

Principals' Guidelines to Implement the Balanced Development Education of Primary Schools in Kunming City: A Mixed-Methods Multi-phase Study

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Abstract

Despite many significant factors related to educational reform, successful implementation of Balanced Development Education (BDE) is attributed to the principals' roles, responsibilities, leadership skills and strategies. Thus, this study aimed to 1) investigate the influence of roles, responsibilities, leadership skills and strategies of the primary school principals whose responsibility is to introduce Balanced Education Development in Kunming, Yunnan Province 2) explore the roles, responsibilities, leadership skills and strategies of the primary school principals and 3) develop guidelines for the principals of primary schools that will enable them to effectively implement BDE in their schools. This study adopted a mixed-methods multi-phase research design approach. The first phase was carried out by content analysis of sixty related documents for better understanding the relationship between BDE and quality education. The second step was collecting 268 the questionnaires from a population of 755 based on Yamane's formula. Thirdly, a group of 12 volunteering interviewees were purposively selected for a semi-structured interview. Finally, a group of seven experts were invited to critically analyze the guidelines derived from the combined three sets of data sources. The findings revealed that 1) gender and age had no effect on the principals' capabilities. Levels of education (from 'diploma' onwards) positively affected how the principals worked. Years in the positions of the principals and the principals under BDE policy showed that experience in the job might be an advantage but negatively affected their strategies, 2) the principals in the study took the roles of academic leaders, operational managers and network leaders but the principals also needed to show desirable personality traits and characteristics. Teamwork skills was the most necessary for both academic and management leadership, 3) The resulting guidelines could offer a proper framework for the principals to follow. First, the principals must be BDE leaders in student development by ensuring that all students feel valued, get attention, care and love in a safe and diverse learning environment for their physical and mental health. Secondly, the principals must professionally develop their teachers and their self-growth to be able to provide quality education and make the school a learning organization. Thirdly, the principals must nurture partnerships with the community and other external organizations such as urban schools by

emphasizing good relationship with parents and cooperating and collaborating in exchanging both human and material resources with those schools.

Keywords :*Balanced Development of Education, Principals' Leadership, Leadership Guidelines, Kunming Primary Schools*

1. Introduction

At this moment, in trying to improve education, China focuses on the elementary school level as it is a significant initial stage for children's overall growth, development, and cultivation of life values. Numerous scholarly investigations have been conducted to examine how improvement of primary education could be carried out for young generations (Li & Liu, 2014). According to Bo (2007), China attempted to carry out Balance Development Education of primary education in four major areas—education equity, educational resources, school teaching processes and educational evaluation. The concept of education for all—that all children have a right to education. as required by the UN Millennium Development Goals has also been valued in China.

Undoubtedly, education improves lives. In the age of intelligent education, promoting balanced compulsory education can improve China's education landscape (Wang, 2021). In addition, Xian (2009) points out that a socialist society like China needs educational equity for social harmony. All children, especially the tribal groups, should get fair education. However, although the Chinese government is trying to enroll more children in school, enrollment of the elementary school students of the minority groups have dropped in large numbers. China, in turn, must target minority populations to boost academic performance and school success. Yunnan is a province that needs special attention because education may not be accessible to all and there are still unbalanced resources in the area. Kumar and Suhail (2021) state that leaders are expected to provide not only education but quality education to all.

Yi et al. (2015) indicated that focusing on curriculum, teacher performance, and principal leadership can quickly transform elementary schools to attract students. Along the same line, Li (2021, p. 270) states that “to promote teaching reform of teaching institutions, strengthen the integration of teaching resources and teachers, and enhance the comprehensive quality of young students” (Li & Li, 2017). In conclusion, Balance Development Education in Chinese primary schools can be defined as an educational reform of basic education to deliver quality in all areas, namely, leadership, teachers, teaching and learning processes as well as integration of resources. Similarly, Xinhua (7 June 2022) defines “Balanced Development of Compulsory Education” as efforts in narrowing inter-regional, rural-urban or inter-school gaps in terms of education conditions and quality.

A large number of studies have been conducted to identify success and failure of primary schools but few focused on Yunnan Province, China, primary school administrators' BDE promotion abilities. Besides, success from the introduction of Balance Education Development is not clearly seen based on a large number of dropouts at primary level. Thus, this study aimed to find out from the principals about how they managed their

schools in the areas of roles, responsibilities, leadership skills and strategies they used. The findings from the study will be used to strengthen the capabilities of primary school principals as well as to prepare those who will be later promoted to the position of the principal.

China is Asia's largest and most populous nation. Fairly implementing balanced development instruction is difficult (Xue & Li, n.d.). Challenges in access to education, facilities, capacities, and unequal capitals in schools must be overcome. The evident disparity in resource allocation is seen within the context of China. Without professional talent training, rural primary schools function poorly. The dearth of competencies in school administration skills is readily discernible. Inefficient or ineffective principals may hinder balanced development education in China because they are the school's leaders (Xiao et al., 2022).

2. Research Objectives

2.1 To study the influence of the roles, responsibilities, leadership skills and strategies of the primary school principals in the implementation of Balanced Development Education (BDE) in Kunming, Yunnan Province

2.2 To explore the roles, responsibilities, leadership skills and strategies of the primary school principals in implementing Balanced Development Education (BDE) in Kunming, Yunnan Province.

