

TOWARDS BEST PRACTICES IN ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION OF SMALL-SIZE BASIC EDUCATION SCHOOL MODEL

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this quantitative study was to better understand the extent and impact within small-sized basic education schools of increasing autonomy, and to determine the relationship between that autonomy and the development of personalized autonomous school models. The authors of this research gathered data from 37 respondents and used this data to measure the level of autonomy in five domains: staffing, budgeting, curriculum and assessment, governance and policy administration, and the school calendar. Using one-sample statistics, the authors found relatively consistent responses across all indicators of autonomy, as all mean values exceeded the test value of 3.50, indicating a high degree of implementation. One-sample t-tests also demonstrated that all three domains of staffing, budgeting, and curriculum and assessment were implemented to a highly significant extent, whereas governance and school calendars were not statistically significant. Additionally, the authors examined the creation of autonomous schools through the lens of small personalized schools, incrementalism, and school-level accountability. The results indicated that the establishment of small, personalized schools had been implemented significantly, whereas incrementalism and school-level accountability had not. The authors also examined the moderating influences of (1) equity and access, (2) habits of mind, and (3) personalization on the creation of personalized autonomous schools. They reported that equity and access significantly moderated the area of curriculum implementation, while habits of mind did not significantly moderate any of the areas of autonomy measured in this study. Personalization significantly impacted the area of budgeting autonomy. Further, through the use of regression analysis, the authors demonstrated that the combined autonomy variables identified in this study accounted for 30.6% of the variance in the development of autonomous small sized basic education schools, with curriculum being a statistically significant predictor of the creation of this type of school. Finally, the authors developed a new conceptual framework for the purpose of outlining the best practices associated with academic administration to support the development of small sized basic education schools based on the results of this study, which place a great emphasis on the use of structured autonomy, stakeholder participation, equity and personalization. Key administrative areas are highlighted in this conceptual framework, which are moderated by contextual variables; therefore, the researcher concluded that the creation of effective, personalized small sized basic education schools requires autonomy in these key administrative areas.

Keywords: *Academic administration, autonomous schools, curriculum, assessment, basic education*

INTRODUCTION

Thailand has set national development goals in accordance with state policy that aims to develop towards becoming a country with stability and sustainability. It is necessary to lay the foundation by emphasizing the potential of citizens. The strength of local communities and the

restructuring of society to be balanced. "Education" is considered an important mechanism for "human development" and "intellectual capital development" and is therefore the main factor that will help increase the competency of Thai people.

This research is aimed to study the direct, indirect and total influence of strategic leadership factors of school administrators influencing the effectiveness of small-sized schools. The samples were 27 administrators of small-sized schools under the primary educational service area office, the Basic Education Commission in the academic year 2023. The population was 15,999 small-sized school administrators who are administrating in small-sized schools under the primary educational service area office of the Basic Education Commission of Thailand.

World society 21 requires examination and improvement of knowledge. Testing of children aims to develop important skills on the 3Rs and 8Cs.

- 3Rs includes reading (Reading), writing (W), writing and arithmetic.
- 8Cs: critical thinking skills and problem-solving skills; creativity and innovation; cross-cultural; collaboration, teamwork and leadership; communications, information, and media literacy; computer skills software, software and communications; computing and ICT literacy, career skills and learning skills.

The Office of the Secretariat of the Education Council of the Ministry of Education has determined the outcomes that must have the aims of education (Desired Outcomes of Education, DOE Thailand).

1 Learners will learn to learn and learn throughout their lives to keep up with the digital and global world. Thailand Create your life to create a job or career.

2 Innovation creates new intellectual innovations again. Programming Digital Intelligence cross-cultural skills, entrepreneurship, increasing opportunities and value for oneself and society.

3 Strong reasons for patriotism, local love, knowing right from wrong, having a conscience of being Thai and global, having a volunteer spirit that is rich in loss and participate in driving the nation on the platform of democratic organizations, equal justice and equal management of natural resources and the harsh environment, coexisting peacefully in Thai society and the world community [1].

Royal policy regarding educational development. His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn His Majesty King Rama X has royal policies regarding the development of education that must focus on creating a foundation for learners in 4 areas [2] as follows:

1 Having the right attitude towards the country. Have knowledge and understanding of the nation adhere to religion Stable in the monarchy and have generosity towards their families and communities.

2 Have a stable life foundation, have morals. Know how to distinguish what is wrong-right/bad-good. Do only what you like that is good. Refuse what is wrong and what is bad and help each other create good people for the country [3]. Have a job, have a career and raise children and grandchildren in the family. Or training in educational institutions must aim at making children and youth love work, fight for work, and do it until the work is completed. Training, both curricular and extracurricular, must have the goal of getting students to work and eventually have employment. And must support program graduates to have careers and jobs until they can support themselves and their families.

3 Be a good citizen. Good citizenship It is the duty of everyone, families, educational institutions and business establishments. Everyone must be encouraged to have the opportunity to act as a good citizen. Being a good citizen means "seeing something that can be done for the country, you must do it" such as volunteer work, service work. Public charity work must be done with kindness. And generosity

Thailand has set national development goals in accordance with state policy that aims to develop towards becoming a country with stability and sustainability. It is necessary to lay the foundation by emphasizing the potential of citizens. The strength of local communities and the restructuring of society to be balanced. “Education” is considered an important mechanism for “human development” and “intellectual capital development” and is therefore the main factor that will help increase the competency of Thai people. To have the potential to develop the country to progress economically, socially, politically and culturally. That leads to sustainability and standing on the international stage.

4 By providing laws regarding national education. To improve education to be in line with changes in both economic and social aspects.

Politics and culture of the country. The National Education Act of 1999 was enacted to be the master law regarding education. As evidence of the country’s educational reform and the preparation of the National Education, Religion, Arts, and Culture Plan (2002 – 2016) is characterized as a long-term strategy that will serve as a framework for creating an action plan for education, religion, arts, and culture.

The spirit of the plan. This is aimed at improving the lives of the people in the country: to be a complete human being with body, mind, intellect, knowledge, and morality, with ethics and culture in life; and able to live happily with others [4].

Ministry of Education. The goals of educational management have been determined focusing on providing excellent education by making schools quality: teaching and classrooms. The quality of learners has reached international high standards in 2007 [5].

To what extent will the above policies and practices be successful? It requires cooperation from all parties in education management. Especially at the school level because schools are the most important operational agency that will put policies into practice to achieve success.

Statement of the Problem

1. To what extent is:
 - a. Autonomy in the following five main areas are implemented the areas of:
 - i. Staffing;
 - ii. Budget;
 - iii. Curriculum and assessment;
 - iv. Governance and policies; and
 - v. School calendar?
 - b. Creating autonomous schools in the areas of:
 - i. Small, personalized schools;
 - ii. Incrementalism;
 - iii. School-level accountability;
2. To what extent do the moderating variables affect:
3. To what extent are the effects of autonomy of small school to creating autonomous small schools?
4. Based on the findings what best practices in academic administration of small-size basic education school model can be proposed?

Scope and Delimitations

The researcher wants to know best practices in academic administration of small basic educational institutions.^{44, 45} In this regard; schools must have guidelines for best practice (Best Practice) in all four aspects of school administration that focus on the quality of students as important.⁴⁷

Review of Related Literature

The provision of basic education in Thailand in the past period can be said as always been an effort to develop qualitatively to develop Thai people to have quality, starting from the educational institutions to develop students to have higher quality, that is, to be good people with morality, ethics, and desirable values.

Consistent with the values of the majority of the nation are happy people with good physical and mental health, not obsessed with vices, have aesthetics in music, sports and art [6]. The Ministry of Education gave the idea that education, no matter what form or who organizes it, is all about building people to be physically strong, encouraged in intellectual strength [7]. The Department of Academic Affairs, a foundation to creating progress and solving various problems.

In society, as well as humans developing themselves, their families, communities, society and the environment including the development of various potentials that makes it possible to live and work happily [8]

Improving the quality of life for live happily in society. The educational management process is based on the principles of complete, all-round development of humans in terms of body, mind, intelligence and society.

Humans are the center of development. Education is not only a tool for development; it is also an important factor in direct development to develop people to have a good life and be complete in themselves. It is also necessary to develop students into human resources for economic and social development [9]

Education, Religion and Culture Development Plan of the Ministry of Education. It has established policies regarding the development of educational quality, continuous development of teaching and learning as well as development of educational personnel. The departments have plans to develop the quality of education to support this. This is, to develop students and the teaching and learning process to have quality. In providing quality education, it is very necessary for cooperation from all parties involved.

