



Lessons Learned From School-Based Reform

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Introduction

“School-based reform” and “school-based management” are terms that received wide circulation in the United States in the early nineteen nineties and later, in other parts of the world, as means were sought for bringing about educational change at the local school level. This was in response to the call by educators for fundamental shifts in what takes place in schools and classrooms. Reformers have urged reconsideration of traditional notions of schools as institutions with isolated classrooms where students spend fixed periods of time studying rigidly differentiated subjects. Instead, there were calls for new institutions to be designed, from the bottom up, by deregulating the educational system and transferring authority to schools which, in return, would be held accountable for student results. (Quellmalz et al, 1995).

There was also an equally significant concern over the repeated failure of centralized structures to inspire in school personnel the prerequisite attitudes and behaviors for bringing about educational improvements. In the words of Mojkowski and Fleming (1998), “a school improvement impetus and authority emanating from outside the school does not produce the responsibility and commitment necessary to sustain consequential improvement.” Hence the call for entrusting educational reform to the school itself, its administration, its teachers and students, and its wider community, under the umbrella of “school-based management.”

There is no specific meaning attached to the concept of school-based management; however, it is generally agreed that it represents a shift of authority toward decentralization, identifies the school as the primary unit of educational change, and moves increased decision-making power to the school itself.

School-based management, or site-based management as it is sometimes called, is basically an attempt to transform schools into communities where the appropriate people participate constructively in major decisions that affect them. It provides principals, teachers, students, and parents greater control over the education process by giving them responsibility for decisions about school operations like the budget, personnel, and the curriculum. School-based management is thus a strategy to improve education by

transferring significant decision-making authority to individual schools and thus creating more effective learning environments for learners.

Just as there is no standard definition of school-based management, there are no “off the shelf” models for schools to follow. In fact, “some so-called school-based management arrangements are in reality merely variations on traditional hierarchical models rather than an actual restructuring of decision-making power” (Cotton, 2001). School-based management thus does not necessarily imply fundamental reform. According to a U.S. national study which will be discussed later, reform in some schools translated into nothing more than changes in teacher routines and meeting times. In many, however, school reform meant a reorganization of school routines to support learning, more challenging classroom practices, and exciting learning experiences for students. In line with school-based management, school-based reform is characterized by the fact that “changes are primarily conceptualized, initiated, and acted upon by a particular school community rather than from other locations of power such as state or national government agencies.” (Quellmalz *et al.*, 1995).

At the center of the discourse on school-based reform lies the question, “what are reform-minded schools actually doing to alter the education found in their buildings?” Reform initiatives need to be relevant to general school goals and expectations of teachers and students - e.g., to prepare for government examinations and/or admission to universities. If a reform initiative is seen to be remote or distracting from the school’s basic goals, teachers are not likely to respond to the reform.

In a topical synthesis of school-based management, Cotton (2001) summarizes its features as follows:

- The school is the primary unit of change.
- Those who work directly with students have the most informed and credible opinions as to what educational arrangements will be most beneficial to those students.
- Significant and lasting improvement takes considerable time, and local schools are in the best position to sustain improvement efforts over time.
- The school principal is a key figure in school improvement.
- Significant change is brought about by staff and community participation in project planning and implementation.
- School-based management supports the professionalization of the teaching profession and vice versa, which can lead to more desirable schooling outcomes.

- School-based management structures keep the focus of schooling where it belongs on achievement and other student outcomes.
- Alignment between budgets and instructional priorities improves under school-based management.

The Focus of Reform

There is general agreement in the literature on reform that “site-based decision-making should be explicitly considered as a means to increased learner outcomes” (Cotton, 2001) for the focus on improving student learning outcomes is “the force that should and does regenerate and reform teaching structures” (Millwater *et al*). Yet, how to bring about such improvement is still a question without a fully satisfactory answer. Thus far, researchers have identified no direct link--positive or negative--between school-based management and student achievement or other student outcomes, such as attendance. In some settings, student scores (on standardized or local tests) have improved slightly, in others they have declined slightly, and in most settings no differences have been noted. “Research as a whole does not indicate that site-based management brings consistent or stable improvements in student performance” (Millwater *et al*).

Reasons identified for this lack of impact on student performance include the fact that improving student performance is not a stated goal in most school-based management efforts, and thus decisions are often made without student outcome goals in mind. Another important reason is that student outcomes can be most powerfully impacted through improvements in curriculum and instruction, and school-based management efforts have often failed to address these areas of schooling.