2.3 To develop a set of guidelines for the principals of primary schools that will enable them to effectively implement Balanced Development Education (BDE) in Kunming, Yunnan Province

3. Literature Review

The principal's job is believed to be complex and multi-faceted based on the studies done in previous years since 2011 to the present time (e.g. Behbahania, 2011; Kadji-Beltran et al, 2012; Hoppey & Meleskey, 2013; Boush and Glover, 2014; Balyera et al, 2015; Kraft et al, 2016; Zheng et al, 2017; Basett and Shaw, 2017; Jones et al, 2018; Bush, 2018; Agasish et al, 2018; Park et al, 2018; McBrayer et al, 2020; Abbamont, 2020; Webster & Litchka, 2020; David et al, 2020; Feng, 2020; Maryan & Allan, 2021; Ngoc Hai Tran et al, 2021; Talebizadeh et al, 2021; Taole, 2022; Pan & Hong, 2022; Dag et al, 2023). These references above are only part of the work done in this area. The bulk literature reveals that this topic is thoroughly researched with resulting similar findings. In brief, it can be said that the principals have complex roles and responsibilities requiring well-designed leadership skills and specific strategies. Principals must lead in instructional leadership, strategic management, teacher development, quality management, staff/resource management, and external communication. School principals must drive change in addition to administrative and management duties. Principals can affect the organizational setting and develop the skills needed to successfully implement new initiatives or methods. (Kadji-Beltran et al., 2013; Zachariou et al., 2013). Principals must build partnerships, create collaborative networks and alliances, set directions, consult widely, empower and mobilize others, understand complexity, demonstrate integrity, translate strategy into action, and facilitate capability building for balanced development of education (BDE). The principal is responsible for teacher training. Motivating teachers requires distribution and change leadership from principals (Gregersen-Hermans, 2021).

Primary education, an integral part of compulsory education, has always been regarded highly. The central government has prioritized basic education since the founding of the new China, propelled by the goal of 'building a socialist country' and full literacy. China's primary schools rose dramatically from 1950 to 1990. In 1981, there were 894,000 primary schools and 14,328 million students, up from 346,800 and 24.39 million in 1949. National education progress depends on compulsory education. Protecting the people's right to survival, progress, and equal education is equally crucial (Xiao et al., 2022).

China's education system differs from the western ones. School leadership abilities, education administration, and school leadership influence the Chinese system. Most powerful and direct authority to manage school principals in China is the education administration system, established by the 1995 Education Law. Chinese education administration is carried out by the Ministry of Education (MoE) at the national level, Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) at the provincial level, Prefecture-Level-City Education Bureaus (PLCEDs), and County Education Bureaus (CBs) at the regent/city level (Feng, 2019). Balanced compulsory education development is essential to education equity and social harmony. China has balanced compulsory education development by narrowing the differences between rural, urban, and other locations (Feng, 2019).

Leadership styles are studied worldwide. Principal leadership is studied because of their importance in school effectiveness and ongoing improvement through balanced education. School principals are leaders who can manage their schools to achieve the expected goals set in the policies. Transformational leadership involves guiding and promoting teacher growth; thus, principals must support their teachers so they can get qualifications that help schools grow. Transformational principal leadership will boost staff capacity to achieve school success (Katsigianni & Ifanti, 2023). This is why a factor for school success is the principal.

School management (staff and instructors) motivation is crucial to teacher development. Self-efficacy is an indication that pulls all school community members together to achieve EDS goals through school quality, thus all parties should be supported in growing it. Self-efficacy was linked to excellent teacher achievement, motivation in instructional practice, excitement, dedication, and work satisfaction (Malandrakis et al., 2019). Principal-led thematic activities promote balanced development instruction and school interaction. The Principal Leadership Skill is also covered in Meso-Level Balanced Development Education, reflecting both an economic aspect of the educational balance system and the equality of educational resources through multi-stakeholder cooperation (Xiao et al., 2022; Xue & Li, n.d.). Educational balance emphasizes principal leadership duties and abilities that improve education for sustainable development and school management (Leithwood, Sun, & Schumacker, 2020).

There are certainly other factors that can affect school success. Unbalanced education resources plague Kunming city, an undeveloped Chinese province. Education resources are abundant in Kunming, the capital, but not elsewhere. Uneven resource distribution is a big issue. The urban-rural teacher quality and quantity gap makes it difficult for Kunming to provide quality education. Resource allocation disparities caused uneven education and human capital quality in each area. The national policy targeted Balanced

Education Development to ensure that all students have equitable access to quality education.

This study aimed to produce at the end a set of guidelines for the primary school principals to implement the BDE effectively because the principals are trusted with the most essential job of running a good school for all students.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study adopted a mixed methods multi-phase research approach, as it involved the utilization of four distinct research methodologies to gather both quantitative and qualitative data from several sources.

4.2 Research Site and Participants

The population for the study was Kunming school principals. Kunming was chosen for numerous reasons: (1) Kunming, the capital of Yunnan, has the greatest ethnic population in China; (2) The Chinese government prioritizes education system and environment development; (3) Kunming, a capital city and promising area, is likely to get government financial support. Kunming's 2020 census population was 8,460,088. Kunming has teacher-training colleges and is a cultural and educational hub in southwest China. In 2017, 678 public elementary schools provided obligatory instruction, while 77 private schools did. Principals, who make decisions and organize schools for teaching and learning, are important to BDE implementation. Kunming Education Bureau and all elementary and secondary schools have long valued Kunming's balanced education development policy's efficacy and passion.

