Leaders in Education Program:
The Singapore Model for
Developing Effective Principal-ship Capability

Prashant Jayapragas
Ministry of Education, Singapore

In this era of constant change, principals need to be able to handle high levels of complexity in its governance and policy implementation. Planning ahead is not sufficient; being able to interpret and plan the future into strategic responses is a huge focus in educational development today. The Leaders in Education Program (LEP) is a 6-month full-time program, which aims to prepare highly capable vice principals and ministry officers in Singapore for principal-ship. This paper examines the value proposition and critical components of the LEP, and through a comparative analysis, it critically reflects on the challenges associated with this model. While the LEP has gained worldwide admiration for heightening participant's awareness of the interactive nature of the "roles" and "minds" of school leadership, this model is found to be "especially selective," attracting just 5% of the intended population. In order for a larger pool of school leaders to benefit, this paper recommends the 'borrowing' of mentoring and networked learning structures to level up distributed and lateral leadership within and across schools. This should gradually develop a culture of leaders growing leaders as a way to ensure scalability and sustainability of leadership talent.

Introduction

Many countries struggle to transform their educational systems to adequately prepare their students with the knowledge, skills and disposition to thrive today. School leaders are thus more than just good managers; they are leaders of schools as "learning organizations" (Darling Hammond, Wei & Andree, 2010). They need to be educational visionaries, instructional leaders, supervisors of policy mandates and initiatives and even community builders (DeVita, 2010). They are also expected to promote inclusive school cultures (Riehl, 2000). The civic community at large is increasingly aware that effective school leadership is central to large-scale education reforms and improved educational outcomes (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Many of these leadership attributes are positively related to student achievement, learning and attitudes (Cotton, 2003). This was also reported by the Wallace Foundation in 2011, which highlighted the empirical link between school leadership and improved student achievement.

Notably, leadership effects on student learning occur largely because leadership strengthens teachers' engagement in the professional community, which in turn, promotes the use of instructional practices that are associated with student achievement (Wahlstrom, Louis, Leithwood & Anderson, 2010). The extent to which a principal is aware of how a school functions and is able to address existing and potential problems is critical to student outcomes (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). In view of this, effective leadership means more than knowing what to do—it is about knowing when, how, and why a certain course of action is taken.

In the last 15 years, there have been numerous shifts in education policies in Singapore. Principals are expected to be role models in providing a Student-Centric Values-Driven education, where developing 21st-century competencies and providing multiple pathways of success to every child is seen as a fundamental tenet of schooling (Teo, 1998; Tharman, 2006). In view of this, principals must be able to determine what a specific policy means to the school, their students and the community at large. In addition, reform efforts should also focus on changing the cultures of the classroom and the schools so as to improve the quality of education (Fullan, 2007). Former Education Minister Teo Chee Hean said that principals must be pro-active enough to want to "cook their own food instead of waiting for the central kitchen to serve up a complete meal" (Teo, 1999). This new educational agenda demands a new type of school leader; one who is confident in dealing with a dynamic and complex context. It is thus essential to equip principals with the right set of skills to be adaptive, flexible and reflective leaders.

Drawing on the current literature about the Leaders in Education Program (LEP) in Singapore, this paper will examine the LEP's value-proposition and through a comparative analysis of normative, empirical and critical literature in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Finland and the United States, I will explore whether elements of the LEP can be further expanded to frame effective leadership preparation models within and beyond Singapore.

Leaders in Education Program
In March 2001, the LEP was launched at the National Institute of Education (NIE), Singapore. The LEP is a six-month milestone executive program for specially selected vice principals and ministry officers (about 30 - 40 in a cohort) in Singapore to prepare them for school leadership. This executive model has similarities to what one would experience in an MBA program. There are varied opportunities for industry leaders to provide interactive sessions in leadership and strategic management to guide decision-making and organizational reform (Jensen & Clark, 2013). This program also adopts a structured and system-wide incorporation of mentoring (Hean, 2009).

At its core, the LEP aims to develop principal-ship capability that is values-based, purposeful, and forward-looking, anchored on both strong people leadership and instructional leadership (Ng, 2007). These officers have a track record of good potential and performance appraisal and have successfully passed a series of situational tests and selection interviews conducted by the Ministry of Education (MOE). The selected participants are fully sponsored by the MOE to engage in the LEP full-time and they receive a salary during this stint (Ng, 2008). Such is the commitment by the MOE to develop outstanding principals. This is similar to the Finnish educational system, where school leaders are fully sponsored with support for induction, mentoring, peer-support and continuing professional education (Hargreaves, Halasz, Pont, 2008).

