



Asia Pacific Leadership Roundtable Annual Conference

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**Connecting an Asian Knowledge base
in Educational Leadership**

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Status Quo

- Fledgling, growing, evidence base of educational leadership in Asia, juxtaposed with a substantial evidence base – also growing – in Anglo-American world
- Research in more developed, English-speaking Asian systems – especially Hong Kong and to lesser extent Singapore – is more voluminous than in non-English speaking systems
- Language is an issue – ‘connecting’ is helped or hindered by the accessibility to the English language
- Ethnocentrism – despite advocates of comparative, cross-cultural, and international education – in the Anglo-American world, there is still an inward focus, where 7 percent of the world’s population purport to speak for the remaining 93 percent (ie. researchers tend to implicitly theorise globally without limiting their findings to the geo-political-cultural frame of their data)
- However, there is a growing reciprocal interest in policies and practices (and their effectiveness) of Asian (ie high-performing systems) and Anglo-American systems of education



Benefits and dangers of connecting knowledge bases cross-culturally

- We're all better off in learning leadership in both Asian and Western systems – eg.
 - it helps us understand our own practices more, and forces us to justify them
 - it may offer new creative ideas from elsewhere that are feasible and applicable, shortening the policy formulation stage
- However, importing policies and practices by cross-cultural borrowing is fraught with dangers – what works (or only partially works) in one culture, may not in another – context and culture are often all important)
- Authentic connections between culturally different knowledge bases are thus very important; we need valid methods of connecting that are holistic in comparing policies and practices across systems, taking into account cross-cultural and contextual similarities and differences

Ways of connecting an Asian Knowledge base to Existing Literature

- × *Connecting* starts with decisions taken early about how we *build* the knowledge base – ie. start thinking about connecting as we research
- × View the building and connecting phases as alternate phased processes – phase 1: build-connect; phase 2: build-connect, and so on
- × Think more radically – especially in early stages – about how to capture authentic indigenous meanings and practices of leadership eg grounded theory – and avoid imposing Anglo-American frameworks, conceptual meanings, and literatures etc.
- × Think more creatively about research methods – from small scale qualitative anthropological grounded theory methods capturing in-depth data to large quantitative baseline studies covering systems
- × Paradoxically – difference with existing knowledge base might not be such a negative



