School performance in three South East Asian countries: lessons in leadership, decision-making and training

Lessons in
leadership,
decision-making
and training

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Abstract

Purpose – The three neighbouring nations of Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore participated in the 2009, 2012 and 2015 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) cycles. Despite many similarities between the three nations, Singapore has consistently been a top PISA performer, with Malaysia and Indonesia in the bottom third of the international league tables. This paper aims to sketch the comparative Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) context and uses PISA-derived metrics to contrast how differences in decision-making and school leadership, particularly in relation to staff development and training practices, may impact school performance across Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.

Design/methodology/approach – Ten scales from the 2015 PISA School Questionnaire for Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia were analysed using ANOVA and *t*-tests as an aid to exploring the extent to which different approaches to teacher training, school leadership and governance may impact student performance.

Findings – Although Malaysian and Indonesian school principals report higher levels of autonomy than Singaporean peers, other evidence suggests that schools in Singapore may actually have greater decision latitude. Most significantly, Singaporean teachers take responsibility for key staff development decisions and skills transfer, whereas in Indonesia and Malaysia, teacher training is controlled by government administrators, a factor that may be a critical differentiator between the school systems.

Practical implications – In Singapore, teacher training is controlled by and for teachers through professional learning teams within schools and professional learning communities across schools; in Malaysia and Indonesia, similar decisions are taken by external administrators. Giving Malaysian and Indonesian teachers control over their own training could be a simple and powerful reform to target skills gaps and to generalise improvements in pedagogy quickly across schools and thus to lift school performance in these countries.

Originality/value – This paper highlights how differences at systemic and school levels, particularly in approaches to teacher training and leadership and may explain differentials in school performance in three ASEAN education systems.

Keywords ASEAN, PISA, Education policy, Evidence-based policymaking, Teacher training, School performance

Paper type Research paper

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Introduction

Since the mid-1990s, there has been a substantial rise in the number of educational international large-scale assessments (ILSAs; [Addey, 2017](#); [Williams and Engel, 2013](#)) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) launched by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2000 has become the most widely used ILSA ([Hopfenbeck, 2016](#)). PISA is completed every three years, and uniquely among ILSAs, it aims to measure “young people’s ability to use their knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges. [...] [and] the student, family and institutional factors that can help to explain differences in performance” (OECD, 2006, pp. 16–17). Despite many critiques of PISA ([Fernandez-Cano, 2016](#); [Klette et al., 2016](#); [Thompson and Allen, 2012](#)) and its suitability for making valid cross-national comparisons ([El Masri et al., 2016](#); [Gorur et al., 2019](#); [Jerrim et al., 2018](#)), PISA results have become catalysts for change in education policy debates ([Baird et al., 2016](#); [Hopfenbeck et al., 2018](#)) and have been used to as the basis for national reforms ([OECD, 2019](#); [Schleicher, 2009](#)).

Programme for International Student Assessment in South East Asia

In all, six members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) have participated in PISA: Indonesia and Thailand from 2000, Malaysia and Singapore from 2009, Viet Nam from 2015, Brunei Darussalam and the Phillipines in 2018. Singapore and Vietnam have performed very well in PISA, but Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand have been consistently placed in the bottom third of participating countries ([Thien, 2016](#)) ([Table 1](#)).

The comparatively weak performance of Malaysian students came as something of a shock to Malaysian policymakers, and it provoked concerns that Malaysia might not be able to achieve developed status because young Malaysians would not have the skillset required for the economy to break out of the so-called middle income trap ([Jimenez et al., 2013](#)). The Malaysian government responded to the challenge by commissioning UNESCO to undertake the Malaysia Education Policy Review, which led to a series of recommendations incorporated in the Malaysia Education Development Plan 2013–2025 ([Azmy et al., 2016](#)). This plan has the explicit objective of raising Malaysian students’ PISA scores from the bottom third to the top global third much closer to Singapore ([Abdullah and Peters, 2015](#)). Reforms to the Malaysian curriculum included the introduction of areas that were thought to be central to Singapore’s comparative success such as the development of soft skills, ethical decision-making, problem solving, team work and higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) ([Aisyah et al., 2019](#); [Hudin et al., 2018](#)). The fact that the PISA 2015 results for Malaysia were better than those for 2012 was widely seen as supporting the initial curricula reforms programme ([Abas and Mohd Shahar, 2016](#)), although the OECD did not publish the data with the main PISA results because of problems with school sampling. However, it has been argued that Malaysia must reform more than the curriculum to improve the nation’s PISA performance ([Perera and Asadullah, 2019](#); [The World Bank, 2011](#)).