5R5M Framework   The LEP was conceptualized using evidence-based research to inform how principals should be developed for leadership roles (Cohen, Raudenbush & Ball, 2003). The program emphasizes a continuous action–reflection loop and brings to the participants' awareness of the interactive nature of the "roles" and "minds" of school leadership (NIE, 2007). Essentially, the way a leader thinks (their 'minds') will influence their actions (associated with their 'roles'); hence it is important for principals to reflect on their actions in the various 'roles' to refine their 'minds.'

Sergiovanni's (2009) Five Forces of Leadership (with associated Leadership Roles, namely Educational, Technical, Human, Symbolic, and Cultural) and Gardner's (2007) Five Minds for the Future (i.e. Ethical, Respectful, Creating, Synthesizing, and Disciplined) are integrated into an innovative 5R5M (Five Roles and Five Minds) framework of school leadership development. The 5R5M framework combines the multifaceted nature of principals' roles with the mindsets needed to perform the roles, contextualized to suit Singapore's school leadership context.

Innovation and Empowerment   For the past 15 years, a key theme of the LEP, like many exemplary leadership development programs from San Diego to the Mississippi Delta, has been on innovation and the creation of new knowledge (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson & Cohen, 2007; NIE, 2007). Today, this ability to create and transfer knowledge into novel contexts is viewed as imperative to a nation's comparative advantage and is a major focus in international development (Read, Fernandez-Hermosilla, Anderson, Mundy, 2015). The act of knowledge creation stimulates the participants' thinking through a series of challenging learning experiences (Jensen & Clark, 2013). These include case studies, dialogues with senior education Ministry officials, and an overseas study trip (Ng, 2013). The study trip allows participants to gain first-hand knowledge on education initiatives by renowned institutes in countries such as Finland, Germany, Canada, Hong Kong and the United States. The program also encourages leaders to be more self-reflective of their practice. Participants use journals and the creative action project (CAP) to reflect on their beliefs, values and purposes about instructional leadership and

management, triggered by the diverse learning experiences encountered in the LEP (Ng, 2008). The exposure offered by the LEP serves to raise participants' leadership skills to new levels and empowers them to lead their schools in impactful ways upon the completion of the program.

Creative Action Project   Every LEP participant is attached to a local school in Singapore, where they are mentored by an experienced principal (Walker & Hallinger, 2015). Mentoring is deeply embedded within many high-performing education systems in East Asia, such as Hong Kong and Shanghai (Jansen & Clark, 2013). Under the guidance of a principal-mentor, the CAP is a major undertaking by the LEP participant in the attachment school. Using the principles of 'Futuring' and Design Thinking, participants explore and work with teachers and school leaders in the attachment school on a value-adding innovation that can transform the school system in 10-15 years' time (NIE, 2007).

An innovation is not necessarily something new in education, but it should be something new to the school, with the potential of being scalable and sustainable. Many of these projects are exciting initiatives that lead to significant improvements in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Darling Hammond et al (2007) assert that one of the most important levers for learning is the close integration of coursework and fieldwork. In alignment with the literature on adult learning, the LEP exposes participants to concrete elements of real-world practice. These in turn increase a school leader's ability to analyze and systematically plan strategies for action (Kolb & Boyatzis, 1999). It is through this process that the LEP participants learn to handle the complexities embedded in the conceptualization and implementation of the CAP.

Theory of Action   The theory of action behind the LEP is to produce principals with the capability to transform schools to be professional learning communities that nurture innovative students and teachers (Hargreaves, Halasz & Pont, 2007), one that is driven by knowledge and learning. This espoused theory is premised on the fact that high quality school leadership training, such as the LEP, grooms promising educators to lead schools to new realms of educational excellence, which should in turn improve teaching and learning, student growth and student achievement (Ng, 2013; Stewart, 2012; Darling-Hammond et al 2007). It is also a means to cultivate and strengthen a culture of learning among the teaching force (Harvey & Holland, 2011); a culture of leaders growing leaders, leaders growing teachers, and in the process, inspire and nurture a pipeline of school leaders (e.g. middle-managers, teacher-leaders etc.) who are accomplished in their profession and able to lead fellow educators.

