



The Scope and Pattern of Distributed Leadership and Its Effects on  
Organizational Outcomes in Hong Kong Secondary Schools

**分權領導之範圍、樣式及組織成果：  
香港中學的實踐情況**

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# Education Reform & Distributed Leadership (DL) - A global perspective

- Strong principal leadership needed for successful school reform
- Superhero model replaced by “working with and through others”
- Capacity building by soliciting collective talents
- Growth of democracy in the global society
- The IT era facilitates collaborative work by lowering the barrier of time, place & space.



# Local Principals' Opinion on the Importance of Distributed Leadership

## 1. As a reaction to the educational context

- school is facing a complex environment
- increasing accountability
- growing social expectations
- expanded democracy in school in line with social trend (political reason)

## 2. For the well-being of principals

- cannot survive with so many jobs
- less stressful when getting support from teachers
- middle managers can serve as a buffer for conflicts



# Local Principals' Opinion on the Importance of Distributed Leadership

## **3. For the benefit of teachers**

- a platform for teacher's professional development
- a path for upward movement in careers

## **4. For the better performance of schools**

- an improved stability when managed as a team
- a stronger power to respond to the rapidly changing social expectations
- a more dynamic spirit in school, to keep school young and energetic
- an enhancement of efficiency and efficacy in performance



# What to distribute

( Leadership tasks in 7 Dimensions of Leadership)

1. External communication and connection
2. Quality assurance and accountability
3. Teaching, learning and curriculum
4. Staff management
5. Resource management
6. Leader and teacher growth and development
7. Strategic direction and policy environment

The seven dimensions of leadership were validated by 331 vice-principals of HK. (Kwan & Walker, 2008)



# Two levels of leadership

## (Nature of leadership)

1. Operational level – concrete administrative or managerial tasks
2. Strategic level – planning, direction-setting or capacity-building tasks, facilitating continual and long-term improvements

A literature search on leadership roles indicated the existence of two leadership levels.

Operational roles are more distributed than strategic  
(Leithwood et al. 2007, Locke 2002)

# Research Framework for studying DL Effects

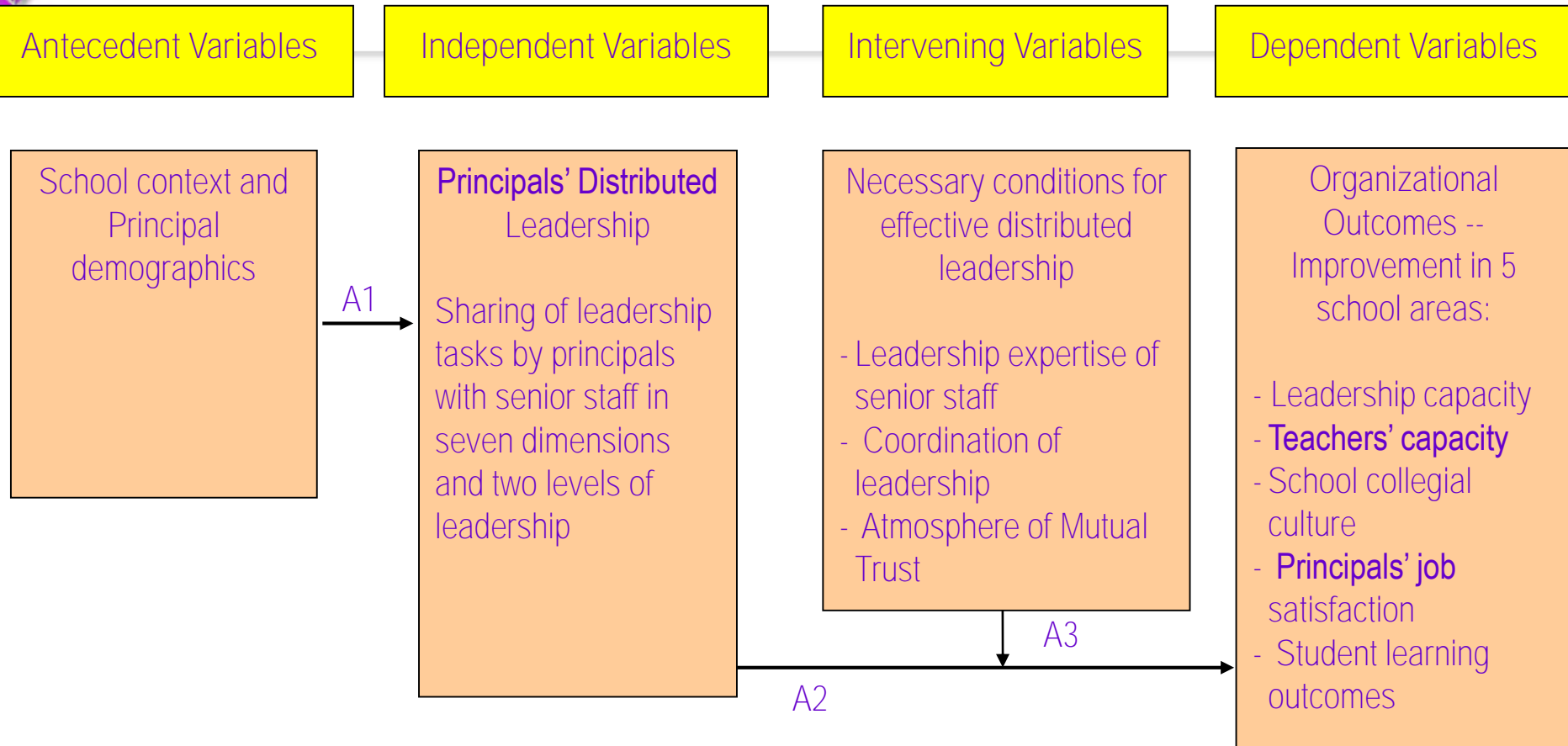


Figure 4.2: The effects of Principals' Distributed Leadership on organizational outcomes