Table 1.
2015 PISA scores for
the five participating
ASEAN nations

	Maths	Reading	Science
Indonesia	386	403	403
Malaysia	446	443	443
Singapore	564	556	556
Thailand	415	421	421
Viet Nam	495	525	525

The global education reform model

Various multi-lateral educational organisations such as the IEA, UNESCO, World Bank and OECD promote a package of reforms in school leadership, governance and autonomy (Grimmett, 2018; Klees, 2008; Sahlberg, 2016; Shahjahan, 2016; Verger *et al.*, 2018b), which have been termed the global education reform model (GERM; Sahlberg, 2006). Among other prescriptions GERM proposes that school leaders and teachers should have high levels of autonomy, schools should be responsible for staff training and development and that schools should be accountable to parents (Sahlberg, 2016); PISA data have been used to justify such reforms in various Asian jurisdictions, including Hong Kong (Adamson *et al.*, 2017), Japan (Kimura and Tatsuno, 2017; Tasaki, 2017), Shanghai (Ngok, 2007; Sellar and Lingard, 2013; Tan, 2012, 2017) and Singapore (Lee *et al.*, 2014; Tan, 2011).

Global education reform model in Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia

The government of Singapore was a very early adopter of GERM, and all state and state-supported schools are directly accountable to parents and alumni through governing bodies established under the School Boards (Incorporation) Act 1990. Although levels of autonomy are graduated across state and quasi-independent state-funded schools, most finance, staffing and training decisions are taken at the school level (Chan and Tan, 2008). Even where schools do not have discretion, centralised government control has largely been replaced by the formation of school collectives or clusters with areas like administration and staff development shared across schools (Gopinathan and Lee, 2018).

Malaysia legally established parent–teacher associations (PIBG) in 1973, and Malaysian parents “have the right to be fully informed about the school’s mission, current performance, and annual improvement programme” (MoE, 2013, p. E-24). However, PIBGs are only consultative bodies, and most school decision-making ultimately rests with civil servants because the Malaysian approach to decentralisation means “more decision rights being awarded to state and district offices. Officials will have more say in identifying areas of improvement for their states, districts, and schools, and in tailoring solutions” (MoE, 2013, p. E-24). Malaysia to some extent copied the Singaporean model by introducing school clusters in 2006, but as the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 (MoE, 2013) makes clear, schools remain accountable to district officials rather than to governing bodies with parent and alumni representation. This means that in practice, the majority of decisions in areas like finance, staffing and teacher training are taken by external administrators, rather than within Malaysian schools.

Indonesia also appeared to be an early adopter of GERM when in 1990, the government devolved to school principals’ responsibility for some aspects of finance, administration and staff training under the provisions of Peraturan Pemerintah Republik Indonesia, No. 28/1990, Tentang Pendidikan Dasar. This was followed in 2001 by the establishment of school governing bodies, but in practice, only about 25% of the governors are parents or alumni, and the majority membership is teachers and government officials so the emphasis is on “partnership” rather than school-level decision-making about staffing and training matters (Bandur, 2012). Moreover, despite apparent school-level autonomy, parents take very little active part in school governance, and district- and provincial-level officials are prone to interfere even in relatively small decisions (Vernez *et al.*, 2012; Hutabarat, 2015).

Thus, within ASEAN, there appear to be two very distinct approaches to the ways in which decisions are made about school staffing and training. PISA 2015 data provide a means to empirically compare the extent to which higher performing Singapore schools may differ from lower-performing Malaysian and Indonesian schools and how these differences

may play out in terms of leadership, decision-making and staff development and therefore help to identify areas in which reforms may be targeted to improve school performance.