At the school level, it must focus on providing quality education that meets national standards. In line with local needs [10] the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, B.E. 2007, places great importance on the provision of education. It is specified in Section 8, Rights and Freedoms of Education, Section 49. Every person shall have equal rights to receive education of not less than 12 years, which the state must provide thoroughly and with quality. Without charging any expenses and Section 80, the government must do the following:

- 1 protect and develop children and youth by providing early childhood education;
- 2 develop the quality and standards of education at all levels and in all forms to be consistent with changes in the environment economy and society;
- 3 provide a national education plan laws to develop national education;
- 4 provide for decentralization of education and for all sectors to participate in education in order to develop educational quality standards [11].

In this matter, the Academic Department suggested that educational institutions must develop quality in educational institutions as follows:

- 1 build confidence and create satisfaction in the educational quality of educational institutions to meet the needs of all involved parties;
- 2 create participation. Participate in the operations of all departments;
- 3 create a quality operating system in educational institutions, and continuously improving quality;
- 4 building the educational management capability of educational institutions to gain the trust and faith of parents, community and society;

5 create quality according to specified standards and continuously raise the standards to a higher level forever [12].

Thanet Khamkerd summarized the idea that changing the administrative system and the management of Thai education with a clear system of promotion, support, monitoring, inspection, and evaluation of educational management allowing educational management agencies to be independent, flexible, and responsive to problems. This includes the opportunity for all parts of society to participate in organizing education, jointly inspect and truly benefit from education. By decentralizing power directly to educational institutions, it will make the provision of education more quality and comprehensive [13].

To build confidence in society. The main agency that is directly responsible for organizing education. The Ministry of Education and its affiliated agencies, namely the Office of the Basic Education Commission allow educational institutions more freedom to operate. This enables educational institutions to respond to the needs of society and local communities. This is considered a display of responsibility that can be verified [14].

Educational institutions have a duty to provide education to the people and operate with the goal of educational management being to make students good people smart and happy people [15].

The important work of the school is academic work. Schools that are successful in academic operations are worthy, praised and accepted as schools that have missions achieved [16] results. The strength of academic administration is education and, therefore, be given first priority [17]. A school is good or bad depending on its academic administration. If academic work is weak, other work will also be weak [18]. For this reason, schools have teachers focused on teaching and classroom activities [19]. Priyaphon Wong Anutarot said that the success of an educational institution lies in academic administration [20]. Somkit Bunyapho, found that academic work is considered the heart of an educational institution, that there must be a method for effective academic administration [21]. Edward Smith (Edward W. Smith & Others) said that spending time on educational administration should prioritized academic work first [22].

Academic work is considered the most important mission of educational institutions according to the National Education Act B.E. 1999 and the additional amendments (No. 2) B.E. 2545 with the intention of allowing educational institutions to operate independently.

Whether the educational institution is large or small, it is strong in academic administration [23]. Similarly, Pakwilai Phongchayakorn found that schools with outstanding academic administration have academic planning and given priority [24]. Davis & Thomas said that having strong academic management will make school administration efficient and will directly affect the academic achievement of students [25]. Later, Bushi (Buzzi), found that the academic components of educational institutions are related to their quality, a predictor of the quality of educational institutions [26] regardless of the type and size of the educational institution. The standard and quality of an educational institution's education is determined by its academic performance. Because academic work is related to the curriculum, educational program teaching and learning is the heart of educational institutions [27]. The most important school administration is academic administration. It is a measure of success or failure in education, especially basic education that affects the majority of the country's people [28] and the most important role.

In organizing education as specified in the National Education Act B.E. 2542, amended (No. 2) B.E. 2002, it must rely on schools as the main source of policy implementation into effective practice [29].

In providing education at the basic education level, primary schools play an important role. However, the academic quality standards of each educational institution are still different,

although at present the Ministry of Education the administration and management of education has been decentralized.

Even if it is directly, the readiness of each educational institution throughout the country still differs. The quality and efficiency of educational provision also vary, especially in small basic educational institutions [30]. In this regard, Hoy and Miskel (Hoy & MisKel) said that management in small schools lacks resources in almost every aspect of administration, specially in academics. This directly affects the academic achievement of students, which is the most important product [31].

Office of the Basic Education Commission. Its main mission is to provide basic education thoroughly and with quality according to the learning standards of the for all school-aged children to learn with quality and to the fullest potential of each person. There are 32,228 educational institutions under its responsibility and they are small schools. With 120 students and below, 12,829 schools, accounting for 39.73 percent of the total number of schools. To consider very small schools, that is, 60 students or less, there will be 4,199 schools, accounting for 13 percent. These small schools challenge educational administrators in every era.

A large number of small schools would result in the efficiency of management being reduced specially the management of teacher staffing. The Ministry of Education has continuously implemented measures to consolidate small schools. Between 1993 and 2003, 2,288 small schools were consolidated. However, school consolidation measures are not a solution that will be successful in every situation. In this case, most communities will continue to oppose the dissolution of the school afraid that children will have to travel far from home. A school in the community has become a symbol of the community's prosperity. Local politicians are often a united front of the community that opposes school consolidation, and the government in some areas has ambiguity and uncertainty As a result, quite a few schools have already been dissolved. It was later revived to continue accepting children in the community. Moreover, there are many schools in remote areas. There are no other schools nearby. It is necessary to exist even though there are not many [33]. These small schools, which are one-third of the schools that provide basic education nationwide, have many limitations that prevent them from developing.

The quality of education is comparable to that of large schools. Three major problems were found:

- 1 Academic achievement is quite low when compared to large schools due to lack of readiness in terms of factors such as not having enough teachers; lack of teaching media and equipment; media and technology are expensive. Most budget allocation uses the number of students as the criterion for allocation. Unable to teach specialized subjects or major fields of study as students come from poor families.

- 2 Investment in education is very high when compared to the number of students in the entire budget. It appears that there is still a shortage of materials, equipment, teachers, and school buildings. If the factors are to be arranged to meet the standards required by the curriculum, a significant increase in investment will be required.

- 3 The problem of morale and morale of personnel. Small schools are inferior to large schools with higher transfer requests each year. There is lack of energy to work and progress. It is a restriction on the performance of teachers, including the promotion and level of school administrators, etc. [34]

A study and assessment of educational quality by the Office of the Basic Education Commission found that small schools were of lower quality than large schools. It was found that most small schools faced similar problems in 4 areas:

- 1 In terms of management, in the past, transportation in the country was not very convenient. The population continues to decline, resulting in a large number of small schools.

This school results in a small school with a high teacher-to-student ratio. More students per classroom than standard. Cost per student is higher than in other-sized schools. In addition, most small school administrators lack school management skills. Obstacles related to school operations were encountered in particular.

2 Teaching and learning problems were found. Most teachers lack the skills to organize teaching and learning activities when there are not enough teachers and a small number of students in each class. Teachers are not full-time and not at full capacity. There are other activities besides teaching and learning in the unit. The teaching media are not up to date, resulting in low academic achievement among students.

3 Problems with readiness regarding supporting factors in allocating budgets to schools in the past, using school size as a criterion. Therefore, small schools receive budget allocations for personnel, materials, equipment, and buildings. The old building is in a state of dilapidation. The school is unable to mobilize many resources from community parents because many of them are poor. As for the student input, it was found that the students came from low-income families.

4 In the past, the community's participation was part of managing it together with the school in the form of a group. Of the school's basic education committee, but the committee's role is still not very significant, and this includes coordinating with outside agencies as well. Whether it's the government or the private sector, there are very few, if any, in some areas, and communities, and poor parents are unable to promote and support themselves. School operations and children's learning are needed as they should be [35]. Academic year 2007, the Office of the Basic Education found the same problem conditions in small schools as in previous years:

1 Quality of education: Average learning achievement is lower than that of students from medium and large schools.

2 In terms of administration, the ratio of teachers to students per classroom is lower than the standard. Cost per student is higher than at other schools of this size. There are still small schools in special areas, such as remote areas, high mountain areas, and on islands at the edge of the country. This is a problem for students traveling to study. In addition, administrators of small schools lack management skills, migration of the population to be hired in various areas. This causes problems and obstacles in the operation of small schools.

3 Teaching and learning were found to be that most teachers lacked skills in organizing teaching and learning. Teachers teach not full-time, and there are other duties besides teaching.

4 In terms of readiness and supporting factors, it was found that a small amount of personnel, budget, materials, equipment, and buildings were allocated. Computers and telephones are not enough.

5 *Participation in education.* In some areas, there was almost no coordination with other agencies and organizations, both public and private. Parents are unable to help and support school education as it should, due to the inefficiency of administration and academic and personnel problems often occurring in small schools [36]. In all 4 areas of work: academics, budget, personnel management, and general administration [37].