For the most part, this theory of action seems reasonable. Dilworth (1996) noted that many leadership programs produce individuals who are technologically literate and able to deal with intricate problem-solving models, but are rather distanced from the human

dimensions. However in the case of the LEP, it anchors itself firmly in the human dimensions through its social constructivism philosophy. The social orientations of constructivism, commonly linked to Vygotsky (1978), emphasize the cultural and social context in which learning takes place. For example, in the interaction among the LEP participants, knowledge is created, rather than acquired. Participants also have to reflect on why they say the things they say, do the things they do and assume the things they assume. This challenges them to justify and defend their views. As learners learn best with and from one another, the participants are also engaged in learning in a way that they are expected to role-model and lead their staff, students and parents (Ng, 2008).

Second, there is this inherent assumption that by judiciously selecting promising officers for the program, the MOE develops principals who will better manage instructional and organizational change. This shall be critically examined later, but it is worthwhile to note that Singapore uses a "select then train model" rather than a "train then select" one. This is because Singapore is confident that she has the best possible leaders for her schools. Next, there is also a wide range of inputs sought in the selection process (Stewart, 2012). Last, the key in Singapore is not just the nature of the training, but the holistic approach to identifying, developing and retaining talent. Young teachers are continually assessed for leadership potential and given opportunities to demonstrate and learn. Those who exhibit a good track record and have shown potential are groomed into middle-management and then with accompanying experience and training, into vice principal roles, often while still in their late thirties (Stewart, 2012). It is a structured system to develop human capital. In this respect, the selection of participants into the LEP is a holistic and rigorous one.

Policy Instruments   The LEP combines a good mix of policy instruments, which are both strong and salient, at the core of its framework. The policy acts as a mandate for the following reasons. First, the LEP is something that all specially selected vice principals are expected to undertake, and second, instructional and organizational change would not occur with the frequency or consistency if principals did not receive sufficient professional development (Jensen & Clark, 2013). The program is also largely seen as a capacity-building mechanism, which aims to produce highly-able principals who will act as a catalyst for change and innovation. McDowell and Elmore (1987) report that capacity building policy mechanisms have immediate costs but long-term benefits. In this case, resources are invested to ensure a well-trained teaching faculty at the NIE, a curriculum that is constantly reviewed to reflect educational changes and principal-mentors who are a good fit to provide sustained support. The benefit is the enhanced skills set of a carefully selected group who will be able to contribute significantly to school improvement in the future.

The most beneficial inducement attached to the policy is the sponsorship of the course fee per participant and the fact each participant will receive a salary and as well as

remunerations during the full-time training. The heavy investment on human capital indicates that the participants' contributions are greatly valued. The inducement is also seen as a form of career progression and talent development. The strategic steps taken to strengthen school leadership in Singapore are similar as those taken by effective educational systems in Finland and the United States; however a key difference is that Singapore places a strong emphasis on critical self-reflection and building change in organizations through sustained mentoring.

Policy Support   The LEP is a sustained training program used to develop principal-ship capability by identifying the kind of leaders that is needed first, and then providing the individuals with the required skills and knowledge. And since the MOE has been tracking the performance and development of its officers, it is in a suitable position to recommend developmental needs of the LEP participants. The NIE augments these needs with additional inputs based on what will give Singapore school leaders an edge in leadership (Ng, 2013). A similar model is also evident in Hong Kong. The Education Bureau very carefully selects and collaborates with its facilitators on a customized training program that is aligned with the educational reform efforts (Jensen & Clark, 2013). In this way, the university–government partnership ensures that the training addresses critical practice areas that are critical for learning and also more enduring theoretical areas.

The American Institutes for Research (2010) assert that school leadership is most productive when situated within a supportive centralized leadership that sets the vision and expectations, but at the same time is also willing to step back and allow the principal with the autonomy to make forward-looking school-based decisions. It must be noted that some degree of decentralization is critical. The LEP is not intended to be prescriptive, but rather empowers leaders with the flexibility on how they will go on to lead school improvement efforts. This allows MOE principals to engage policy in terms that suit their values, interests and knowledge, while ensuring that their actions are aligned with the broader goals of education (Cohen, Moffitt, & Goldin, 2007), thereby bridging the gap between policy and practice.