School measures in the programme for international student assessment

As part of PISA 2015 cycle, the school questionnaire contained items that were designed to assess aspects of school leadership, autonomy, staff training and related contextual features salient to GERM (OECD, 2016). Using primary items from the PISA 2015 School Questionnaire, the OECD aggregated the scores for individual items about school leadership, autonomy, staff training and other related issues into bigger composite scales designed to capture broad areas of school activity; the calculations used the generalised partial credit model (GPCM) and weighted likelihood estimates to develop an internationally comparable metric with a mean of zero and standard deviation of one that provides a standardised score for each school (OECD, 2015). A selection of these PISA composite scales and the areas of activity assessed are shown in Table 2 below.

Research has shown that the dimensions shown in Table 2 are critical in achieving school performance (Burns et al., 2016), so it is clearly of interest to establish how the three immediate neighbours Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore may differ. Thus, the present research examined the score differentials on these composite scales for mid-performing Malaysia relative to Singapore and Indonesia, to highlight areas of similarity or difference and to explore the extent to which these factors might impact school performance.

Methodology

The 2015 PISA School Questionnaire data for Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia were downloaded from the OECD PISA website, and the scores for the composite scales from the PISA School Questionnaire shown in Table 2 above were extracted for the schools sampled in the three nations. As the standardisation process used to calculate the composite scale scores inevitably yields a distribution of scores with a notional mean of zero, it follows that half the scores are negative, making it difficult to compare the magnitude of scores easily between nations. Therefore, to make it easier to interpret the similarities and differences in scores, each of the scales was transformed by adding the minimum score in the range for each scale to all the scores in that scale so that all the aggregate scales were then expressed as positive numbers (for the composite scale characteristics, see OECD, 2015, pp. 325–327). This meant that was immediately possible to see how one country had scored relative to another and also to see any trends across different areas of activity. As the scale scores for

Table 2.
The PISA 2015
School Questionnaire
derived variables

Scale	Area assessed
LEAD	Leadership by the principal
LEADCOM	Teaching activities aligned with curriculum
LEADINST	Instructional leadership within the school
LEADPD	School-level decisions about professional development
LEADTCH	Teachers participation in leadership decision-making
RESPCUR	School-level responsibility for curriculum
RESPRES	School-level decisions about resource allocation
SCHAUT	School autonomy overall
TEACHBEHA	Teacher behaviour and/or resistance hindering learning
STRATIO	Student–teacher ratio

some schools were not available, the minimum and maximum number of schools included in the survey and the means of the transformed scale scores for the ASEAN nations are shown in [Table 3](#) below.

Analysis and results

As the composite scale scores were normally distributed, it was possible to use parametric procedures to make contrasts between the scores for schools across the three nations using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). As is immediately apparent from [Table 4](#), in almost every case, there were significant differences between the scores for schools in the three nations, so to explore these differences further, a series of individual *t*-tests was conducted. Despite the fact that the ANOVA had shown most of the composite scale means to be different across the three nations, for the sake of parsimony and to minimise the likelihood of Type I errors, the Bonferroni correction was applied to the probabilities such that only those probabilities less than 0.005 (0.05/10) would be considered significant. To make interpretation of the findings easier, the first named nation in each column was entered into each analysis first. This means that a positive *t* indicates that the mean score for the first nation named in each column was higher than the score for the second named nation; it naturally also follows that a negative *t* shows that the mean score for the first named nation in each column was lower than for the second nation. The results are summarised in [Table 5](#).

Table 3.

Transformed mean
scores for the PISA
2015 School
Questionnaire
derived variables for
the schools sampled
in the three
comparator ASEAN
nations

PISA Scale	Indonesia (<i>n</i> = 217–236)	Malaysia (<i>n</i> = 219–225)	Singapore (<i>n</i> = 171–176)
LEAD	6.92	7.43	6.98
LEADCOM	5.03	5.60	5.18
LEADINST	4.02	4.60	4.26
LEADPD	4.00	4.06	4.00
LEADTCH	4.14	4.30	3.83
RESPCUR	1.76	0.37	1.07
RESPRES	1.30	0.35	0.50
TEACHBEHAV	1.25	1.83	2.16
SCHAUT	0.83	0.38	0.74
STRATIO	15.18	11.66	11.88

Table 4.