Procurement of textbooks, exercise books, library books, teaching media, and creation of a mobile computer unit, and solving the problem of teacher shortage [38]. Chamlong Phu Ang found that teachers in schools of different sizes had different problems, with teachers in small schools having more problems than teachers in medium and large schools [39, consistent with Prakob Kutpho who found that the problems academic administration regarding student-centered teaching and learning in small schools are more than in schools of other sizes [40]. The objective is to create opportunities for underprivileged students, raise the quality of small

schools, and share resources in managing small schools with efficiency similar to that of large schools [41].

Why small schools?

Like Central High School, many communities have been plagued by high dropout rates, inadequate resources, and unequal access to challenging learning opportunities for all students. With high-stakes testing a prerequisite for high school graduation, many schools are confronting these long-term problems and seeking solutions with renewed vigor.

Research indicates that large comprehensive schools, especially those serving high percentages of low-income students and students of color, need a radical overhaul to be successful in raising and sustaining achievement for all students.

Educational equity is today's most crucial civil-rights issue. Progress in raising student achievement has been incremental on virtually every measure of student engagement and performance, particularly for low-income students. Many touted examples of reducing educational disparities for these groups have masked the deleterious effects of high-stakes tests on dropout and suspension rates, special-education placement, and grade-retention rates for the very students these initiatives purport to help. Cultures of low expectations, negative stereotyping, and inadequate resources continue to plague public schools enrolling high percentages of low-income students. Yet, these very schools are increasingly constrained in their practices through the heavy hand of the No Child Left Behind Act. Such a radical overhaul must go beyond individual reforms, such as block scheduling, interdisciplinary curriculum development, and even high-stakes testing. These, and other reforms, when implemented in isolation, have had little impact on raising student achievement.

Many comprehensive high schools are choosing to form small learning communities rather than small, autonomous schools. While the trend toward small learning communities (SLC) within large comprehensive high schools may assist in creating more personalized learning cultures, much recent research points to the pitfalls of SLCs that minimize their benefits.

For example, a recent report by Jobs for the Future found the following:

- Small learning communities are often layered onto the existing organizational structure of large comprehensive high schools, making an already complex organization even more complex.
- In the layering model, faculty have multiple affiliations—to the SLC and to departments, for example. Students attend, and teachers teach classes in both their SLC and the large school.
- The multiple affiliations and choppiness of such arrangements do not offer the heightened accountability for students and teachers that comes from students being known well by a consistent group of adults.

Because of these pitfalls, “it is unlikely that the positive results associated with being a student in a small, autonomous school will accrue to the students and teachers experiencing such hybrids” [42].

For these reasons, we propose that the best strategy to address systemic public school ineffectiveness is to create small freestanding schools or to redesign and transform large public schools into small, autonomous schools.

Origins of the small schools movement. The beginning of the small schools' movement can be traced to the mid-1970s, when Deborah Meier [43] and a group of like-minded teachers founded Central Park East Elementary School in Harlem, New York. Meier believed that emphasizing the size of the school would successfully bring the rigor and challenges found in many private schools to students in low-income communities.

Small schools developed out of the fairly simple concept that schools ought to be places where each child is known, visible, and valued by at least one caring adult who takes responsibility and accepts accountability for the child's learning. Small schools are an attempt to address systemic ineffectiveness through redesigning and transforming large public schools. The small schools' movement seeks to dramatically improve educational experiences and outcomes for students and their families.

In recent years, several foundations, most notably the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation, have moved the small high schools strategy into the public spotlight through significant funding initiatives. This has led to a substantial expansion of small, start-up high schools and the conversion of large, comprehensive high schools to multiple small schools and small learning communities.

Backed by research and a desire to improve conditions for student learning so that all students may participate fully in our democratic society, many large urban districts such as Philadelphia, Boston, San Francisco, Seattle, and Oakland have joined New York City and Chicago in this movement to create a new vision of public education.

This vision calls for maximum autonomy and flexibility in small schools planning and implementation in exchange for strong accountability to ensure that all reform efforts are successful in raising student achievement for underserved students.

A Small Schools Success Story: Boston's Pilot Schools

A central principle of our work at the Center for Collaborative Education (CCE) is that schools have the best chance to successfully educate all students if they are granted autonomy over their resources in exchange for increased accountability, all within the economies of scale of a larger urban district. Boston's Pilot Schools, which CCE coordinates, best represent this concept of schooling. The result of a unique partnership among the mayor, school committee, superintendent, and teachers' union, Pilot Schools were created in 1994 to promote increased choice options within the city, largely in response to state legislation creating first-time charter schools and the subsequent loss of Boston students to such institutions.

The Pilot Schools are unique among the nation's urban districts for the autonomy schools exercise over budget, staffing, governance, curriculum, and the school calendar as the result of a teachers' union contract. As noted in a Boston Public Schools memo (1995), Pilot Schools were intended "to provide models of educational excellence which will help to foster widespread educational reform throughout all of the Boston Public Schools. Ultimately, we hope to dramatically improve the educational learning environment and thereby improve student performance." Starting with four new start-up schools and one school that converted from a regular school, the Pilot Schools Network has now grown to a total of twenty schools spanning grades Pre-K through 12 and enrolling approximately 6,500 students, or roughly 11 percent of Boston Public Schools' (BPS) total enrollment.

At CCE, we serve as the Pilot Schools Network convener and coordinator, providing network schools with coaching, network-wide professional development, advocacy, research, and financial management.

In January 2006, CCE released a study, *Progress and Promise: A Report on the Boston Pilot Schools*, showing that Pilot Schools outpace the district average on all student performance and engagement indicators: they have higher attendance, lower suspensions and transfers, and higher achievement and college-going rates.¹ Pilot high school students have a 94 percent attendance rate as compared to an 89 percent rate for students attending regular BPS high schools; this translates to Pilot high school students attending school an average of two additional weeks per year than their peers attending regular BPS high schools.

On the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests, Pilot students perform at a higher level than the students districtwide at every grade level tested (3–10), in both English and math, and at the passing, advanced, and proficient levels. And while 79 percent of Pilot graduates are attending college one year after high school graduation, only 67 percent of BPS graduates are doing so.

Pilot Schools achieve these impressive results because they control their resources, which they use to implement effective practices, such as small class sizes, low student-teacher loads, long instructional blocks, time for faculty collaborative planning, increased advisory and student support, and a personalized school culture. These are prime reasons why Pilots have among the highest wait lists for student enrollment of any district schools.

With a commitment to equity for students and families at its center, we propose a model for school change that requires that schools embrace the following four conditions to be successful.

1 Smallness: Schools are small and personalized so that students and teachers know each other well.

2 Unifying vision: Schools have a unifying vision of teaching and learning. That vision binds the school community and drives teaching, learning, and assessment, with the goal of creating powerful learning experiences for every student.

3 Autonomy: Schools must have the autonomy necessary to create unified learning communities (i.e., control over budgets, staffing, curriculum/assessment, governance, and school calendar), while also benefiting from the economies of scale that remaining within a large district affords (e.g., transportation, facilities, payroll, legal services).

4 Accountability: Schools must be held accountable for the quality of the education they provide to students and for student outcomes, through benchmarks and school quality reviews. Students in effective small schools are held accountable through competency-based graduation portfolios and exhibitions, in addition to mandated standardized tests.

Increasingly, evidence suggests that small schools can be a powerful antidote to the failures of the nation's large schools. A comprehensive review of the research on small schools reveals that students in small schools do as well academically as, and often better than, those in large schools. Student attitudes are more positive about school, attendance is higher, dropout rates are lower, there are fewer discipline problems, and students participate more in extracurricular activities. All students have equal access to learning at high levels. Team teaching, integrated curriculum, cooperative learning, and other successful grouping and instructional strategies that are easier to implement in small schools are in greater evidence. Parents are more involved, and teachers report that working in small schools is more satisfying. Most important, research indicates that school size affects student performance, particularly the performance of low-income students and students of color (Cotton, 1996).

This study reaches the following important conclusions about small schools:

- Small schools perform at least as well academically as large schools—and often their performance is superior.
- Teaching strategies that are linked with higher student performance are more often implemented in small schools.
- Student attitudes toward school are more positive in small schools.
- Small schools experience significantly fewer discipline problems and less truancy, violence, substance abuse, and gang participation.
- Levels of extracurricular participation are higher and more varied in small schools, and students in small schools gain greater satisfaction from participation.
- Student attendance is higher in small schools, while the dropout rate is lower.
- Students' confidence and academic self-concepts are higher in small schools.
- Small schools have a higher rate of parental involvement.

