



Establishing a Set of Professional Standards for Principals in Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to formulate a set of professional standards for principals in Taiwan. The research methodology employed was fuzzy Delphi. An initial set of 52 standards was formulated and then revised by a panel of 20 experts. Main findings of this study are: the standards are divided into four dimensions: professional knowledge (14 standards), value and vision (11 standards), professional attitude (14 standards), and professional behavior and performance (13 standards). The standards established by this study can be a useful tool for the recruitment of future school principals and a useful instrument for the evaluation of current school principals due to the fact that Taiwan currently lacks a standardized set of professional standards for school principals. This study provided a good example for formulating a set of professional standards for school principals suited to a certain country for having taken its specific local context into account and having learned from the sets of standards in use elsewhere as well.

Keywords: professional standards; principal; Taiwan; fuzzy Delphi

RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Principal leadership has increasingly become one of the main focuses in education reforms across countries over the past decades (Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2008; UNESCO & SPBEA, 2020). Recent studies have identified that student learning gains occurred as a result of such initiatives only when the principal in charge holds the belief that improvement is possible, and have also found the substantial role that an effective principal plays in the academic success of students due to the fact that principals create stimulating learning environments and it to be second only to that of the classroom teacher (Leithwood, & Anderson, 2010; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; UNESCO & SPBEA, 2020; Wahlstrom, Louis,; Waters and Cameron, 2007). It appears that the importance of principal standards lies in their serving as a way for improving school effectiveness and student performance, and thus the standards for principals plays a key role in consolidating an education system (UNESCO & SPBEA, 2020). However, many countries currently lack a standardized set of professional standards for school principals.

In formulating such a set of standards, it will be helpful to review the relevant literature on theory and practice of principals in the world. Although much can be learned by referring to the existing

literature, it will be necessary to take local conditions and contexts into account so as to build a system of standards suited to Taiwan. A substantial body of the relevant findings shows that effective leaders understand their impact and that leadership must be contextualized (Linda, 2014). Recently the context within which school principals work in Taiwan has been characterized by increasingly complex expectations for school principals and greater demands for accountability. These changes have resulted in calls for the demands of established professional standards for school principals (Ingvarson, et al., 2006). The purpose of the present study is to establish a set of professional standards for principals in Taiwan which takes into account both international trends and local needs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this section is to review some of the existing literature on concept of professional standards for school principals, and as well as the related theories and empirical studies. This section has three parts: the concept of principal standards; the relevant theoretical considerations; and a review of the related studies.

The Concept of Principal Standards

Principal standards that describe the nature and scope of principal work and set out the main areas of practice and provide elaborations on what the standards mean in terms of what school principals should know and be able to do as defining the professional standards for duties of school principals (Fedorchuk, 2019; Ingvarson, et al., 2006; Karatas, 2016). It is suggested that the standards of school principals should be used to (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2015; Department for Education, 2015; Manna, 2015; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015; UNESCO and SPBEA, 2020): 1) shape principals' own practice and professional development; 2) inform the evaluation and appraisal of school principals; 3) support the recruitment and appointment of school principals; 4) provide a framework for training school principals; 5) help schools clarify the knowledge, skills and attitudes all principals are expected to equip and act; 6) improve the quality and effectiveness of principal leadership; 7) provide a framework for identifying the professional development needs of principals; 8) inspire public confidence in school principals; 9) serve as a guiding force for states and leadership preparation programs as they identify and develop the specific knowledge, skills, dispositions, and other characteristics required of school principals to achieve real student success in school; 10) define the scope of the principal's job, including what principals should know and be able to do.

