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Assuring the Quality of Education through School-University Partnership

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Globalization and Educational Change

- **Globalization and changes in information technology have great impacts on the education systems and educational administration.**
- **Public schools should keep pace with societal changes and expectations, in order to survive in such a changing environment.**
- **We are confronted with demands from the society to reform the organizational structure and educational processes.**
- **Leading and managing change is one of the most important and difficult responsibilities of a leader.**

External Force of Change vs Internal Force of Change

- Organizational change theories: **Theory E** and **Theory O**.
- That is, **external force** of change vs **internal force** of change
- **A hybrid** of these theories is likely to produce better results in organizations.

Theory E Changes

- maximizing stakeholder **values**;
- managed from the **top down**;
- emphasizes **structures and systems**;
- motivates through **financial incentives**;
- and
- involves the processes of **planning** and **establishing programs**.

Theory O Changes

- aim to develop **organizational capabilities**
- encourage participation from the **bottom up**
- focus on the building up of **a corporate culture**
- motivate through **commitment**, and
- make use of the processes of **experimentation** and **involvement**.

International Trend of the Quality Assurance Movement in Education

1980s: Scotland, England, and some other European countries, for example, Netherlands and Norway;

Early 1990s: NSW and Victoria in Australia and New Zealand and also Singapore;

Late 1990s: British Columbia and Ontario and a few countries in Asia, e.g., Mainland China and Hong Kong SAR

The Quality Assurance Mechanism in Hong Kong

The **Education Commission Report No. 7** in 1997 recommended a similar approach to QA in Hong Kong:

- The **Quality Assurance Inspectorate (QAI)** was established in 1997 for accountability purposes.
- The internal quality assurance framework will rely on schools' own **capability of self-evaluation** in the process of school improvement.

A Two-pronged Approach to Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance Unit
(External Mechanism)

VS

School Self-Evaluation
(Internal Mechanism)

The Pros and Cons of the Two Mechanisms of Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance	External Mechanism	Internal Mechanism
1. Approach	An innovative approach	A Kaizen approach
2. Changing agent	Quality Assurance Unit	School Self-Evaluati
3. Changes	A “crash-through” approach with radical surgery.	An evolutionary development.
4. Drives	Top-down and from external	Bottom-up and from within
5. Pace of Change	Fast, on schedule and intermittent	Slow, continuously, and long lasting

Effectiveness of the Two-pronged Approach to QA

The approach is NOT so effective as expected!

1. External mechanism is limiting in effects.
 - A whole-school inspection (WSI) or external school review (ESR) lasts only for one to two weeks each time in a school
 - The QAD will re-visit the same school at least five to seven years later, given the present manpower.

2. Internal Mechanism has to be developed
 - Most schools do not know how and have poor capacity to carry out self-evaluation.
 - Not enough resources and support to help implement self-evaluation.

The SSE projects initiated by the School Development & Evaluation Team (SDET)

Period	Project Duration	Project Title	No. of Schools		
			Primary	Secondary	Total
2000-2002	2-year	School Self-evaluation and School-based Performance Indicators (Quality Education Fund)	10	10	20
2001-2002	1-year	School Self-evaluation and Renewal	2	2	4
2002-2003	1-year	SSE Training Programs for Heads and Teachers of the Catholic Church	22 kindergartens		22
2002-2004	2-year	Self-Evaluation and School Development	10	10	20
2003-2004	1-year	Initiating Organizational Change via School Self-evaluation	23	27	50
2004-2005	1-year	School Self-evaluation: Reinforcing Organizational Change	10	14	24
2004-2005	1-year	Self-Evaluation, External Review and School Development	25	36	61
2004-2006	2-year	Transforming Schools into Learning Organizations (Quality Education Fund)	10	10	20
2005-2006	1-year	School Self-evaluation, External Review and Sustainability	20	36	56
2005-2006	1-year	Self-evaluation, External Review and Extended School Development (Teaching and Learning)	2	12	14
2005-2006	1-year	School-based Self-evaluation and Development	2	3	5
2006-2007	1-year	School Self-evaluation: Surviving Educational Reform	4	5	9
2006-2007	1-year	Self-evaluation of Teaching and Learning	2	6	8
2006-2008	2-year	Metacognition in Learning and Teaching: Supporting Students' Learning Needs (Quality Education Fund)	9	9	18
2007-2009	2-year	School Self-evaluation: Optimization of School Management	50 kindergartens		50
	Total		72 Kindergartens/129 primary schools/180 secondary schools		

What is School Self-Evaluation?