4.3 Research Instruments

This study employed four research techniques at different phases-1) document research of 60 related document was done before the questionnaire was constructed, so significant data could be used to design the questionnaire, 2) Then 268 questionnaires were sent to primary principals, who had gone through random sampling, 3) Semi-structured interviews, with 8 prompt questions, were conducted on 12 primary school principals who volunteered to take part in the study, and 4) a set of guidelines derived from the findings of the filled-out questionnaire and semi-structured interviews was drafted for the invited seven experts from the Ministry of Education in Yunnan Province to critically analyze and give suggestions.

The following table shows the component sections of the questionnaire.

Table 1 Breakdown of the Component Sections of the Questionnaire

Primary School Principals	Number of questions
Background Information (IVs)	5 items
Principals' Roles (DV1)	8 items
Principals' Responsibilities (DV2)	9 items
Principals' Leadership skills (DV3)	13 items
Principals' Strategies (DV4)	13 items

The questionnaire consists of 48 questions with 1 to 5 (Age, Gender, Education Levels, Years in the Principals' Position and Years as BDE Principals as independent variables and the rest as dependent variables.

As Creswell (2008) recommended 8–12 interviewers for sufficient, in-depth qualitative data. This study interviewed 12 elementary school principals, each for 30-45 minutes. The inclusion criteria for these principals were (1) working as principals for at least 1 year; (2) located in Kunming city; (3) registered in the Department of Education in Yunnan Province; (4) full time status as principals in designated primary school (5) with outstanding school management reputation. The interview prompt questions were as follows:

Table 2 Semi-Structured Interview Questions

No.	Prompt Questions
1	In the principal's position, what are your responsibilities?
2	What do you think about the application of the balanced development education policy in primary schools
3	During the implementation of the BDE (Policy for Balanced Development of Education) in primary schools. Are there any factors that you want to emphasize as essential roles and responsibilities?
4	Do you think BDE is launched successfully in your school? What are the reasons?
5	What do you think can be the guidelines for other principals in implementing BDE?
6	How should the principals lead the primary school in implementing the Balanced Development Education in Kunming Province?
7	In your opinion, what skills and actions does the principal need to have in moving towards quality education?
8.	Can you evaluate yourself as the principal in primary school? What can you do well in the position and what you want to improve?

4.4 Data Analysis

This section explained how the two sets of data were analyzed. Scoring and scale points were used to analyze quantitative data. A linear multiple regression analysis was conducted utilizing the Stepwise Technique due to the presence of numerous independent variables (Harrell, 2015). The data were analyzed by SPSS 29 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Version 29). To determine the guidelines for primary school principals to effectively apply the BDE in Kunming, Yunnan Province, the findings from Research Questions 1 and 2 were analyzed with multiple-stage questionnaire-based quantitative analysis. The quantitative data were analyzed with descriptive statistics and multiple regression. The qualitative analysis adopted Lichtman's 3Cs Steps of Analysis (Code-

Category-Concept). The three Cs were employed after the six sub-steps: initial coding, revision, initial coding, generation of an initial list of categories, modification of categories by further reading, revision of categories, and transition from categories to concepts.

4.5 Findings

4.5.1 Analysis of the Questionnaire Data

The next section provides the analyzed data derived from the five sections of the questionnaire, namely: 1) Personal Particulars, 2) The Principals' Roles, 3) The Principals' Responsibilities, 4) The Principals' Leadership Skills, and 5) Strategies. The findings obtained from this survey, encompassing all five sections, were utilized to address Research Questions 1 and 2.

Table 3 below shows the Personal Particulars of the questionnaire respondents.

Table 3. Personal Particulars

Items	Choice	N (268)	Percentage
Gender	Female	69	25.82%
	Male	199	74.18%
Age	< 30 years old	20	7.42%
	30 – 40 years old	110	40.95%
	41 – 50 years old	130	48.66%
	51 – 60 years old	8	2.97%
Items	Choice	N (268)	Percentage
Level of Education	Diploma	13	4.75%
	Bachelor's degree	251	93.47%
	Master's degree	3	1.19%
	Doctoral degree	0	0%
	Post-doctoral study	1	0.59%
Year of Being in the Principal's Position	<5 years	165	61.42%
	6-10 years	56	21.07%
	Years	22	8.31%
	16-20 years	6	2.08%
	>20 years	19	7.12%
Year of Being the Principal implementing BDE	1-2 years	134	49.85%
	3-4 years	62	23.15%
	5-6 years	41	15.43%
	7-8 years	14	5.34%
	9-10 years	7	2.37%
	>10 years	10	3.86%

According to Table 3, the bulk of the respondents (74.18%) were male. The proportion of female principals was 25.82%. Based on the data gathered from the questionnaire, most respondents fell within the age range of 41 to 50 years old, accounting for 48.66% of the total. The next largest group, comprising 40.95% of the respondents, fell within the age range of 30 to 40 years old. Upon merging the two groups, the resulting percentage was 89.15%. The survey primarily consisted of individuals who held a bachelor's degree, comprising 93.47% of the participants. Nevertheless, a majority of 61.42% of the group had less than five years of experience in the principal's role. Most

principals (49.85%) had 1 to 2 years of experience with Balance Education Development (BDE), while 23.15% had 3 to 4 years of experience with BDE.