The Relevant Theoretical Consideration and Practice

According to Clifford, Behrstock-Sherratt, and Feters (2012), there are two emerging policy perspectives on principal effectiveness. One is the practice perspective, in which principal effectiveness is defined by the quality of the practice of principal's leadership; the other is the impact perspective, in which principal effectiveness is defined by the principal's impact on his or her school (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). In an important report titled "The Ripple Effect: A Synthesis of Research on Principal Influence to Inform Performance Evaluation Design," Clifford, Behrstock-Sherratt, and Feters (2012) present a meta-analysis of previous research and propose a framework for explaining principal effectiveness that comprises the direct and indirect effects of practices of principal leadership. At the center of the ripple effect is practice of a principal's leadership, which is made of his or her knowledge, dispositions, and actions. Research suggests that practices of a principal's leadership influence the successful implementation of curriculum that

have an influence on school effectiveness and student learning (Wahlstrom, Louis, Leithwood, & Anderson, 2010). Their findings also support the present widespread interest in establishing professional standards for school principals so as to improve their leadership as a key to the successful implementation of large-scale education reform.

The existing literature has shown that professional standards for principal has been established in a number of countries especially the English speaking countries. In the UK National Standards for Headteachers are developed corporately by Teacher Training Agency. Hereafter, National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services (NCLSCS) was established (Department for Education and Skills 2004; National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services, 2010). The USA is a typical country of decentralization of education. However, after ISLLC was established in the middle of 1990s, it stimulated every state to develop corporately the common framework of training and professional development of primary school and junior high school principals (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 2000). The principal standards of the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand are compared as can be seen from Figure 1 and Table 1.

Council of Chief State School Officers (2014)	BCPVPA Standards Committee (2013)	Linda(2014)	Department for Education (2015)	Ministry of Education (2017)
• Vision and Mission • Instructional Capacity • Instruction • Curriculum and Assessment • Community of Care for Students • Professional Culture for Teachers and Staff • Communities of Engagement for Families • Operations and Management • Ethical Principles and Professional Norms • Equity and Cultural Responsiveness • Continuous School Improvement	• Values, Vision, & Mission • Ethical Decision Making • Supervision for Learning • Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment • Intrapersonal Capacity • Interpersonal Capacity • Cultural Leadership • Management and Administration • Community Building	• Leading teaching and learning • Developing self and others • Leading improvement, innovation and change • Leading the management of the school • Engaging and working with the commune	• Qualities and knowledge • Pupils and staff • Systems and process • The self-improving school system	• Culture Provide professional leadership that focuses the school culture on enhancing learning and teaching. • Pedagogy Create a learning environment in which there is an expectation that all students will experience success in learning. • Systems Develop and use management systems to support and enhance student learning. • Partnerships and Networks Strengthen communication and relationships to enhance student learning.

Figure 1 The Principals' Professional Standards among the Five Countries

Table 1 A Summary of the Principals' Professional Standards among the Five Countries

Country	Standard Title	Standard Aspect	Mandatory or not	Subject	Standard Structure	Standard Number
UK	The National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers	4 Domains	Yes	Principal	2- layer	24
USA	The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, ISLLC leadership Standards	11Indicators	No	Principal	1-layer	11
Canada	The British Columbia Principals' & Vice Principals' Association, BCCPAC Standards	4 Domains	Yes	Principal and Vice Principal	2-layer	9
Australia	Australian Professional Standard for Principals	5 Key Professional Practices	NO	Principal	2-layer	5
New Zealand	Professional Standards for Secondary Principals	4 Areas of Practice	Yes	Principal	2-layer	31

A Review of the Relevant Studies

A number of studies directly relating to principal standards can be found in the existing literature (Fedorchuk, 2019; Glenewinkel, 2011; Karatas, 2016; Militello et al., 2013). First of all, in his study "Professional Standard of a School Principal: Russian and International Experience," Fedorchuk (2019) presents an analysis of the Russian and international practice of implementing professional standards for the leadership activities of the head of an education organization. This study also takes the problem of developing principles of structured professional standards and a system for integrating personnel standards into the system of professional development into account, and finally proposes a list of professional standards for school principals. In another related study, "Principal Leadership and Mathematics Achievement: An International Comparative Study," Shin and Slater (2010) examine and compare the differences and similarities in the impact of principal leadership on student mathematics achievement in different regions worldwide using TIMSS international data.