Ronald Barth, in his peculiar style, depicts the perennial problem of instructional rigidity as follows:

I find our education system akin to a radio that seems to play on but one station, WDTT-Didactic Teacher Talk. As teachers, we can adjust the volume, the tone, and the length of the program. As students, we can employ the on or off switch whenever we choose. But I do not believe that as a profession we have yet discovered where the tuning knob is, let alone how to explore different stations with it. (Barth, 2001).

According to Mastin and her associates, researchers involved in reform have argued that inquiry-oriented instruction is most appropriate for reforming current instructional methods because it provides for active engagement by learners, involving rich social interactions in real-world experiences. (Mastin et al, 2001). Mastin describes a school reform project focusing on technology integration which involved the training of teachers to use technology in a context of inquiry-based, student-centered learning. Her account of the reasons for the success of the project, known as the MINT's project, is worthy of extensive quoting:

The success of the MINT's project was not coincidental. Unlike other projects that had failed in the past due to lack of teacher support, we provided ongoing support and training. First in the technology skills needed, then in creating projects that required the use of cooperative, activity-based learning and higher order thinking skills. We held monthly meetings where all the teachers could share their success and frustrations and receive feedback from their colleagues. We also had a MINT's Listserv used for sharing ideas, websites, classroom success stories and questioning other MINT's teachers regarding a particular problem...

Our classroom teachers were not left to their own devices in the classroom after a brief period of instruction. They had continuous training and support, and they knew they had someone to call on at anytime for assistance...

During the MINT's project we learned that students are quite industrious when learning new technologies; as soon as they learn the basics they are ready to explore more. When they discovered something new, they were eager to use the interactive whiteboard to share what they had just learned with the rest of the class. They were always open to helping their fellow students as well. (Mastin et al, 2001).

Role Changes

Restructuring in the direction of school-based management will obviously bring about important changes in the roles of governing boards, administrators, teachers, students as well as parents. In this connection, changes in the role of the school's governing board are particularly significant. As the overall authority, the board needs to provide general direction to the school by establishing goals and policy statements, allocating resources, and monitoring progress. The board's support thus remains vital to the effectiveness of reform initiatives. In most school-based management settings, the roles of administrators, teachers and even students and parents are also affected considerably. Perhaps the greatest degree of change occurs to the principal's role. Instead of enforcing policies made by the higher-reps, the principal now works collegially with the teaching staff,

sharing authority with them. Typically, the principal moves closer to the educational process, serving as an instructional leader and manager. (Cotton, 2001).

Under school-based management, input is often sought from students who have traditionally been isolated from operational and policy decisions. Older students are particularly involved in program planning, implementation and evaluation. While teachers must set challenging tasks and provide the scaffolded assistance required to support learner engagement, they must also empower students to learn in various collaborative arrangements in their pursuit of meeting standards of excellence. In doing so, learners are required to think, develop deep understanding, use disciplined inquiry and an established knowledge base. The roles of parents, alumni and other concerned members of the wider school community also become more active and influential. According to Cotton, “school-based management structures not only make use of increased parent/community input, but also provide training to help them become more capable participants in the school’s planning and decision-making efforts.” (Cotton, 2001).

Obstacles to implementation

Studies of school-based reform report a large number of obstacles faced during implementation. The following is a list of main ones:

- The climate of the school
- The effectiveness of the communication system
- Prevalent attitudes towards power and authority
- The distribution of and interaction among role responsibilities
- Unplanned interventions (government policy changes, staff turn over, budget cuts, etc...)
- Lack of appropriate professional development opportunities
- Difficulty of parental involvement

(Millwater et al)

- Anxiety over uncertainties of change outcomes
- Time availability and teacher overload
- Unrealistic expectations of immediate results of the change
- Lack of needed group process skills (group decision-making, conflict resolution, problem-solving)
- Financial and budgetary constraints
- Lack of knowledge of school operations (e.g., budget, facilities, personnel)
- Readiness of staff to assume new roles

- Uncertainty about a positive outcome of improved academic performance

(Cotton, 2001)

- Multiplicity and incompatibility of school reform programs (Mora)

In some school-based structures, the policy and operational decision-making areas in which teachers are asked to participate are not those of their central concern such as curriculum, instruction, assignment of students and teachers to classes, and student promotion and discipline policies.