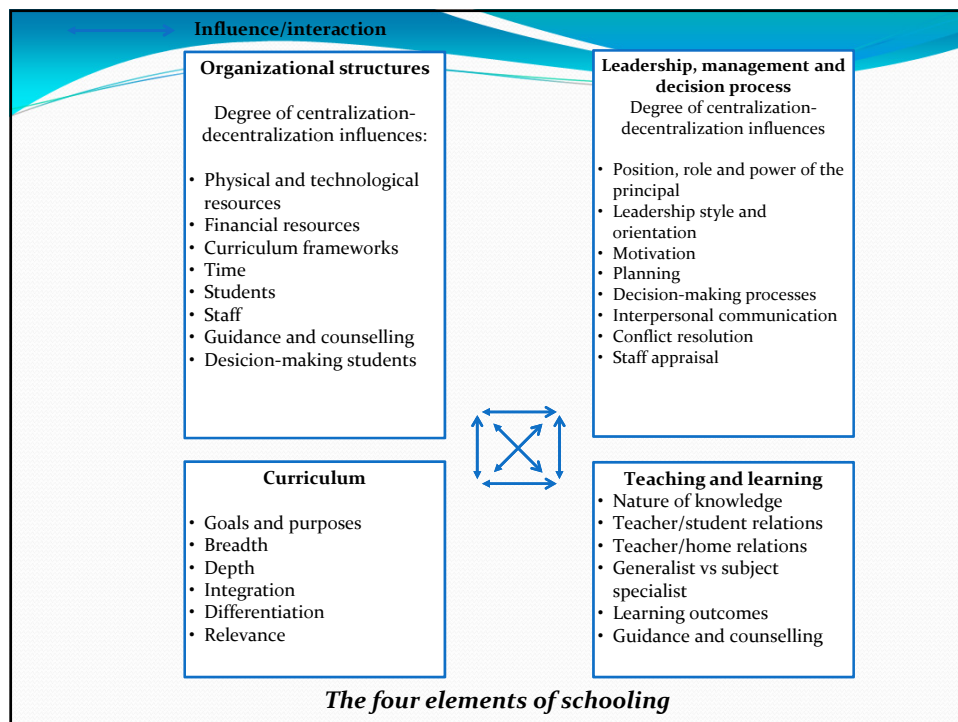
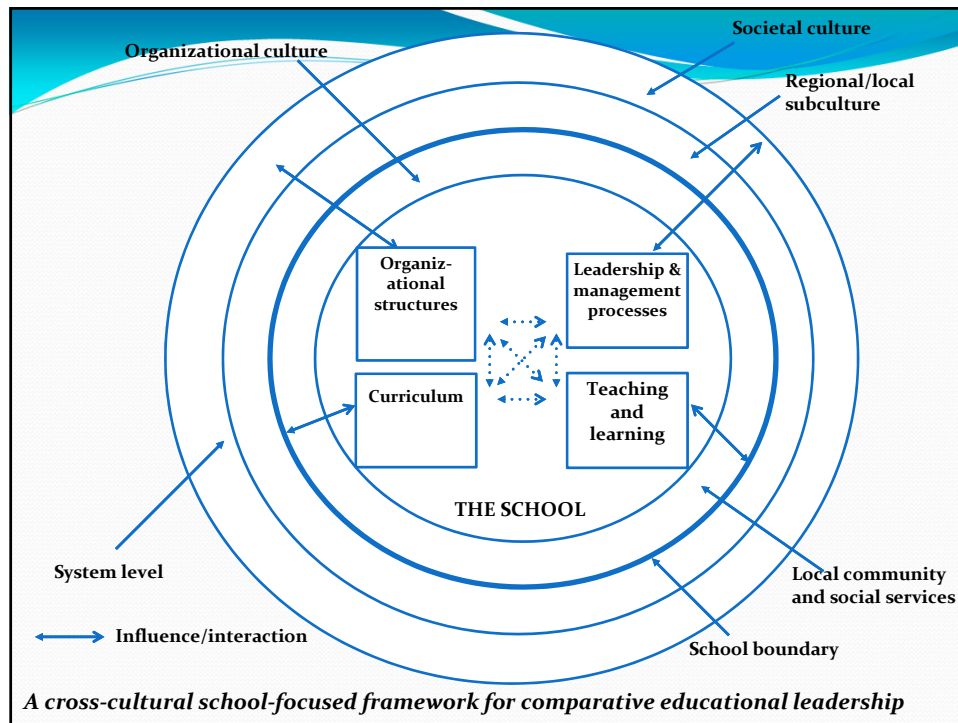
Methods of achieving authentic connections of cross-cultural knowledge bases

Connecting knowledge bases is enhanced by adopting common –

1. Research problems, aims, goals and research questions
2. Having a strong Justification for connecting two or more knowledge bases needs to be sound and arguments robust eg why connect? The ethnocentric criticism of much Anglo-American research needs to be mounted strongly. Yields better understanding of cultural and contextual influences.
What are the potential benefits, and who the beneficiaries? And what are the methodological and practical dangers of mis-interpretation?
3. Having robust literature reviews that are more context- and culture-sensitive than at present

Cont.....Methods of achieving authentic connections

4. Using same theories, concepts and models eg. "distributive leadership" **but** with a cultural interpretation of key terms appear to be instrumental in conceptualisation – since meanings are culturally dependent
5. Sharing tools of analysis, presentation of data and interpretation
6. Adopting common structures related to writing up and presentation of data, plus commonality of themes and arguments
7. Co-ordinating cross-cultural data for presentation at International conferences and for international publications





Societal/regional/local cultures	Organizational culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Power-distributed/power-concentrated• Group oriented/self-oriented• Consideration/aggression• Proactivism/fatalism• Generative/replicative• Limited relationship/holistic relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Process-outcome oriented• Person-task oriented• Professional-parochial• Open-closed• Control and linkage; formal-informal; tight-loose; direct-indirect• Pragmatic-normative

Dimensions of societal and organisational cultures