Effects of the LEP

The LEP has had promising results. Ng (2008) gathered feedback from 48 participants via an open-ended questionnaire, which was followed through with a number of informal interviews. He reported that 88% of the participants benefited from the open sharing and responsiveness of their mentors to their learning needs. Participants also felt more confident in using their mentoring experience to develop their middle-managers and teachers. The principal-mentors embraced the opportunity for self-reflection and intellectual sparring. The four main themes that emerged from the participants' learning are as follows:

      i)   Learning to conduct futuring,
      ii)   Learning to contextualize,
      iii)   Learning to be adaptable and flexible, and
      iv)   Learning to collaborate in a self-organizing paradigm.

Futuring: Better understanding of the ground sentiments The CAP provided an opportunity for the LEP participants to handle complexities that reflect the challenges of school leadership in a real-life context. Some notable value-adding innovations, among many others include alternative assessments, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and socio-emotional learning in academic instruction (NIE, 2015). Through the process of doing the project, the participants experienced first-hand the challenges of leading people without rank and facilitating changes without position. Participants also learned that it is necessary for leaders to contextualize theories to the local situations and role-model behavior as this helps in garnering teacher buy-in (Ng, 2013; Jensen & Clark, 2013). This was a valuable learning experience as principals usually implement policies based on what is essential (Rost, 1991; Robinson, 2007). The process also undergirds the importance of establishing support from the ground in order to create meaningful school change.

Contextualizing best practices into the local context The overseas study visits were seen as an effective way to learn from other countries' experiences, expand their network connections, and challenge participants' thinking on how good practices can be adapted to fit their school context. For example, a team that went to Alberta noted how disconnected youths were encouraged to continue studying to complete high school with the slogan "You are not broken - Finish School Your Way." The team that went to Finland saw how the education ministry pushes for more and better use of ICT in schools through the development of educational games (Ng, 2008). It is widely agreed that the LEP engages participants in educative processes that draw on their life experiences and inner wisdom to better equip them to make more informed decisions about school improvement.

Recognized for developing leadership talent worldwide Since the LEP's inception in 2001, the program has won widespread admiration from educators in many parts of the world. Over the years, a number of senior educators from Brunei have also joined Singaporeans for this training (NIE, 2007). In addition, every year, many educators and government officials from overseas are invited to visit and discuss the program's approach in preparing principals (NIE, 2014). Notably, the Leaders in Education Program International (LEPI), which was launched in 2005 builds on the highly successful LEP. This program exposes school principals and education officers across the world to the current thinking in educational leadership and provides them the opportunity to spend time in Singapore schools to experience first-hand how success or innovation is achieved

(NIE, 2015). This is testimony to the positive effects of the LEP and how this model has the potential to be expanded to benefit a larger group (Gurr, Drysdale & Mulford, 2006).

Challenges
To date, it is unclear if the financial resources in running the LEP is making a lasting impact on student learning, curricular innovations and teacher-development. If so, how sustainable is the program and to what extent does it offer a high return on investment? Given the rise of accountability systems in education today, these are pertinent questions that should be answered (Slavin, 2002).

Balance between instructional and organizational leadership   Results of hierarchical linear models, which are aligned with the aims of the LEP, indicate that principals perceive they have high influence in instructional and supervisory activities when the teachers in their schools actively participate in decision-making (Printy, 2010). This finding suggests the benefits of mutuality in school leadership. However, Singaporean principals are hesitant to engage teachers in school change decisions (Walker & Hallinger, 2015). In a qualitative study of principals who were once part of a LEP cohort, Ng (2008) reports that principals spent less than 10% of their time on functions traditionally defined as instruction (such as classroom observations and professional development for teachers), making it a challenge to continuously spearhead curricular innovation (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). This view was similarly corroborated in the report *Leadership Matters* by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (2013). Researchers revealed that many principals had multiple, often conflicting priorities, which included responding to the needs of stakeholders and superiors. In Finland, for example, all principals have to teach for a minimum of 2 hours per week (Hargreaves et al, 2007) and this is in addition to them leading school change and serving the wider community. In Tennessee, about 50% of a teacher's evaluation is based on principal observations (Darling-Hammond et al, 2007). While these requirements are well intentioned, advocates of this approach fail to adequately recognize the demands on the contemporary principal.

Balance between imagination and pragmatism   'Futuring' is a major component in the CAP undertaken by participants in their attachment school. According to Albrecht (1994, p. 42), 'futuring' is "about riding shock waves, monitoring critical indicators and exploiting trends." Many LEP graduates gave feedback that since they would eventually be taking up leadership positions in their attachment schools, they would not get to implement all the ideas in their plans, which assumed the development of a school from scratch (Ng, 2008). Another critical challenge is finding the right calibration between imagination and pragmatism. By freeing participants from the shackles of reality, it sparks creativity but they find less application in their immediate circumstances. This is particularly true for principals who are deployed to assume leadership roles in low-performing or failing schools. It is a challenge to prioritize innovation when resources and talent are limited. In

such contexts, a behavioral change process will prioritize school improvement over innovation.