# Profile of Respondents

**Table 6.1 – Response rate of PILSI by school sectors**

<b>School Sector</b>	<b>No. of schools in Hong Kong</b>	<b>Schools Responded</b>	<b>Response Rate</b>
Government	35	14	40.0
Subsidized	362	187	51.7
Direct Subsidy (DSS) & Others (Private and English School Foundation)	63	19	30.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>47.8</b>



# Profile of Respondents (1)

## Appendix XII - Principal Demographics of Respondents

### Principal Demographics

#### *Gender*

Male	Female
<b>68.2%</b>	<b>31.8%</b>

#### *Highest qualification*

Bachelor	Master	Doctorate
<b>14.6%</b>	<b>76.8%</b>	<b>8.6%</b>

#### *Position before becoming principals*

Deputy Principal	Assistant Principal	SGM	Involvement in Tertiary Ed.	Others
<b>43.8%</b>	<b>20.1%</b>	<b>22.8%</b>	<b>4.1%</b>	<b>9.1%</b>

#### *No. of years as principals*

0-5	5.1-10	10.1-15	15.1-20	More than 20
<b>37.6%</b>	<b>28.9%</b>	<b>15.6%</b>	<b>11.5%</b>	<b>6.4%</b>

#### *No. of years in education field*

Less than 20	20.1-25	25.1-30	30.1-35	35.1-40
<b>14.4%</b>	<b>25.9%</b>	<b>31.8%</b>	<b>23.2%</b>	<b>5.0%</b>

# Profile of Respondents (2)

## Appendix XII - Principal Demographics of Respondents

### Principal Demographics

#### *No. of years serving in current school*

0-5	5.1-10	10.1-15	15.1-20	More than 20
<b>28.8%</b>	<b>24.2%</b>	<b>10.1%</b>	<b>13.2%</b>	<b>23.7%</b>

#### *No. of years as principal in current school*

0-4	4.1-8	8.1-12	12.1-16	More than 16
<b>40.8%</b>	<b>27.5%</b>	<b>14.7%</b>	<b>7.3%</b>	<b>9.6%</b>

#### *Previous principal experience in other schools*

No	Yes
<b>75.9%</b>	<b>24.1%</b>

#### *Ways of appointing principalship*

Recruited externally	Promoted internally
<b>63.6%</b>	<b>36.4%</b>

# Research Question 1 – Distributed Leadership in Seven Dimensions

In which of the seven dimensions of leadership are leadership tasks distributed more by Hong Kong secondary principals?

**Table 6.7 – The mean, standard deviation and rank of distribution of leadership tasks in the seven dimensions of leadership (Scale: 5 Point Likert Scale)**


Leadership Dimensions	Mean	Mean diff. with next	S.D.	Rank
Teaching, learning and curriculum	3.975	0.036	0.593	1
Quality assurance and accountability	3.939	0.456	0.641	2
External communication and connection	3.483	0.018	0.656	3
Strategic direction and policy environment	3.465	0.012	0.799	4
Resource management	3.452	0.060	0.755	5
Staff management	3.392	0.044	0.745	6
Leader and teacher growth and development	3.348	--	0.709	7



# Research Question 1 – Distributed Leadership in Seven Dimensions

## Observations:

1. Two-layer phenomenon
2. Even the least distributed dimension had a mean greater than the middle 3 (of the 5-point Likert scale)



A comparison of leadership distribution ranked by principals in this study with the level of engagement ranked by deputy principals in Kwan & Walker's (2008) study

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Leadership Dimensions	Distribution ranked by principals	Engagement ranked by Dep. Pr
Teaching, learning and curriculum	1	4
Quality assurance and accountability	2	3
External communication and connection	3	6
Strategic direction and policy environment	4	2
Resource management	5	7
Staff management	6	1
Leader and teacher growth and develop.	7	5

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# Research Question 2 –

**B. Are tasks at the Operational level more distributed than at the Strategic Level?**

By comparing the means using T-test:

**Table 6.10 – A comparison of means between operational and strategic levels by T-test**

Dimension	Difference of Means (Operational minus Strategic)	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
External communication and connection	0.17353	5.540	219	.000
Quality assurance and accountability	0.25576	5.513	219	.000
Teaching, learning and curriculum	0.27607	7.410	219	.000
Staff management	0.15982	4.105	219	.000
Leader and teacher growth and development	-0.23044	-6.973	218	.000
Overall (Accounting for all dimensions)	0.10416	4.586	219	.000

One exception is in the dimension *Leader and teacher growth and development*.

# Research Question 2 –

B. Are tasks at the Operational level more distributed than at the Strategic Level?

By observing the 10 most and 10 least distributed leadership tasks:

**Table 6.6a – Ten most distributed leadership tasks with mean value greater than 4.0**

Leadership Task	Mean	S.D.	Dimension	Level (Note)
Selection of text books and instructional materials	4.383	0.990	T&L	Op
Resolving student behavioural problems across the school	4.220	0.802	T&L	Op
Organizing and supervising co-curricular activities	4.201	0.881	T&L	Op
Contact with parents regarding student problems across the school	4.197	0.849	T&L	Op
Monitoring internal test and examination outcomes	4.164	0.790	Accountability	Op
Direct supervision of students across the school	4.145	0.900	T&L	Op
<b>Inspecting student's exercise books</b>	4.145	1.017	Accountability	Op
Building up a sincere, helpful and cooperative relationship with parents	4.055	0.848	External	Str
Responding to parent inquiries	4.027	0.822	External	Op
Reviewing public examination results	4.009	0.881	Accountability	Op

*Note:* Op denotes operational; Str denotes strategic

Most of the highly distributed leadership tasks are “operational” in nature

# Research Question 2 –

B. Are tasks at the Operational level more distributed than at the Strategic Level?

**Table 6.6b – Ten least distributed leadership tasks**

Leadership Task	Mean	S.D.	Dimension	Level
Preparing school budget	3.173	1.196	Res Mgt	Op
Handling grievances and conflicts amongst teachers	3.083	1.148	Staff Mgt	Op
Setting up criteria and standards for staff promotion	3.070	1.178	Staff Mgt	Str
Raising funds for school	2.905	1.255	Res Mgt	Op
Establishing a professional network with external institutes or universities	2.766	1.170	External	Str
Disciplining under-performing staff	2.610	1.206	Staff Mgt	Op
Maintaining a good relationship with primary schools in the district	2.599	1.238	External	Str
Attending courses, seminars, conferences or workshops for principals	2.560	1.180	Growth	Op
Professional sharing with leaders in other schools	2.559	1.154	Growth	Op
Visiting primary schools for student enrolment	2.519	1.294	External	Op

Only 3 out of 10 are “strategic” in nature.