Summary ANOVA
results for the
comparison of the
transformed scores
for the PISA 2015
School Questionnaire
derived variables for
schools in Malaysia,
Indonesia and
Singapore

PISA scale	F	Probability value
LEAD	13.79	0.001
LEADCOM	21.99	0.001
LEADINST	22.30	0.001
LEADPD	1.53	0.217
LEADTCH	9.07	0.001
RESPCUR	146.28	0.001
RESPRES	62.05	0.001
SCHAUT	306.35	0.001
TEACHBEHA	55.02	0.001
STRATIO	17.25	0.001

School leadership and decision-making

Given the supposed centrality of leadership to PISA success, the findings for the main leadership indices shown in Table 5 are perhaps surprising. Malaysia scores significantly higher than both Indonesia and Singapore for the leadership given by principals (LEAD), alignment of teaching and curriculum (LEADCOM) and instructional leadership within schools (LEADINST). However, there are no significant differences between the three nations for school-level decision-making about professional development (LEADPD), but Malaysia and Indonesia have similar scores for teacher participation in decision-making (LEADTCH), and these scores are significantly higher than those for Singapore. This suggests that Malaysian principals are providing more leadership than their peers in Singapore or Indonesia, but that this is not associated with a greater focus on professional development. Indeed, although Malaysian and Indonesian schools have higher levels of teacher participation in decision-making than the higher performing Singapore schools, this is not associated with any significant differences in the amounts of professional development provided for staff.

Responsibility for curriculum and resources

The indices of school-level responsibility for curriculum (RESPCUR) and resource allocation (RESPRES) appear to show that principals and teachers in Malaysia have significantly less control over the curriculum than those in Indonesia and Singapore. Malaysian schools have the same amount of control of resources as their Singaporean peers, but both have less control than Indonesian principals. This suggests Malaysian principals have least autonomy over what is taught, and in common with their Singaporean colleagues, may have only moderate control over resources.

School autonomy

The composite measure of school autonomy (SCHAUT) suggests that Malaysian and Singaporean principals have similar levels of overall autonomy, but that both have rather less independence than their peers in Indonesia.

Teacher behaviour

It appears that teacher behaviours and resistance which hinder learning (TEACHBEHA) are more prevalent in Malaysia than Indonesia, but perhaps surprisingly that they are most prevalent in Singapore.

Table 5.
Summary *t*-test
results comparing
the mean
transformed scores
for the PISA 2015
School Questionnaire
derived variables for
schools in Malaysia,
Indonesia and
Singapore

PISA scale	Malaysia vs Indonesia	Malaysia vs Singapore	Singapore vs Indonesia
LEAD	4.66*	4.20*	0.53
LEADCOM	6.30*	4.88*	1.62
LEADINST	6.35*	3.92*	2.70
LEADTCH	1.43	4.49*	-3.00*
RESPCUR	-17.35*	-8.79*	-7.31*
RESPRES	-9.98*	-2.03	-7.73*
SCHAUT	-22.05*	0.92	-5.16*
TEACHBEHA	6.70*	-17.82*	11.00*
STRATIO	-4.59*	-0.76	-4.34*
Note: * <i>p</i> < 0.005			

Student–teacher ratio

Indonesia has a significantly higher student–teacher ratio (STRATIO) of approximately 15:1 in comparison to Malaysia and Singapore, which both have a ratio of approximately 12:1, but the fact that there is no significant difference in the student–teacher ratio between Malaysia and Singapore suggests that any differences between Malaysia and Singapore are not simply due to staffing numbers.