The quantitative analyzed using linear multiple regression to examine how genders, ages, levels of education, years in principal position, and years dealing with Balanced Development Education (BDE) of the principals reveals the impact on their roles, responsibilities, leadership skills, and strategies as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4 The Effects of Independent Variables on the Principals’ Roles

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
3	(Constant)	36.294	.356		101.832	.001
	YrsBDE3	-6.535	2.063	-.188	-3.168	.002
	YrsBDE5	-10.294	4.110	-.149	-2.504	.013
	Post1	-1.017	.501	-.121	-2.029	.043

a. Dependent Variable: Roles

*p<0.05

When all independent variables in the form of dummy variables (17) were entered into the multiple analysis utilizing the Stepwise Techniques. The data clearly show that out of the 17 dummy variables, only three had a significant impact on the principals' roles. These variables are: 1) YrsBDE3, which represents the number of principals with 5-6 years of experience in Balanced Development Education, 2) YrsBDE5, which represents the number of principals with 9-10 years of experience in Balanced Development Education, and 3) Post1, which represents the number of principals with 1-5 years in their current position. Their effects can be ranked in descending order as -0.188, -0.149, and -0.121, respectively. It is intriguing to discover that all three specified factors exhibited adverse impacts with a significance level of $p = 0.05$. Put simply, the longer individuals served as principals and dealt with BDE, the more pronounced were the adverse impacts of these three factors on their performance. The remaining characteristics, such as gender, age, and educational levels, had little impact on the functions of the principals.

Out of the 17 dummy variables, only three had a significant impact on the principals' responsibilities. The details are shown in Table 5 that follows.

Table 5 The Effects of Independent Variables on the Principals’ Responsibilities

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
3	(Constant)	37.906	.394		96.122	.001
	YrsBDE3	-6.579	2.735	-.144	-2.405	.017
	Edu3	2.616	1.194	.132	2.190	.029
	Edu2	-1.653	.825	-.121	-2.002	.046

a. Dependent Variable: Responsibilities

*p<0.05

These variables are: 1) YrsBDE3, which represents the number of principals with 5-6 years of experience in Balanced Development Education, 2) Edu3, which represents principals with a master's degree, and 3) Edu2, which represents principals with a diploma. Their effects can be ranked in descending order as follows: -0.144, 0.132, and -0.121. It is intriguing to discover that YrsBDE3 and Edu2 exhibited adverse impacts with a significance level of $p = 0.05$. Put simply, this implies that principals with a diploma and 5-6 years of experience in BDE were adversely affected by these two characteristics in carrying out their duties. The remaining characteristics, such as gender, age, and tenure, had little impacts on the principals' duties. Details are shown in Table 6.

Table 6 The Effects of Independent Variables on the Principals' Leadership Skills

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
4	(Constant)	57.766	1.697		34.043	.001
	Post2	-4.982	1.195	-.294	-4.169	.001
	Post1	-3.866	1.060	-.272	-3.646	.001
	Edu2	-2.904	1.096	-.166	-2.649	.009
	YrsBDE1	3.941	1.597	.146	2.468	.014

a. Dependent Variable: Leadership

* $p < 0.05$

The data presented in Table 6 clearly indicates that out of the 17 dummy variables, only 4 of them had a significant impact on the leadership skills of principals. These variables are: 1) Post2 (holding the principal position for 6-10 years), 2) Post1 (holding the principal position for 1-5 years), 3) Edu2 (possessing a diploma certificate), and 4) YrsBDE1 (having 1-2 years of experience in BDE). The significance level for these effects was set at $p = 0.05$. The effects of the four factors can be ranked in descending order as follows: -0.294, -0.272, -0.166, and 0.146. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that three out of four specified characteristics had substantial detrimental impacts on the principals' leadership abilities. This suggests that those with longer tenures and higher education qualifications, namely those who had a diploma degree and had 1-10 years of work experience, saw notable detrimental impacts on their leadership abilities. Only individuals who have 1-2 years of experience working with Business Development Executives (BDE) show a notable improvement in their leadership abilities. The remaining characteristics, such as gender and age, had little impact on the leadership abilities of the principals. See Table 7 below.

Table 7 The Effects of Independent Variables on the Principals' Strategies

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
2	(Constant)	56.739	.437		129.845	.001
	YrsBDE3	-9.489	3.420	-.166	-2.775	.006
	Edu3	3.435	1.480	.139	2.320	.021

a. Dependent Variable: Strategies

* $p < 0.05$

The data presented in Table 7 clearly indicates that out of the 17 dummy factors, only two variables, specifically YrsBDE3 (representing 5-6 years of experience dealing with BDE) and Edu3 (representing holding a master's degree), had significant influence on the principals' tactics at a significance level of $p = 0.05$. YrsBDE3 exhibited a noteworthy adverse impact, while Edu3 had a notable favorable impact with values of -0.166 and 0.139, respectively. This suggests that the experience of working with BDE over a period of 5-6 years negatively impacted the principals' methods, whereas possessing a master's degree positively influenced their strategies. The remaining characteristics, such as gender, age, and tenure, had little impacts on the principals' tactics.

4.5.2 Analysis of the Qualitative Data

Based on the Qualitative Research analysis, the Lichtman's 3Cs Steps of Analysis had been conducted. There were 379 coding; 119 categories and 36 concepts elaborated how to effectively implement BDE in Kunming city. The PS Principals based on role of PS principals define as supporting teaching-learning system; setting the vision of the schools; and gather the research problem and supervise to arrange the solution. The PS Principals Responsibilities in running the schools consists of managing the resources; assign the professional teachers and do the assessment and monitoring as to ensure the BDE implementation is on the same pathways of the vision and mission of schools. Leadership skills of PS principals could be the ability of principals to shares the resources and equalize the primary schools; develop the networking and partnership and implementing the political culture. Through these findings, the strategies could be assigned to implement the BDE effectively by training the teachers skills and professional development; exchange teachers to support other schools; innovate and initial the digital literacy to principals; improve the facilities of the schools and support the learning outcomes for the students.