School self-evaluation (SSE) is a mechanism through which schools can help themselves review the quality of education, improve continuously and develop themselves into effective schools.

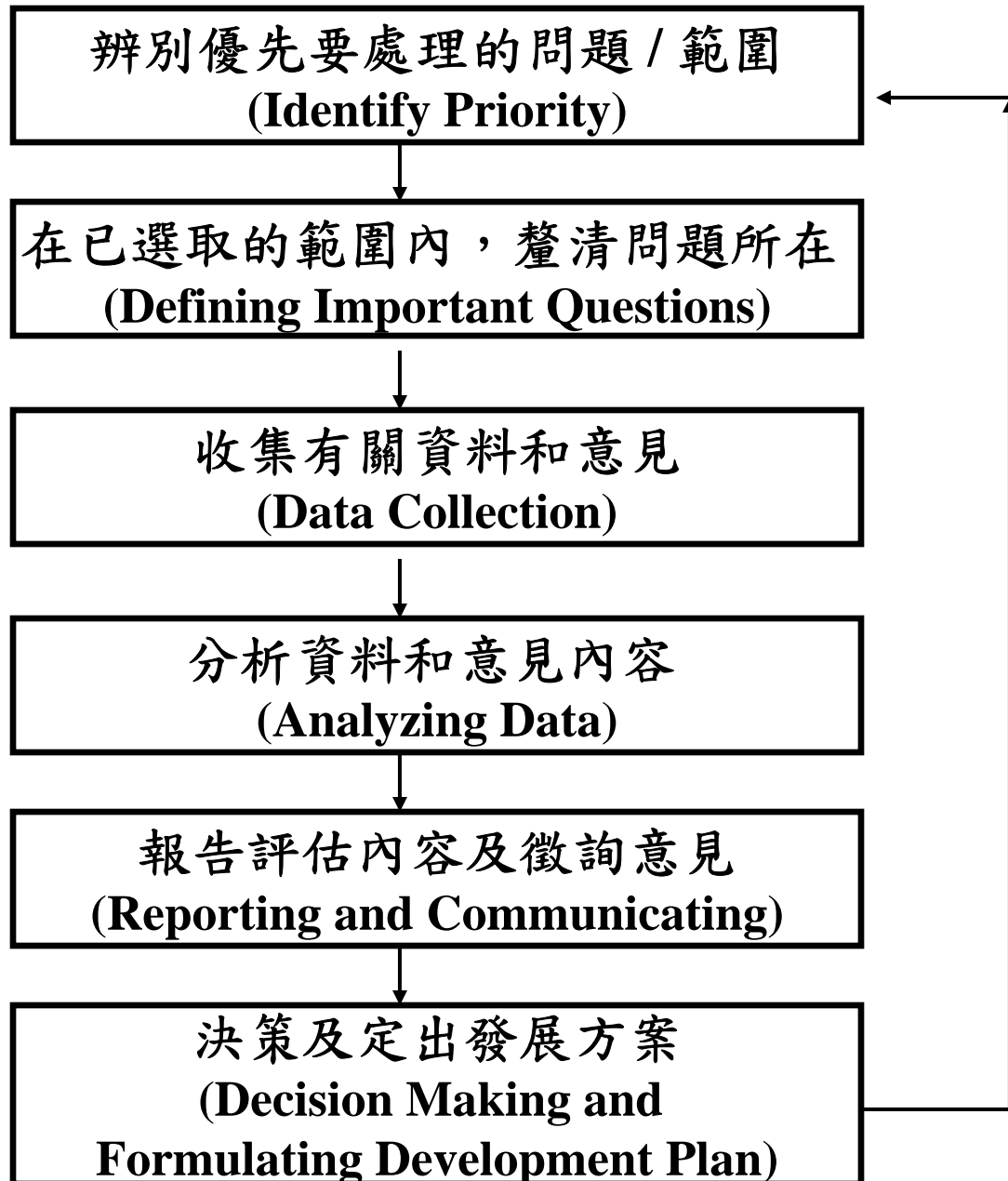
The Three Major Questions in SSE:

1. What is our present performance?

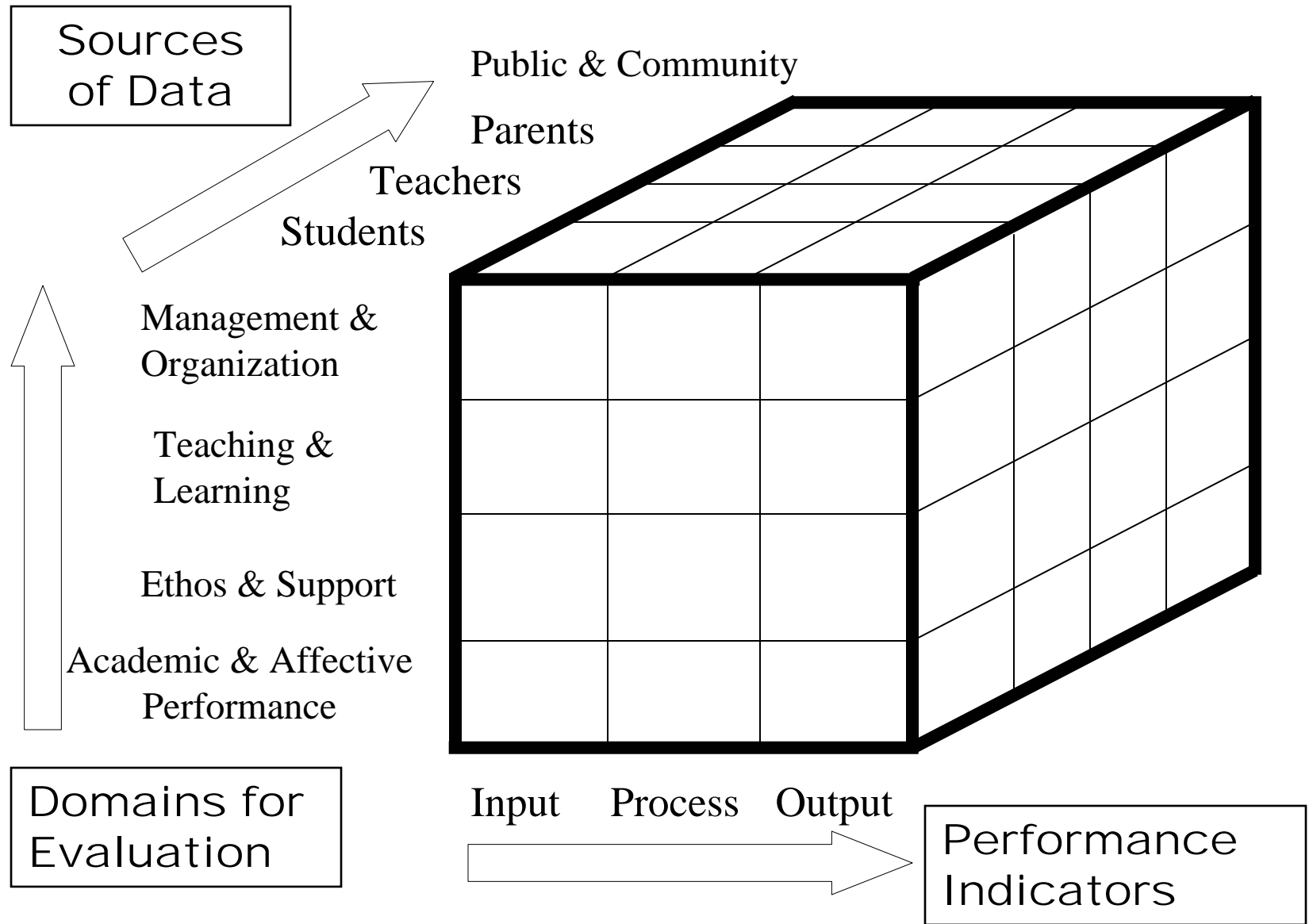
2. How do we know?