In another relevant study, "Professional Standards for School Principals in Turkey," Karatas (2016) proposes a set of professional standards for school principals in Turkey. The 7-point, Likert-type questionnaire Professional Standards Scale for School Leaders designed by the researcher was administered to 328 private school principals in Turkey. The factor analysis of the scale had an internal consistency coefficient of 0.994 and explained 77.2% of the professional standards of school leadership. According to the results, Karatas categorized the proficiency areas of school leaders into (1) knowledge base, (2) effective communication, (3) institution management, (4) change leadership, (5) technology leadership, (6) educational leadership, (7) school-environment relations; and (8) life and society. In another related study, "How Professional Standards Guide Practice for School Principals," Militello et al. (2013) examine how 61 head teachers in the US state of North Carolina put prescribed leadership standards into practice. They found that principals set strikingly different priorities in applying prescribed and codified standards. Also of interest is the study "How Do Superintendents Use the ISLLC Standards to Evaluate Principals? Or Do They?" in which Glenewinkel (2011) examines a set of standards for the training of candidates for public

school administrative positions formulated in 1996 by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), a committee formed by the Council of Chief School Officers (CSSO). The purpose of the study was to determine to what degree school district superintendents in Washington state use the ISLLC standards to evaluate the performance of principals. In another noteworthy study, Taipale (2012) discusses a survey commissioned by the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) in 2011 to look at the qualifications and continuing education requirements for school principals. The aims of the study were to explore school leadership systems and leadership training practices; to compare the plans relating to qualifications, pre-service training programs, and on-the-job professional development with those of other countries; and to design new professional practices and training models for school principals in Finland.

RESEARCH METHOD

The methods employed in this study was fuzzy Delphi. The Delphi method is a knowledge acquisition technique based on responses provided by a panel of experts (Habibia, Jahantigh, & Sarafrazi, 2015), and was developed in the late 1950s by the U.S. RAND Corporation to forecast the impact of technology on warfare (Powell, 2003; Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004). Ambiguity has been a serious shortcoming of the Delphi method since its inception. Thus Murray, Pipino, & Gige (1985) conducted a pilot study in which the Delphi method was used in conjunction with fuzzy sets, and a combination of the traditional Delphi method and fuzzy set theory has been developed to address the ambiguity of the Delphi panel consensus (Ishikawa et al., 1993). Habibia, Jahantigh, & Sarafrazi (2015) have devised a clear solution for ending the rounds used in the Delphi method. In the present study a single round of the fuzzy Delphi technique was used.

Based on the review of the existing literature and taking local conditions in Taiwan into account, an initial set of standards for principals in Taiwan was developed as follows:

Dimension 1. Professional Knowledge

- 1-1 Policy and leadership knowledge
- 1-2 Decision making knowledge and capability
- 1-3 Administration skill
- 1-4 Public relationship ability
- 1-5 School context knowledge from local to global
- 1-6 Political and financial knowledge
- 1-7 Communication skill
- 1-8 Interpersonal management
- 1-9 Social interaction
- 1-10 Curriculum leadership and instructional leadership
- 1-11 Planning and leadership
- 1-12 Practical knowledge of school operation
- 1-13 Motivating staff
- 1-14 Organizational management and construction

Dimension 2. Value and Vision

- 2-1 Educational philosophy and value
- 2-2 Vision and belief
- 2-3 Respect and flexibility

- 2-4 School development
- 2-5 Ethical belief
- 2-6 Moral behavior
- 2-7 Professional code
- 2-8 Personal integrity
- 2-9 Social models
- 2-10 Integrative capability
- 2-11 Innovative ideas

Dimension 3. Professional Attitude

- 3-1 Positive and optimistic
- 3-2 Study and innovation
- 3-3 Leading positive development
- 3-4 Positive relationships
- 3-5 Reflection and responsibility
- 3-6 International links
- 3-7 Transparency and reliability
- 3-8 Fair motivating system
- 3-9 Accountability
- 3-10 Resource distribution and deployment
- 3-11 establishing partnerships and cooperation
- 3-12 Self-improvement
- 3-13 Supporting professional development
- 3-14 Promoting educational value