4.5.3 Combining the findings from the Questionnaire Data and the Semi-structured Interview Data

The following figure shows the matching of both types of data

Findings from the 48-Item Questionnaire

Findings from the Semi- structured Interviews

- BDE Policy-equity, equality, quality
- Executing the government's BDE policy at their best ability.
- Care and support for stake-holders—teachers, students and the communities
- Value the children and treat the teachers fairly.
- Facilitating student learning and teacher professional development to enhance quality education
- Aiming at all schools to be a learning organization where all parties (the principals, the teachers and the students) must continue to learn
- Leading in academic activities
- Leading in curriculum design, monitoring and evaluating the teachers' adopted teaching methods
- Using strategies of treating all the teachers equally as well as working closely with the teachers as teams.
- Networking with external organizations to improve education quality such as a network with the parents, with the community, with the schools in the rural and urban areas as well as involving all stakeholders in supporting the school especially with educational resources and expertise sharing.

- The principals must be
- Academic leader
- Management leader
- Network leader
- The principals must have
- Desirable skills and abilities

Figure 1 Combined Findings from the Questionnaire and the Semi-Structured Interviews

Hence, the afore-mentioned map was created and utilized as the prescribed framework for seven invited specialists to conduct an analytical and critical evaluation of the recommendations.

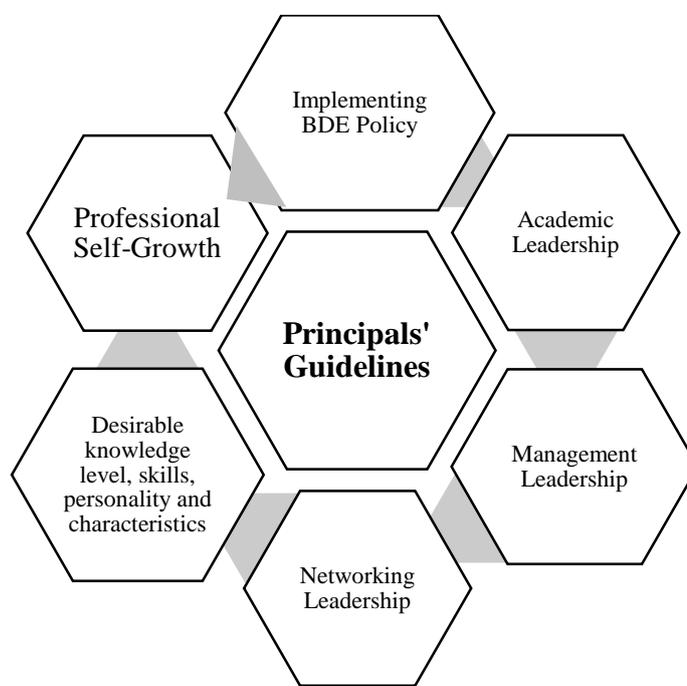


Figure 2. The Proposed Principals' Guidelines to Be Reviewed by the Focus Group Educational Experts

Seven experts from the Chinese Ministry of Education were invited to a focus group discussion to provide guidelines for principals to enhance school improvement in all areas, including student learning and teachers' professional development. The experts provided comprehensive feedback and recommendations, utilizing the guidelines formulated by the researcher, which were derived from the findings of two prominent instruments employed in the study presented here. Below are the expert's thoughts and suggestions. Further are comments from the FGD's experts:

1. Designing Curriculum Integrated with Traditional Chinese Values and Culture

Traditional Chinese values and culture must be taught. Chinese traditional values emphasize six natural environment-related values. Compared to Western and Chinese cultures.

"I suggest integrating traditional Chinese values and culture into the curriculum. This will ensure that students receive a well-rounded education that includes both modern knowledge and our cultural heritage..."(Expert 1, August 31, 2023)

Western culture emphasizes mastery, while Eastern culture emphasizes harmony. As shown by "Tian Ren He Yi," which emphasizes the deep harmony between humans and nature, harmony is the ultimate goal of humanity in Chinese culture. Second, the value system considers individual relationships. Chinese traditional culture is collectivist, while Western society is individualistic. Collective interests are valued more than individual interests in

collectivistic civilizations like China. Third, the value system considers how people value their actions. This dimension concerns activity hierarchy. Western culture emphasizes thinking before acting, while Chinese traditional culture emphasizes being and acting. The fourth dimension of values underpins morality. Reasoning is used to make moral decisions in Western civilization. This cultural paradigm emphasizes good, right, and ought moral judgments. The Western moral ideal values fairness and obligation, while Chinese culture values sympathy and self-control. A value system's fifth dimension is time prioritization and its impact on our major priorities and energy allocation in the nature-time framework. Chinese culture emphasizes present-focused decision-making. The sixth dimension of a belief system is contemplating the best outcome for people. Western culture emphasizes individual rights and independence, aiming to create fully formed people. The goal of Chinese traditional culture is human-nature harmony. A harmonious society is valued more than individual rights or personal growth in Chinese society. Western culture seeks to maximize human potential through active and autonomous means. Cross-cultural studies analyze the interactions, similarities, and differences between cultures to better understand human behavior, society norms, values, and Human existence is the first dimension.