3. What will we do?

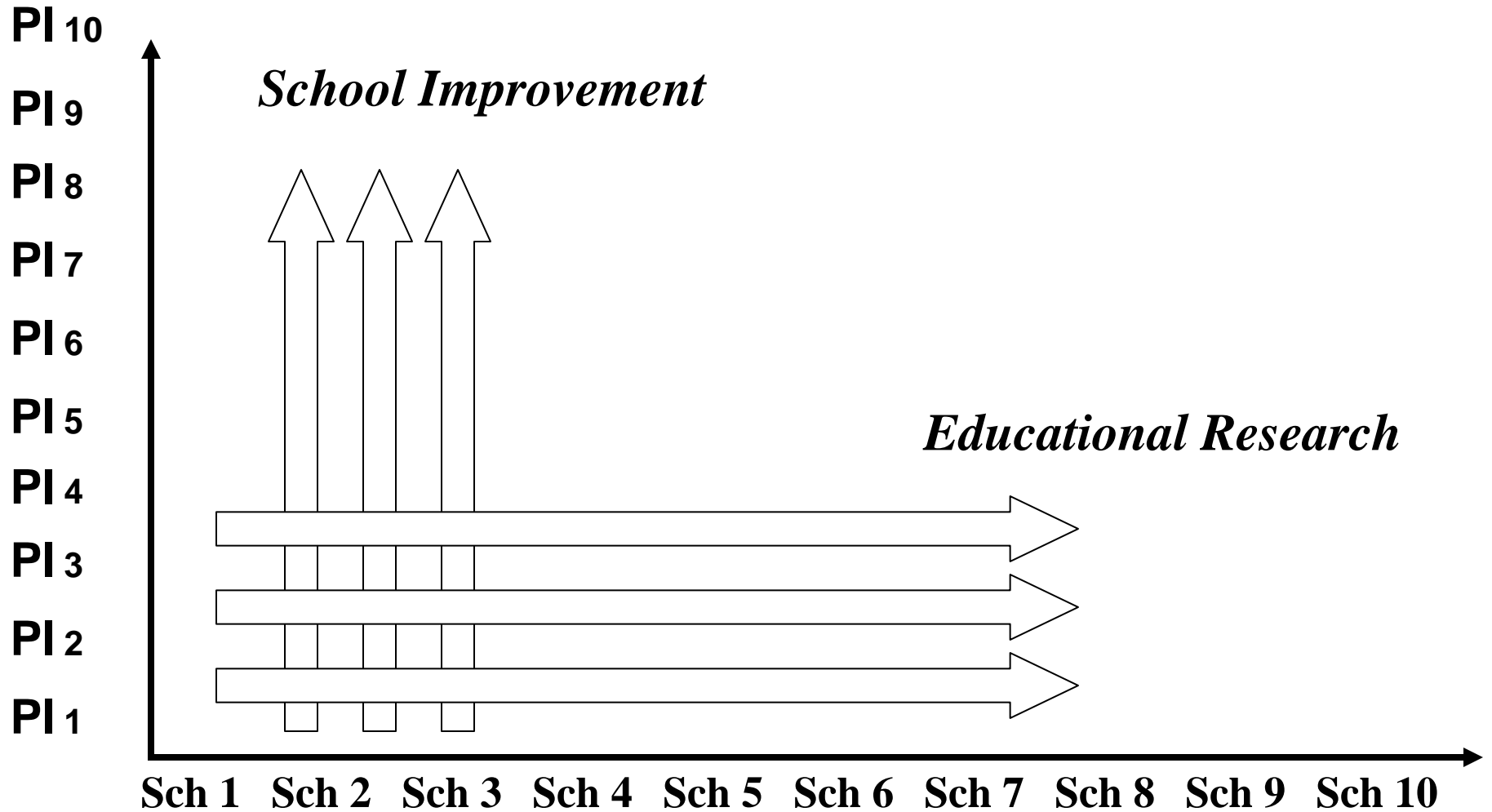
The Basic Steps in SSE



Theoretical Framework for School Self-evaluation



The Relations among Performance Indicators, School Improvement, and Educational Research