Dimension 4. Professional Behavior and Performance

- 4-1 Contextual sensibility and judgement
- 4-2 Negotiation and bargaining
- 4-3 Implementation capacity
- 4-4 Empowerment
- 4-5 Adventure
- 4-6 Improving student achievement and well-being
- 4-7 Parental education
- 4-8 Building an open climate
- 4-9 Establishing a supporting ethos
- 4-10 Building a safe, quiet, and orderly school environment
- 4-11 Encouraging and developing good student behavior
- 4-12 Distributive leadership
- 4-13 Facilitating student excellence

These initial standards were modified using the fuzzy Delphi approach, and were revised by a panel of 20 experts. The initial standards are divided into four dimensions (professional knowledge, value and vision, professional attitude, and professional behavior and performance) and consist of 52 second-level standards. Based on the findings obtained with fuzzy Delphi, the standards were revised and confirmed by the panel.

Max-min was used to integrate the 20 experts' opinions. When there is common consensus, the researcher calculates the Triangular Fuzzy Numbers of importance of the measures. If the first expert's evaluation on the importance of k measure is $\tilde{W}_{lk} = (a_{lk}, b_{lk}, c_{lk})$, $l = 1, 2, 3, \dots, m$, fuzzy weight of k measure will be $\tilde{W}_k$. The calculation is shown below:

$$\tilde{W}_k = (a_k, b_k, c_k), k = 1, 2, 3, \dots, n$$

$$a_k = \text{Min}_l \{a_{lk}\}, b_{lk} = \sqrt[m]{\prod_l^m b_{lk}}, c_k = \text{Max}_l \{c_{lk}\}$$

($\tilde{W}_k$: Fuzzy Weight; lk : the first expert's evaluation of importance of k measure; n : number of measures; m : number of experts)

The total effectiveness value of the triangular fuzzy number was set at 0.6, which serves as the threshold value ($\alpha = 0.6$) for evaluating the measures. All the measures were higher than the threshold value 0.6, indicating that the 52 measures are well suited to serve as professional standards of principals in Taiwan. Table 2 below present the fuzzy Delphi analysis of the measures.

Table 2 The Results of the Fuzzy Delphi Analysis

No.	Indicator item	Anti-fuzzy number (a_k (L), c_k (U), total effectiveness values)
1-1	Policy and leadership knowledge	(0.797, 0.467, 0.665)
1-2	Decision making knowledge and capability	(0.788, 0.455, 0.667)
1-3	Administration skill	(0.756, 0.459, 0.649)
1-4	Public relationship ability	(0.765, 0.458, 0.654)
1-5	School context knowledge from local to global	(0.679, 0.444, 0.618)
1-6	Political and financial knowledge	(0.681, 0.452, 0.615)
1-7	Communication skill	(0.788, 0.324, 0.732)
1-8	Interpersonal management	(0.784, 0.455, 0.664)
1-9	Social interaction	(0.705, 0.451, 0.627)
1-10	Curriculum leadership and instructional leadership	(0.769, 0.445, 0.662)
1-11	Planning and leadership	(0.759, 0.447, 0.656)
1-12	Practical knowledge of school operation	(0.764, 0.446, 0.659)
1-13	Motivating staff	(0.797, 0.467, 0.665)
1-14	Organizational management and construction	(0.714, 0.428, 0.643)
2-1	Educational philosophy and value	(0.774, 0.457, 0.659)
2-2	Vision and belief	(0.801, 0.467, 0.667)
2-3	Respect and flexibility	(0.765, 0.458, 0.654)
2-4	School development	(0.689, 0.430, 0.630)
2-5	Ethical belief	(0.733, 0.438, 0.643)
2-6	Moral behavior	(0.812, 0.452, 0.680)
2-7	Professional code	(0.825, 0.463, 0.681)
2-8	Personal integrity	(0.816, 0.464, 0.676)
2-9	Social models	(0.689, 0.430, 0.630)

