



# *Serving principals* **Needs Analysis Programme**

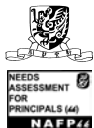


DEVELOPMENTAL  
NEEDS ANALYSIS

## *Overview and Foundation*


A NAFPhk Professional Development Programme





## **A NAFPhk Professional Development Programme – Serving Principals Needs Analysis Programme *Overview and Foundation***

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For more information on the *Needs Assessment for Principals (Hong Kong) [NAFPhk]* programmes, please email us at [NAFPhk@fed.cuhk.edu.hk](mailto:NAFPhk@fed.cuhk.edu.hk) or visit <http://www3.fed.cuhk.edu.hk/ELDevNet>



# Welcome to SpNAP

Congratulations on your decision to explore SpNAP - a professional learning programme designed specifically for school leaders. Through choosing to find out what this program can do to support your leadership development you have demonstrated the openness and commitment necessary to help take schools toward a brighter and more meaningful future.

SpNAP is the third cog in a series of needs-based leadership professional learning programmes we have developed over the last five or so years. As with related NAFPhk programmes for Aspiring and Newly Appointed Principals, SpNAP was developed and written in close consultation with a group of experienced school leaders under the stewardship of the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB). The working tripartite partnership which evolved while developing and implementing the various programmes was based firmly on openness, shared control and professional independence.



I invite you to experiment with the elements and mechanisms which comprise SpNAP. As explained in the accompanying documentation, the purpose of the programme is to stimulate your curiosity about your leadership - how you see and do things in your school – and to use the resulting insights to challenge your present beliefs and ways of operating. Through such challenge, and in partnership with others, you may well uncover new, different or even more meaningful ways of leading your students, teachers and the broader school community.

I hope you enjoy some of what SpNAP offers. We certainly don't claim it to be perfect or to contain easy answers, but we do believe if approached professionally that it can in some small way help you find out more about yourself as a leader and help you build a worthwhile leadership learning agenda. As with all NAFPhk programmes, your feedback is not only welcome but necessary if we are to continue to make our programmes relevant and worthwhile. Please feel free to contact us should you have any comments or questions.

Kind regards,



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***That is what learning is. You suddenly understand something  
you've understood all your life, but in a new way.  
(Doris Lessing)***

***Learning is not compulsory... neither is survival.  
(W. Edwards Deming, 1900 – 1993)***

***Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.  
(John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963),  
speech prepared for delivery in Dallas the day of his assassination  
November 22, 1963***

***Leadership is learning with purpose when others would  
shuffle with trepidation.  
(Anon)***

# CONTENTS

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<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>4</b>
AIM	5
EXPECTED OUTCOMES	5
OUTWARD SIGNS OF ACHIEVEMENT	6
KEY SpNAP FEATURES	7
<b>THE PROGRAMME</b>	<b>8</b>
SpNAP PROGRAMME BOOKLETS	9
FOUR PROGRAMME ELEMENTS	10
<b>THE PROCESS</b>	<b>16</b>
STEP 1: SELECT YOUR STARTING POINT, PATHWAY AND TIME FRAME	15
STEP 2: GOAL-BASED LEARNING	17
LEADER'S LEARNING JOURNAL	20
TRIPOD PROCESS AND JOURNAL	23
STEP 3: CONTINUING ANALYSIS AND LEARNING	22
<b>FOUNDATION</b>	<b>25</b>
I. BACKGROUND	
WHY SHOULD SERVING PRINCIPALS UNDERTAKE NEEDS ANALYSIS?	26
THE PHASES OF THE PRINCIPALSHIP AND NEEDS ANALYSIS	28
II. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS	
GOAL-BASED LEARNING	33
LEARNING GOALS	32
REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AND PRAXIS	35
COGNITIVE CONFLICT AND REFLECTING ON DATA	36
CURIOSITY	37
DISCERNMENT AND GATHERING DATA FROM OTHERS	38
META-AWARENESS AND SELF-TALK	39
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>NAFPhk TEAM AND OTHER CONTRIBUTORS</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>SOURCES AND REFERENCES</b>	<b>44</b>

## FIGURES AND TABLES

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FIGURE 1: THE FOUR PROGRAMME ELEMENTS	8
FIGURE 2: THE J-CURVE	14
FIGURE 3: FLOW CHART OF THE SpNAP PROCESS	17
FIGURE 4: GOAL-BASED LEARNING PROCESS	20
FIGURE 5: THE SIGMOID CURVE	26
FIGURE 6: GOAL-BASED LEARNING FRAMEWORK	33
FIGURE 7: DOUBLE-LOOP LEARNING	37
FIGURE 8: THE ACTION LEARNING MODEL	39
TABLE 1: GOAL-BASED LEARNING SCHEDULE	21
APPENDIX 1: CORE AREAS AND CONVERSATIONS BOOKLETS MATRIX	43

# Introduction



SpNAP is a needs analysis programme designed specifically for Serving Principals (SPs) in Hong Kong. Serving principals are leaders who have been working as school heads for more than two years. The programme is designed to encourage principals to examine issues of leadership, school culture and school-based improvement within increasingly complex expectations for good schooling. The avenues for rigorous self-reflection, goal setting and peer interaction included in SpNAP aim to enable principals to identify their own learning priorities and inform their overall continuing professional development agenda. The programme is designed to allow principals to select the starting point, pathway and timeframe of the analysis to suit their own circumstances and stage of development.

Two of the most common misconceptions held about effective school leadership are that it stems exclusively from either a broad 'academic' knowledge base or from personal insights which can only be learned through years of experience as a principal. Behind the first notion is a belief that reading textbooks and articles, and absorbing what these say, will lead a person to acquire the knowledge and understanding required to be an effective leader. Behind the second is that the simple accumulation of years 'on the job' makes an effective principal.

While it is self-evident that increasing knowledge and gaining experience can increase leadership effectiveness, on their own, neither is sufficient to sustain ongoing growth and development. For example, much knowledge when viewed in practice looks very different from that found in books. The architecture of SpNAP is based on the premise that if principals are to enhance their effectiveness in meeting the challenges of the contemporary workplace, they must shift their focus from simple content-centred or experience-dependent approaches to a goal-based approach which firmly locates their learning within their own contexts.

The SpNAP programme is based on a belief that needs analysis requires principals to clarify their own personal and workplace values and beliefs; look deeply within themselves, their schools and the broader educational context to identify their needs; and set goals to guide their further leadership development. Goal-based learning holds that an understanding of one's needs comes through interaction with authentic cases that stimulate curiosity and internal tension or a form of cognitive conflict. In other words, SpNAP asserts that learning and change is more likely when school leaders are asked to explain, elaborate and defend their positions to themselves and to others and that this gives rise to cognitive conflict. Cognitive conflict occurs when SPs confront a discrepancy between their existing knowledge and beliefs and new beliefs and information. They then move to resolve this conflict through new learning. Such learning can include new skills and knowledge or even changing values and reassessing attributes.



## Aim

The overall aim of SpNAP is to provide serving principals with a flexible, self-paced needs analysis so that they can:

- ❑ consider personal and professional leadership strengths and weaknesses within their school context and the broader educational environment;
- ❑ address these needs through guided self reflection, goal setting, social interaction and action planning;
- ❑ develop their leadership through engaging in a systematic, self-sustaining learning process;
- ❑ make decisions about ways to develop their leadership of student learning and school improvement in order to create a better future for education in Hong Kong.

## Expected Outcomes<sup>1</sup>

As outcomes of SpNAP, serving principals will:

- ❑ Clarify and articulate their personal and professional values and beliefs;
- ❑ Review their current levels of knowledge, skills, values and attributes in order to identify strengths and developmental opportunities;
- ❑ Locate their personal and professional learning needs within their school context and the wider educational environment;
- ❑ Recognise immediate and ingrained issues confronting school communities and reflect upon how these are managed or solved;
- ❑ Reflect upon their management of school-based issues and generalise from their conclusions to drive improved leadership practice;
- ❑ Connect and interact with colleagues to build learning and other support networks;
- ❑ Reassert their dedication to leadership growth through ongoing engagement with needs analysis and professional development;
- ❑ Identify needs and suitable strategies for moving toward the next phase of their principalship;
- ❑ Develop a deeper awareness of what is needed to lead schools to a better future.