# Studying the Effects of DL

## Research Question 3 –

Will the antecedent variables (school context and principal demographics) have an effect on distributed leadership?

Observation:

An experienced principal tends to distribute more leadership tasks in the dimension *Teaching, Learning & Curriculum* to her/his senior staff.

# Studying the Effects of DL

## Research Question 3 –

Will the antecedent variables (school context and principal demographics) have an effect on distributed leadership?

By using ANOVA or T-test

Table 6.12a –Means and ANOVA results of Principal Demographics on distributed leadership variable – Teaching, Learning and Curriculum

Antecedent	Number of years as Principal	Number of years as Principal in current school
<b>All respondents</b>		
Mean	3.9749	3.9749
S.D.	0.5957	0.5957
<b>Respondents by antecedent groupings</b>		
Mean Gp1 (Lowest 20 percentile)	3.7403	3.7350
Mean Gp2 (21- 40 percentile)	3.9828	4.0002
Mean Gp3 (41- 60 percentile)	3.9676	4.1030
Mean Gp4 (61- 80 percentile)	4.0298	3.9363
Mean Gp5 (81- 100 percentile)	4.1704	4.0513
<b>ANOVA results</b>	F (4, 213) = 2.915 P = .022	F (4, 213) = 2.441 P = .048



# Studying the Effects of DL

## Research Question 3 –

Will the antecedent variables (school context and principal demographics) have an effect on distributed leadership?

Observation:

If a principal was promoted internally, s/he would distribute fewer leadership tasks in the dimension

*Staff Management*

# Studying the Effects of DL

## Research Question 3 –

Will the antecedent variables (school context and principal demographics) have an effect on distributed leadership?

**Table 6.12b – Means and ANOVA results of Principal Demographics on distributed leadership variable – Staff Management**

<b>Antecedent</b>	<b>Principal appointed internally</b>
<b>All respondents</b>	
<b>Mean</b>	<b>3.3916</b>
<b>S.D.</b>	<b>0.7445</b>
<b>Respondents by antecedent groupings</b>	
<b>Yes (appointed internally)</b>	<b>3.2482</b>
<b>No (not appointed internally)</b>	<b>3.4735</b>
<b>ANOVA results</b>	<b>F (1, 218) = 4.743</b> <b>P = .030</b>

# Research Question 4:

Will a more distributed form of leadership, which consolidates diverse expertise and a stronger sense of faculty achievement, lead to more improvement in five areas of organizational outcome?

**Independent variables:  
DL in 7 dimensions**



**Dependent variables**

**School Improvement in 5  
areas of organization  
outcome:**

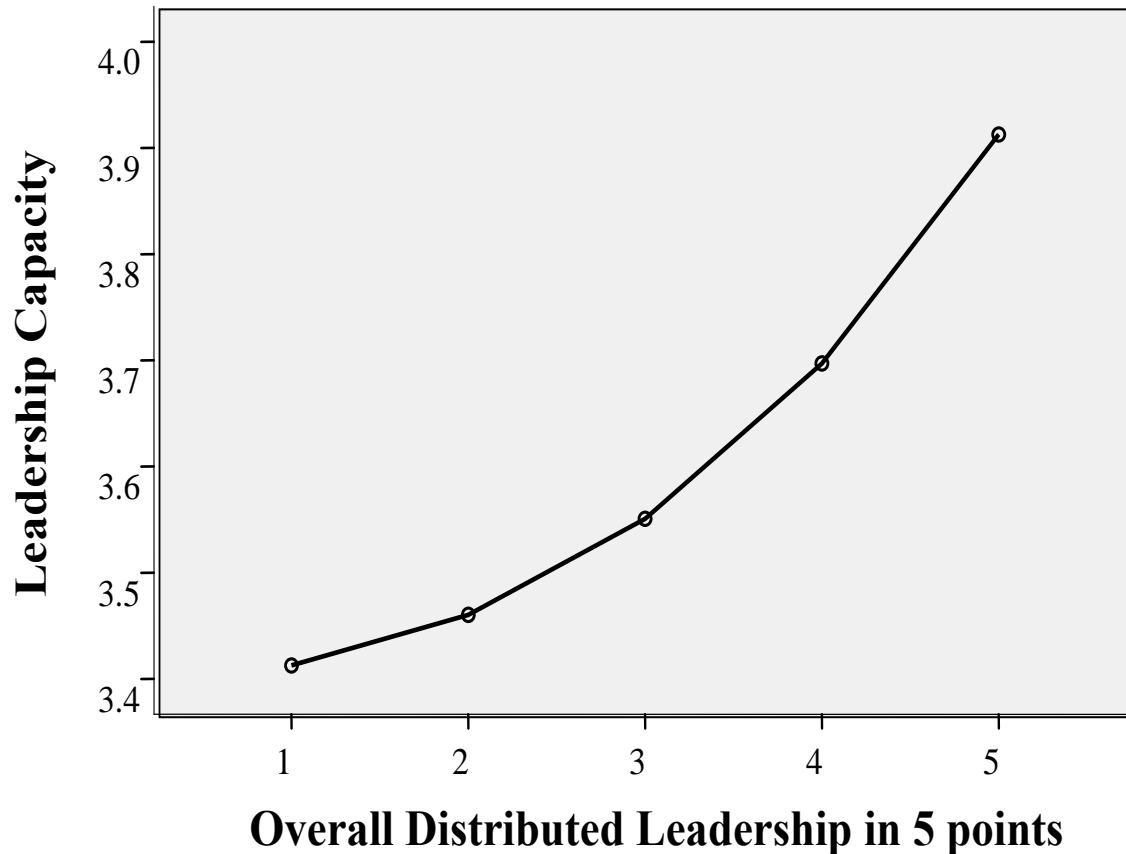
- Leadership capacity
- Teachers' Capacity
- School collegial culture
- Principals' job satisfaction
- Student learning outcomes

# Research Question 4:

Will a more distributed form of leadership, which consolidates diverse expertise and a stronger sense of faculty achievement, lead to more improvement in five areas of organizational outcome?