(Cotton, 2001)

The U.S. National Study

During the 1991-92 school year a national study of school-based reforms was conducted for the U.S. Department of Education. (Quellmalz *et al*, 1995). The study included (1) a mail survey of a nationally representative sample of 1,550 school districts reporting about their “most comprehensive school-level improvement efforts;” (2) mail and telephone surveys of all state education agencies describing reform efforts in their states; (3) case studies of reform efforts in five states, 16 school districts, and 32 schools. These were selected for encompassing the full range of reforms and “with an eye toward the lessons they could teach others about *successful* reforms.”

The study emphasized that the heart of school reform is the improvement of student learning. The best examples of school reform thus featured significant changes in goals, curricula, instruction and teaching, and assessment.

The study’s findings indicated that schools placed increased emphasis on students’ acquisition of higher-order reasoning strategies and computer literacy. Rather than recite facts, students analyzed significant phenomena, made extensive comparisons, developed interpretations, drew conclusions, and evaluated issues. Newer curricula tended to emphasize the processes of solving problems and thinking critically rather than simply getting one right answer.

The study reported that schools replaced traditional subject–matter treatments with more integrated, engaging curricula. Thematic, interdisciplinary curricula and extended blocks of time were being designed to allow in-depth exploration of significant themes and content.

New instructional approaches included manipulative mathematics, hands-on science, issues-centered history/social science, literature-based reading, and process writing. Such approaches brought with them new classroom interactions and instructional practices which included all students in active, collaborative activities. Cooperative learning and clustering arrangements revitalized the settings in which students learn and the ways they work with one another. Students did not spend the entire school day working in isolation. Especially at the elementary level, students were seated, not in rows facing the teacher, but in clusters of four or five. Employing cooperative learning approaches, teachers in these classrooms assigned roles to individuals that would enable their group to accomplish a task. Even at some of the middle and high schools, groups of students shared four or five teachers, promoting closer relationships than were possible in the traditional setting.

The study identified the following “**Key Features of Successful Reform Strategies**”:

A. Creating challenging learning experiences for all students

I. Setting high expectations for all students

Setting high standards: Performance standards are set that represent challenging, yet attainable, accomplishment rather than minimum competency.

Emphasizing problem solving and critical thinking which involves shifting from emphasis on facts to strategies for using information for application.

Utilizing flexible behavioral standards which entail revising standards for “proper” classroom behavior and conditions necessary for learning. Teachers need to feel that it is okay to be noisy in the classroom and to recognize that behavioral expectations should be flexible enough to allow for students to interact as they learn.

Implementing heterogeneous grouping which is “supported by research as beneficial to learning.”

Developmental appropriateness of classroom content and organization, particularly at the middle school level, by combining subjects to soften the transition from elementary school.

2. Developing a challenging curriculum

Curriculum reforms tended to emphasize depth over breadth and presented authentic activities in which students applied concepts in meaningful contexts. Curricula emphasized problem solving and critical thinking, often having students synthesize their inquiries in oral or written presentations. In some schools, technology both presented engaging activities and supported collaboration and writing.

3. Setting alternative configurations of students and teachers: These included block scheduling, team teaching, and collaborative learning which also involved cross-age and peer tutoring.

4. Tracking student progress with a range of outcome measures: Alternative assessments were used featuring authentic integrated tasks, multiple interpretations; focus on process, collaboration and ongoing assessment. Types of alternative assessment that were identified included portfolios, projects and investigations.

B. Building a school culture that nurtures staff collaboration and participation in decision making

1. Finding ways for teachers and school staff to collaborate on significant changes needed in the school
2. Seeking ways to reformulate the roles and authority of teachers and administrators
3. Reformulating staffing, resources, and time and space to increase staff collaboration

The most successful school-based reforms developed effective techniques for nurturing staff collaboration and participation in decision making. The schools created cultures of collegiality by finding ways for staff and the community to work together on significant changes needed in their schools. Equally important to shared decision making was the reformulation of the roles and authority exercised by teachers and administrators. A new division of labor created new responsibilities and obligations for school staff. Leadership for these change

processes came from a variety of sources: teachers, principals, and district or state personnel. The advances in staff collaboration and participatory decision-making were often achieved by an array of creative changes in staffing patterns and allocations of resources, time, and space.