2. Professional training for PS Principals

Important findings in this research include leadership capability. Professional training for PS Principals is crucial to delivering Balanced Development Education efficiently. Principals manage and protect the school's vision, missions, and values. Each person must inspire others to achieve the school's aims. This involves helping people grow to achieve the institution's vision and missions. To lead the school to its goal, you must welcome and adapt to change. Finally, collaborating with multiple interest groups is essential to achieving the institution's vision and purposes. The principal must drive policy, objective, and strategy development to achieve the school's vision and mission.

“...The proposed practices for primary school principals align well with the balanced education development policy. To enhance their effectiveness, I recommend incorporating a stronger focus on continuous professional development for principals themselves. By fostering their own growth, principals will be better equipped to lead their schools effectively...” (Expert 2, August 31, 2023)

The principal must also advise teachers, students, parents, and other educational stakeholders on the best ways to achieve the school's goals. The above discourse argues and provides substantial proof that principalships should not be based on chance or personal relationships. Instead, it requires trained professionals who can complete the job right away. This is preferable to hiring unqualified people who feel insecure in school. Today's schools need principals with extraordinary qualifications to create a good learning environment. Additionally, these principals must be able to promote the school's offers in the community. Principalship professionalization is part of career-pathing, with professional training distinct from academic progression. This view agrees that schools should be run by qualified administrators and leaders. Professionalizing principalship in China is important and overdue to boost school productivity. A good principal knows that staff skills should be constantly improved. Principals are supposed to motivate and inspire their staff' professional advancement. When a principal lacks the requisite qualifications, they may view staff efforts to improve their qualifications as a threat to their position. The trial-and-error technique of school management and leadership must be replaced with highly skilled principals who can maintain stability while aligning schools with their visions and missions.

3. Balanced Professional Quality of Teachers in Rural and Urban Areas

An experienced principal understands that teachers must continuously enhance their skills and competence in order to properly instruct. Principals are required to examine the personnel of the school and identify the human resource needs based on the Skills Development Act of 1998 and other relevant factors that need the acquisition of new skills and knowledge for effective teaching. An unselective generation of talent may result in individuals being placed in positions that do not align with their specific skills and knowledge. Professional development courses should be tailored to address individual requirements, and principals should strive to maintain a balanced approach by not excessively prioritizing one skill set at the expense of others. Principals must possess the knowledge and skills to effectively allocate and rank human resources. Professional development and training should align with the operational requirements of educational institutions (Glazzard & Rose, 2019; Tulyakul & Hussin, Mohd Sofian, 2018) . Initially, there is a requirement for innovative approaches and enhanced policies and institutions for training teachers in rural areas. Furthermore, rural educators require an increased amount of top-notch instruction (Boyles, 2020) . This study identified a need for rural teachers to receive training and high-quality education in order to effectively address the challenges of expanding education in both urban and rural areas.

“...start with the establishment and improvement of the teaching quality evaluation system, connect the smart teaching with the construction of digitalization and information technology, establish and improve the teaching quality control system, strengthen the supervision of teaching quality, and implement the control of teaching quality into every class, every link and every process. Only in this way can we fundamentally improve the quality of education. Promote the balanced development of education...” (Expert 7, August 31, 2023)

4. Digital Learning and Creativity Development for Students

The resource conversion rate disadvantage faced by rural students can be ascribed to several causes, such as insufficient academic groundwork, restricted availability of family resources, and a diminished level of parental engagement (Fredriksson et al., 2020). Therefore, it is advisable for educational institutions to actively encourage the incorporation of "family and pre-school education" in the near future.

“...the guide should underscore the need for primary school principals to leverage technology not only for improving digital literacy but also for personalized learning. Tailoring teaching approaches to individual students needs will maximize the impact of the balanced education policy and enhance educational outcomes.” (Expert 4, August 31, 2023)

“...I propose the inclusion of strategies for fostering critical thinking and creativity among students. Primary school principals should be encouraged to incorporate project-based learning and interdisciplinary approaches, enabling students to develop the skills required for the challenges of the modern world. This aligns well with the goals of balanced education development...” (Expert 6, August 31, 2023)

5. Local Communities Engagement

Principals are obligated to exhibit a strong commitment to promoting the involvement of parents and the community in the administration and oversight of educational institutions. Principals must have the ability to create and maintain successful professional relationships with School Governing Bodies (SGBs), parents, students, communities, and other stakeholders in the education sector. On the other

hand, the application of instructional leadership can be observed in the collaborative management of resources between rural and urban schools, as evidenced in Iranian primary school (Gwele, n.d.; Zeinabadi et al., 2020).

“...I appreciate the comprehensive approach presented in the guide, particularly the emphasis on shared resources and networking. However, to strengthen the implementation of balanced education development, I recommend integrating a community engagement component. Primary school principals should collaborate with local communities to understand their unique needs and aspirations, thereby fostering a sense of ownership and active participation in the education process.” (Expert 5, August 31, 2023)

“...there are still some difficulties in replacing teachers in urban and rural areas, because there are still some difficulties or guarantees in the flow of teachers, which can not even improve the enthusiasm of teachers, let alone improve or change the difference between urban and rural education in the long run” (Expert 5, August 31, 2023)

Concisely, the experts unanimously concurred with the results obtained from the instruments employed in the investigation. Nevertheless, they incorporated additional precise information into several areas to ensure that the researcher may formulate the instructions in the most optimal manner.