1. Principals will define more personal specific outcomes based on the pathways they select for their needs analysis.

## Outward Signs of Achievement

Although principals will set their own pace, starting point and level of involvement in SpNAP, the success of the programme may be gauged by the extent to which they can demonstrate outward signs of achievement. Depending on the nominated place and level of involvement they will have been successful if they have:

- ☐ Completed the beliefs and values scanning process;
- ☐ Completed the 360° feedback process;
- ☐ Identified ongoing and more immediate leadership issues in the school;
- ☐ Read the six *Conversations* booklets;
- ☐ Completed the *Leader's Learning Journal* and *Tripod Journal*;
- ☐ Developed a *Continuing Professional Development Plan* (CPDP);
- ☐ Put together a *School Leader's Portfolio*.



## Key SpNAP Features

<b>Self-Paced</b>	Allows you to determine the pace at which you will work through the needs analysis according to your own schedule and requirements.
<b>Flexible Start Points</b>	Allows you to determine where you begin your needs analysis. Either begin at a fixed point or select your own.
<b>Flexible Progression</b>	Allows you to decide your own needs analysis pathway. Either follow a fixed comprehensive pathway or build your own.
<b>Context Specific</b>	Encourages you to draw on and relate needs analysis specifically to your leadership and your school context.
<b>Continuous Learning</b>	Promotes continuous development planning and learning through a process of Goal Based Learning and Action Learning.
<b>Peer Support</b>	Encourages peer support, feedback and networking.
<b>Dual Format</b>	Provides a choice of electronic or paper formats, both with web support.

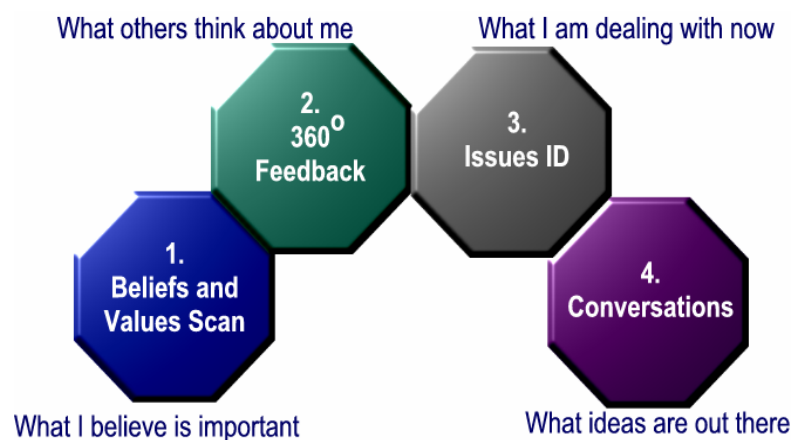
# THE PROGRAMME

SpNAP is designed to help you identify your leadership development needs and to use these as the basis for meaningful leadership development. This is achieved through a continuous process of setting and prioritising learning goals and specific learning targets.










SpNAP is built around four interwoven programme elements (see Figure 1). Each programme element is designed to address a different perspective on principal needs analysis. Programme elements are set out in either one or a number of separate booklets. There are 12 booklets altogether.

Although we recommend that you work your way sequentially through the programme elements they are designed so that you can begin with any of the elements or even with different parts of these. You can also decide the pace at which you work through your needs analysis.

Figure 1: The Four Programme Elements



## SpNAP Programme Booklets

1. SpNAP Overview and Foundation
  2.  SpNAP Beliefs and Values Scan
  3.  SpNAP 360° Feedback
  4.  SpNAP Issues ID
  5.  Conversations 1: Accountability
  6.  Conversations 2: Change and Strategic Thinking
  7.  Conversations 3: Effective Leadership
  8.  Conversations 4: IT and eLearning
  9.  Conversations 5: Networking
  10.  Conversations 6: Student and Learning
  11. SpNAP Workbook (including the Leader's Learning Journal and Tripod Journal)
  12. Continuing Professional Development Plan and Portfolio Guide
- These six booklets provide the stimulus materials for Element 4.

## Four Programme Elements

Needs analysis is a personal process, and involvement should be guided by the particular situation of the person involved (some of these are explained briefly later in this booklet). SpNAP is built around four interwoven programme elements. Within each of these elements there are a number of mechanisms designed to stimulate needs analysis.

The four programme elements included in SpNAP are designed to provide you with a range of information about your leadership. This information draws on self-analysis, feedback from others, interaction with current issues in school and expert perceptions on school leadership. When accessed either individually or together, the four programme elements are designed to offer you enough flexibility to mould needs analysis to your circumstances. This moulding is done through a Goal-Based Learning (GBL) process.

The programme elements are built around the 6 core areas of school leadership which underpin principal needs analysis in Hong Kong. In some elements, such as *Issues ID*, the core areas will be explicit, whereas in others they will be more subtly built into the mechanisms. Each element comprises a number of mechanisms which may be completed individually or as a block. The four programme elements are described on the following pages.



## **ELEMENT 1: Beliefs and Values Scan - *what I believe is important***

This element is designed to help you to think about your principalship and what you want from it. This is a very important starting point for any needs analysis and particularly for leaders of Professional Learning Organisations. What you need to do to improve your leadership is of little use if you have not clarified what 'improve' really means or what you believe you are in the job to achieve. In other words, your needs analysis must be framed by what you perceive to be important in your role as a principal. Through using the scan you can determine the 'shape' or focus of your future learning needs. Working through the scan encourages you to take a strategic approach to needs analysis and to set or review a personal vision and direction. After completing all or selected parts of the scan you use your reflections to write leadership learning goals.





## ELEMENT 2: 360° Feedback - *what others think about me*

This element provides a guided process\* that enables you to collect information about your leadership from other members of the school community. The identification of leadership development needs is incomplete unless it collects and analyses the opinions of others. This element is designed to get you started on this process. One of the major purposes of engaging in a needs analysis is to discover what you 'don't know you don't know'. It is not just about confirming what you already know about, what you want or need to learn. The advantage of 360° feedback is that it stimulates your professional curiosity about yourself. "Why did they say that about me?" "Why do teachers think I need to do that...?" "Am I missing something?" "Do others know me better than myself?" Such questions can be used to set leadership learning goals.

*\* This element allows the flexibility for SPs to adjust and add to the questions provided.*

### **ELEMENT 3: Issues ID - *what I am dealing with now***

This element provides a structure for identifying needs directly from your unique organisational context. Issues ID means Issues Identification. The element is included for principals who want to link needs identification with what they need to learn (or relearn) in order to deal with the current issues or problems they face in their school. As one principal commented: "I am currently dealing with two really important issues, what I need is a lot more knowledge and skills about how to manage them properly. While I think I am doing a reasonable job, I also know I could do it better." Although in ideal terms needs analysis should be proactive rather than reactive, in reality, some development needs stem from more immediate issues. Using and dealing with such issues as part of needs analysis can provide useful learning experiences which may help deal with similar issues next time they occur. Issues ID is based on clarifying current organisational needs, fears and concerns and using these to stimulate curiosity. As with the other elements, the issues you identify are used to develop your leadership learning goals.



## 4. Conversations

### ELEMENT 4: Conversations - what ideas are out there

The 'Conversations' element involves reading stimulus materials\* that are designed to trigger your professional curiosity. The idea here is that through reading the extracts you will be exposed to ideas, concepts and other information which will help you reflect upon how to improve your school leadership.

The *Conversations* Booklets contain approximately 70 brief extracts from a range of sources relevant to educational leadership. We call these extracts 'conversations' because we hope that they will stimulate curiosity to the extent that they promote both **self-talk** (internal dialogue) and **collegial discussion** with other professionals about school leadership. Through reflecting on and discussing aspects of the conversations we hope that principals will attempt to 'make sense' of them within their own context/s. The *Conversations* provide stimulus materials designed to ignite new ideas and questions which produce a cognitive tension – or the desire to know more. This is a form of needs analysis. When this happens within a particular context, learning (guided by goals) follows and the principal will have developed new knowledge, skills or beliefs. This process of needs analysis and the subsequent learning through the stimulus provided by the *Conversations* can be illustrated by the 'J – Curve' pictured here.

Figure 2: The J-Curve



Some conversations are from published journal articles, others from books, some from credible websites and others from newspapers or policy documents – others have been written specifically for this programme.



The *Conversations* are not intended as references or to form a ‘textbook’ on how to be a good principal – they have been selected because they are interesting, intriguing and challenging, and not because they represent the ‘final word’ in good leadership. In other words we hope that some of the conversations will stimulate you to think more deeply and talk more frequently about school leadership.