An open, fair, and just system and a democratic and participative climate in the school is crucial for the success of SSE

Requirements for Participative

Self-Evaluation:

- *Communication*
- *Involvement*
- *Participation*

The Benefits of Participative

Self-Evaluation:

- *Assure the quality of self-evaluation*
- *Promote job satisfaction*
- *Enhance commitment*

The Research on the Implementation of SSE in Hong Kong Schools

Subject:

- **20 Principals and all teachers** in the 10 primary schools and 10 secondary schools participated in the School-University Partnership (SUP) projects

Methods:

- **A qualitative approach**
- **Conduction of workshops** in the 20 schools with teachers' participation in investigating the factors that facilitate or hinder the implementation of SSE in the schools
- **Interviews with the Principals** of the 20 participating schools
- **Observations and discussions**

Factors that hinder the implementation of SSE

A. At the educational planning and policy context

1. A **loosely coupled** relationship between EMB and schools, which create difficulties in policy implementation.
2. **Too ambitious** in planning of the implementation of the QA mechanisms
3. Most schools **lack a long-term vision and planning.**
4. **Implementing too many school reforms** at the same time without well co-ordination.
5. School self-evaluation is **a complex process, which needs a well-planned change strategy to initiate.**
6. **Lack of resources for training**, especially at the time of economic recession.

Factors that hinder the implementation of SSE

B. At the school organizational level

1. **The plurality of the categories of stakeholders and the diversity of views and opinions** may lead to many ideal sets of reforms being opposed.
2. **Past failed experience** in the implementation of educational policy rendered schools to take a passive and conservative roles in educational reform.
3. Schools are **political arenas** and **power struggles** are inevitable. These create resistance to educational change.
4. The school leaders and the teachers in some schools might have **embroiled in a conflicts**, which cause tensions, fears, and low morale among teachers.
5. In some schools **communication breakdown** between teachers and administrators that leads a very weak basis for collaboration and commitment.

Factors that hinder the implementation of SSE

B. At the school organizational level

6. Most teachers and principals have **no knowledge and skills** in school self-evaluation and **misconception of SSE**.
7. There were **no agreed guidelines/criteria** to success.
8. There were no formal, systematic, and in-depth **professional development and training programs** well-designed for the implementation of SSE.
9. Most schools usually are **passive and reactive to change** and lack of a culture of **organizational learning**.

A Critical Reflection on School-University Partnership

- As recommendation by **the ECR No.7**, the Chief Executive announced in his **Policy Address** the establishment of the **Quality Education Fund (QEF)** to finance projects for the promotion of quality education in Hong Kong.
- With an allocation of **\$5 billion**, the QEF provides an **effective channel for worthwhile projects** from the school education sector **to be funded** and caters for worthwhile **non-profit making initiatives** within the ambit of school education.
- Since then, there has been a **remarkable growth of school-university partnership (SUP) projects in Hong Kong.**

A Definition of School-University Partnership

School-University Partnership in the Hong Kong context can be defined as:

“a mutually supportive arrangement between a school and a university in the form of contractual obligation, in which partners commit themselves to specific goals, objectives and activities intended to promote the quality of school education.”

The School-University Partnership Projects

- The findings of the then QAI in 1998 showed that **a self-evaluation framework was not commonly established** in most Hong Kong schools.
- With the support of the QEF, CUHK has launched **a series of school-university partnership (SUP) projects** to help Hong Kong schools institutionalize a self-evaluation framework in daily practices.
- Since the year of 2000, **a total of 133 primary schools and 169 secondary schools** in Hong Kong have taken part in these SUP projects, which amounted to **about 33%** of schools in Hong Kong.