- Teacher attitudes towards their work and their administrators are more positive in small schools.
- Small schools are effective in combating the effects of poverty on student achievement and in narrowing the achievement gap that separates poor students from their affluent peers. In addition to supporting the educational benefits of small schools, recent research challenges the notion that large schools are cost efficient. A 2000 study on high school size in New York City found that “small academies and large high schools are similar in terms of budget per graduate. Because the literature on school size indicates that small high schools are more effective for minority and poor students, the similarity in [financial costs] suggests that policy makers might do well to support the creation of more small high schools” (Stiefel, Berne, Iatarola, & Frutcher, 2000). Factoring in that high school dropouts add significantly higher future costs to society through increased crime, prison, and welfare rates and lower voter participation rates, the economic argument in favor of large schools becomes even less credible. Unifying Vision. Our work is guided by principles of teaching and learning and a commitment to equity and access for all students. The CCE Small Schools Principles are a local version of the Ten Common Principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools. They grow out of the research that identifies key characteristics of successful schools. These principles provide a vision for effective small schools and guide the reform work in CCE member schools. Small schools can use the principles as a way of focusing their work as they make decisions about school governance and develop the school’s vision. They ensure the principles are embedded in the school’s curriculum and assessment practices. These principles are also used in annual assessments of a school’s progress toward becoming an effective small school.

Theoretical Framework

Continuous Improvement: Model by W. Edwards Deming. Deming (2000) discussed the concept of continuous improvement within his seminal work *Out of the Crisis*. Deming’s continuous improvement model is based on his work with Japanese companies in a post–World War II environment and the application of the 14 key principles. Since then, several scholars have contributed to the theory of continuous improvement and have enhanced its usability across social science fields (Kelemen, 2003).

Deming (2000) offered 14 strategies to support continuous improvement in an organizational setting. These are (1) create constancy and purpose toward improvement of product and services, (2) adopt a new philosophy, (3) cease dependence on inspection, (4) end the practice of awarding business on the basis of price, (5) improve the system of production and service, (6) institute training on the job, (7) institute leadership, (8) drive out fear, (9) break down barriers between departments, (10) eliminate slogans and targets for production, (11) eliminate quotas and management by objectives, (12) remove barriers to pride in workmanship, (13) institute a program of education, and (14) include everyone in the transformation of the organization (pp. 23-24). He posited that if applied consistently by upper management, a shared vision representing these core values would evolve within the organization and would serve as the foundation of resulting quality organization.

Organizational Learning by Chris Argyris and Donald Schön. In the 1970s, Argyris and Schön (1996) introduced the theory that organizations possess the capacity to learn and grow in ways that mirror the learning of individuals.

Since its original introduction in 1978, the theory of organizational learning has evolved with the assistance of many theorists. According to Argyris and Schön, organizational learning and individual learning are closely linked. However, in order for organizational learning to occur, an organization must employ strategies to systematically integrate individual and collective learning into skills and knowledge that will deeply affect the organization. To illustrate this

point, an example from education is used. An individual teacher may decide to implement a new questioning strategy in the classroom that is based on the latest research in cognitive development. The teacher may take courses, visit other teachers in the area who have implemented such practices, and conduct several lessons using the new strategies. On reflection, the teacher determines that this strategy positively impacts students.

Learning Organizations by Peter Senge. In 1990, Peter Senge, senior lecturer at Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Sloan School of Management, published *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Value, belief, policy held by the organization.*

In this work, he provided a theoretical framework for learning organizations by which members of an organization create structures designed to facilitate learning and adaptability to changing conditions. The first four components of learning organizations are personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, and team learning. The dashed lines in Figure 4 indicate that these components, though unique in their definitions, share elements with one another.

The fifth component, systems thinking, pervades all aspects of Senge's learning organization model. The components are interdependent; a learning organization cannot exist without each component working in concert, creating a culture where individual and organizational learning is normalized. When organizations function as learning organizations, their members are attuned to each of the elements and can respond to an ever-changing environment.

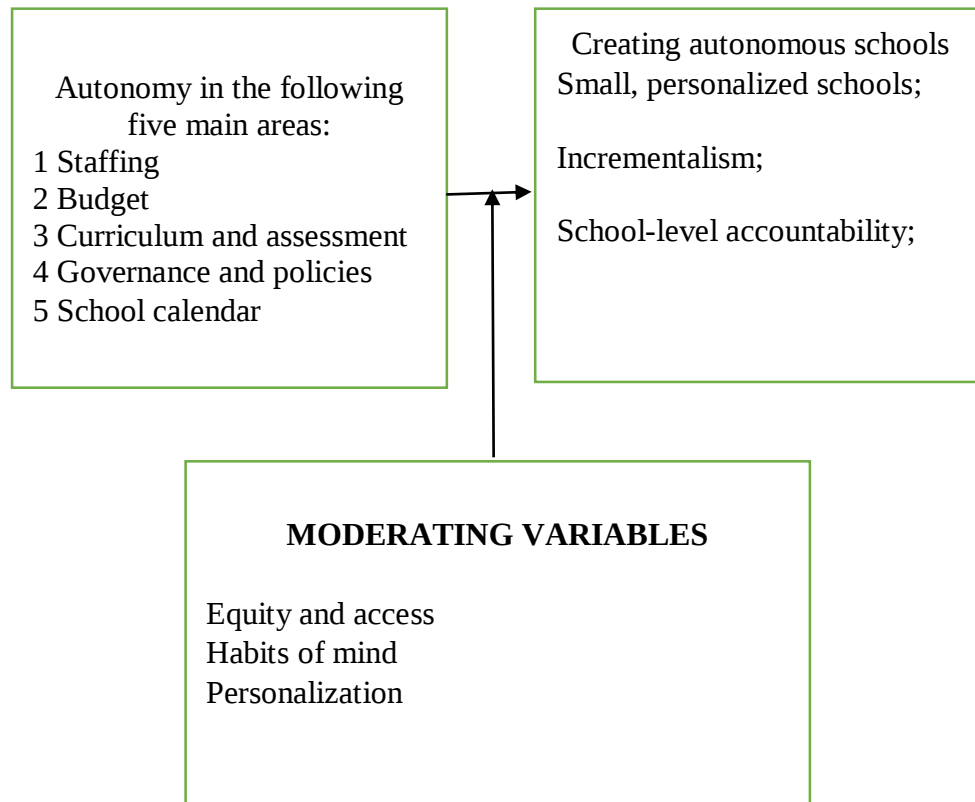
Personal mastery represents the first domain of a learning organization whereby leaders within the organization seek to support the personal development and fulfillment of all employees. Personal mastery can be defined as the dance between the vision individuals hold for themselves and the current reality in which they operate.

According to Senge, personal mastery develops when a clear vision emerges. This personal vision then becomes a roadmap to guide and inspire people to reach their ideal state. The same can be said of organizations; a clear, articulated organizational vision offers great generative powers for all involved with that organization.

Appreciative Inquiry by David Cooperrider. Appreciative inquiry (AI), an organizational change framework principally developed by David Cooperrider, postulates that organizations change in the direction from which they inquire. If members of an organization inquire into problems, then they will repeatedly find problems. However, if members inquire into the strengths and positive attributes of an organization, they will find more of those qualities (Hammond, 1998). Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros (2005) stated, "AI is based on the simple assumption that every organization has something that works well and these strengths can be the starting point for creating positive change" (p. 3).

This truly embodies a fundamental shift in thinking from problem-solving approaches. Five principles of human systems and change guide appreciative inquiry: (a) the constructionist principle, (b) the principle of simultaneity, (c) the poetic principle, (d) the anticipatory principle, and (e) the positive principle (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2007, pp. 83-84). The constructionist principle asserts that social knowledge and its construction are intricately woven with organizational change. The questions that members of an organization ask directly impact the direction the organization develops. Appreciative inquiry integrates imagination and reasoning to construct knowledge that is fundamentally different than traditional change strategies.

Conceptual Framework



The moderating variables

CCE Small Schools Principles

- 1 Equity and access. The school's goals should apply to all students, while the means to those goals will vary as students themselves vary. In particular, there should be an explicit goal of raising learning and achievement levels of low-income students and students of color.
- 2 Habits of mind. The school's central goal is to teach students to use their minds well in every area of work they undertake, to the end of becoming responsible members of a diverse, democratic community.
- 3 Personalization. The school is small and personalized, so that teachers and students know each other well. Student-teacher ratios are greatly reduced so that all faculty know their students well, with secondary ratios at no more than 80:1 and elementary ratios at no more than 20:1.
- 4 Less is more. The school's curriculum is driven by the concept of "less is more." Each student should master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge.
- 5 Student-as-worker, teacher-as-coach. The governing metaphor of the school should be student-as-worker and teacher-as-coach. This helps students to take responsibility for their learning. Learning should be purposeful, rigorous, and related to helping students become powerful in the real world.
- 6 Assessment by Exhibition. Assessment should demonstrate what important things students know and can do, as well as where they are in need of more help. Students should demonstrate their mastery of competencies in various ways, including exhibitions and portfolios.
- 7 High expectations, trust, respect, and caring for all. The tone of the school stresses values of high expectations, trust, respect, and caring on the part of all members of the

community. Professional collaborative communities. The principal and teachers have multiple obligations and demonstrate a sense of commitment to the achievement of all members of the school community. Teachers work together to create a professional collaborative learning community.