We have deliberately **not** grouped the conversations explicitly within the six core areas of leadership listed below. However, as with all the programme elements, the core areas were used to guide the selection of materials for the *Conversations* and can be found as underlying themes throughout the six Booklets. We constructed the *Conversations* element this way to better reflect the complex reality of schools. The **Matrix** on pg. 43 demonstrates how the 6 core areas of school leadership were mapped through the *Conversations* booklets. It is expected that the conversations will trigger the J-curve effect across all 6 core areas of school leadership in Hong Kong.



\* The six *Conversations* booklets are provided as introductory stimulus materials only. New conversations will be developed and provided via the SpNAP website ([http://www3.fed.cuhk.edu.hk/ELDevNet/NAFPhk\\_SP.asp](http://www3.fed.cuhk.edu.hk/ELDevNet/NAFPhk_SP.asp)) at regular intervals. New topics will cut across the 6 core areas and continue to expose a wealth of perspectives.

# THE PROCESS

SpNAP is designed to provide you with a choice of entry points and the flexibility to work through the process at your own pace. Such a design recognises the different learning styles, qualifications and beliefs principals bring with them to the process. The SpNAP process moves through three general steps.

## **Step 1: Select your starting point, pathway and time frame**

While acknowledging the necessity of individual judgment and flexibility we recommend that principals wanting to engage in a comprehensive needs analysis move sequentially through the four programme elements as shown in Figure 3. This is also recommended for principals who prefer a regimented structure or are unsure of where to begin. Whichever pathway you take you will engage in Goal-Based Learning (GBL). The choice however is a personal one – you can choose to begin at whatever point you deem appropriate. This is explained on page 17.

When you have decided on your pathway set a time frame. This is completely up to you and the value you place on the needs analysis process – but be realistic and be sure to balance your time. If you want to work through the entire process you should set a reasonably long timeframe. Regardless of the starting point selected, you can always reassess how much time to devote to various components as you work through them. As a guide we suggest that each element might take you approximately one school term to work through, but this may vary depending on other commitments.

## **Step 2: Goal-Based Learning (GBL)**

Work through your selected pathway. Irrespective of the starting point or the timeframe, all programme elements are the beginning of the GBL process. This is introduced in the next section. The SpNAP Workbook (which includes the Leader's Learning Journal and Tripod Journal) will be used to collect and prioritise your learning goals.

## **Step 3: Continuous analysis and learning**

If you have selected your own starting point, return to the various elements and their components then decide a new starting point/timeframe and repeat the process. If you have worked through the entire process, access SpNAP updates and/or other available analysis mechanisms.

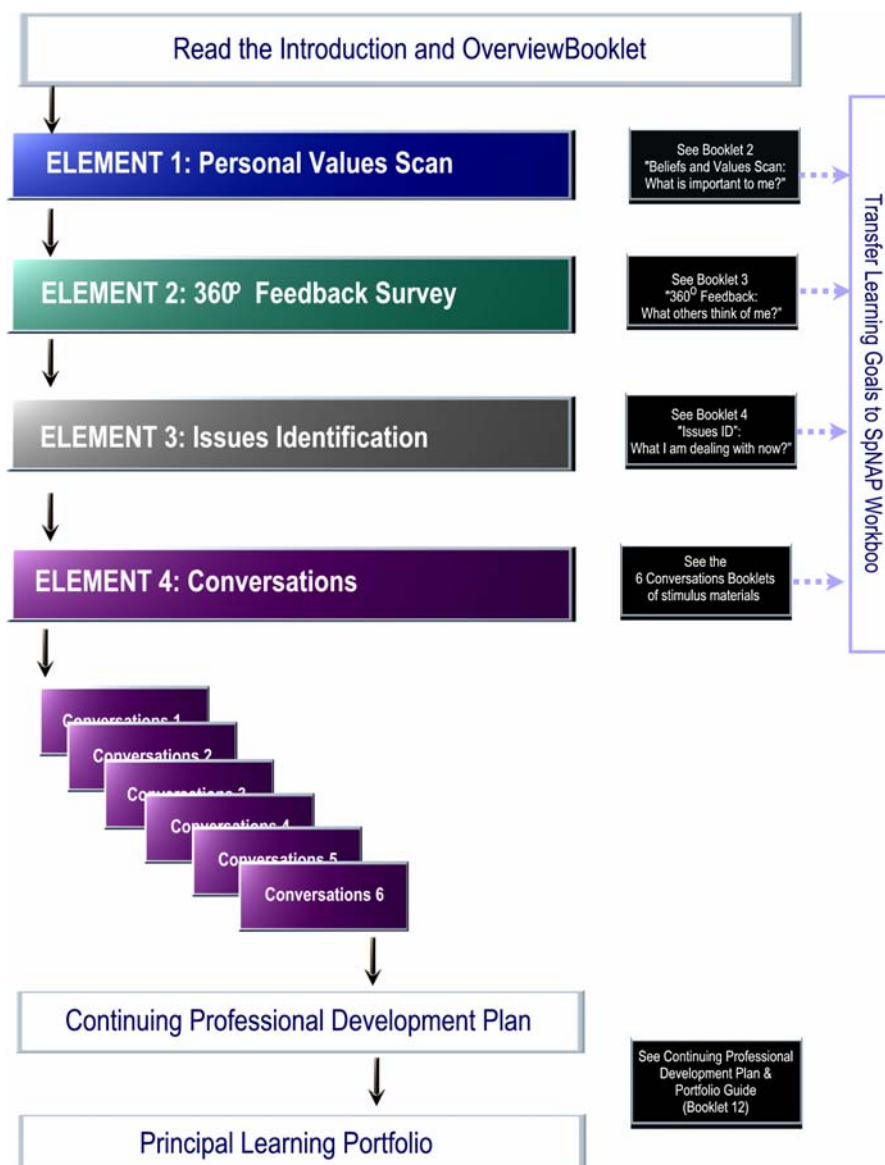
## Step 1: Select your starting point, pathway and time frame

One of the key features of SpNAP is that it allows you to determine where you begin your needs analysis. You may

- (1) move through the entire process sequentially and begin with the first exercise of Beliefs and Values Scan (Possible Pathway 1, as in Figure 3).
- (2) start at another point and select any of the four programme elements which you believe will help you identify your leadership development needs (Possible Pathway 2).
- (3) skim the various programme element booklets and select a more specific mechanism on your starting point (Possible Pathway 3).

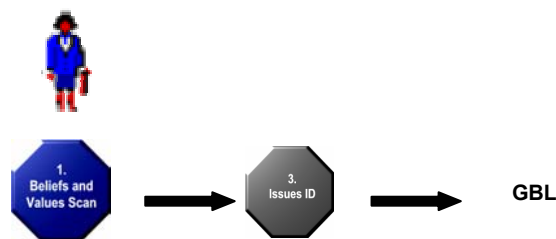
### *Possible Pathway 1*

Figure 3: Flow Chart of the SpNAP Process



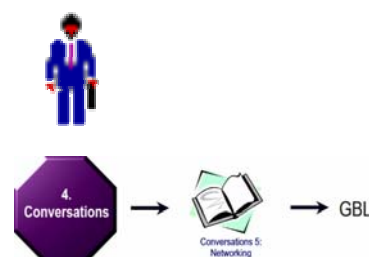
## Possible Pathway 2

Mrs. Yeung has been recently appointed as principal of Wong Tak Lun College after serving as principal in Li Yuk Memorial School for two years. While she is confident that she can apply the technical skills that she has learned during the early years of her principalship to her new school, she is unsure about how to face the unexpected and unfamiliar issues that seem to constantly arise in the new school. Part of her thinking is that now that she is through much of the 'busy' stage of the beginning principal, she needs to truly clarify what she expects from herself as an educational leader. She thinks that by starting with the Beliefs and Values Scan (Element 1), she can clarify what principalship means to her and thus reinforce her own beliefs and values. After finishing the beliefs and values scanning, she moves to the Issues ID (Element 3). She deliberately skips the 360° Feedback (Element 4) because she is new in Wong Tak Lun College and that staff may not know enough about her as a leader to make informed ratings. She expects her selected pathway to take approximately six months to complete and build into her portfolio.