C. Providing meaningful opportunities for professional growth

1. Identifying and prioritizing the topics and types of staff development that will promote the school's reform goals
2. Planning a coherent, sustained program for professional growth that will provide time and expertise for staff to acquire, implement, and reflect on new approaches
3. Exploring a variety of methods for developing expertise

In schools with successful school-based reform, teachers set staff development priorities keyed to their vision of the reform goals in their schools. Typically, staff development topics related to technical areas such as curriculum, instruction, and assessment, or to managerial areas such as schoolwide planning or collaborative decision-making. Teacher teams developed strategic plans that selected staff development topics and methods allowing sustained, coherent immersion in an area. Teachers sought the expertise and time necessary for the school staff to acquire, implement, and reflect on innovations on an ongoing basis. The methods used for staff development ranged far and wide. Trainer-of-trainers created cadres of teacher experts in the school; teaming and coaching arrangements allowed school faculty to learn from experts and from each other; visits to classes in their own and other schools allowed teachers to see new ideas in action; alliances with universities brought expertise to the schools and opportunities for growth and advancement to teachers; some schools pooled resources to share training expenses and personnel.

Teacher Empowerment

It is generally acknowledged that teachers have often been isolated from involvement in significant decision making and from frequent and meaningful contact with one another. School-based management has afforded an opportunity for broader teacher involvement in decision-making on school policies and operations. However, it has been argued that

reform initiatives are not likely to succeed unless they incorporate teachers' participation in making decisions in areas that are specially important to them (Conley, 1990).

In a study conducted by Johnston and Germinario (1985), the findings indicated that “the majority of teachers would like to be more involved in decision-making and that they are most interested in participating in those decisions which pertain to the teaching-learning process.” Furthermore, it has been suggested (Grundy, 1998) that teachers are more likely to change if they can see that change will assist their students to learn better as well as more efficiently and effectively; otherwise it is likely they will reject it. Thus any process of school change needs to involve teachers in the dialogue of change planning and actions as well as show effective and efficient learning benefits for students.

Millwater cites seven important organizational features that contributed positively to a greater commitment and heightened sense of efficacy by teachers. These were: respect from relevant adults such as administrators, parents and the community at large; participation in decision-making that augments their influence over the work setting; structures and procedures that contribute to a high sense of efficacy, such as mechanisms to obtain frequent and accurate feedback about their performance and its specific effects on student learning; opportunity to experiment, make use of and improve existing skills and knowledge; adequate resources and a pleasant, orderly physical working environment; congruence between personal and school goals; and frequent and stimulating professional interaction among peers. (Millwater et al).

To be involved in change, teachers need to recognize the relevance of the change to their needs. “Teachers change or do not change according to whether they perceive a need, diagnose a problem, and conceive of a response to the problem that is both within their intellectual and emotional capacity, and appropriate to their personal, educative and ideological perspective and the context in which they work” (Day, 1997, cited in Millwater et al). This is confirmed by other writers who noted that the success or failure of school reform depended not only on the soundness of the reform model used, but primarily on teacher perception, acceptance and endorsement of the change. Renshaw (1995) argued that teachers must be motivated to invest energy and professional expertise to make educational reforms that are aimed at improving teaching and student learning outcomes actually work.

Whitaker and Moses (1990) saw teacher empowerment as fundamental to the restructuring process for several reasons. First, empowerment creates a sense of ownership leading to greater motivation, ingenuity and productivity. Second, it enfranchises teachers; for decisions are made by those responsible for implementation, and these results in less alienation and greater commitment. Third, it prevents mindless bureaucracy. Top-down structures characterized by rules and rigidity are challenged and teachers assume greater responsibility for use of their own initiative and creativity. Fourth, empowerment inspires teacher growth and renewal for, “while externally induced school reform is reactive, internally motivated change stemming from empowerment is creative and reflective” (Whitaker & Moses, 1990, cited in Millwater et al).

Teacher empowerment is particularly reflected in the leadership roles which teachers are allowed to assume. Barth emphasizes that “teachers become more active learners in an environment where they are leaders. When teachers lead, principals extend their own capacity, students learn and live in a democratic community of learners, and schools benefit from better decisions. This is why the promise of widespread teacher leadership in our schools is so compelling for the success of school reform.” (Barth, 2001). Preparing teachers for leadership roles thus forms an important part of their capacity building. The role of reform coaches is particularly significant in this connection. Findings suggest that coaches carry out important functions in the process of improving teaching and learning in schools by building leadership capacity for instructional improvement and by directly coaching teachers who require instructional support (Coggins et al, 2003).