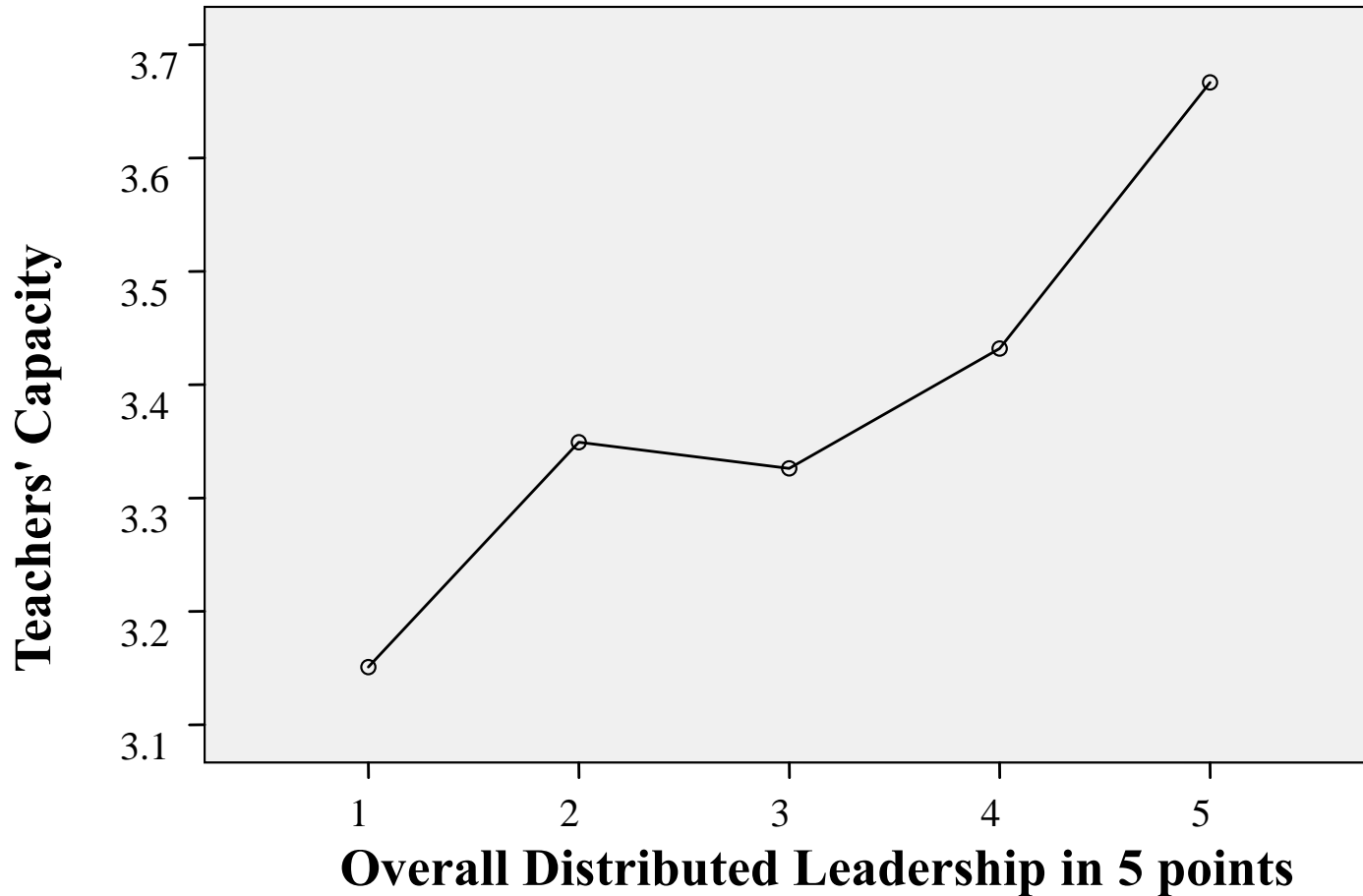
By Graphic Plots to demonstrate the integrated effect of DL