4.6 The Emerging Guidelines

The guidelines that have been modified with the experts’ comments and suggestions are as follows:

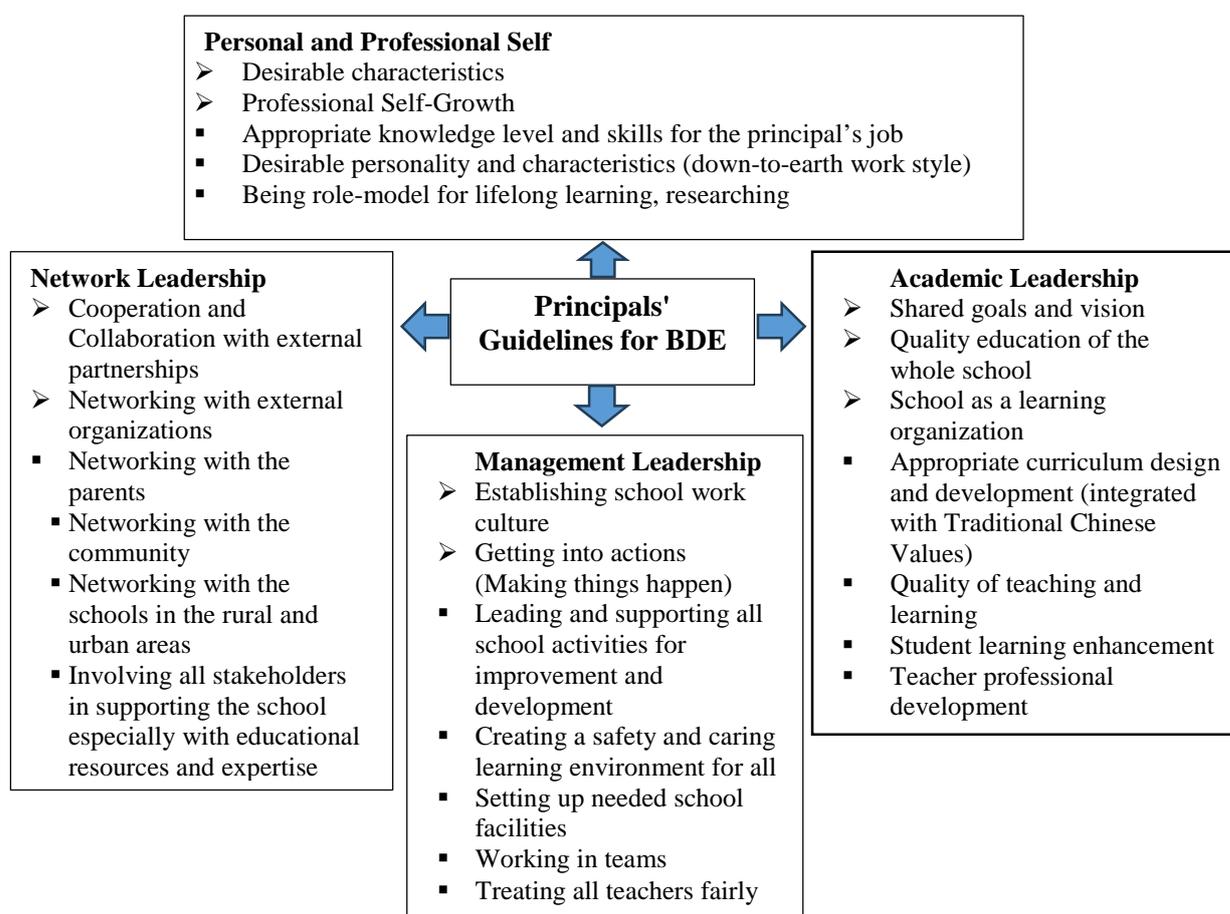


Figure 3 The Emerging Guidelines

5. Discussion

Based on the guidelines presented in the previous part, the issues that should be discussed are as follows:

5.1 Significance of the Principal's Leadership

The findings of the study can be concluded that primary school principals are expected to develop three major formats of leadership—Academic Leadership, Management Leadership and Network Leadership. Besides, they should possess desirable characteristics that are approachable to all parties or as the FGD experts defined as “the down-to-earth style of leader”. This is in line with the studies done in previous years since 2011 to the present time (e.g. Behbahania, 2011; Kadji-Beltran et al, 2012;(Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013); (Bush & Glover, 2014); (Balyer et al., 2015); (Kraft, 2015) (Tian & Zheng, 2017); (Bassett & Shaw, 2018); (Jones, 2018); (Agasisti et al., 2019); (Park, 2018); (Pannell & Sergi-Mcbrayer, n.d.); (Abbamont, 2020); (Webster & Litchka, 2020); (Baroudi & David, 2020); Feng, 2019; (Haiyan., & Allan, W., 2020); (Tran et al., 2021); Taghizadeh et al, 2017; (Taole, n.d.); (Pan, et al., 2017); Dag et al, 2023). These references are only part of the work done in this area. The bulk literature reveals that this topic is thoroughly researched with resulting similar findings. In brief, it can be said that the principals have complex role and responsibilities requiring well-designed leadership skills and specific strategies.