## Possible Pathway 3

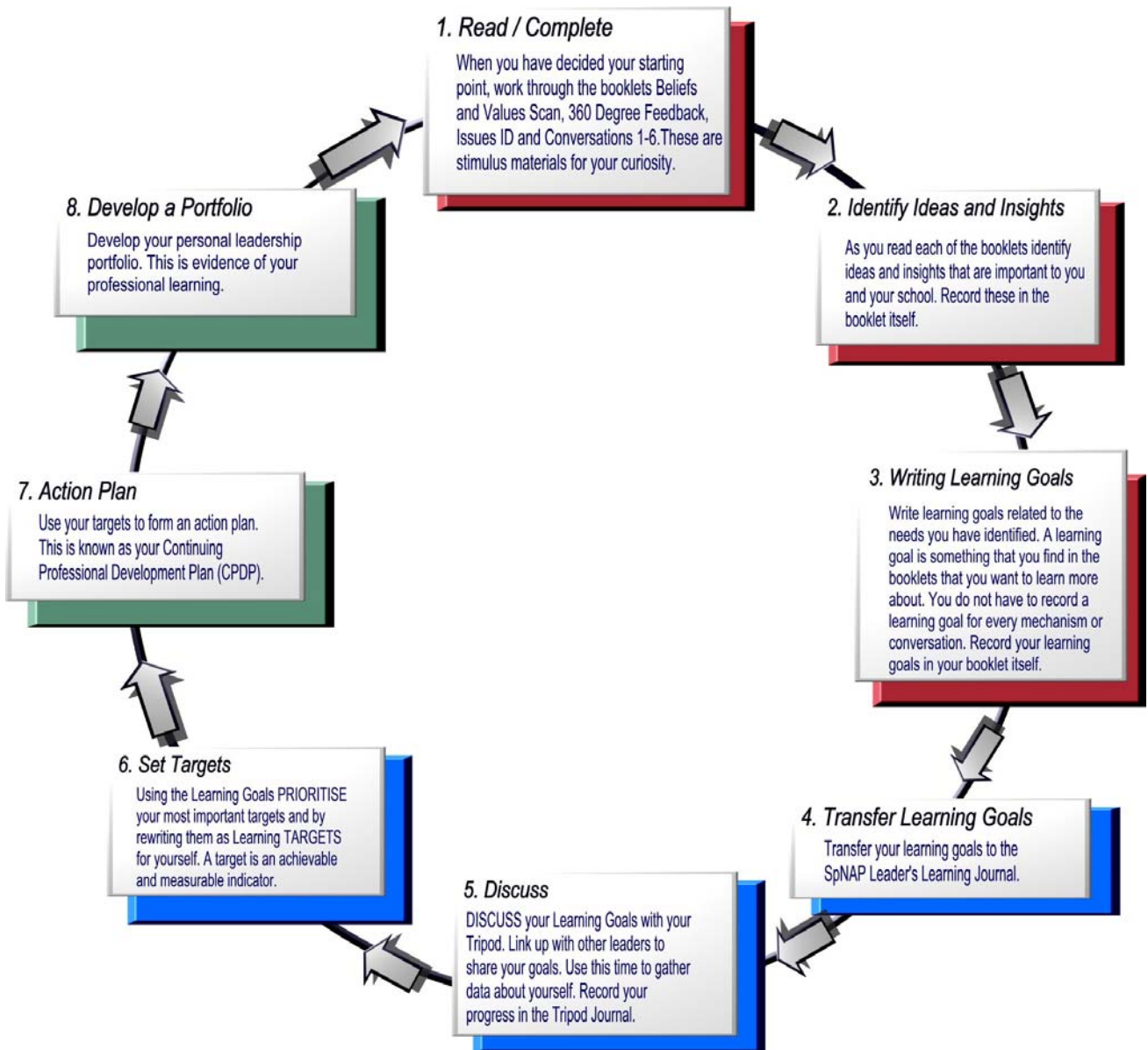
Mr. Lai has started his 18<sup>th</sup> year as principal in Anderson Primary School. He is clear about his beliefs and values and shares an open and honest working environment with the teachers who are comfortable to share feedback and ideas with each other. Anderson Primary School is a prestigious school, and Mr. Lai, who has a solid reputation, is experienced in identifying issues that he needs to handle at the school level. He, therefore, chooses to start SpNAP by reading Conversations 4: IT & eLearning (Element 4). Although he is an experienced principal, he is interested and curious about 'what ideas are out there', especially in regard to technology and how it might influence his school development. By reading and reflecting upon the conversations, he hopes to expose himself to ideas that are new to him, thus helping him to distinguish any areas of leadership that he can further develop. He believes he can complete this process in approximately one month. He will then revisit the overall SpNAP package and select another mechanism.



## **Step 2: Goal-Based Learning (GBL)**

Each programme element is operationalised using a Goal-Based Learning Model (GBL) (Figure 4 and Table 1). In essence, interaction with the mechanisms included within the four elements stimulates curiosity which in turn leads to reflection and thinking and then to learning goals. Each of the elements is explained in detail in the separate booklets. As you work through the booklets you write learning goals. These goals reflect your leadership learning needs. When set, you discuss your most important goals (i.e. those you consider most important to your leadership development) with other professionals, through a ‘tripod’ process and use this feedback and discussion to further prioritise your goals through rewriting the most important as targets. Targets are then operationalised through a simple development planning process. The major components of GBL are introduced below and come into play as you work through all or any the four programme elements.

**Figure 4: Goal-Based Learning Process**



We recommend that if at all possible you should 'discuss' or talk to people about your analysis, curiosities and learning throughout the entire GBL process, not just during the Tripod discussion.

**Table 1: Goal-Based Learning Schedule**

Step	What	Where	
1. Read/Complete	Select the element and mechanism where you will begin your needs analysis. Work through at your own pace.	Either/or · ■ <i>Beliefs and Values Scan</i> · ■ <i>360° Feedback</i> · ■ <i>Issues ID</i> ■ <i>Conversations 1-6</i>	Element Booklets
2. Identify Ideas and Insights	In the booklet you are working on record the ideas and insights you identify, i.e. those that you believe are important to you and your school.	Either/or · ■ <i>Beliefs and Values Scan</i> · ■ <i>360° Feedback</i> · ■ <i>Issues ID</i> ■ <i>Conversations 1-6</i>	
3. Write Learning Goals	In the booklet you are working on write a/some learning goals related to the issues you have identified.	Either/or · ■ <i>Beliefs and Values Scan</i> · ■ <i>360° Feedback</i> · ■ <i>Issues ID</i> ■ <i>Conversations 1-6</i>	
4. Transfer Learning Goals	Rewrite your most important learning goals to this journal.	The appropriate section of the <i>Leader's Learning Journal</i> (matching the booklet you've been working on) in the <i>SpNAP Workbook</i> .	SpNAP Workbook
5. Discuss	Rewrite your most important learning goals in the Tripod Journal and discuss these with your Tripod. Record useful points from this discussion.	The <i>Tripod Journal</i> in the <i>SpNAP Workbook</i> .	
6. Set Targets	Prioritise your most important learning goals by writing them as targets.	The <i>Tripod Journal</i> in the <i>SpNAP Workbook</i> .	
7. Action Plan	Transfer the targets to the planning booklet and build a Continuous Professional Development Plan.	The <i>Continuous Professional Development Plan &amp; Portfolio Guide</i>	CPDP & Portfolio Guide
8. Develop a Portfolio	Keep a record of anything that shows what you achieved as a leader which is linked to your learning targets.	The <i>Continuous Professional Development Plan &amp; Portfolio Guide</i>	

## Leader's Learning Journal

An essential part of the needs analysis is the Leader's Learning Journal which is included in the SpNAP Workbook. This journal is essentially a collection point for your most important learning goals. These are drawn from any of the goals which you have set in the four programme element booklets. As you work through the mechanisms which comprise these booklets you are asked to identify salient **ideas and insights** and then to work these into **learning goals**. Ideas, insights and learning goals are first recorded in each of the separate booklets and then transferred to the appropriate section of the Leader's Learning Journal. You can transfer the goals whenever you feel ready, but we suggest that you do this when you have either completed a selected mechanism or a selected booklet. The process of transferring learning goals encourages you to prioritise through thinking more deeply about what you want or need to learn (self-talk). Your learning goals are the base data upon which you will eventually draw your Continuing Professional Development Plan.