Characteristics and Conditions for Effective SUP

1. *Setting clear and explicit goals in the partnership*

- ***The goals of the SUP projects has been set and stated clearly before the schools participated in the projects.***
- ***The details of the arrangements, requirements and concerned activities within the projects were delineated and expounded to the Principal and teachers concerned.***
- ***It would create a focus or shared vision that concentrates efforts, resources and time of partners***
- ***Combined effect is greater than the sum of individual efforts that are applied separately.***

Characteristics and Conditions for Effective SUP

2. Understanding the roles and responsibilities in the partnership

- ***A “juxtaposition of two cultures”—the practice-oriented cultures of the school and the research-oriented culture of the university.***
- ***The roles of the university in the partnership are to provide theoretical backgrounds, knowledge and information, to design the program and activities within the projects, and to play a role of critical friend in giving advice and providing consultancy on the school’s development plan and action plan.***
- ***The roles of the school in the partnership are to put those acquired knowledge and skills into practice and action, to unify efforts among all staff members and to commit to the planned endeavors.***
- ***In sum, the role of the university is “theory-building” and the role of the school is “theory-in-action”.***

Characteristics and Conditions for Effective SUP

3. Availability of resources

- ***Resources include money, human, time, and space***
- ***The establishment of the QEF in 1998 has facilitated a tremendous growth of SUP in the Hong Kong.***
- ***There may be lots of reforms and programs undergoing from time to time and teachers are heavily loaded with teaching and pastoral duties.***
- ***The participating school should have agreed to set the SUP project a high priority and to leave rooms for conducting the activities and workshops brought by the project.***
- ***In Hong Kong, most of the schools would make use of the three discretionary days for staff development granted by the EMB to accommodate these requirements.***

Characteristics and Conditions for Effective SUP

4. *Institutionalization of a continuous mechanism in the school management structure*

- *The establishment of a School Development and Evaluation Committee (SDEC) to facilitate daily practices.*
- *In each school, the principal and a group of three senior teachers would be the SDEC members.*

The major duties of the SEC members would be:

- *(i) identifying priorities in the areas of school development;*
- *(ii) defining important questions to be investigated and answered in self-evaluation;*
- *(iii) collecting appropriate data for consideration and reference;*
- *(iv) analyzing data for interpretation and sharing;*
- *(v) reporting and communicating results of self-evaluation to concerned stakeholders; and*
- *(vi) formulating school development plan and action plan.*

Characteristics and Conditions for Effective SUP

5. *Mutual benefits in the partnership*

- ***The issue of opportunism may represent reasons for partnership.***
- ***In SUP projects, both schools and the University have been benefited.***
- ***After joining the project, each school would have cultivated a school culture of self-evaluation and established a self-renewal strategy as a mechanism for continuous and sustainable development***
- ***As to the University, these projects have been enabling the Project Team to acquire funds, lead to publications, create significant impacts to the professional community, and build good, close relationships with schools. All these have built a good reputation for the University.***

Characteristics and Conditions for Effective SUP

6. *Continuous evaluation of the school-university partnership*

- ***An on-going system for research and evaluation of the projects was a contributing factor to the success of the SUP.***
- ***A rigorous evaluation plan for use in formative evaluation as well as Sufficient feedback mechanisms must be in place, so that schools and the University know how well structures and activities are working.***
- ***The participants were asked to comment on the general usefulness of the courses and to make suggestions for further improvement.***
- ***The project leader and team members from the University would change the plans, contents, and activities concerned, based on the feedback and comments from the schools involved in the partnership.***

Conclusion

School-university partnership (SUP) for the quest for quality of education has been receiving wide attention in Hong Kong since the establishment of the Quality Education Fund (QEF) in 1998.

With the financial support from the University, the QEF and the schools participated in the projects, the Author has been successfully launching a series of school-university partnership projects in Hong Kong, which have attracted more than 330 schools participated in these projects in the last seven years.

In the Hong Kong context, school-university partnership refers to a mutually supportive arrangement between a school and a university in the form of contractual obligation, in which partners commit themselves to specific goals, objectives and activities intended to promote the quality of school education.

Experience in the school-university partnership projects has rendered us to learn that establishing and maintaining effective school-university partnership requires effective processes as mentioned before.