8 Flexibility, autonomy, and shared governance. The people closest to students, including teachers, administrators, parents, and the students themselves, are the policymakers and decision makers. This calls for democratic and equitable forms of school governance and facilitative leadership. The school has maximum flexibility and autonomy, enabling decisions to be made as close to the learner as possible.

The independent variables

Five Areas of Autonomy

1 Staffing: Small schools have the freedom to hire and excess their staff in order to create a unified school community. This includes:

1.1 Deciding on staffing patterns that best meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of students.

1.2 Hiring staff that best fit the needs of the school, regardless of their current status (although every teacher hired becomes a member of the local teachers union).

1.3 Excessing staff (into the district pool) that do not fulfill the needs of the school.

2 Budget: Small schools have a lump-sum, per-pupil budget, which the school has discretion to spend in the manner that provides the best programs and services to students and their families. This includes:

2.1 Creating a lump-sum, per-pupil budget, the sum of which is equal to that of other district schools within the relevant grade span.

2.2 Moving the district toward itemizing all central office costs and allowing schools the option to purchase identified discretionary district services and include them in the school's lump-sum, per-pupil budget.

3 Curriculum and assessment: Small schools have the freedom to structure their curriculum and assessment practices to best meet students' learning needs. While acknowledging that all small schools are expected to administer any state- and district required tests, these schools are given the flexibility to best determine the school-based curriculum and assessment practices that will prepare students for state and district assessments. This includes:

3.1 Freeing schools from local district curriculum requirements.

3.2 Having graduation requirements set by the school, not by the district, with an emphasis on competency-based, performance-based assessments as long as they meet or exceed the district's standards.

4 Governance and policies: Small schools have the freedom to create their own governance structure that affords increased decision-making power over budget approval, principal selection and firing, and programs and policies, while being mindful of state requirements on school councils. This includes:

4.1 Having the school's site council take on increased governing responsibilities, including principal selection, supervision, and firing, with final approval by the superintendent in all cases; budget approval; and setting of school policies.

4.2 Giving the school freedom from all district policies and flexibility to set policies that the school community feels will best help students to be successful. This includes policies on such areas as promotion, graduation, attendance, and discipline.

5 School calendar: Small schools have the freedom to set longer school days and calendar years for both students and faculty. In particular, research supports a correlation between faculty learning and increased student achievement. Scheduling that allows for summer and

school-year faculty planning time contributes to a more unified school community and educational program. This includes:

- 5.1 Increasing planning and professional development time for faculty.
- 5.2 Increasing learning time for students.
- 5.3 Organizing the school schedule to maximize learning time for students and planning time for faculty (e.g., longer days Monday through Thursday in order to have half-days for students on Fridays, providing faculty a significant planning and professional development block every Friday afternoon).

Accountability. All CCE network schools are expected to document both their practices and student engagement and performance. Often this occurs through a school quality review. The school quality review process is a proactive accountability strategy for ensuring that schools are engaged in quality educational practices that lead to high student engagement and achievement. Periodic school quality reviews demonstrate the potential of on the ten common principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools. The complete material from the Coalition can be read at the website essentialschools.org thoughtful school examinations leading to improved practice and higher student engagement and achievement. These reviews are based on a set of public benchmarks as to what constitutes the practices and policies of an effective school. They require a process of self-examination, reflection, and assessment on the part of the school and a team of external practitioners, based on the benchmarks, and the synthesis of this self-assessment into a document for public review (often, a school portfolio). This report articulates a set of strengths, concerns, and recommendations, with the recommendations effectively becoming a road map for future school improvement efforts.

The dependent variables

1 Small, personalized schools that have autonomy over their resources can produce high student engagement and achievement. Autonomy over budget, staffing, curriculum, governance, and schedule is critical for creating the conditions in which schools can flourish. The model is built upon the belief that placing our trust and resources in the hands of people at the school level is the best way to create innovative, challenging, and high performing schools. As one Pilot principal stated, “What every [school] should have are the kinds of conditions Pilots have. That’s everything from size and scale to hiring their own staff to instructional flexibility to governance, the works” (Neufeld, 1999). Ironically, this philosophy is the antithesis of the trend of most urban public school districts in response to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Act which is to increase centralization through mandated instructional practices, required textbooks, and more frequent testing.

2 Creating autonomous schools requires a transformed district and teachers’ union partnership. All too often, teachers’ unions and school districts are pitted against one another, so that little meaningful reform is achieved. The Pilot School model is a partnership of a different sort, one in which each party lets go of historical control over all of the conditions that govern a set of schools. Instead, the district and union work collaboratively to support autonomous schools.

3 Incrementalism does not lead to fully autonomous schools. Autonomy can only be gained by taking the risk to negotiate the full set of autonomies from the start. The Boston Community Leadership Academy case study (see Chapter 3) illustrates the power of giving a school a complete set of tools with which to undertake comprehensive improvement. As other school districts explore replicating the Pilot concept, they often seek ways to implement the strategy in stages. We have discovered that seeking a side letter union agreement to rethink a job description, a waiver request for a textbook requirement, or permission for a schedule

change will not result in attaining the full scope of autonomy, nor does it allow staff to consider how teaching and learning can be fundamentally different. In districts that have tried a slow start or incremental approach, the process has bogged down at the first stage.

4 School-level accountability is a critical piece of the autonomy equation. Autonomy should come with accompanying high expectations. Pilot Schools undertake a five-year cycle of school quality reviews, in which they conduct a self-study based on the Network benchmarks, and then host a three-day on-site review from an external team of practitioners, who submit a report of findings and recommendations to the school district and teachers' union. Along with student outcomes, each school is assessed for vision, leadership and governance, teaching and learning, professional development, and family engagement.

5 Vibrant networks of schools can play a powerful role in spreading success and in influencing district practices. The Pilot Schools have collaborated over the years to influence one another's practice, through monthly leadership meetings, spring retreats, annual teacher sharing conferences, study groups, and cross-school visits. The Pilot School strategy has also led to improvements in the Boston Public Schools in significant ways:

5.1 The Pilot model of competency-based graduation was instrumental in shaping a new BPS graduation policy that provides multiple pathways to graduation, including one that enables a school to create its own path of courses and performance assessments.

5.2 The Pilot autonomies have informed the creation of a new set of district schools that can seek a policy waiver to advance their teaching and learning agendas.

5.3 The success of the Pilot high schools was an important factor in the superintendent's decision to convert four large BPS high schools to multiple small schools.

Third-party intermediaries can provide valuable assistance to a network of autonomous schools. CCE is the convener for the Pilot Schools Network. Serving as a "jack-of-all-trades," CCE supports the Pilot Schools through coaching, professional development, budget negotiations, advocacy, and research.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study utilized a quantitative survey technique.

Data sources are action plans for the academic year 2021-2023, school constitution report on the results of the school's self-evaluation, teacher meeting notes, record of meetings of parents or the school's basic education committee, report on the performance of school activity projects, school curriculum, and management practices of the sample schools, etc.

Population and Sampling Technique

The population is school administrators and teachers in educational institutions under the Phitsanulok Primary Educational Service Area Office, Area 3, for the Academic Year 2023, totaling 1,526, divided into 146 educational institution administrators and 1,380 teachers.

The samples are school administrators and teachers from 4 small educational institutions. The criteria for selecting the schools that are case studies are as follows: All 4 schools will have similar characteristics according to the basic criteria for consideration, namely: the size of the educational institution is a small educational institution; it is a school that has been certified by the Office of the Basic Education Commission as a school with good results; the quality level is good for all 3 standards; it is a school with a national test result (O-Net) with an average in 4 subjects higher than National level for 3 consecutive years.

Data Analysis

The following statistical tests will be applied on the following:

For SOP1, a paired t-test;

For SOP2, ANOVA by factors; and

For SOP3, Ordinary Least Squares Regression analysis.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences, v28, is used to process the data.

Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The responses did not identify any respondent, and all information is presented as a group. The paper was subjected to a PlagScan to avoid plagiarism.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1 Autonomy in the following five main areas, as implemented the areas of:

1.1 Staffing;

1.2 Budget;

1.3 Curriculum and assessment;

1.4 Governance and policies;

1.5 School calendar

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Staffing	37	3.9730	.64492	.10602
Budget	37	4.0000	.70711	.11625
Curriculum	37	4.0811	.72182	.11867
Governance	37	3.6216	.75834	.12467
School Calendar	37	3.6757	.81833	.13453

The computed standard deviations are all less than 1.00 which indicate homogeneity of the responses.