## Tripod Process and Journal

The *Tripod Journal* is also part of the SpNAP Workbook. The essence of the Tripod process is that it encourages you to reflect upon your leadership learning needs by discussing your Learning Goals with colleagues. The Tripod is a supportive collaboration arrangement between three or more colleagues - it is about gathering data on yourself through the 'eyes' of two or more other leaders/colleagues who you respect. These colleagues can be fellow principals, other education professionals or professionals from outside education, from either private or public sector. The key to selecting a tripod group is to link with people you trust to provide honest feedback and advice. Although we suggest that three is a good group size for promoting in-depth interaction and feedback, the number of people involved can vary depending on your preference. Other configurations might be:

- with a mentor or critical colleague.
- with a group of principals from the same Sponsoring Body or District.
- with fellow principals and vice-principals as part of a professional development course.

A '*Tripod Journal*' is a log or diary that records your discussion with other leaders. After you have set your learning goals you transfer the most important of these to the *Tripod Journal* and use these as the basis for discussion with your colleagues. As the discussion proceeds you briefly record the essence of the feedback discussions in the *Tripod Journal*. Also as part of the discussion, you further prioritise the learning goals by reframing them as targets, which you also write in the *Tripod Journal*. The difference between learning goals and targets is that targets are priorities and are written in more achievable measurable forms in order to focus your development planning in the *Continuing Professional Development Plan* (Booklet 12).

In sum, the Tripod process and journal ask you to gather feedback and record your **reflections** as you progress through the needs analysis. These reflections provide additional information which helps you further **prioritise** your learning goals and then to reframe these as targets.



### Step 3: Continuing analysis and learning

At this step you use the *Continuing Professional Development Plan* and *Portfolio Guide*. They are explained in Booklet 12. The targets set in the *Tripod Journal* are written in this booklet and used as the basis for ongoing planning. Ongoing planning involves referring to the six Core Areas, developing strategies, setting timeframes and evaluating your targets. As a target is achieved, it should be replaced by a new target drawn from the same process. As you achieve your targets (either fully or completely) the resulting evidence can be collected into a *School Leader's Portfolio*. The *Portfolio* is a place for you to record evidence of your learning and other accomplishments and successes.

# Foundation

This section provides the background and the theoretical underpinnings of SpNAP. The Background part discusses briefly one reason why needs analysis is important for serving principals and acknowledges that they are at different phases of development and experience. It further discusses that this can influence why and how principals can approach needs analysis and what they hope it achieves. The second part presents some of the 'theories' which underpin SpNAP. This is included because of our belief that principals as professionals need to understand WHY they are doing something if it is to be of maximum benefit. The Theoretical Underpinnings part revolves around Goal-Based Learning.



## I. Background

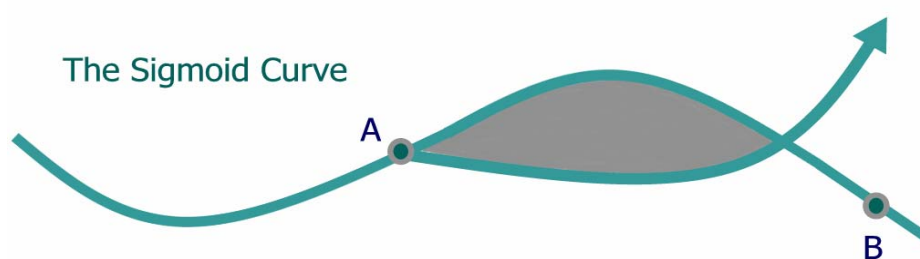
### Why should serving principals undertake needs analysis?

One of the main reasons SPs should seriously consider engaging in needs analysis can be usefully explained by reference to what is called the **Sigmoid Curve**. In essence, the curve has a number of phases – a building or introduction phase, a growth phase, a maturing phase and finally a declining phase. The *curve* has been used to describe everything from product and biological life cycles to attempts to explain the rise and fall of companies and even nations.

The curve can also be used to describe the growth or lifecycle of leadership. When starting out leaders often begin slowly, learn through experimentation and stumbling and then grow rapidly in terms of knowledge, effectiveness and success – until – often, their effectiveness begins to wane. As their effectiveness wanes, the best leaders strive to reinvent themselves and begin the cycle again.

Conscious leadership regeneration is best started before the leader begins to plateau or wane, that is, when leaders have the time, energy and resources at their disposal to engage in renewed professional development and reinvigorate their theories of leadership before the first curve dips downwards. Sounds easy, but of course it is not.

Figure 5: The Sigmoid Curve (Handy, 1994, p.52)



Refer to the above diagram (Figure 5) to gain a better understanding of the curve. Point A is precisely the point where most indicators are pointing to success. At this point, your 'leadership formula' is working - things are going well. It is natural at this point to assume that any suggestion to tamper with proven success would be futile and even a little crazy. Many leaders may well ask: "Why spend additional time and energy on more professional development and learning when everything is fine?" And indeed it may well be, but such a stance assumes that everything in the school will continue to progress smoothly. However, as we well know, this is rarely the case in schools today – change is unpredictable and can appear at any time, often without warning.

The problem with change is that leaders often only feel any real impetus to look at what they are doing when their leadership seems to be confronted with a disaster or when they realize that they have slipped well below their previous level of success. At this point, (Point B on Figure 5) unfortunately, the effort and resources required to make significant changes to leadership beliefs and/or practice are formidable indeed – usually much more so than if they had been explored earlier. By the time you have reached Point B your credibility as a leader may have already diminished and you are perceived as having ‘let the school slip downhill’. The point here is that continuing professional development requires the foresight to build your future while at the same time maintaining and extending the present – building ‘a new house’ while continuing to live within the old – it is not about waiting to rebuild when the house has fallen down.

SpNAP targets the shaded zone in Figure 5. It suggests that you start seriously reflecting on your learning and development needs and associated agenda when you are at Point A, not Point B. This involves mapping a pathway beyond the curve to gain a clearer understanding of ‘where you are’ early in the cycle of the next wave. As Such, SpNAP encourages serving principals to seize the moment to reinvent their leadership with a clear vision and a renewed sense of purpose.

The Sigmoid Curve provides one rationale for why principals should engage in needs analysis. The next question then is when and what type of needs analysis is most appropriate for serving principals? Of course, there is no single ‘right’ answer to this question. Like members of any profession, principals come in all shapes and sizes in terms of their beliefs, experience, learning styles and backgrounds. They also work in very different schools, with different staff and cater for different student and community needs. Because of such variables it is virtually impossible to dictate one approach to needs analysis for all serving principals. Recent thought about how principals progress through different phases of their job, however, may offer some guidance for determining appropriate needs analysis and professional development.

## **The Phases of the Principalship and Needs Analysis**

As noted, not all serving principals have the same development needs. Some may have 3 years experience while others have 33 – clearly their development needs will be different. The following description of four phases of the principalship attempts to comment on some possible implications of this on needs analysis and development needs. Of course, individual differences and school context are just as important as any 'phase' perspective – all should be considered by principals when deciding which approach to needs analysis offers them the most potential. The phases discussed below present just one way of looking at stages of the principalship, there are many others which are equally useful.

## Phase 1: Early leadership

This is an exciting phase as new leaders first enter the 'principal's world', where they find themselves at the 'top' for the first time. They undergo a 'steep learning curve' as they realise that many of their 'theories-in-use' do not match the 'espoused theories' they held before becoming a principal. In other words, trying to place and make sense of all the ideas they developed over time about what they would do differently when they became a principal. This phase may be as brief as 1 year or as long as 5 or more years 'on the job'.

### Implications for Needs Analysis and Professional Development

*New principals are brimming with ideas and ideals and have an almost unlimited reserve of enthusiasm. Unfortunately, during the first 12 months or so, many of these ideals run into 'the brick wall of reality'. This can lead to emotional turmoil and even a degree of fear and uncertainty. Frequent and regular feedback from experienced and caring principal peers through formal and informal networks is strongly suggested. Feedback may also take a mentoring and resource allocation form. New principals need to engage in formal and informal support programmes and share their needs with others. In terms of needs analysis they often need to deal with the unexpected and often unfamiliar issues which continually crop up in the school. They also need to be sure that they have clarified their beliefs about what they are trying to achieve in their schools and why this is important.*

## Phase 2: Transition

This is often a time of instability and change – commitment, involvement and job satisfaction may deteriorate. Feelings of dissatisfaction with their role as principal may increase. Principals at this stage may feel an ‘existential anxiety’. When experiencing this, principals often feel that they are not in control of their lives, and at the same time, feel that their job has lost its challenge and excitement – or that they have not achieved what they had hoped to achieve.