Discussion

The findings reported above make it clear that there are some significant differences between Malaysian schools, their higher performing Singaporean counterparts and the lower performing Indonesian schools. This suggests that the differences in policy and governance may translate into significant differences in school leadership and the ways in which schools approach decision-making in key areas around staffing and development, though not necessarily in the ways that might be seen as consistent with GERM.

Student–teacher ratios

The fact that student–staff ratios are higher in Indonesia than Malaysia suggests that any school performance differences could be related to the challenges of teaching bigger classes. However, the fact that there are no significant differences between Malaysia and Singapore suggests that any differences in school performance across these two nations do not arise from differences in relative resourcing levels between the two nations, rather that the performance differentials may be related to differences in areas such as leadership, staffing and professional development (Hanushek and Woessmann, 2017).

School autonomy, leadership and teacher behaviours

Malaysian principals report similar levels of overall autonomy to those of higher-performing Singapore, but both Malaysia and Singapore principals report having rather less autonomy than Indonesian peers. Although Malaysian and Indonesian teachers appear to have higher levels of participation in school decision-making than their Singaporean peers, this is not associated with greater professional development opportunities. Lastly, Singaporean principals report higher levels of teacher behaviours and resistance that hinder student learning in comparison to Malaysian teachers, with Malaysian teachers being seen as hindering learning more than their Indonesian peers. Taken together, these factors suggest that Malaysian and Indonesian schools should perform better than Singaporean schools (Ingersoll *et al.*, 2018), yet precisely the opposite is the case. Indeed, in this context, the ways in which these factors combine differently at school level may help to explain the performance differences across the three nations.

Although autonomy is usually considered beneficial to school performance, it may only benefit schools that have a strong academic ethos and that are already performing well within clear and supportive governance structures (You and Morris, 2016). Autonomy in the absence of sound governance and administrative competence may lead to weaker performance (Hanushek *et al.*, 2011). As we have seen, in practice, Singapore schools have considerable autonomy and are governed by independent governing bodies and clusters that also hold principals accountable (Chan and Tan, 2008). In Malaysia, PIBGs and school clusters appear to have little authority, and schools have little real autonomy because most decision-making and accountability actually rest with civil servants (MoE, 2013, p. E-24), and this may explain why apparently high levels of participation in decision-making have no apparent impact in other areas. In Indonesia, the preponderance of government officials and teachers on governing bodies means that the discretion of principals is very limited,

decision-making is consensual and there is little accountability (Bandur, 2012). These factors may be further compounded by high levels of teacher participation in decision-making because this may actually make it more difficult for principals to drive improvements in school performance by, for example challenging existing skills levels and implementing professional development programmes to address deficits. In Malaysia and Indonesia, principals are constrained by collectivist management expectations (Koo and Park, 2018), and this means principals are mostly focused on maintaining traditional hierarchies and group harmony rather than dealing with more difficult issues such as teacher performance (Bush *et al.*, 2018). By contrast, Singaporean principals are noted for displaying high levels of assertiveness and competitiveness, even though such characteristics are not congruent with Asian behavioural expectations, and it is these factors that drive school improvement (Walker and Hallinger, 2015). This may also explain why Singaporean teachers are considered to hinder student learning more than Malaysian teachers, who in turn hinder student learning more than their Indonesian peers. In this context, “hindrance” may mostly reflect “resistance” to principals who are attempting to drive improvement. In Singapore, schools most staffing and development decisions are taken at the school level (Chan and Tan, 2008), and this means that principals can make decisions that are likely to encounter resistance. In Malaysia, decisions about most staffing issues are controlled by local government (MoE, 2013), so perhaps the reason principals encounter less resistance is that they are not actually able to take any decisions that might provoke resistance from teachers. In Indonesia, principals are even more constrained because the appointment and terms of full-time teachers are wholly controlled by central government, no teachers are ever fired and there are no external motivators for improvement (Lewis and Pattinasarany, 2009). Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that as decision-making, particularly about matters directly relating to staff, moves further away from schools and from principals, the harder it is to drive changes or improvements that may impact school performance.