The computed means are all greater than 3.50, an indication that the indicators are all implemented to a high extent.

One-Sample Test

Test Value = 3.5

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Staffing	4.461	36	.000	.47297	.2579	.6880
Budget	4.301	36	.000	.50000	.2642	.7358
Curriculum	4.897	36	.000	.58108	.3404	.8217
Governance	.976	36	.336	.12162	-.1312	.3745
School Calendar	1.306	36	.200	.17568	-.0972	.4485

As for the test of significance of the implementation, Staffing, Budgeting and Curriculum are implemented highly significantly ($\text{sig}=.000$); whereas, Governance and School Calendar are not implemented significantly.

2 Creating autonomous schools in the areas of:

1.1 Small, personalized schools;

1.2 Incrementalism;

1.3 School-level accountability;

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Small	37	3.8649	.88701	.14582
Incrementalism	37	3.5676	.95860	.15759
School Level	37	3.6486	.88870	.14610

The computed standard deviations are all less than 1.00, hence, the responses are considered to be homogenous, that is, the respondents are in one accord in their responses.

The computed means are all greater than 3.50, thus, the indicators are all implemented to a high extent.

One-Sample Test

Test Value = 3.5

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Small	2.502	36	.017	.36486	.0691	.6606
Incrementalism	.429	36	.671	.06757	-.2520	.3872
School Level	1.017	36	.316	.14865	-.1477	.4450

The test of significance of the mean difference shows that creating an autonomous small school is implemented significantly; while incrementalism and school level are not significantly implemented.

3 Extent the moderating variables affect Staffing, Budgeting, Curriculum and assessment, Governance and policies and School calendar

3.1 Equity and access as a moderating variable

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Staffin g	Between Groups	.503	3	.168	.383	.766
	Within Groups	14.470	33	.438		
	Total	14.973	36			
Budge t	Between Groups	3.205	3	1.068	2.382	.087
	Within Groups	14.795	33	.448		
	Total	18.000	36			
Curric ulum	Between Groups	5.696	3	1.899	4.797	.007
	Within Groups	13.061	33	.396		
	Total	18.757	36			
Gover nance	Between Groups	.705	3	.235	.388	.763
	Within Groups	19.998	33	.606		
	Total	20.703	36			
School Calend ar	Between Groups	2.193	3	.731	1.101	.363
	Within Groups	21.915	33	.664		
	Total	24.108	36			
Small	Between Groups	1.196	3	.399	.485	.695
	Within Groups	27.129	33	.822		
	Total	28.324	36			
Increm entalis m	Between Groups	1.020	3	.340	.350	.789
	Within Groups	32.061	33	.972		
	Total	33.081	36			
School Level	Between Groups	.934	3	.311	.374	.772
	Within Groups	27.498	33	.833		
	Total	28.432	36			

Equity and access moderate highly significantly Curriculum (sig=.007). The rest of the indicators are not affected.

3.2 Habits of mind as a moderating variable

ANOVA

		Sum of Square s	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Staffin g	Between Groups	.251	3	.084	.187	.904
	Within Groups	14.722	33	.446		
	Total	14.973	36			
Budge t	Between Groups	.611	3	.204	.387	.763
	Within Groups	17.389	33	.527		
	Total	18.000	36			
Curric ulum	Between Groups	2.090	3	.697	1.379	.266
	Within Groups	16.667	33	.505		
	Total	18.757	36			
Gover nance	Between Groups	.258	3	.086	.139	.936
	Within Groups	20.444	33	.620		
	Total	20.703	36			
School Calend ar	Between Groups	.108	3	.036	.050	.985
	Within Groups	24.000	33	.727		
	Total	24.108	36			
Small	Between Groups	4.324	3	1.441	1.982	.136
	Within Groups	24.000	33	.727		
	Total	28.324	36			
Increm entalis m	Between Groups	3.526	3	1.175	1.312	.287
	Within Groups	29.556	33	.896		
	Total	33.081	36			
School Level	Between Groups	4.377	3	1.459	2.001	.133
	Within Groups	24.056	33	.729		
	Total	28.432	36			

Habits of mind does not moderate significantly Autonomy.

3.3 Personalization as a moderating variable ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Staffing	Between Groups	1.578	3	.526	1.296	.292
	Within Groups	13.395	33	.406		
	Total	14.973	36			
Budgeting	Between Groups	4.451	3	1.484	3.613	.023
	Within Groups	13.549	33	.411		
	Total	18.000	36			
Curriculum	Between Groups	.592	3	.197	.359	.783
	Within Groups	18.165	33	.550		
	Total	18.757	36			
Governance	Between Groups	3.872	3	1.291	2.530	.074
	Within Groups	16.831	33	.510		
	Total	20.703	36			
School Calendar	Between Groups	.988	3	.329	.470	.705
	Within Groups	23.120	33	.701		
	Total	24.108	36			
Small	Between Groups	5.493	3	1.831	2.647	.065
	Within Groups	22.831	33	.692		
	Total	28.324	36			
Incrementalism	Between Groups	1.583	3	.528	.553	.650
	Within Groups	31.498	33	.954		
	Total	33.081	36			
School Level	Between Groups	3.133	3	1.044	1.362	.271
	Within Groups	25.299	33	.767		
	Total	28.432	36			

Only Budgeting is significantly affected by Autonomy (sig=.023). The rest of the indicators are not affected by Autonomy.

4 Extent of the effects of autonomy of small school to creating autonomous small schools

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.553 ^a	.306	.194	.79648

a. Predictors: (Constant), School Calendar, Budget, Curriculum, Staffing, Governance

The Model Summary shows that School Calendar, Budgeting, Curriculum, Staffing, and Governance represent 30.6% of relevant variables are included in the regression equation (R-square=.306).

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	8.658	5	1.732	2.730	.037 ^b
Residual	19.666	31	.634		
Total	28.324	36			

a. Dependent Variable: Small

b. Predictors: (Constant), School Calendar, Budget, Curriculum, Staffing, Governance

The F-test of significance of the derived equation is significant at $\alpha=.05$ (sig=.037), thus, the derived regression equation is a valid tool to predict autonomy of small school to creating autonomous small schools using the predictors School Calendar, Budgeting, Curriculum, Staffing, and Governance.

Coefficients^a

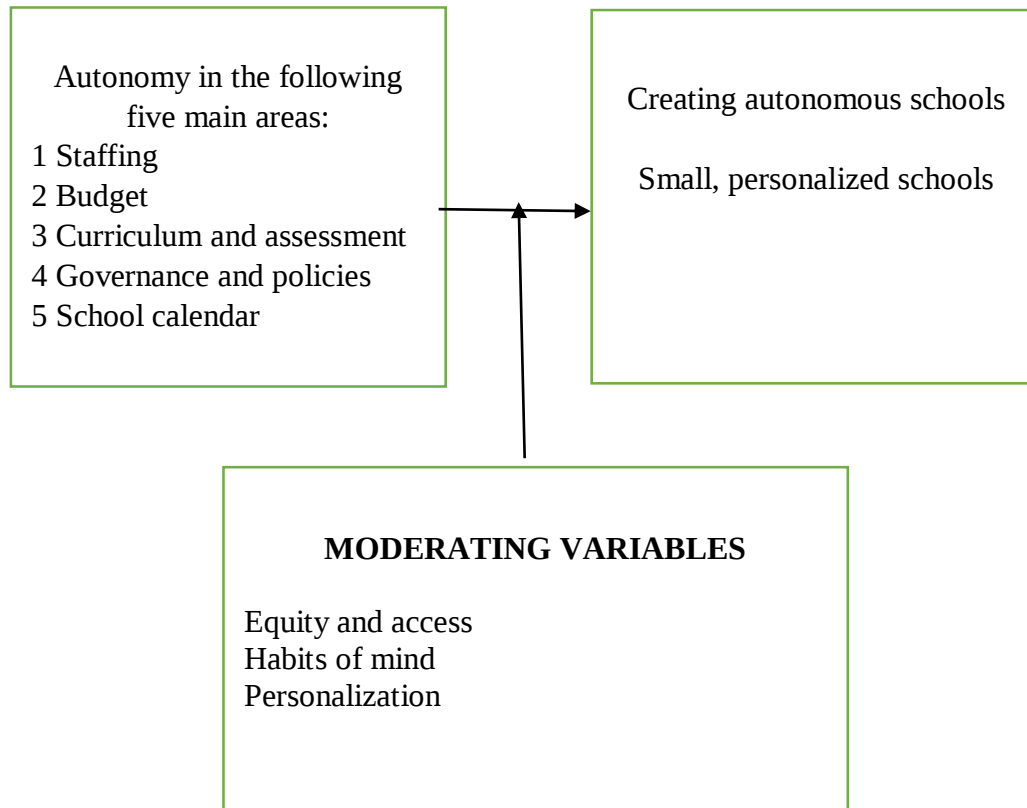
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	1.643	1.343		1.223	.230
Staffing	.376	.236	.273	1.592	.122
Budget	-.219	.211	-.175	-1.038	.307
Curriculum	.613	.197	.499	3.119	.004
Governance	-.222	.202	-.190	-1.098	.281
School Calendar	-.026	.178	-.024	-.146	.885

a. Dependent Variable: Small

Of the given predictors, when taken singly, Curriculum is highly significant. However, when taken together, School Calendar, Budgeting, Curriculum, Staffing, and Governance significant to have an effect to the autonomy of a small school.

