

The model of resource allocation and its implication for student learning

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Abstract

The theory of local school management focused on the decentralization of authority of decision making to school site and placed emphasis upon student learning. there was a significant correlation between local school management and student performance because the students in self-managing schools perform much better than those in school with traditional school management. Based upon the importance of student performance in local school management, this paper aimed to review the model of resource allocation in the field of local school management, which valued student academic performance highly, to uncover how resource allocation contributed to student learning.

Keywords: resource allocation, local school management, student learning

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1. Introduction

There were a variety of terms referring to the concept of local school management such as school-based management, school-based budget, school-site management, self-managing school, shared governance (Clune & White, 1988). Though these terms intended to identify the concept, local school management was chosen throughout this paper for highlighting the transfer of the power of resource allocation to local schools. Likewise, various definitions of local school management had been also found over the course of decades of research. From the perspective of decision making, local school management was able to be seen as an educational system where a local school was the primary unit which makes the most part of decisions (Lindelov, 1981). From the viewpoint of decentralization, Caldwell (2009) argued that local school management referred to “the systematic and consistent decentralization to the school level of authority and responsibility to make decisions on significant matters related to school operations within a centrally determined framework of goals, policies, curriculum, standards, and accountabilities” (p. 55). Based on the concept of localization, Weisner maintained that local school management was designed for an approach whereby local schools at all levels got higher authority of management than before. The authentic concern, creativity, and initiative were able to be stimulated for students’ benefit by means of providing school stakeholders with opportunities to develop professionalism (as cited in Clune & White, 1988). Thus according to those scores of definitions, local school management not merely focused on the decentralization of authority of decision making to school site but placed emphasis upon student as well because after all, student learning had been the fundamental educational goal all over the world (Bifulco, Duncombe, & Yinger, 2005; Cross, 2004; Ross, Gray, & Sibbald, 2008).

Furthermore, Caldwell and Spinks (2008) had indicated three main tracks for change in the worldwide public education, including the building of local school management system, a great emphasis upon student learning environment, and creating schools for a knowledge society and global economy. From Caldwell’s observation, we could see that local schools with the new model of management built were changed for their adaptation to the socio-economical world of knowledge management and that obviously local school management was tied closely with student performance. From this perspective, local school management could be considered one of primary educational changes, integrated with other reform policies to uplift education quality for students (as cited in Gamage & Zajda, 2009). Likewise, proposing administrative decentralization and

community participation on local school management was also inclined to lead to the improvement of the educational progress of students (Ornstein, 1983). According to Caldwell's and his colleagues' (2002, 2003) studies, there was a significant correlation between local school management and student performance because the students in self-managing schools perform much better than those in school with traditional school management. Thus, based upon the importance of student performance in local school management, this paper aimed to review the model of resource allocation in the field of local school management, which valued student academic performance highly, to uncover how resource allocation contributed to student learning.

2. The model of resource allocation

In the early days, those models of local school management usually focused on transferring power at all levels to local school sites as Ornstein (1983) had proposed the models of administrative decentralization and community participation and control. The term "administrative decentralization" signified a process whereby a school system was separated into several smaller units and the power to make decisions shared by administrative boards of education. The terms "community participation and control" were concerned with community involvement in school matters where community groups function either as advisory ones that provided suggestion for school board or as legal members of school board to participate in the process of decision making. Moreover, apart from Ornstein's models, the three models of power balance in school site were further presented: principal-control model, teacher-control model, and community-control model (Drury & Douglas, 1994). The principal-control model involved the absolute power of a school principal to make significant decisions endowed from the district-level educational authorities. The teacher-control model in effect related to teacher empowerment, which teachers were given the most authority to dominate school operation. The community-control model dealt with school councils composed of parents and community members to control school management rather than principals and teachers. As a matter of fact, other researches also illustrated similar models as the three ones above (Hill & Bonan, 1991; Murphy & Beck, 1995; Wohistetter & McCurdy, 1991). Obviously, these early models of local school management were based upon decentralization and devolution of power and authority to school site.

As mentioned above, since local school management was popular around the world, its theoretical models had been created and developed by a numerous number of world-wide scholars. However, most of the models were apt to lay more emphasis on dimensions of decentralization to schools rather than on the need of students themselves. Caldwell and Spinks had paid much attention to student learning pertinent to the allocation of school resources. This was not the resources allocated for school improvement as other models focusing on school comprehensive control of the authority of resource allocation to improve school effectiveness but ones for school

transformation as a “significant systematic and sustained change that secures success for all students in all settings, thus contributing to the well-being of the student and society” (p.3-4) (Caldwell & Spinks, 2008). Thus, the implication of transformation referred to the constant transformation of schools so as to respond to the continuous alteration of educational environment and to individual school changes for specific students or settings, attained necessarily with the aid of avenues to the allocations of resources (Caldwell & Spinks, 2008).