**Fig 6.1a Leadership Capacity vs DL**



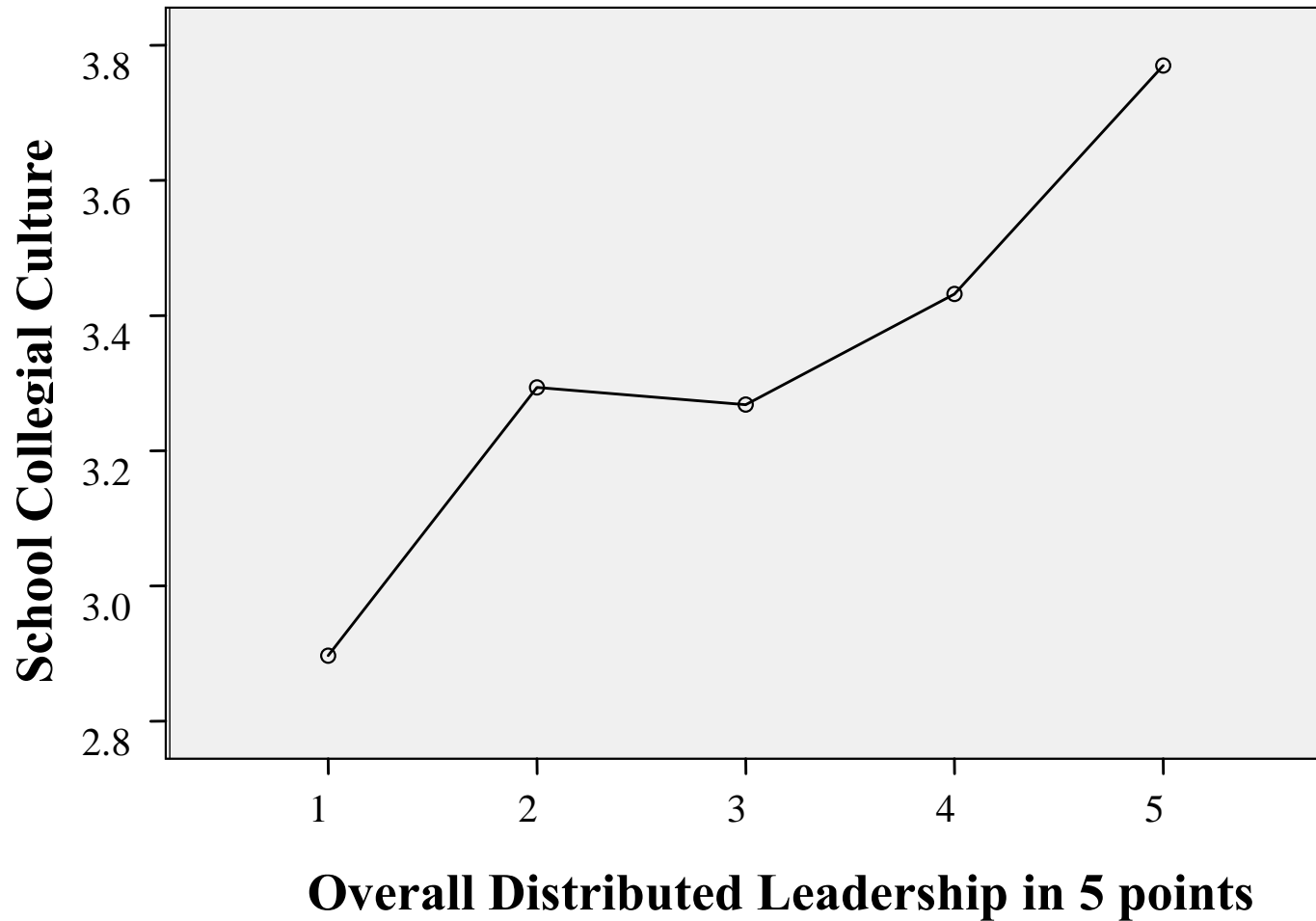
# Research Question 4:

**Fig 6.1b Teachers' Capacity vs DL**



# Research Question 4:

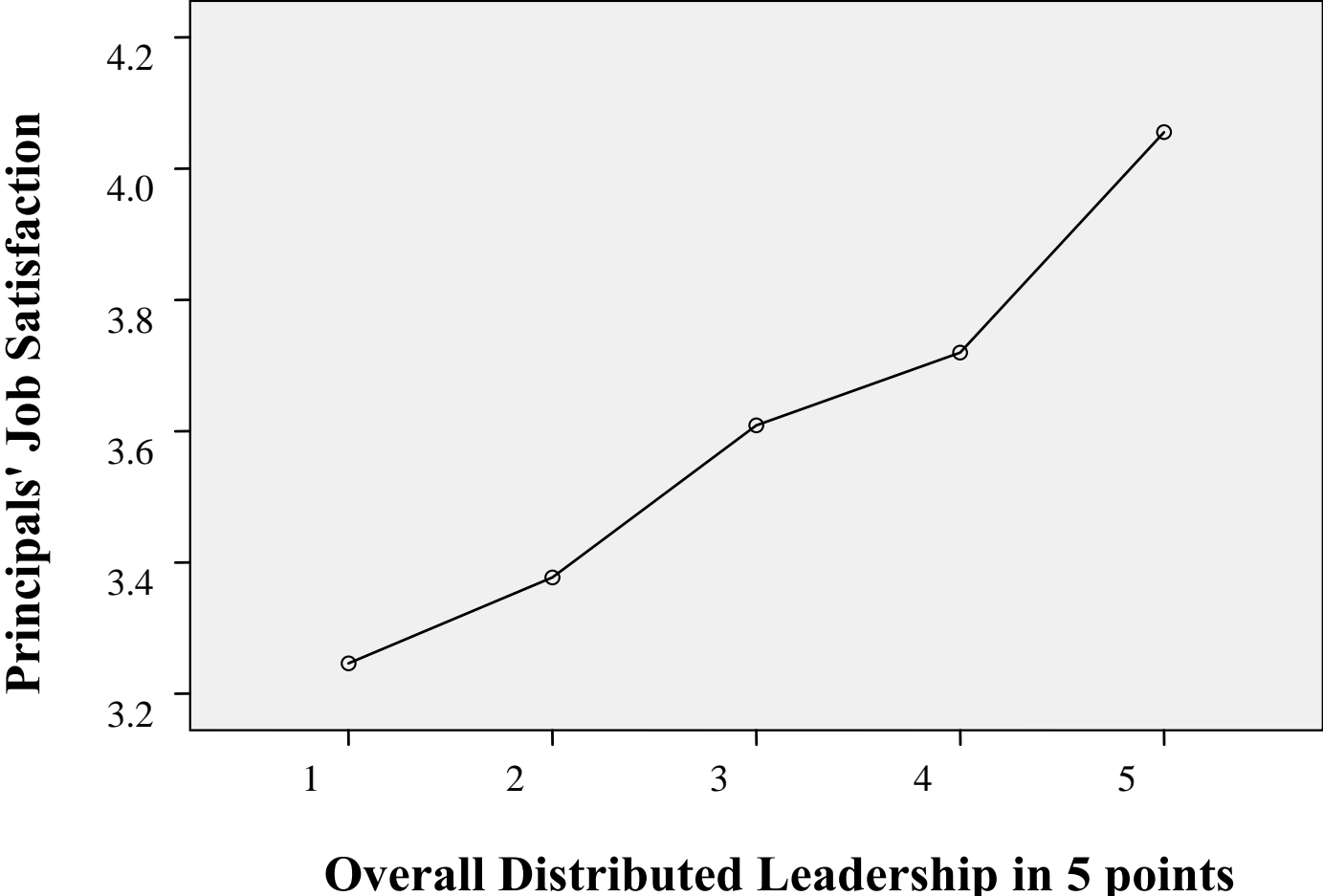
**Fig 6.1c School Collegial Culture vs DL**