The School Culture

Several writers emphasize that school-based reform or restructuring does not in itself insure the success of reform initiatives. Beyond that, what is essential is the presence of a collaborative school culture. This was confirmed by Millwater and her associates who reported on a comparative study of both primary and secondary schools in Australia that were undergoing changes in their work organization as part of the National Schools Network’s program of reform. They found that successful reform was marked by a school environment in which equal attention was paid to changing structure as well as the school

culture in ways that developed a collaborative teaming community for both students and teachers. (Millwater et al).

Barth highlights this with even stronger emphasis: “Culture changing is the most important, most difficult and perilous job of school-based reformers. School cultures cannot be changed from without; they must be changed from within.” He goes on to say that a school’s culture can work for or against improvement and reform. “Some schools are populated by teachers and administrators who are reformers, others by educators who are gifted and talented at subverting reform. Some other school cultures are indifferent to reform.” (Barth, 2001).

According to Millwater, “organic collaboration, which values the ideas and issues that belong to all members, requires an investment of time, energy and emotion by all constituents in order to transcend special interests and traditional, vested power bases held by some of the team members.” (Millwater at al).

The challenge of building professional cultures confronts schools with the necessity to make major changes that will take time, patience, enlightened leadership, and a willingness to take risks at both individual and organizational level. This can be extremely difficult in each school confronting change for, as Groundwater-Smith (1996) found, individuals involved are at different points, with some highly committed and anxious to proceed while others are more concerned to be well grounded before continuing. She goes on to say that this difficulty is compounded by the possible existence of powerful barriers to reform in the thinking and practices of school community members. These include “traditional concepts of hierarchical leadership, stereotyped roles of teachers, administrators and students, and dominant curriculum and assessment regimes” (Groundwater-Smith, 1996).

Barth cites a number of cultural norms as necessary for a healthy school culture: collegiality, experimentation, high expectations, trust and confidence, tangible support, reaching out to the knowledge bases, appreciation and recognition, caring celebration and humor, involvement in decision-making, protection of what’s important, traditions, and

honest, open communications. He reports approvingly that these qualities of a school's culture "dramatically affect the capacity of a school to improve." (Barth, 2001).

Millwater and her associates also identify collegiality and collaboration as central features of a school culture that is conducive to school reform. Collaboration includes those activities which bring members of the school community together to share information and ideas, plan together, engage in decision-making and participate in the professional life of the school. A key factor in collaboration, however, is the element of collegiality. Collegiality implies a level of interpersonal interaction, which is built upon openness and trust, respect, willingness to take risks, sharing and caring. All participants not only need to feel part of the school community and have some say in its decisions, but they also need to feel accepted by this community as valued and equal partners. Hence, "collegiality is a component attitude of a collaborative school culture and refers to egalitarian and positive interrelation marked by mutual respect, cooperation and interdependence among all members of the school community" (Lieberman, 1990; Hargreaves, 1992, cited in Millwater et al).

Professional learning communities

A school culture characterized by collaboration and collegiality will provide fertile ground for the growth and development of the school as a professional learning community. Darling-Hammond (1995) observed that teachers need to have opportunities to share what they know, to consult with peers about problems of teaching and learning, and to observe peers teaching. She noted that such activities which are typical of professional learning communities deepen teachers' professional understanding and contribute to a collaborative spirit among them.

According to Lieberman (1995 b), providing ways for teachers to talk publicly with each other about their work in behalf of students reduces the isolation of teachers and mobilizes them to commit themselves to making major changes in how they participate in the school. Lieberman (1995a) recommended teacher learning contexts that include the support of colleagues in a professional community that is nurtured and developed not only within but outside the school. Sykes (1996) agreed that "an invaluable resource for teachers is a professional community that can serve as a source of insight and wisdom about problems of practice." Schools thus became centers of inquiry in which participants

engage in asking questions and pursuing activities designed to keep discourse alive, informed, and based on values.