In Shanghai, for example, the 'Empowered Management Program' is a significant policy aimed at reducing "between schools" inequality. Principals in high-performing schools share ideas, information and resources to help school leaders in low-performing schools (Jensen & Clark, 2013), thereby building effective practices across both schools. This improvement strategy emphasizes leadership development and changing behaviors related to teaching, learning and equity. As effective school improvement will involve a behavioral and a cultural change process, it is rarely, if ever, achieved across a system in the short-term. This requires clear consistent implementation over several years. As a consequence, a contemporary challenge of leadership, in systemic terms, is not merely to distribute leadership, but also to articulate its intent to the stakeholders. Ideally, each principal should be able to address the needs of and relationships between short term and long term improvement during their stint in a school (Dodd & Favaro, 2007), and must also consider how leadership effects will last beyond them and after they leave so that their benefits are spread from one leader to the next (Hargreaves et al, 2007). This will encourage leaders to think hard and critically about how reflective leadership and deliberate collaboration can bring about benefits beyond the school.

Reflection

Being able to identify talent has been a cornerstone of how Singapore develops its leaders across all public service sectors (Darling-Hammond et al, 2010). In retrospect, I notice a concerted emphasis on leveling the playing field for all students through the purposeful deployment of educators. For example, a new human resource policy strongly encourages the deployment of high-performing principals to high-needs schools so as to have direct impact on curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. There are two inherent beliefs here.

First, organizational needs are seen as being more important than the fit between the principal and the school. While this does not come as a surprise, it is possible that a participant's attachment school could be a level that he/she had never been in before. An example would be a principal who has been in a secondary school throughout his teaching career and is now deployed as a principal in a primary school. While there is value in challenging principals to handle complexity, being tasked to adapt to an entirely different system is a tall order. This begs the question, how can we expect principals to be instructional leaders if they are not familiar with the content and curriculum? This may potentially result in school leaders feeling less confident and overwhelmed about their role. Second, there is the belief that a principal who succeeded in one school is able to do the same in another. While this caveat does not always hold, it does support the narrative

that effective school leaders with a successful track record are better able to lead and manage change for a better tomorrow. However is this narrative compelling enough?

The broader view of celebrating principal-ship should be about recognizing that every school—and every student—deserves an effective principal. Although the LEP utilizes selection criteria that are transparent, the program comes across as being highly elitist. Every year, the cohort takes in at most 40 participants out of over 1000 eligible officers. This comes up to about 4-5% of the population, which makes the program "especially-selective." There is also the impending elitist overtone to the LEP structure, just like the 'Teach for America' model; a belief that the best and the brightest can make a positive difference to education (Wasserman, 2011). If talents and financial resources are selectively distributed, it inevitably sends a message that the roles and voices of certain individuals are more valuably perceived. In what ways can we then leverage the merits of the LEP such that all principals also benefit?

To answer this critical question, we must first accept that every school deserves a capable principal. In Finland, almost all novice principals possess the National Qualification for principal-ship. For existing principals, though, there is not a strong tradition of good leadership training because principals are typically promoted through their schools to develop their own roles and their skills on the job (Hargreaves et al, 2007). However, with decreasing enrolment and school closures, Finland realizes that leadership cannot always be learnt on the job. This is a very similar challenge that Singapore faces today. In view of a falling cohort size, 22 secondary schools will merge in the next 2 years (Lim & Ng, 2016). This would translate to lesser principals and hence the need to provide opportunities to deepen principal-ship capability.

On the contrary, Hong Kong strengthened principals' capacity and confidence by having all principals including aspiring, newly appointed and serving principals undergo a new leadership program when the reform policies were implemented. Serving principals were given structured programs that individually identified, planned, and facilitated professional development. Aspiring principals had to complete a 'Certification for Principal-ship' process that included a needs analysis, as well as a 'Preparation for Principal-ship' course (Jensen & Clark, 2013). Both programs focus on the implementation of the reform agenda and leading behavioral change in schools. In view of this existing unevenness, there is an impetus for Singapore to formalize a structure to develop principals' capacity holistically.