Supposing a school would be transformed effectively, the model of resource allocation had to be proposed. The components in the model were four forms of resources, including intellectual capital, social capital, spiritual capital, and financial capital. The four capitals linked with one another intended to guarantee for the success of all student learning at schools, located in the very center of the model. Simply stated, the student was taken as the focus of implementing resource allocation and that of the outcome of those local school management programs.

The intellectual capital in this model was illustrated as the level of knowledge and skill of school staff that work for school (Caldwell, 2008). The quality of teachers associated with teaching knowledge and skill was the very crucial factor that had a great impact upon student academic achievement, revealing the significance of intellectual capital for students. Caldwell and Spinks further adapted Rueff and Stringer’s (2006) theory of talent force to demonstrate the intellectual capital. The intellectual capital was defined as knowledge and skill which were needed for transforming schools into self-managing ones. Staff of schools that endeavored to transform ought to follow and adopt the “talent force” approach rather than the “workforce” one (Caldwell & Spinks, 2008). The assumptions of these two approaches were concerned with the process of procuring school staff. In the work force approach, the supply of school staff which waited to be hired was always assured, the owners appeared arrogant and ignorant of what the staff needed the most. The work force approach adopted a traditional way to make it a routine to invite the applications on the phone and preparing short lists manually. The school staff was always expected to do what they were told to do under school’s control completely. The performance management of the work force approach could be viewed as soft for its evaluation of individual workers seemed little or no difference in judgments from their performance. As for the location of employment, schools who adopted the work force approach expected their staff to work and live at the local school site and would restrict the sources of employment within the local border. In sum, the work force approach might be seen as a short-sighted strategy merely procuring the source of employment only from local sites and using the soft measurement of staff’s work performance.

In contrast to the work force approach, the talent force one was highlighted to be the requirement for school expecting to transform into a self-managing one. The feature of staff’s availability was the humility for the need of the best ones rather than a great number of them. The high technology was used to look for those excellent staff, drawing their attention by means of new

websites and search agencies. In the regard of staff control, the talent force approach would adopt the way of shared leadership to put emphasis upon the importance of staff's professional skills and knowledge. Schools with the talent force approach could also search for national or international employees and create the best environment for the best graduates. The individual work performance was necessarily included in the contract of employment, whose performance indicators would be negotiated between employers and employees. This way of evaluation in contrast with the soft one in workforce approach was called hard one. The staff was not necessarily hired from the local place but from locations far away for the best employees may not be found within the local place. The best people in another location were also able to work well by ways of modern advanced technology, such as email, videoconference. The strategy of talent force approach was not as short-sighted as the workforce one because it assumed a compelling strategic way to search for the best people for schools so as to set up the intellectual capital.

Unlike the intellectual capital referring to the level of knowledge and skill of school staff, the social capital was defined as the strength of formal and informal partnership between school and stakeholders outside school, including parents, community, industry, any organization which supported school or was supported by school (Caldwell, 2008). In other words, social capital could provide a plenty of resources for school through the mutual support between school and community (Caldwell & Spinks, 2008). An example of Finland taken by Caldwell (2008) was that community would support local school student extra-curricular activities financially, and on the contrary, the local school might support the community as well in the ways of providing free school facilities for adult education. Furthermore, Caldwell (2008) cited Fukuyama's (1995) definition of social capital to depict it as the capacity of people that strived for a common purpose in groups or teams. To put it differently, social capital in the model of resource allocation addressed the relationship between school and non-school stakeholders, all of whom worked to achieve common educational goals. Take the example of Finland above, the same purpose of local school and community was the very educational one whether the learners were the youth or the elderly. Moreover, the importance of the association between social capital and student performance was highlighted through the study of Coleman (1988). According to Coleman's study, students with the high level of social capital performed better in academic learning than those in school with the low level of social capital. Stated another way, as the link or network of school-community is stronger, students could be easily supported by community and their academic achievement or outcome might better as expected.