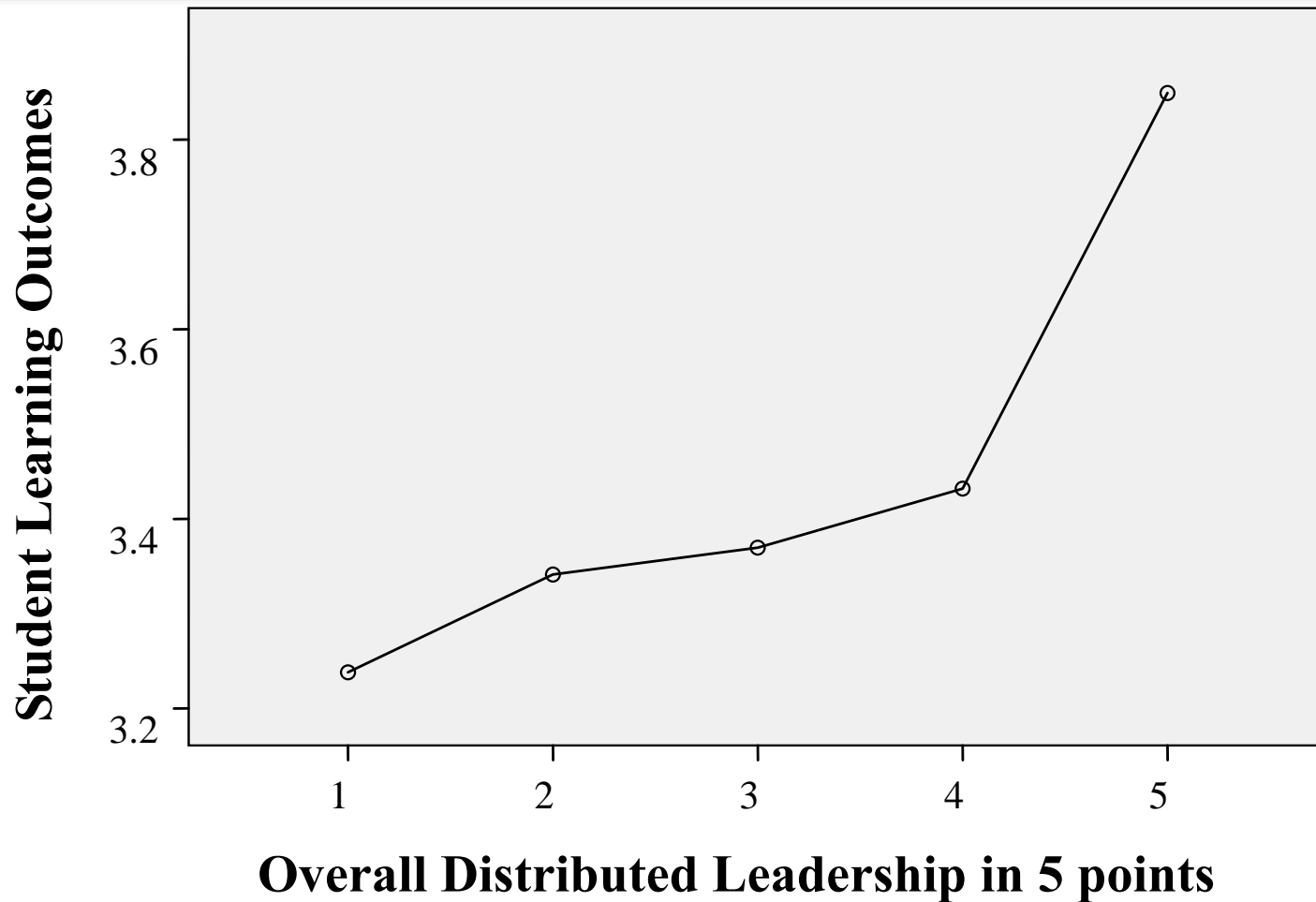
# Research Question 4:

Fig 6.1d Principals' Job Satisfaction vs DL



# Research Question 4:

**Fig 6.1e Student Learning Outcomes vs DL**





# Research Question 4:

Will a more distributed form of leadership, which consolidates diverse expertise and a stronger sense of faculty achievement, lead to more improvement in five areas of organizational outcome?

## Observation:

- A general positive slope can be observed, indicating that stronger DL will lead to greater improvement in organizational outcome
- A plateau between point 2 & 3 of DL in Teachers' Capacity & in School Collegial Culture.
- A sharp rise between point 4 & 5 of DL in all 5 curves

# Research Question 4:

Will a more distributed form of leadership, which consolidates diverse expertise and a stronger sense of faculty achievement, lead to more improvement in five areas of organizational outcome?

By Multiple Linear Regressions:

**Table 6.13 –Multiple Linear Regressions results with outcome variables as the dependent and distributed leadership in seven dimensions as independent variables**

Outcome Variables	R <sup>2</sup>	F	P	Significant Standardized Beta Coefficients						
				Ext	Acc	T&L	SMgt	RMgt	Growth	Dir
Leadership Capacity	.121	4.098	.000		.215 P=.029				.305 P=.019	
<b>Teachers' Capacity</b>	.120	4.035	.000				-.286 P=.011	.208 P=.024	.332 P=.011	
Collegial Culture	.148	5.148	.000		.257 P=.008			.209 P=.021	.268 P=.037	
<b>Pr's Job Satisfaction</b>	.139	4.779	.000							
St Learning Outcomes	.097	3.207	.003				-.295 P=.010	.222 P=.017	.258 P=.050	



# Research Question 4:

Will a more distributed form of leadership, which consolidates diverse expertise and a stronger sense of faculty achievement, lead to more improvement in five areas of organizational outcome?