Karen Seashore Louis (2000) has specified the following components of a professional community:

Shared Norms:	Staff share norms and values around key areas
Focus on Learning:	Common focus on student learning and high expectations
Collaboration:	Staff are helpful, cooperative and collaborative
Shared practice:	Teachers share their teaching publicly with one another
Reflective Dialogue:	Ongoing discussion with a focus on learning from each other
Collective Responsibility:	All teachers feel responsibility for the success of all students

In a SEDL review of studies of professional learning communities, it is reported that outcomes for both staff and students have been improved by organizing professional communities. For staff, the results include:

- reduction of isolation of teachers
- increased commitment to the mission and goals of the school and increased vigor in working to strengthen the mission
- shared responsibility for the total development of students and collective responsibility for students' success
- powerful learning that defines good teaching and classroom practice, that creates new knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learners
- Increased meaning and understanding of the content that teachers teach and the roles that they play in helping all students achieve expectations.
- Higher likelihood that teachers will be well informed, professionally renewed, and inspired to inspire students.
- More satisfaction and higher morale, and lower rates of absenteeism

- Significant advances into making teaching adaptations for students, and changes for learners made more quickly than in traditional schools
- Commitment to making significant and lasting changes
- Higher likelihood of undertaking fundamental, systemic change.

For students, the results include:

- decreased dropout rate and fewer classes “cut”
- lower rates of absenteeism
- increased learning that is distributed more equitably in the smaller high schools
- larger academic gains in math, science, history, and reading than in traditional schools
- Smaller achievement gaps between students from different backgrounds.

There is thus wide recognition of the power of the organized professional learning community that makes possible the advancement of student achievement. It is, however, not simply the presence of the learning community but what the community chooses to focus on that influences the outcome. McLaughlin (1993) has cautioned that professional communities, in and of themselves, are not necessarily a good thing. The openness, the sharing of values and beliefs about learning, the action research that is conducted, are all vital elements of the life of a learning community. In this connection, the nature and role of the staff development offered is crucial.

There should be a set of professional development standards that delineate matters such as areas of critical knowledge and skills needed by reform participants, the processes by which these might be acquired and the nature of the school culture required to support continuous improvements in teaching and learning that make a difference in student outcomes. High quality, ongoing training programs with intensive follow-up are needed, as are other growth promotion processes such as study groups, action research, teacher networks and peer coaching (Hirsch, 1999).

Parental and family involvement

Parents have traditionally been considered an important part of the school community, but the nature and family scope of their role have varied from one community to another.

The literature on school-based reform asserts that family involvement makes critical contributions to student achievement and asserts that children do best when their parents are enabled to play four key roles in their children's learning: teachers, supporters, advocates, and decision-makers; and a comprehensive, well-planned family-school partnership fosters high student achievement. (Henderson and Berla, 1994).

However, it is reported that teachers do not systematically encourage family involvement, and parents do not always participate when they are encouraged to do so. This is especially true at secondary levels (Cohen, 1994), where family involvement is more limited than at early childhood or elementary levels. Teachers often believe that parents are neither interested in participating in their children's education nor qualified to do so. Parents, in turn, sometimes feel intimidated by school administrators, staff, and teachers, and feel that they lack the knowledge and skills to help educate their children.

Quite often teachers resent parental "interference" in their work with students and view it as an infringement on their professional role, and parents are sometimes afraid that their involvement in school affairs might negatively affect their children's relations with teachers. The role of parents thus gets restricted to social and fund-raising activities like parties and bake sales.

Advocates of active parental involvement in school-based decision-making call for professional development programs for both parents and teachers emphasizing a healthy partnership between the two groups. As a matter of fact, they propose including the development of family involvement skills and attitudes in preservice teacher education programs.

Concluding Statement

School-based reform is basically a function of school-based management which, in turn, reflects a policy of decentralization – i.e., transfer of decision-making power to the school; and within the school, decision-making is shared among governing bodies, administrators, teaching and non-teaching staff, and in varying degrees, with students and parents.

Restructuring through decentralization mainly applies to public schools which typically form part of national systems of education and report to national and/or local education

authorities. When granted substantial decision-making power, such schools would then enjoy a status of autonomy comparable to that of private schools.

An autonomous structure, however, does not in and of itself insure reform in schools, whether public or private. As Fullan and Watson (1999) note, “while School-Based Management has a structural element, it is culture that is the primary agent of change, i.e., a culture that focuses on that of continuous improvement... School-Based Management means developing professional learning communities [and] establishing new capacities across the school and community...” School reform efforts are likely to succeed when teachers are provided meaningful opportunities for growth within the context of a school culture characterized by collaboration and collegiality. “Without clarity of purpose, commitment, collaboration, leadership [and sustained nurturing], reform efforts may sputter and die” (Fullan and Watson, 1999).

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