5 Based on the findings what best practices in academic administration of small-size basic education school model can be proposed.

The initial conceptual framework is now revised to its final form.



Autonomy in creating small autonomous schools is anchored on the following main areas: staffing, budgeting, curriculum and assessment, governance and policies and school calendar. It is moderated by equity and access, habits of mind and personalization. The resulting autonomous small school is personalized.

CONCLUSIONS

Getting Started: Small Schools Design and Implementation. This section is a road map that may assist districts and schools in planning small, autonomous, and vision-driven schools. Each district will take its unique path to developing small schools, but there are some common elements that all districts should consider. While the steps in this section are presented sequentially, districts may choose a different sequence that suits them. Indeed, some districts may already be well on their way in small schools design and even implementation; this guide can then serve as a checklist to assess progress.

Important Considerations Before Starting. Before you begin the challenging work of either establishing a new small school or converting a large school into small schools, it is important to keep the following considerations in mind.

Be Prepared to Answer the Question, “Why Small Schools?”

As school and district leaders embark on the journey of creating effective small, autonomous, and vision-driven schools, building buy-in among all constituents for the substantial changes to be undertaken is crucial. In order to get the conversation started, leaders must be able to answer for themselves and for staff, parents, students, and community members the question,

“Why small schools?” There are three good entry points that can serve to engage the larger community in this conversation:

1. Facilitate a process of articulating a community vision for the education of the students being served, much as the Small School Principles articulate a vision. Through this process, constituents may begin to understand how their desires are best accommodated in small, personalized settings.
2. Build community awareness of the research base demonstrating that small schools are safer, foster better performance by students from all backgrounds, and are more cost-efficient than large schools.
3. Gather quantitative and qualitative data on your own school, along the lines of that cited in the opening vignette of this chapter (e.g., test scores, attendance, enrollment in honors classes). In this way, constituents may find areas for improvement in their own school, and small schools may provide an answer to those challenges.

Ensure Representation of Key Constituencies on Leadership and Design Teams. Small schools cannot be created in isolation from those who will be affected by them. There should be diverse representation of key constituencies on school-level Design Teams. The design of small schools will have greater integrity and strength when crafted with the input of many.

Ensure Regular Communication With and Opportunities for Input From the Entire School Community. Small schools will be successful when they build support among all the constituencies of the school community—faculty, administration, families, students, and the larger community. While representation helps to accomplish this, everyone involved needs to be regularly apprised of the process of small schools’ development and its benefits and have opportunities to provide input into shaping the evolving models.

The Autonomies Are Crucial to the Success of Small Schools. Smallness enables greater personalization and makes high-quality teaching possible—but small alone is not enough. In order for small schools to attain their individual visions of excellence, they need to have autonomy over critical conditions of schooling, including budget, staffing, curriculum/assessment, governance and policies, and time. This flexibility enables small schools to craft educational experiences that best meet the needs of the diverse students that they serve.

4. In the End, It Is All About Learning, Teaching, and Assessment. Smallness and autonomies enable schools to focus on the essence of the educational experience for students—learning, teaching, and assessment. Small schools strive to ensure that learning is purposeful, challenging, and has value in the world beyond school. Every student must be engaged in learning experiences that ensure students are fully prepared to be productive citizens in a diverse and democratic society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Suggested Sequence for Small Schools Design and Implementation. Table 4.1 suggests a sequence for small school design activities to be conducted at the school and district levels. Each step is discussed in detail in the pages that follow.

Table 1.1 Small Schools Design and Implementation

At the District Level

- Establish a districtwide small schools Leadership Team to develop a district plan and to pursue small school autonomies.
- Build community support for small schools.
- Develop a district plan for small schools that includes community input.
- Deliver a clear message to the community on the district’s plan.

At the School Level

For large school conversions:

Create a Design Team to guide the conversion. Decide on the framework for the small schools (e.g., theme or philosophy), size, enrollment process, and faculty assignment process.

For Small Schools, Either Freestanding or Sharing a Facility

- Create a Design Team for each small school.
- Develop a vision and design for the small school.
- Decide on the enrollment process.
- Decide on the selection/assignment process for the school leadership and faculty.
- Design the governance and leadership for the small school.
- Construct the curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- Create the schedule and student groupings.
- Design the personalized culture of the school.
- Design the professional collaborative culture of the school.
- Plan family and community partnerships.

Steps to Consider in Small Schools Design and Implementation at the District Level

- Establish a Districtwide Small Schools
- Leadership Team to Develop a District Plan and to Pursue the Small School Autonomies

The five areas of autonomy: *staffing, budget, curriculum and assessment, governance and policies, and school calendar*, are critical to the success of small schools. Each district should create a District Team to pursue these autonomies for the projected small schools. The team should consist of those district staff who have authority over the five autonomies (e.g., budget director, human resources director, curriculum coordinator), teachers union representation, and representation from each of the proposed small schools (or representation from each large school to be converted into small schools). The goal is to gain the same level of autonomy in each realm for each of the proposed small schools in the district. The team will deal with some areas that need superintendent and/or school committee approval (e.g., budget, curriculum and assessment, governance and policies), while others may also need teachers union approval (e.g., some areas of the budget, staffing, and school calendar). The initial autonomies that each small school will receive should be defined by the June prior to a September start-up date.

Questions to Consider:

- Staffing: To what extent will each small school be provided with staffing autonomy to hire and excess staff and to decide on the staffing pattern that best meets the needs of the school?
- Budget: To what extent will each small school be provided with a lump-sum, per-pupil budget over which it has discretion to spend as it sees fit to provide the best services to students and their families?
- Curriculum and assessment: To what extent will each small school have freedom to set its curriculum and graduation requirements?
- Governance and policies: To what extent will each small school have increased governing authority over budget approval, principal selection and firing, and programs and policies?
- School calendar: To what extent will each small school have the freedom to set longer school days and years for both students and faculty, with a particular focus on creating greater time for faculty to meet?

Build Community Support for Small Schools. Small schools are not necessarily what most adults have experienced. Adults are most familiar with the large, comprehensive high school; they may not immediately see the benefits of small secondary schools. The district should have a plan for building community support for small schools. This could include community forums, newsletters sent to families, and business roundtables. The research on small schools needs to be shared in lay terms, and district data revealing that significant student populations are not currently being served well by large schools need to be included.

Question to Consider: How will this plan build community support for small schools?

Develop a District Plan for Small Schools. This plan should articulate a rationale, design, and timeline for creating small schools in the district as well as the construct and philosophy of each small school. For large school conversions, the plan should articulate the small schools to be housed within the larger school facility. There should be a defined rollout plan for each of the district's small schools.

Question to Consider: Is the plan clear to the public?

Deliver a Clear Message to the Community on the District's Path. In order to build momentum and commitment to the transition to small schools, a strong message needs to be given to the larger school community stating the district's intent to move to small schools (e.g., how many, in which facilities), the reasons why, the plan for district rollout of small schools, and the timeline, as well as a commitment to seek public input along the way. This message is best delivered by the superintendent and is especially critical in building faculty commitment to small schools.

Question to Consider: What is the critical message that you want to communicate to the community?

Steps to Consider in Small Schools Design and Implementation at the School Level for Large School Conversions Create a Design Team to Guide the Conversion.

This team should comprise representative faculty constituencies in the school, as well as district representation. The team should be responsible for deciding how many small schools there will be, the size of each small school, the student enrollment process, and the faculty selection/assignment process.

Questions to Consider:

- *Design Team composition:* Whom will the Design Team consist of? What constituencies will be represented? How big will the team be? How will members be selected?
- *Role of the Design Team:* What will be the charge of the Design Team (e.g., developing a design framework for breaking down a large school into smaller schools)?
- Communication and involvement with key constituencies. Who are the key constituencies that need to be kept informed and have opportunities for input? How will you ensure that these constituencies are regularly informed about the Design Team's progress? At what key junctures will you gain their input, and how will you do this?
- *Timeline:* What is the timeline for developing the design plan? For gaining input from key constituencies?
- *Design framework:* How many small schools will there be? What will be the size of each small school?
- *Student selection:* What will be the student selection process for each small school to ensure equitable enrollment across race, income, gender, special education status, and achievement? What will be the faculty selection/assignment process for each small school, to ensure each small school has a core group of faculty committed to the vision of their particular small school?