## Observations:

1. A significant equation in each of the 5 outcome variables, indicating a link between each organizational outcome and DL
2. Some significant betas in four organizational outcomes, but not in Principals' Job Satisfaction.
3. Three positive significant factors, namely DL in *Quality Assurance and Accountability, Resource Management,* and *Leader and Teacher Growth and Development.*
4. One negative significant factor, DL in *Staff Management.*

## Research Question 5- The Intervening Effects

Will the intervening variables

- leadership expertise of senior staff
- coordination of leadership
- atmosphere of mutual trust

influence the effect of DL on org.  
outcomes?

# Research Question 5- The Intervening Effects

Comparing the strength of the three intervening variables

**Table 6.15 –Sum of Beta Coefficients of the three dummy intervening variables from the Regressions on five outcome variables**

Intervening Dummy Variables	Outcome Variables					Sum of Beta	Rank
	Leader Capacity	<b>T's</b> Capacity	Collegial Culture	Pr's Job Sat.	St. Learning Outcomes		
Leadership Expertise	.207	.206	.178	.157	<u>.081</u> (Note)	0.829	3
Coordination <b>of L'ship</b>	.262	.158	.182	.202	.223	1.027	1
Mutual Trust	.203	.279	.248	<u>.041</u>	<u>.104</u>	0.875	2

Note: The underlined number denotes a non-significant beta.



# Implications of the Study

## 1. For the Education Bureau (EDB) of Hong Kong

- Since the Importance of DL has been verified in the HK context, the EDB may consider injecting more resources into understanding and promotion DL in HK schools, such as supporting large-scale & school-level research and establishing formal and informal sharing platforms for school leaders.
- Setting up an institute similar to the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in England to develop and promote school leadership in general, and DL in particular.
- DL leads to principals' job satisfaction, more efforts to promote DL can improve principal recruitment and retention.





# Implications of the Study

## 2. For Professional Development for School Leaders.

In view of the positive effect of DL to organizational improvement:

- More DL theories, strategies and successful practices should be included in the pre-service training of principal (preparation courses for aspiring principals)
- As the objective of professional development for DL should emphasize situational and organizational analysis (Bennett, 2003), ∴ more in-depth sharing and analysis of DL practices should be incorporated into in-service principal training (such as “Blue Skies”)
- Leadership expertise is a necessary condition for effective DL, ∴ more leadership training for senior teachers.



# Implications of the Study

## 3. For School Sponsoring Bodies

- Be aware of the major structural, cultural and micro-political barriers when implementing DL
- **Nurturing the three necessary conditions for successful DL within schools**
- Developing succession plans for all levels of leadership through increased distribution of leadership tasks to future leaders.

# Implications of the Study

## 4. For Principals

- More DL leads to principals' job satisfaction
- Principal should be aware of the existence of two levels of leadership, and engage themselves more in direction setting and complex tasks
- More distribution of leadership tasks in three dimensions (***Quality Assurance & Accountability; Resource Management; Leader & Teacher Growth & Development***) will have positive effect on organizational outcomes.
- Leadership tasks in ***Staff Management*** should be distributed cautiously or a negative effect on teachers' capacity and student learning outcomes may result.

# Comparing Distributed Leadership in Hong Kong with Anglo-American Societies

Hong Kong			Anglo-American					
This Study			Spillane et al. (US)			Leithwood et al. (Canada)		
	DL Mean	Rank		DL %	Rank		DL %	Rank
External	3.483	3	Foster Relationship	54.5	3	Redesign the org	66.7	1
Accountability	3.939	2				Redesign the org (Note3)		
T&L	3.975	1	Instr. & Curr.	59.85	2	Mgt the Instr. Prog	56.9	3
Staff Mgt	3.392	6	Admin	39.6	4			
Res Mgt	3.452	5	Admin (Note2)					
Growth & Dev	3.348	7	Prof. Growth	82.95	1	Developing people	60.5	2
Direction	3.465	4				Setting direction	49.0	4
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>3.578 (64.5%)</b>			<b>47.9%</b>			<b>57.6%</b>	

# 如何建立領導團隊？

- a) 被了解
- b) 一起看
- c) 被肯定



# a) 被理解





# 領導就是喚醒生命

生命力領導者的心靈補給 — 澆灌內心，  
重新得力

當我經常接觸內心的寂靜空間時，我就不容易被燃燒殆盡。因為我感覺到，在這個空間有泉源湧現，也因這來自於上帝，所以永遠不會被封死。精疲力盡的人是靠自己的力氣工作，而不是靠著上帝能力，來自上帝的力量是從內心湧出的，且永不止息。

