

An Integrated Professional Development Model for School Leaders

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School leaders, like teachers, need to engage themselves in life-long learning to improve their work. Around the world, huge amount of human, material and financial resources are spent on continuous professional development (CPD) activities for school leaders. However, the impact of CPD on school improvement is generally not evident. This may be due to that participants have no change in their attitudes and belief in the training and do not practice what they have learnt in schools. This paper introduces a new school leadership training model that addresses such problems and is able to bring about really changes in schools.

Most CPD training focuses on knowledge and skills. The mere acquisition of knowledge and skills would normally bring neither changes in attitudes and belief, nor the implementation of actions. This model aims to facilitate attitudinal and value changes through deep reflections. Participants are given an opportunity to visit foreign schools in which practices differ greatly from their own. The great contrast stimulates deep reflection on their practices, particularly the underlying rationale, that they have taken for granted. This would lead to some paradigm shift among participants. After the training, they are required to apply what they have learnt by carrying out a school improvement project. Trainers will visit their schools later to give professional support and evaluate the project. Moreover, participants are not just school leaders; educational officers responsible for supervising schools also take part in the programme as participants. Understanding what were learned in the programme as well as the underlying rationale, the officers will be more positive and supportive to the school leaders under their supervision when the latter carry out the school improvement plan.

The captioned model designed by the Centre for Educational Leadership, The University of Hong Kong, has been practised in Gansu province, China since 2014. 12 rounds of training have been conducted for a total of around 400 principals of pre-primary, primary and secondary schools and educational officers, who have attended the two-week training in Hong Kong. Based on the feedback of participants, the changes observed in participants' schools, and programme reviews conducted by independent scholars, the effectiveness of the model and the impact of the programmes are evident. In the paper, the design, content and rationale of the model will be elaborated in detail, and evidences supporting its effectiveness will be presented.