Aside from intellectual and social capitals, financial capital was also an important form in the model of resource allocation. Literally, it involved the monetary resource that supported school development and activities (Caldwell, 2008). More specifically, financial resource would pertain to students' need of academic learning and cultivation. In fact, the teacher quality again proposed by Caldwell was the key factor that affected the allocation of financial resources due to the fact that

enough money and fund could afford and sustain the best teachers for students. Therefore, we could see that financial resource like the other two still guaranteed the success of student learning resulting from good quality of teachers. What is more, three main issues of financial capital were proposed as illustrated below, including the identification of the level of resources, allocation of resources to meet students' need, and the enhancement of school efficient deployment of available resources (Caldwell & Spinks, 2008). First, it was important for a school leader to confirm the quantity of monetary resource sufficient for security of student's successful learning. That is, student's outcome of academic learning was the main concern of the allocation of financial resource in an educational transformational school as Caldwell indicated. Second, financial resource must be deployed and distributed based on the number and nature of students. Namely, it was vital for a self-managing school to employ monetary resources to meet the need of students especially in some difficult or challenging environment so as to expect good student academic outcome. Third, a local school ought to increase her capacity to allot available financial resources appropriately to support students' individual learning effectively and efficiently. As students had their own needs for the improvement of academic learning, school should offer them appropriate different financial supports, such as tuition, books, learning materials, in order to enhance academic performance effectively. The efficient monetary support was also essential for students in challenging circumstances on account of the fact that students' learning could not ignored.

Last but not least, spiritual capital was viewed as resources about the strength of morality in school and the level of values, beliefs, and attitudes concerning school life and teaching (Caldwell, 2008). This capital might be founded on religion in some schools while it was related to values or ethics shared by students, teachers, and the members of community in other schools. In effect, spiritual capital could be unveiled and realized through the understanding of social capital. Caldwell had adopted Putnam's (2000) research to explain that there were half shared religious beliefs and practices accounted in the theories of social capital. Van Galen's (1997) research on social capital and school community was also further employed by Caldwell to place much emphasis on the advantages of spiritual capital. Sharing the same values with schools, the community was willing to participate in and in favor of school activities, which might lead to the decrease of school discipline problems and to the increase of higher student achievement. Apart from social capital, spiritual capital could be connected to intellectual capital as well. Malloch's (2003) research cited by Caldwell supported the assumption that both of social capital and intellectual capital were formulated on the basis of the existence of good faith, truth, a sense of purpose, and morality. The human society and economy could not develop and grow well without the abundance of spiritual capital.

In addition to the four forms, governance was a process that developed school projects and programs, set the priorities of school matters, allocated budgets, established partnership with

community to support school activities, and made effective decisions based on accurate data (Caldwell & Spinks, 2008). To put that differently, governance could be considered the procedure that schools constructed their intellectual, social, financial, and spiritual capitals, aligning them together to achieve educational goals (Caldwell, 2008). In this model of alignment, governance was the core component that connected these four forms of capitals together to secure the success for all students. There were five domains adapted from the work in the APEC project (Department of Education, 2005) by Caldwell and Spinks (2008) to assess the governance of schools as follows: purpose, process, policy, scope, and standards. Purpose, first of all, referred to the missions and goals that schools intended to achieve and completed for students' academic outcomes. Second, process involved the engagement of stakeholders, such as parents or members of school communities, with regard to school policies or plans. Third, policy was concerned with the legitimacy, representativeness, accountabilities, and efficiency. Fourth, scope consisted of the three forms of capitals, including intellectual capitals, financial capitals, and social capitals. At last, standards were made up of specificity, data, transparency, replication, and ownership. These five domains included 20 indicators as an effective instrument for schools' self-assessment of governance (Caldwell & Spinks, 2008).

3. The implications for student learning

As mentioned above, the model of resource allocation was a model pertinent to the resources transferred from districts and represented the change of attention from school administrative management to student performance in the field of local school management. There were three main implications which could be found in this model, including student-focused improvement, school distributed leadership, and alignment of the four capitals. These implications might help school managers to understand this model better.

3.1 Student-focused improvement

Local school management had been looked upon as educational or school improvement to promote school effectiveness and education quality (Cheng, 1996; Fullan & Watson, 2000). By means of offering power and authority to local schools, various dimensions of school effectiveness, such as administrative communication and coordination, teaching quality, student academic performances, and support of community and parents (Hoy, 2001; Scheerens, 1992), could be expected to be put into practice. Nevertheless, local school management ought not to be just illustrated as the decentralization of power to the level of school sites, but should be considered a shift to a process of multilevel self-management where school stakeholders pursued systematic and continuous improvement in a changing educational environment (Cheung & Cheng, 2002). Caldwell and Spinks' model of resource allocation responded to school improvement resulted from

the practice and influence of local school management. In order to face the global challenge, schools had to arrange and allocated the four forms of capitals well on the basis of school backgrounds, current conditions, and future development plans. These arrangement and allocation of resources in essence had to meet the need of student learning so that schools should strive to create new unprecedented opportunity for it. The capabilities of teachers and school administrators also needed to be built to develop curriculum and teaching strategies so as to meet students' need of learning, take priorities in local setting into consideration, and increase the capacity to monitor student academic performance (Caldwell, 2009).