# b) 一起看





Day 2

讓我們一起擁有  
跳躍的生命！



# c) 被肯定



# 首屆品德教育傑出教學獎

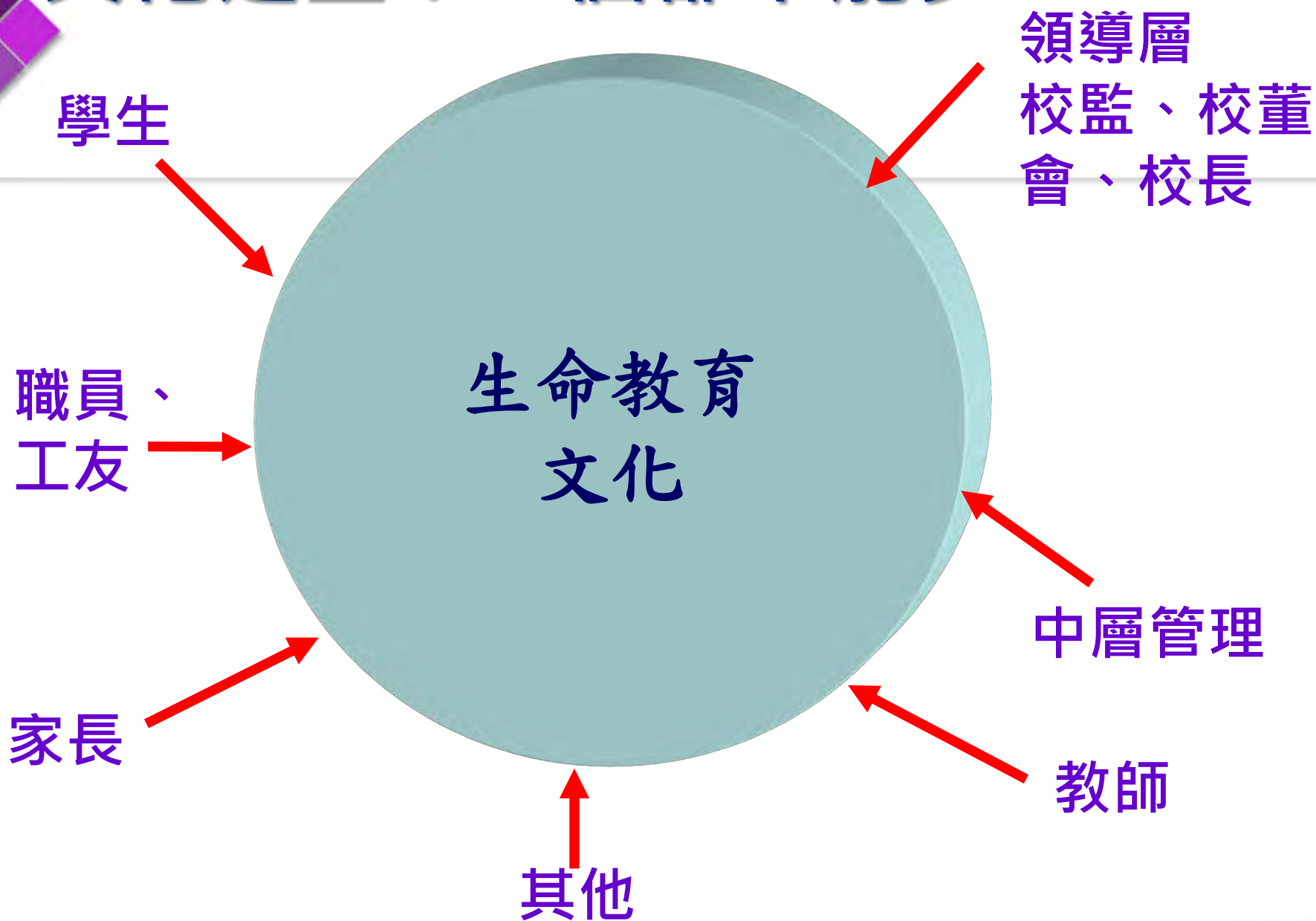


# 行政長官卓越教學獎

全港首間中學榮獲德育及公民教育卓越獎

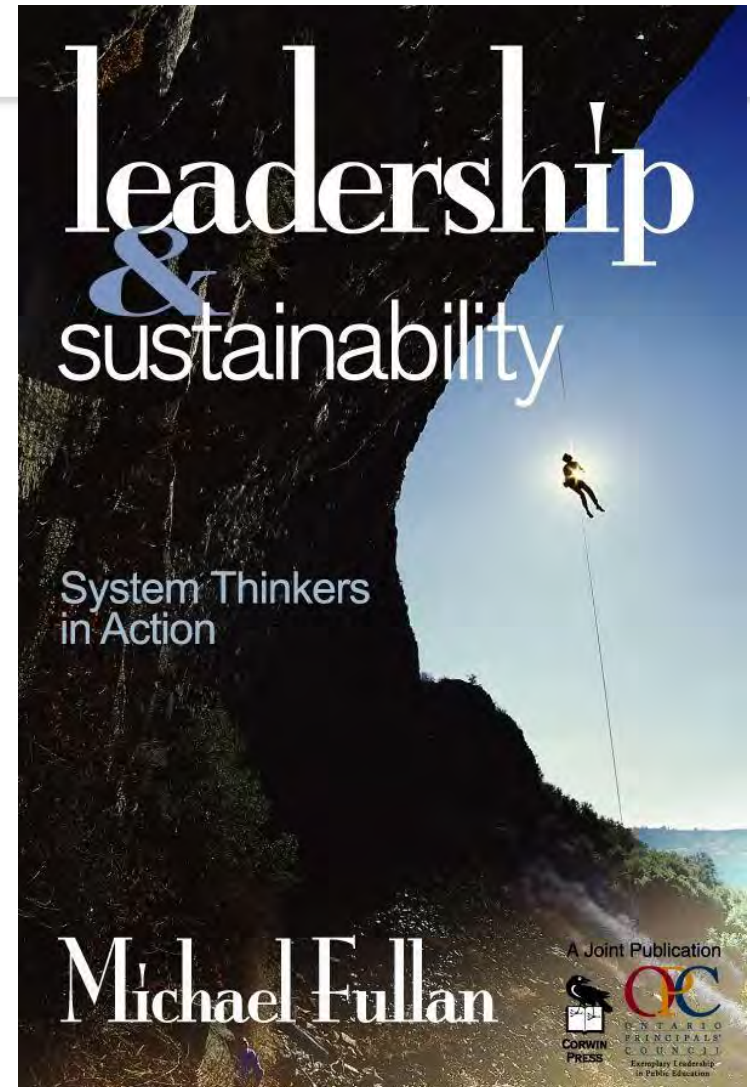


# 文化建立：一個都不能少



# On handing-over ....

The main mark of an effective principal .... on how many leaders he or she leaves behind who can go even further (P. 31)



**Thank You**