But given the LEP's financial efficiency issues, it is not cost-effective to have all potential principals undergo this program. However, policy makers could build on best practices within the LEP to create a stronger and more holistic system of leadership preparation that is scalable and sustainable.

One way is to encourage deep, reflective mentoring, which seeks to promote a culture of leaders developing leaders. This framework is well-documented in many educational systems around the world (Darling-Hammond et al, 2010). For example, many experienced teachers mentor beginning teachers to ease them into the profession (Martin, 2008). Mentoring for professional development is grounded in the belief that the role of the teacher is not a lonely effort and having the ability to relate to peers concerning personal and professional concerns is a way to reduce that sense of isolation (Fluckiger, McGlamery & Edick, 2006). By extending this argument to every potential principal and should the autonomy to work with teachers through professional learning communities be given, this may promote a more reflective leadership practice on a systemic level. Another possible model is to explore the possibility of LEP graduates mentoring fellow principals within their district. This will enable school leaders to engage in personal inquiry and deepen conversations about school improvement, promote an environment that support leaders to learn from, learn with and learn on behalf of other colleagues, and ensure total system alignment between leading change and transforming schools through empowerment and team building.

Last, spearheading curricular innovation that is purposeful and transformative is not a one-person effort; it is a collaborative effort. It requires that principals take on the role as a 'system' leader (Hargreaves et al, 2007). Currently the way Singapore principals function does not sufficiently engage school leaders in lateral, networked leadership (Barber & Mourshed, 2009). However, in Finland, the decentralized system supports school leaders to engage readily with other leaders, parents and the wider community (Harris & Townsend, 2007). This form of leadership across schools is strongly associated with improved teaching and learning. In view that more special education students are expected to be integrated into the Singapore mainstream curriculum (Lim, 2016), school leaders and their teachers will inevitably be faced with unfamiliar pedagogical, behavioral and psychological challenges. Forming cooperative professional partnerships with fellow leaders and stakeholders is strongly seen as a way to align school and municipalities to share resources, best practices and even think systematically about promoting a uniform vision about schooling. If the LEP provides meaningful opportunities for aspiring principals to lead such efforts, the skills and experience will better prepare principals for the uncertainty ahead.

Conclusion

Highly effective schools are often characterized by high leadership stability. Unlike many countries, principal development is a high priority in Singapore's education policy agendas. The LEP is a strong reflection of the goals at the ground level. The key underlying andragogical principle of the LEP is knowledge construction, sharing and application within a social constructivist paradigm. This principle is also aligned with modern

complexity theories, which argue that knowledge emerges from rich dynamic human interactions. In fact, this ability to create and transfer knowledge and, in turn implement creative yet feasible solutions is seen as imperative to a nation's comparative advantage. Moreover, as the LEP pushes aspiring principals to reflect on their educational and personal philosophy, it also facilitates the internalization of values, and promotes self-awareness as well as personal mastery among the participants. This is a major focus in international development today.

However, this model of leadership development is "especially selective" as a principal's role is recognized as being both pivotal and critical. The benefits include developing principals who are able to critically examine future trends in education, look beyond the immediate vision of the school, and develop foresight to move education into the future. It also challenges school leaders to contextualize theories to the local context for productive action. While there are gems within the LEP that can be expanded beyond our education system, other educational settings should not be too quick to emulate a country like Singapore that serves approximately just 500,000 students. In fact, countries like Finland have a much more homogenous racial and socioeconomic diversity than us (Jackson & Hasak, 2014). What works in one context may not work in another; however, if used with a clear purpose, the LEP can serve as a useful framework for principal-ship development. This also opens up the possibility of having experienced principals and even LEP graduates to mentor aspiring school leaders into the "roles" and "minds" of principal-ship. In Singapore, this will be achieved by developing clear plans and effective processes for leadership succession. Positive improvement depends on planned succession, leaving a legacy, mentoring new leaders and creating great leadership density and capacity from which future high level leaders will evolve within a common vision of institutional and societal progress.

Author's Note: The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author, and not necessarily the views of the MOE, Singapore.

About the Author: Prashant Jayaprags is a curriculum officer at the Ministry of Education, Singapore. He started his teaching career at Raffles Institution, an independent all-boy school before pursuing his M.A. degree in education at Columbia University, Teachers College. *Contact:* Prashant Jayaprags a*t prashant_jayapragas@moe.edu.sg*

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