3.2 Distributed leadership in local school management

As noted previously, the four forms of capitals should be aligned by the process of governance to secure the success of all students. Governance should be accomplished in the distributed leadership style rather than the single traditional hierarchal leadership. As Zuboff and Maxmin (2004) argued, the distributed leadership, considered one of key elements in self-managing school, emerged within or across schools in federations and supports teaching and learning through various programs (as cited in Caldwell & Spinks, 2008). To put it differently, because student learning was the chief educational objectives in schools, school stakeholders related to it should be involved in school decision making and share leadership with principals and administrators concerned. Furthermore, Caldwell's (1993) interpretation of principal roles of leadership in self-managing schools in Australia and New Zealand consisted of four forms of leadership styles, including cultural leadership, strategic leadership, educational leadership, accountable leadership. Cultural leadership described the capacity of leaders to work with others in school community to maintain a culture of excellence and equity. Strategic leadership literally dealt with the ability to be in charge of and responsible for his or her own agenda, sharing such knowledge with others in school community, formulating and monitoring effective strategies for school development. Educational leadership involved the nurturing of a learning community where the process of teaching and learning and the mutual support of school stakeholders are laid much emphasis. Accountable leadership was concerned with the capacity of school leaders to work with others for the responses to the need of students, community, and society within the specific framework of responsibility of local school management. Based on the elements of leadership styles in self-managing school discussed above, obviously school leadership distributed and shared by school stakeholders had pervaded in the concept and practice of local school management.

3.3 The alignment of the four capitals

As was mentioned above, the model of resource allocation comprised the four forms of capitals, intellectual capital, social capital, spiritual capital, and financial capital. Although these capitals

respectively represented distinct resources which could support school effective operation, it was necessary for a local school to drive them to work in synchronism to achieve its own transformation. Simply stated, this model composed of the four capitals was called a model of alignment (Caldwell & Spinks, 2008). In the process of resource allocation, these four capitals needed to be taken into consideration based on individualized schools and personalized students. Caldwell and Spinks (2008) cited the Innovative Designs for Enhancing Achievement in Schools Project (IDEAS) developed by the University of Southern Queensland to demonstrate and interpret the alignment. This IDEAS model tried to search for the alignment among school wide pedagogy, cohesive community, and strategic foundations, which respectively represented intellectual capital, social capital, and spiritual capital. It was the effective alignment of the three capitals that led to the successful implementation of the IDEAS model. Moreover, as noted previously, Malloch's (2003) research revealed the alignment among spiritual capital, intellectual capital, and social capital as the first had a great impact on the latter two. If the shared beliefs and ethics pervaded within and outside schools, it was not hard for school stakeholders to accept teachers' instruction and seek the mutual support of community and school. However, securing the alignment successfully had to need the support of governance. It was the formal process of decision making in a manner of shared distributed leadership to contribute to the success for all students.

4. Conclusion

The model of resource allocation ought to be referred to as a new perspective for local school management, directly demonstrating how a local school arranged a great number of budgets appropriately transferred from the board of education in school district. Not only the distribution of monetary resources but also the investment of intellectual, social, and spiritual resources should a local school searching for its own transformation care about. More specifically, it must be noted that good teacher quality, good relation with school community, sufficient funds, and shared morality and value within school were the crucial factors in a school which expected to achieve self-management. All of these resources aimed to achieve the ultimate goal that secured the success of all students in all settings, which revealed the focus of this model on student academic performance. Nevertheless, high academic achievement should not be the only objective that students had to attain. Formulating the appropriate attitude and belief toward getting along with peers, teachers, and parents, was quite significant. For instance, a social and character program based on the concepts of local school management intended to prevent substance use, violent behavior, and sexual activity that American primary school students might encounter (Beets, et al., 2009). These American primary school students should learn how to solve and overcome these critical problems by means of teachers' instruction and assistance in campus life. It was also dangerous to put all school resources upon student academic learning and to neglect other things

that students needed to learn how to adapt themselves to societies in the future. Hence, the more resources a local school had, the more comprehensive allocation should be put on.

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