### Implications for Needs Analysis and Professional Development

*Effective needs analysis at this phase is essential so that the principals can ‘map’ their strengths and weaknesses. Re-evaluating personal goals, setting personal targets and generally being able to talk through feelings of dissatisfaction with others is vital. At this stage it is also important that principals get feedback from other members of their school communities in areas where they feel they have underperformed. At this point professional development programmes become urgent; principals should seek to be involved in learning other skills and developing other competencies. This might be related to their administration, to counselling staff, to interpersonal skills, to systems management or to financial management. Involvement in professional development programmes such as mentoring programmes, Action Learning and formal study are strongly advised.*



### **Phase 3: Midlife**

This phase typifies a period when principals re-establish professional goals. The individual's career as a principal once again becomes very important. It often coincides with personal changes such as the last of the family members becoming independent. A freeing of time provides space for greater commitment and involvement in their professional community and other outside school activities (for example, community clubs, professional associations etc). Principals at this phase are often highly productive and have a wealth of knowledge and experience to share with others. Most importantly, they have the confidence in themselves needed to be innovative and to take 'risks' in trying new things. They have the 'experience' to know that they can 'get out of any problem' and are therefore able to take on board new ideas.

#### *Implications for Needs Analysis and Professional Development*

*Some principals at this stage may have difficulty in relating to the 'need for development'. They are often asked to conduct professional development programmes for others and they do a good job in this role. They may see needs analysis as unnecessary for them while strongly supporting it for others. The true value of the needs analysis at this phase is to harness commitment and the desire to be involved in innovation and 'new ways of doing things'. To this end, principals at this phase may find it very useful to identify needs through exposure to new, different or controversial ideas and programs. Given their confidence, they may also find they are less threatened by honest feedback from other members of their school community. Such feedback can stimulate needs and development in specific or generic areas. The key to needs analysis at this phase is 'learning what you don't know you don't know' – or opening the eyes of the principal to a new world of ideas.*

## Phase 4: Maturity

This phase is a time of relative stability and tranquillity and of consolidating and reinvesting time in established strengths and interests. At this phase principals may have 'resigned' themselves to retiring and so investing their resources in that ideal. They may take up a new interest, buy a boat, resign from professional associations and generally be more relaxed about their lives and choices. Professional achievements may have plateaued and their performance remain predictable; although some may develop a new self-image that is independent of their school careers (for example, involvement in community clubs or sporting associations etc). Unfortunately some may decline professionally as they 'lose' interest in schools, and start to 'sit out' their time.

Professionally, this is a time for reflection. A question that might feature large in the minds of principals at this phase is: "Have I left my mark on my school/on education?" Many principals at this phase seek to reinvent themselves, to leave 'their schools as they would like to find them', as places that are fit, flexible and well prepared to face the future.

### Implications for Needs Analysis and Professional Development

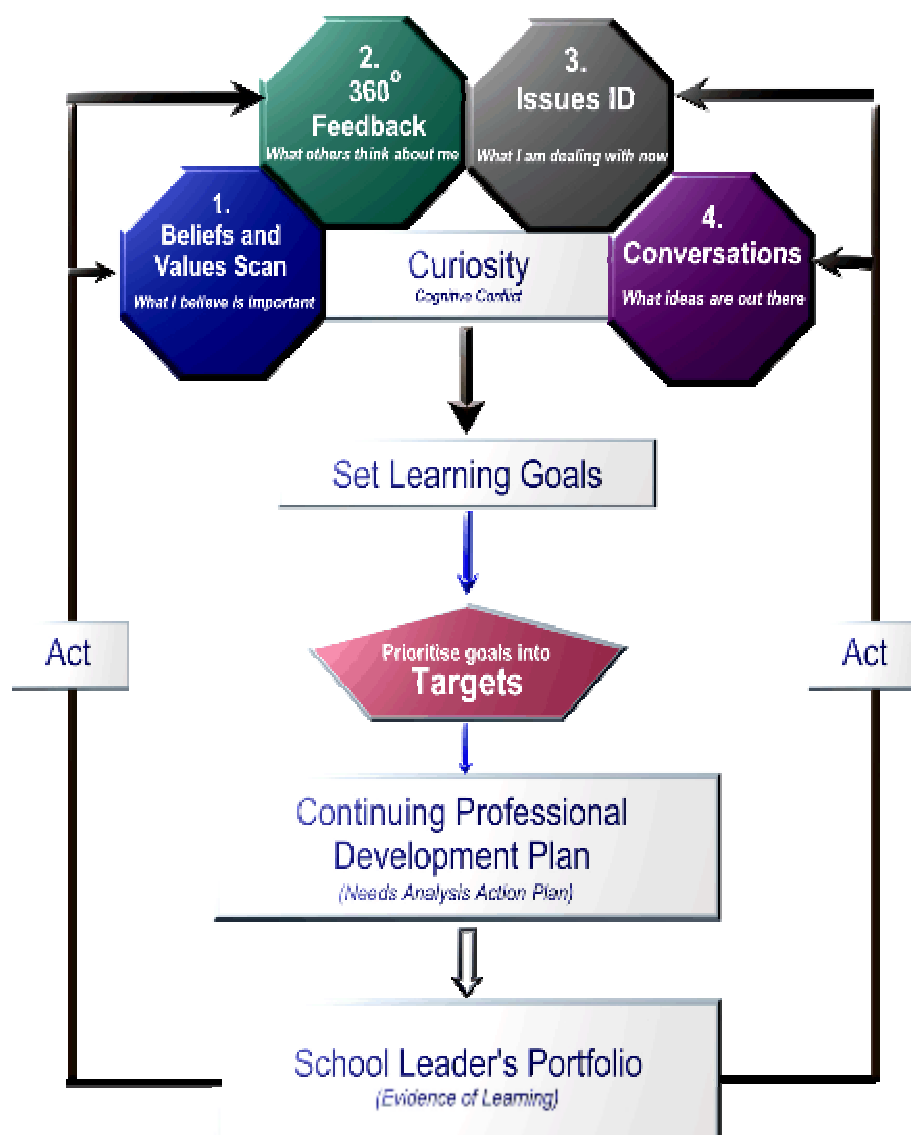
*At this phase of their career, principals should be conducting performance management for others or mentoring and supporting the development of younger colleagues. This is a crucial time for needs analysis and professional development. Either the wealth of experience and competencies they have collected are utilised and shared or they lapse into memories and memoirs. At this stage it is clear that the most significant reward which principals receive from their work stems from the work itself. During this phase, some principals may have reduced interest in professional development – but this is a big mistake – it is actually a vital time to renew interests and re-establish visionary leadership. Needs analysis may direct them to understand that the knowledge base of schools has shifted and is constantly evolving. Needs can be identified through exposure to new ideas, either from within the school or from other sources. An apt expression at this phase is establishing the belief 'that there is something important left to do'. As such it can be a good idea for principals to review and 'reclarify' their beliefs about school, people and their professional role. This can help them set goals to discover 'what they have yet to do', and to reinvent themselves! It may also be a good time for principals to be involved in higher level study, national and international conferences and symposia that introduce them to new thinking and theories.*

## II. Theoretical Underpinnings

### Goal-Based Learning

SpNAP is a needs analysis programme built around Goal-Based Learning (See illustration below). Goal-Based Learning is a process of setting goals and learning from the experience of working to obtain them. In order to achieve their learning goals principals need to acquire particular skills and knowledge. This is where and when the needs analysis takes place. Goals in this context refer to the successful pursuit of the 'real' task at hand. GBL therefore serves both to motivate and to give principals the opportunity to "learn by doing".

Figure 6: Goal-Based Learning Framework



## Learning Goals

Throughout the SpNAP programme you will be asked to set **learning goals**. The idea behind this is that deciding upon and setting the goals helps you to engage with, create and reflect upon a range of data – data that has made you curious and created cognitive conflict.

Some examples of goals that help to engage with data might be:

- ☐ Find out more about the teachers needs, fears and concerns regarding the new .....
- ☐ Up to now I have always held the view that is this still appropriate?
- ☐ Is it okay for me to feel this way about it even if other principals don't?
- ☐ What's really going on here?
- ☐ Find out if parents really think that.....
- ☐ What seems to be energising this group right now?

