and for planning improved student outcomes.
- Render accountability to external agencies by providing information on their school's performance.
- Promote the image and reputation of their school by referring to performance data collected during the evaluation and accountability process.
- Model and reinforce the collection and analysis of data as a means of evaluating and improving performance of student outcomes.
- Utilise computer technology to aid the collection and analysis of performance data.
6. External Communication and Connection

Principals build connections between the school and the local, national and global communities. By so doing, they enable their school communities to contribute to the wider society and its development.

Principals:

- Set personal priorities by communicating with and connecting to their local, national and global educational contexts.
- Analyse educational trends and policies and identify key issues for dissemination to the school community.
- Present and disseminate personal and professional views and analysis on behalf of themselves and their schools in the wider society.
- Actively listen, speak and write convincingly and effectively when communicating with the school community and wider society.
- Promote the image and reputation of their school to the school community and the wider society.
- Encourage colleagues to work with parents and other community members in and outside of the school for the benefit of the school and the students.
- Encourage parents and other community members to contribute to the school for the benefit of the students.
G. Personal Attributes

The foregoing sections have identified educational values, professional knowledge and skills necessary for principals’ leadership in securing school improvement. These alone, however, are not sufficient. Principals also display a range of attributes which in conjunction with their knowledge and skills are vital in the exercise of their leadership. Given the transitional nature of the Hong Kong educational context as it adopts school-based management and pursues school improvement, a premium is placed on these attributes.

Among the more fundamental attributes to principals’ leadership in the Hong Kong context of school-based management and school improvement, are those identified below.

- **Adaptability** and **Responsiveness** in school decision-making and in managing people while retaining **Commitment** to core values, such as student needs and learning outcomes.
- **Courage** of conviction with regard to their values, principles and actions and **Resilience** in times of adversity and opposition.
- **Self-confidence** in their abilities and actions, while maintaining **Modesty** in their interactions and dealings with others in and outside of their school communities.
- **Tough-mindedness** in regard to the best interests of staff and students while showing **Benevolence** and **Respect** in all their interactions.
- **Collaboration** as team members coupled with individual **Resourcefulness** and **Decisiveness**.
- **Integrity** in their dealings with others combined with **Political Astuteness**.
### Core Areas for School Leadership

#### Strategic Direction & Policy Environment
- Education Policies
- Education Trends
- Legal Context

#### Teaching, Learning & Curriculum
- Curriculum Design & Evaluation
- Teaching & Learning
- Social & Child Psychology
- Coaching & Counselling
- Management & Leadership
- Computer Technology

#### Leader & Teacher Growth & Development
- Learning-centredness
- Innovativeness
- Lifelong Learning
- Education-for-all
- Professional Development
- Coaching & Counselling
- Health & Stress Management
- Technology

### Educational Values
- Critical thinking
- Prioritising & goal setting
- Visioning
- Writing & speaking
- Active listening
- Key-point presenting
- Prioritising & goal setting
- Planning / connectivity
- Shared decision making
- Prioritising & goal setting
- Planning
- Supervising & monitoring
- Appraising
- Goal setting & prioritising
- Planning
- Organising
- Appraising
- Evaluating
- Culture building
- Vision building
- Negotiating
- Motivating
- Culture building
- Motivating
- Coaching & counselling
- Modelling
- Courage
- Resilience
- Self-confidence
- Modesty
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- **Curriculum Design & Evaluation**
- **Teaching & Learning**
- **Social & Child Psychology**
- **Management & Leadership**
- **Student Assessment**
- **Financial Management**
- **Allocating & Deploying Resources**
- **Management & Organisation**
- **Management of Resources**
- **Computer Technology**
- **Policy Context**
- **Evaluation Processes**
- **Data Collection & Analysis**
- **Computer Technology**
- **External Conditions**
- **Parental & Community Involvement**
- **Computer Technology**

- **Prioritising & goal setting**
- **Writing & speaking**
- **Planning & deploying**
- **Delegating**
- **Interpreting**
- **Team building**
- **Decision making**
- **Prioritising & self-evaluation**
- **Writing & giving feedback**
- **Planning & organising**
- **Data collection & analysis**
- **Evaluating**
- **Appraising**
- **Marketing**
- **Prioritising connecting**
- **Writing & speaking**
- **Active listening**
- **Key-point presenting**
- **Organising**
- **Marketing**
- **Prioritising & connecting**
- **Writing & speaking**
- **Active listening**
- **Key-point presenting**
- **Organising**
- **Marketing**

- **Tough-mindedness**
- **Benevolence/Respect**
- **Collaboration**
- **Resourceful/Decisiveness**
- **Integrity**
- **Political Astuteness**