Steps to Consider in Design and Implementation for Small Schools, Either Freestanding or Sharing a Larger Facility

Create a Design Team for Each Small School. Each small school to be created should have a Design Team that guides the design phase through to the launching of the small school. This Design Team should consist of the new small schools leader, faculty who will be working in the small school, and prospective parents and students.

Ultimately, the team should have 10–15 members. The Design Team is responsible for guiding all aspects of small school design through to implementation (e.g., vision, governance, teaching and learning, professional support, family and community partnerships).

Questions to Consider:

- *Design Team composition:* Who will the Design Team consist of? What constituencies will be represented? How big will the team be? How will members be selected? Are members of the Design Team automatically members of the new small school (in most cases, they should be)?
- *Role of the Design Team:* What will be the charge of the Design Team (e.g., developing a design for a designated small school within a large building, developing a design for a small, freestanding school)? What are the parameters of the Design Team's task (e.g., is their role completed once the design is finished and approved)?
- *Communication and involvement with key constituencies:* Who are the key constituencies that need to be kept informed and have opportunities for input? How will you ensure that these constituencies are regularly informed about the Design Team's progress? At what key junctures will you gain their input, and how will you do this?
- *Timeline:* What is the timeline for establishing the Design Team? For developing the design plan? For gaining input from key constituencies?

Develop a Vision and Design for the Small School. Each small school should have a coherent, well-articulated vision of what the school represents and what students are expected to achieve. The vision should be shaped by and reflect the small school principals and be developed by the planning team with community input. Once developed, it should be manifest in all documents created for the school (e.g., handbook, curriculum guide, orientation material) and be present in the small school's decision-making, policy development, and instructional practices and in other planning.

Question to Consider:

- What is the vision that will drive all aspects of the school?

Decide on the Student Enrollment Process for the School. The student assignment and enrollment process should ensure equitable enrollment by race/ethnicity, income status, language, gender, and special education, resulting in enrollment of these student groups that reflects their relative percentage within the district at each grade level. For this reason, controlled choice, within a ± 5 percent range of the district averages for the grade level, is recommended. The enrollment process should include a wide distribution of information about the school so that students and families may make an informed choice about selecting the school.

Question to Consider:

- What student assignment process will be adopted that will ensure equitable enrollment among the small schools? Decide on the Selection/Assignment Process for the School Leadership and Faculty. Ideally, the school's leadership should be selected by the governing body, with approval from the superintendent. Because this may not be possible in all cases, there should be a process in place that ensures the leadership embraces and is committed to the vision of the school. It is preferable to have faculty voluntarily select the small school in which they will work, while ensuring in large school conversions that each small school receives an

equitable distribution of faculty by race/ethnicity, academic discipline, and other local considerations. In all cases, this selection/assignment should be accomplished in concert with the local teachers' union.

Question to Consider:

- What faculty assignment process will ensure a critical mass of faculty committed to the school's vision within each small school? Design the Governance and Leadership for the Small School. Each small school should have a clear governance and leadership structure to guide it. The governance and leadership structure should reflect the principle of democratic decision making and include input and decision-making authority by the full faculty for any significant decisions that affect the small school. The leadership of the school should be clearly delineated, whether it be a principal, director, or teacher-leader. If the small school is located within a larger facility that houses multiple small schools and there is a building wide principal or administrator, the relationship between the small school leader and the large school leader should be clearly defined. In addition, small schools should develop a school governing council and a Leadership Team. The school council governing body should reflect the respective state guidelines for representation (most often administration, faculty, parent, and community representation, and sometimes student representation at the high school level). This body helps guide the school in all phases, and takes on increased governing responsibilities, including principal selection, supervision, and firing (with final approval by the superintendent), budget approval, and setting of school policies. This body usually meets no more than once per month. Each small school should consider having a Leadership Team, a faculty-administration body that meets more often (twice per month) to focus more deeply and in greater detail on guiding the school's implementation in all aspects. The team should be representative of all faculty constituencies. These governance structures should ensure the access of students, faculty, and families for bringing issues forward for consideration, the making of decisions in a timely manner with sufficient input, and effective communication within the entire school community.

Questions to Consider:

- Leadership: What will be the leadership of the school (e.g., principal or some other title)? How will this person be selected? If the small school is sharing a building with other small schools, will there be a building manager, and if so, what will be the delineation of roles between the building manager and the small school leaders?
- Governing body: Who will make up the school's governing body? What constituencies will be represented? How will they be selected?
- Decision making: What will be the shared decision-making structure of the school? What decisions will the school governing body make? The head of the school? The school's Leadership Team? The faculty? Parents? What will be the process for making decisions?

Construct the Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment for the Small School. This process is at the heart of the small school planning and should include as many faculty that will be teaching in the small school as possible. It is recommended that schools construct their curriculum, instruction, and assessment to be competency based; that is, the goal is to have every student master a set of defined competencies and to demonstrate this mastery in a variety of ways in order to graduate from that school. The curriculum, instruction, and assessment for the small school should be driven by the school's vision.

Questions to Consider:

- *Habits of mind:* Will the school have overarching habits of mind that drive the curriculum? If so, by what process will they be developed?
- *Less is more:* How will you construct the curriculum to focus on depth over breadth?

- *Student-as-worker*: How will the curriculum be constructed to emphasize project-based learning, opportunities for application of learning, and students' engagement in purposeful and meaningful work?

- *Assessment by exhibition*: What will be the graduation requirements for your school? How will graduation requirements ensure that students demonstrate mastery of key competencies? How will portfolios and exhibitions be embedded in both graduation requirements and the ongoing curriculum?

Create the Schedule and Student Groupings for the School. The schedule and student groupings should reflect the school's vision.

Questions to Consider:

- How will the staff create teams of teachers that are responsible for and accountable to a defined group of students?

- How will the schedule ensure significant common planning time for faculty teams?

- How will the schedule accommodate longer blocks of learning time for academics in order to focus on the principles of "less is more," "student-as-worker," and "assessment by exhibition"?

- Will there be equity in access to a high-quality curriculum for all students and the avoidance of tracking or ability grouping?

- How will staff create student-teacher loads of no more than 80:1 at the secondary level and no more than 20:1 at the elementary level?

- Will there be sustained student-teacher relationships over time—for example, through advisories, looping, and multiage classes?

- Will special education and bilingual/English language learner (ELL) students be included in all classes?

Design the Personalized Culture of the School. A key characteristic of small schools is their ability to create personalized cultures in which each student is known well by at least one adult. This characteristic is one critical correlate to students successfully completing their school career.

Questions to Consider:

- *Personalization*: How will you ensure that every student is known well by at least one adult over time (e.g., advisories)? What supports will be available for students who need it (including special education), and how will the supports be managed and delivered (e.g., Student Support Teams, learning centers)?

- High expectations, trust, respect, and decency for all: How will you establish a school culture that embodies these values?

Design the Professional Collaborative Culture for the School. There are direct correlations between having a professional collaborative culture that focuses on teaching and learning and seeing increases in student achievement. Each small school should design the structures, schedule, and culture of the school to guarantee significant, sustained time for faculty to meet and discuss teaching and learning and to provide them with the support to learn and practice tools for doing so. For example, small schools may create significant blocks of time weekly for faculty to meet in various groupings—full faculty, academic teams, Critical Friends Groups (CFGs), and study groups. CFGs, facilitated by trained teacher-leaders, meet regularly, with consistent group membership over time, to engage in collaborative practices focused on improving teaching and student learning, including looking collaboratively at student and teacher work, conducting peer observation, and engaging in action research. A formal process for supporting and assessing teacher performance should be part of the professional collaborative culture.

Questions to Consider:

- *Professional collaborative communities*: What structures and activities will be put in place to ensure the building of a unified professional collaborative community that is engaged in improving teacher practice and student learning (e.g., Critical Friends Groups)? When will faculty meet, how often, and in what groupings?
 - *Schedule*: How will the schedule and staffing pattern be constructed so as to create time for teachers to meet?
 - *Staffing*: What will the staffing pattern of the school look like?
- Plan Family and Community Partnerships*. Each small school should identify strategies for reaching out to families. These strategies can include involving them in ongoing efforts to
- Improve student outcomes, engaging them in meaningful dialogue about student learning, and providing multiple roles and opportunities for families to participate in the school, particularly in its academic programs and governance. Each small school should also seek to establish substantial community partnerships that support the achievement of the school's vision.

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