Your capacity to learn is limited only by your curiosity and your capacity to 'read' data, recognise cognitive conflict and frame insightful learning goals. During the first stages of the needs analysis process you will be asked to create far more goals than you can possibly achieve. That is fine – the idea is that you will return to these a number of times in order to develop your priorities. This prioritisation process culminates when you reframe your most important goals as learning targets which will, in turn, drive your *Continuous Professional Development Plan*.

The mechanisms comprising the four elements introduced earlier are designed to stimulate your curiosity and then to use this as a motivator to set learning goals. Drawing on this curiosity, you are encouraged to set learning goals in the separate element booklets themselves and then to transfer the most important of these to your **Leader's Learning Journal**. You then prioritise again through selecting and transferring a new set of your most important goals to the **Tripod Journal** where you use them as the basis for discussion and feedback with fellow professionals. During and/or following this discussion you complete your final prioritisation by reframing selected goals as learning targets, write a professional development plan and build a portfolio.

The background for Goal-Based Learning is drawn from the following concepts.

- ☐ Reflective practice and praxis
- ☐ Cognitive conflict and use of data
- ☐ Curiosity
- ☐ Discernment and gathering data from important others
- ☐ Meta-awareness and self talk

## Reflective Practice and Praxis

The ancient Greeks used the word *praxis* to refer to thoughtful practice or practice that was informed, purposeful and deliberate (Willower 1998, p.123). Marx suggested that the difference between bees and architects is that bees build marvellous structures based on *practice*, while architects build marvellous structures based on *praxis*. The difference is that architects are involved in reflective practice. They 'think' about what they are doing. They constantly re-evaluate their values, skills, theories and knowledge as it applies to the structure they are building. *Praxis* however, is more than just the application of theories and learned skills. Like Schön's (1983) notion of expert practitioners, leaders may also draw from their extensive repertoire of past experiences in order to understand situations and develop possibilities for effective action. This is what SpNAP encourages you to do.

Through the elements and mechanisms provided you are encouraged to reflect on and re-evaluate your skills, knowledge and even your values and attributes as they apply to your work as a practicing school principal. You are encouraged to draw on your store of past experience to look forward and to find new ways of improving your leadership and what's happening in your school.

Doing this involves reflection; which can be simply taken to mean that we give something or someone the benefit of "serious consideration". SpNAP asks you to give your values, skills, knowledge and attributes, the benefit of sustained and serious consideration, both individually and in partnership with colleagues. We contend that when this happens, you open your leadership practice to the possibility of worthwhile change and enrichment in very powerful ways. As such, it promotes purposeful learning – as opposed to acquiring good habits by sheer accident or mimicry – as a necessary precursor to leadership learning. The bottom-line is that serving principals who are able to sustain reflective practice are ultimately more able to reframe issues in ways that create meanings and possibilities that make a real difference to student outcomes. Reflective practice involves recognising tensions which result from dissonance between what we presently believe and know and what we find out we don't know.

## Cognitive Conflict and Reflecting on Data

Cognitive conflict is the tension that is created when what a person believes they know and value is challenged by what actually is or by other alternate positions. This tension often emerges when we critically reflect on new data. In other words, when a person is exposed to new data he or she can come to realise that there is a difference between what they thought they knew and what is being revealed. For example, early Christian church leaders encountered a great deal of cognitive conflict when Galileo showed them (with the use of his telescope) that the Earth actually revolved around the sun and was not the centre of the universe.

The data collected through SpNAP can reveal differences between presently held values, skills, knowledge and/or attributes and what is needed or expected of leaders in today's schools. For SPs this tension can be the catalyst for the identification of learning needs and ongoing development. The ultimate aim of SpNAP is to help embed in principals an entrenched, life-long habit of ***searching for, attending to, recognising, creating, respecting and working with data.***

When you think about it, life can be characterised as a never-ending encounter with data – from the news on the car radio on the way to school, to the complexity which comes over the internet or confronts you across a conference table (or even across the restaurant table). Because of the tremendous demands on their time, capabilities and emotions, school leaders can too easily become so preoccupied with busywork and the day-to-day grind of the principal's office that they overlook the importance of the data that bombards them. The response of many leaders to data which 'upsets' their routines or asks them to move from their comfort zones is to almost unconsciously disregard their personal reactions to the data. They may do this in order to please others, to always look knowledgeable or more often, 'because they don't have the time'.

SpNAP aims to offer you a number of ways to notice, engage with and work with different types of data. Again, this is not easy because it asks you to first become familiar with and then comfortable with data that others typically don't notice, ignore or are ill at ease with. SpNAP holds that noticing and 'listening' to data and how it diverges from what 'you know' can provide a critical leverage in both life and work. The elements and mechanisms included in **SpNAP urge you to notice cognitive conflict when it happens** – not to just ignore it, but to purposefully seek it out. Whereas the information provided by SpNAP about leadership is unavoidably finite, one of its ultimate aims is to help you develop your skills at seeking cognitive conflict in the data you encounter day to day.

## Curiosity

To engage with data and recognise the tension brought about by cognitive conflict it is necessary to be actively curious. As used here, curiosity has several characteristics, it requires leaders to:

- ❑ maintain an open mind.
- ❑ actively wonder about things.
- ❑ ask lots of questions.
- ❑ be interested in the possibility that things are not always as they seem at first glance.

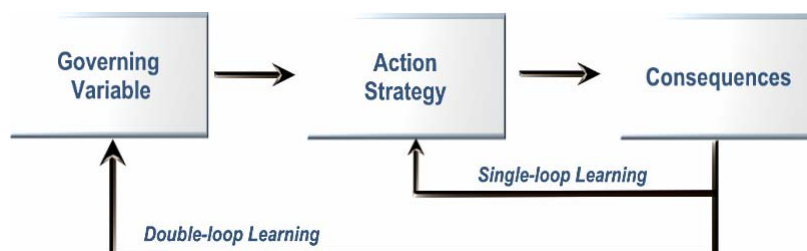
**Curiosity is also about reframing.** Reframing is the capacity to see things in new ways – ways that generate fresh options for action and for learning. Common examples of reframing include using different perspectives or new angles to examine an enduring problem; getting different people involved in brainstorming and discussion; or looking below obvious or surface issues. Developing a habit of viewing issues from multiple perspectives is one well worth developing as it helps form the bedrock of creative effort and possibility.

The concept of “**double-loop**” learning (Argyris, 1982) is also relevant when developing curiosity. Double-loop learning occurs when we test the ‘governing variables’ that guide our decisions. These governing variables can include the basic assumptions or beliefs (even attributes) which operate to steer action in a particular situation. Instead of finding a ‘standard’ or surface solution to the problem, as happens through single-loop learning, double-loop learning looks beyond the surface to the values and beliefs which may have shaped or caused the problem in the first place. As such, double-loop learning involves refocusing and examining our governing variables about organisational culture, student learning, human relations etc. and the core values which determine how we make sense of leadership and what happens in schools.

The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing.

**(Albert Einstein)**

**Figure 7: Double-Loop Learning**



The key to your needs analysis as an experienced serving principal is not making a list of the skills and knowledge you already know you need to learn, but discovering ... what you don't know you don't know!

## Discernment and Gathering Data from Others

Discernment is the art of seeing things as they really are. It is penetrating deeper than the obvious to understand what lies hidden beneath. It is going looking below and beyond day-to-day routines and actions of daily life into what is actually running things (Hanks, 1994, p. 88).

Perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of needs analysis programmes such as SpNAP is to be **discerning** (that is, to see things as they really are!). Discerning what is real can become more difficult the higher we climb the organisational ladder. For example, it is not too difficult for beginning teachers to become discerning, because others in the school are usually very quick to tell them what they are missing. The same may be true for some newly-appointed principals in new schools because they are acutely aware of what others think about their actions and leadership. It is, however, far more difficult for experienced serving principals.

We all know that it can be lonely at the top. Unless you have an unusually open school culture and work very hard at it, the chances are that your staff will rarely criticize what you do or say. This may be especially true in places such as Hong Kong. Many serving principals also find it difficult to ask people to tell them how they are doing or what they are doing wrong. For example, to some, this could be seen as a sign of insecurity or even a 'weakness'.