No.	Indicator item	Anti-fuzzy number (ak (L), Ck (U), total effectiveness values)
2-10	Integrative capability	(0.729, 0.438, 0.646)
2-11	Innovative ideas	(0.724, 0.438, 0.643)
3-1	Positive and optimistic	(0.765, 0.458, 0.654)
3-2	Study and innovation	(0.706, 0.429, 0.639)
3-3	Leading positive development	(0.816, 0.464, 0.676)
3-4	Positive relationship	(0.801, 0.467, 0.667)
3-5	Reflection and responsibility	(0.755, 0.447, 0.654)
3-6	International links	(0.676, 0.420, 0.628)
3-7	Transparency and reliability	(0.774, 0.457, 0.659)
3-8	Fare motivating system	(0.745, 0.448, 0.649)
3-9	Accountability	(0.706, 0.466, 0.620)
3-10	Resource distribution and deployment knowledge	(0.679, 0.444, 0.618)
3-11	establishing partnership and cooperation	(0.706, 0.429, 0.639)
3-12	Self-improvements	(0.724, 0.438, 0.643)
3-13	Supporting professional development	(0.697, 0.420, 0.639)
3-14	Promoting educational value	(0.710, 0.440, 0.635)
4-1	Contextual sensibility and judgement	(0.801, 0.467, 0.667)
4-2	Negotiation and bargaining	(0.793, 0.454, 0.669)
4-3	Implementation capacity	(0.706, 0.429, 0.639)
4-4	Empowerment	(0.719, 0.418, 0.650)
4-5	Adventure	(0.677, 0.452, 0.613)
4-6	Improving student achievement and well-being	(0.754, 0.425, 0.665)
4-7	Parental education	(0.706, 0.429, 0.639)
4-8	Building an open climate	(0.701, 0.429, 0.636)
4-9	Establishing a supporting ethos	(0.752, 0.436, 0.658)
4-10	Building a safe, quiet, and orderly school environment	(0.829, 0.463, 0.683)
4-11	Encouraging and developing good student behavior	(0.745, 0.448, 0.649)
4-12	Distributive leadership	(0.756, 0.459, 0.649)
4-13	Facilitating student excellence	(0.681, 0.430, 0.625)

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Based on the above results, conclusions and suggestions of this study are as follows:

A set of 52 standards for school principals in Taiwan for promoting professionalism and being served as a guide for pre-service training and professional development of school principals in Taiwan

The 52 standards are based on the results of fuzzy Delphi. The initial standards are based on the actual functionality of the principal, established ideas about effective leadership at the regional, local and school levels, as well as on the experience of other educational systems. As Karatas (2016) argues that determining professional standards for school principals forms the basis for understanding the types of responsibility and liability that the school principal has; the type of training school administrators should receive; carrying out the appointment, evaluation, control,

and transfer processes impartially; and determining the needs of in-service training. A set of 52 standards for school principals in Taiwan obviously provide an organizing frame for informing school principals' training, professional development, and licensing practices.

The standards can lead to professionalization of principals

It is essential to establish professional standards for principals of primary and secondary schools in Taiwan. However, it does not necessarily mean that it must mandate. The standards can help describe job missions for principals and to systematically lead the development of their pre service education and on the job training. And the standards can motivate principals' ambition and therefore have a function of benchmarking for principal profession. The findings derived from this study have clear implications for professional practice of school principals in Taiwan. In terms of what is expected of school principals, the professional knowledge (14 standards), value and vision (11 standards), professional attitude (14 standards), and professional behavior and performance (13 standards) founded are essential competences and abilities for successful principals in Taiwan. The establishment of profession standards for school principals will result in improvement of professionalism of school principals and as a result of this public confidence in school principals can be enhanced.

The standards can be a useful tool for the recruitment of future school principals and a useful instrument for the evaluation of current school principals

How can the above professional standards of school principals be used? The standards for principals are so important, it is suggested that the government of Taiwan should consider adopting the above principal standards into its educational regulations, as well as using the above standards to enhance coherence across policies and initiatives targeted at cultivating and supporting successful principals in Taiwan in the future.

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