As the top administrators in the school hierarchy of power, the principals must be the leaders in all school activities, especially academic activities such as curriculum development, the teaching and learning process that enhance student learning and the teachers' professional learning. Based on the study findings, curriculum development is rated as a very important mission for the principals. The curricula designed should be tailor-made, which integrated knowledge and skills with the traditional Chinese values. According to (Chan et al., 2022)), attention to curriculum design and development should be the top priority of all the principal' jobs as that leads to improved student learning and better teaching practices. Not only the students but also the teachers learn from their teaching.

For the learning of the teachers and students, the principals are trusted with transforming schools into learning organizations in which all stakeholders must learn all the time. “The learning organization is one capable of continual regeneration from the variety of knowledge, experience and skills of individuals within a culture which encourages mutual questioning and challenge around a shared purpose or vision (G Johnson and K Scholes, 2003, p. 153).

It is worth realizing that the context specific leadership styles of the principal are fundamental in bringing improvements in different areas of a school system (Andrews & Soder, 1987; (M. Brown & R. Wynn, 2009); (Dinham, 2005); (Fullan, n.d.); Newmann et al, 2000; (Johansson et al., 2009)). However, it is not only the styles but the way a leader involves in whole process of influencing the led to achieve the desired objectives of the SI in a particular environmental context (Bush & Glover, 2014; Leith wood et al, 1998; Robbins, DeCenzo & Wolter, 2012). This means the principal needs to plan and identify the needs of his or her school which may be different from those of other schools. According to Talebizadeh et al. (2021), the principals whose learning-centered leadership as called by Hallinger and Wang (2015) can enhance teacher professional learning by developing trust among teachers and foster knowledge sharing. This means the teachers will no longer learn in the traditional style of workshops or conferences but through school-based knowledge sharing and knowledge management.

As a management leader, school principals have to play different roles to effectively manage the school. They have to play the role of a leader, supervisor, motivator, evaluator, and caretaker, academic as well as administrative success of the school completely depends on the managerial skills of the principal.

As a network leader, school principals must work closely with external organizations which means other schools both in the urban and local areas with an aim to share resources and human expertise. Schools should support one another. When one school is better in one way, that expertise must be transferred to other schools. Or when educational resources are plentiful in one school, other schools should be able to use them. Besides. cooperation and collaboration both from parents and local communities must be nurtured for the schools to function more effectively.

5.2 Personal Characteristics of the Principal in the Leading Role

Leading a school is a not an easy task and the leader of the school needs to be prompt, hardworking, self-motivated and mentally tough person. There may be many occasions on daily basis where he or she is required to show multifaceted skills and character to deal with the challenges encountered to manage the school. Success of a school depends on the approach and attitude of the principal. It can be on his/her attitude that he is taking challenges as a problem or as an opportunity. Challenges and what kind of innovative and improvised steps he or she is taking to overcome the challenges coming before him/her. There are many ways to overcome the challenges such as excessive paper work may be eliminated by moving to online forms and applications and establishing a digital IT system at school which will be used both in teaching and learning and well as school management. Parental and other stakeholder involvement may be an answer to deal with the management of classroom, absenteeism of teachers or overcrowded classes (Kumar, 2021)

The principal to implement BDE cannot be anyone who only knows the policy and uses his or her authority to manage the school. The principal is required to have excellent

teamwork skills, persuasive ability and down-to-earth management style. This means that he can lead in all activities by making all parties willing to participate in them, not by forcing them to join the activities. Thus, trust and shared vision will be significant. When all parties realize that by putting in their efforts to support school improvement, they will feel valued and the activities will be meaningful for all. Besides, by treating all the teachers and staff equally and fairly, all school members will be wholeheartedly willing to support the school and the principal.

5.3 Promotion of Quality Education

Quality education is the ultimate goal for BDE with three clear goals—equity, equality and quality. The school starts with equity that is to make education accessible to all children especially those in remote areas. By paying attention to all, making them feel valued and by identifying their needs which may not be the same, the children will be able to improve their learning. This is also what the Focus Group Discussion expert says “Personalized learning should be developed”. With appropriate curricular that match the needs of the school’s context will finally lead to quality education for all. According to S., Rasheed (2000), quality education is seen in healthy learners, safe and well-equipped environments, relevant curricula, child-center teaching and learning processes and learning outcomes that lead to desirable knowledge, skills and attitudes.

5.4 School as a Learning Organization

The concept of “School of a Learning Organization” probably benefits most primary school principals. All schools must learn. All the parties—the principal himself or herself, the teachers and the students in schools must learn. That is why the concept of lifelong learning must be promoted. For school to be a learning organization, Garvin et al (2008) suggest that three major characteristics must be instilled: 1) supporting learning environment, 2) concrete learning processes and 3) practices and leadership that reinforce learning. Other scholars such as (Yuan et al., 2021) also expressed the same views that school improvement should be carried out by adopting the concept of “School as a Learning Organization”.

In conclusion, the findings from the study are found to point out to these emerging issues. Therefore, for BDE primary school principals in Kunming, Yunnan, these listed issues should be considered.

6. Recommendation for Future Studies

Studies of the principals’ jobs and attempts for school development should be further studies to really measure what can be done successfully, what needs to be improved, what are the factors of success and what are the factors of failure. Many studies can be generated based on these in various different contexts and in larger or smaller scales of study.

7. Ethical Consideration

To conduct this study, multiple data collection licenses have been submitted to the Education Bureau of Yunnan Province. The ethics review for Human Research of Rangsit University has been applied with number as “COA. No. RSUERB2023-100”. Following the acquisition of the necessary authorization, the researcher commenced data collection activities in June 2023.

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