A major aim of SpNAP is, however, for principals to discover 'new' things about themselves through 'listening' to others. In other words, serving principals are encouraged to overcome their current mindsets because these may be influencing the way they see themselves through filtering their perceptions. Challenging established mindsets necessitates the collection of performance data and personal information from other people and then using this to discern what is real. This is NOT about being popular, but it is about being honest with yourself and becoming **conscious** of various aspects of your leadership.

This is difficult because it means that serving principals **need to become conscious of what is not there** – of what they are missing – and the only way to do this is to gather data about themselves from others. A principal looking to become a more complete leader needs to ask colleagues and peers to comment on their skills, knowledge, values and attributes as a leader.

Part of the SpNAP programme advises principals to engage in a structured process through which they seek data about themselves from others. This includes the use of a **Needs Analysis Tripod**. A 'tripod' is a three way collaborative arrangement in which reflective partners support and give feedback to each other. One of the 'legs' of your support can be another serving principal or even someone from outside education. By working with others you can identify, for example, which skills require further development or gaps in your knowledge. Uncovering these needs is another way of creating **cognitive conflict**.



## Meta-awareness and Self-talk

Another important aspect of needs analysis is the ability to question the meaning of what you and others do. When you read something and then ask yourself, “What was that all about?” “Why didn’t I understand any of that?” You have engaged in an act of meta-awareness or self-talk.

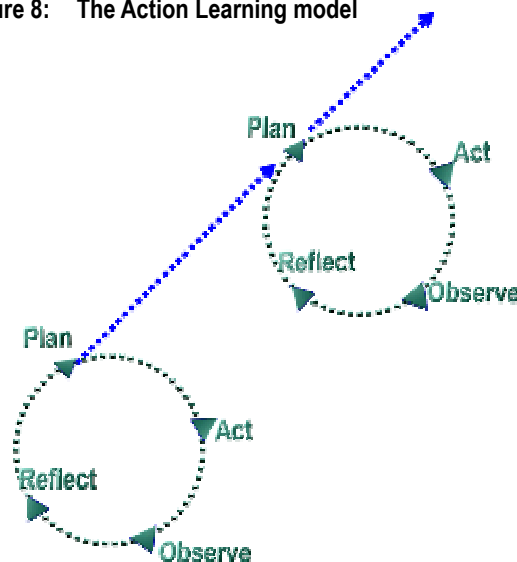
Meta-awareness is the process of becoming an observer of your own thinking and behaviour. You use it every time you think about what you will do next, how well you just did something or reflect on what others think of you. Of course we can ‘turn off’ our meta-awareness, if we didn’t we would never make any decisions or take any action. Unfortunately, some professionals turn off their meta-awareness and leave it off for the rest of their lives. As a way of helping to explain this concept, think about the following three levels of awareness.

1. At the first level we simply respond or act without thinking too much. As serving principals, much of our skilled behaviour has become so ingrained that we are good at it without even thinking about what we are doing. Our behaviour at this level is simply habit - being who we are in the world – our spontaneous, unrehearsed selves.
2. At the second level we might be forced to stop acting purely from habit and think about how to progress. This may be because the first position hasn’t worked or because the situation is novel, unfamiliar, threatening or urgent. In this situation we may try new ideas or seek more information.

As the saying goes “when all else fails...read the manual!”

3. At the third level we stop and think about the ‘why’ we are doing something in a particular way and attempt to look at things differently – this may involve re-framing an issue or problem through engaging in self-talk. When we do this we become self-reflective and begin to focus on cognitive conflict and tensions. In such a scenario, we might begin to question our values and our beliefs (double loop learning) and seek to discover ‘what we don’t know we don’t know’. At this level we are engaging personally in an **action learning cycle** (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: The Action Learning model



Action Learning is a form of “learning by doing”. Once targets have been set, they follow a spiralling process of “Plan – Act – Observe – Reflect”. As goals are achieved, the process is repeated and then repeated again - as each target is achieved a new one is set and so on.

**Planning:** What do I do now? What is going on? What am I missing? Why do I think this way?  
**Acting:** Set myself some learning goals and achieve them.  
**Observing:** Did it work? Am I better able to meet the needs of the situation?  
**Evaluating:** What have I learnt from this?

Action Learning is about moving toward the third level of awareness – where you actually stop and think or talk to yourself. This is central to principal needs analysis. The advantages of sustained engagement at this level, through action learning, is incalculable over the life time of the principalship. Individual principals and schools as organisations hold the potential to be profoundly different – and better – if they focus on the **why** of actions, beliefs and problems.

# Conclusion

SpNAP has been specifically designed for serving principals in Hong Kong. It recognises that serving principals are not beginners but represent some of the best and most experienced educators and administrators in our system.

The programme offers a series of elements and mechanisms designed to suit the needs of different principals. Each of these has been designed to engage principals in exploring their school leadership and hopefully, to provide new ways of looking at what a serving principal does within their normal worklife. SpNAP has been designed to excite their awareness of the need for self-reflection and ongoing professional development and to identify worthwhile learning pathways. The programme hopes to create cognitive conflict from the disagreement between existing knowledge and new information. Our belief is that cognitive conflict will lead the principal to identify the new knowledge, skills, values or attributes needed to lead their schools and students successfully into the future.

## **Confidentiality**

*The Serving principals Needs Analysis Programme (SpNAP) is a self-analysis process and is not intended as a principal performance management tool. The outcomes of the programme remain the property of the individual principal.*

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## Appendix 1: Core Areas and Conversations Booklets Matrix

		CORE AREAS OF LEADERSHIP					
CONVERSATIONS		Strategic Direction & Policy Environment	Teaching, Learning & Curriculum	Leader & Teacher Growth & Development	Staff & Resource Management	Quality Assurance & Accountability	External Communication & Connection
	Accountability	Con. 4 Con. 5 Con. 6 Con. 8 Con. 9 Con. 10	Con. 1 Con. 5 Con. 7	Con. 3 Con. 6 Con. 9	Con. 1 Con. 2 Con. 4 Con. 9 Con. 10 Con. 11	Con. 1 Con. 2 Con. 3 Con. 4 Con. 5 Con. 6 Con. 7 Con. 8 Con. 10 Con. 11 Con. 12	Con. 2 Con. 12
	Change & strategic thinking	Con. 1 Con. 3 Con. 4 Con. 5 Con. 6 Con. 7 Con. 8 Con. 9 Con. 10 Con. 11 Con. 12	Con. 1 Con. 2 Con. 6 Con. 8 Con. 9 Con. 10 Con. 11 Con. 12	Con. 2 Con. 3 Con. 5 Con. 8 Con. 10 Con. 11 Con. 12 Con. 13	Con. 6 Con. 8 Con. 10 Con. 11 Con. 12	Con. 6 Con. 8	Con. 7 Con. 8 Con. 12
	Effective leadership	Con. 1 Con. 2 Con. 4 Con. 7 Con. 8 Con. 9 Con. 10 Con. 11 Con. 12	Con. 11 Con. 12 Con. 13	Con. 1 Con. 3 Con. 4 Con. 5 Con. 6 Con. 7 Con. 9 Con. 10 Con. 11 Con. 12 Con. 13	Con. 1 Con. 5 Con. 6 Con. 12 Con. 13	Con. 8	Con. 5
	IT & eLearning	Con. 1 Con. 8 Con. 9 Con. 10 Con. 12	Con. 3 Con. 5 Con. 8 Con. 11	Con. 2 Con. 6 Con. 7 Con. 11	Con. 4 Con. 6	Con. 7 Con. 9 Con. 10 Con. 12	Con. 4 Con. 7
	Networking	Con. 3 Con. 4 Con. 6 Con. 7	Con. 3	Con. 2 Con. 4 Con. 5 Con. 7 Con. 8 Con. 9 Con. 10 Con. 11 Con. 12	Con. 1 Con. 4 Con. 5 Con. 6 Con. 9 Con. 12		Con. 1 Con. 2 Con. 6 Con. 8 Con. 10 Con. 12
	Student and Learning	Con. 1 Con. 2 Con. 6 Con. 7 Con. 9	Con. 1 Con. 2 Con. 3 Con. 4 Con. 5 Con. 6 Con. 8 Con. 10 Con. 11 Con. 12	Con. 1 Con. 4 Con. 7 Con. 9 Con. 12	Con. 2 Con. 7 Con. 10	Con. 6	Con. 3

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