Staff training and development

Given the above, it may initially seem paradoxical that principals in Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore report school-level decision making about staff development and training at roughly equal levels. It is well appreciated that teacher training is perhaps the most significant way to improve school performance in schools throughout ASEAN (Hallinger and Walker, 2017), particularly if such training includes giving school principals the skillset needed to improve teacher performance (Lee and Nie, 2017). Thus, it might be expected that higher-performing Singapore might report greater levels of decision-making by principals about teacher training. However, the apparent similarity may mask a much more significant disparity because, for any training and development exercise to be effective, it must obviously be relevant, which means it is important who actually makes decisions about development exercises, and principals may not always be those best placed.

Despite the fact that the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 highlights the importance of effective professional development for all teachers, the reality remains that decisions are not made at school level because “The Ministry will [...] identify which areas teachers need support in, and will then provide as much targeted support as possible.” (MoE, 2013, pp. 5–10). The Malaysian government has introduced a National Professional Qualification for Educational Leaders, which is mandatory for those who aspire to become principals (Ng, 2017), but it has been suggested that the type of school leadership being taught is along traditional lines (Bush and Ng, 2019), so it is unlikely to impact school performance. In Indonesia, there has been very little school-level decision-making about training and development because the focus of activity has been on a nationwide

programme to get all teachers to the levels of professional competence necessary for government certification (Fahmi *et al.*, 2011), though to date, progress has been at best mixed (Harjanto *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, the fact that district and provincial officials interfere in decision-making about training means that the types of training and development provided may not be those that are actually required by schools, irrespective of government certification requirements (Vernez *et al.*, 2012; Hutabarat, 2015). Thus, despite the fact that decision-making about teacher training in Malaysian and Indonesian schools may appear to be similar to Singapore, the focus of those decisions and the actual decision-makers may be quite different.

In Singapore, schools' staff training and development is not controlled by principals or administrators, but by teachers themselves. Training is commissioned and delivered through professional learning communities (PLCs) within each school, each consisting of professional learning teams (PLTs) normally organised on the basis of subject discipline, which are tasked to share best practice amongst colleagues in a structured fashion (Hairon and Tan, 2017). As Hairon and Tan acknowledge, this is in part only possible because Singapore is small enough for the central authorities to ensure that PLCs and PLTs are functioning correctly, but they also note that Shanghai, with a population of over 20 million, has been able to evolve a very similar system. Other scholars have already identified that the PLC model has the capacity to turn around poor-performing schools in Malaysia and Indonesia (Harris and Jones, 2017), and it has been suggested that PLCs should be adopted across Malaysia (Hassan *et al.*, 2018). Indeed, given that teachers in low-performing ASEAN schools are generally receptive to training and development exercises (Ansawi and Pang, 2017), it seems logical that empowering Malaysian and Indonesian schools to decide and disseminate training via PLCs might be a very effective way to lift overall performance.

Implications for Malaysian and Indonesian schools

The findings presented here are based upon the results of a survey, and this means that they are subject to all the caveats and limitations that are associated with any self-report measure. Nevertheless, there do appear to be some significant differences between the high-performing schools of Singapore and those of Malaysia and Indonesia. School autonomy, leadership and accountability all have some part to play in achieving high levels of school performance, but irrespective of systemic factors, levels of training and the ways in which teachers take part in professional development may be most important and easiest to address (Hanushek and Woessmann, 2017). The right type of training improves principal effectiveness across ASEAN (Hallinger and Walker, 2017), which in turn improves teacher performance (Lee and Nie, 2017). When teachers then take control of their own professional development, the impact may be increased (Hairon and Tan, 2017). If, as seems likely, the Malaysian reforms begun in 2013 have begun to yield some positive improvements, then the quickest way to multiply them may be through better trained principals and teachers empowered to take control of their own development. Although Indonesia is starting from a lower base, this recipe may be equally applicable to Indonesia (Harjanto *et al.*, 2018). Further reforms around school governance and accountability in line with the measures that have proved effective in Singapore would certainly be desirable, but they would also be slower and more complex to implement, so may not be so pressing as reforming control and access to training and development.

Conclusions

In many respects, Malaysian schools are closer to those in Singapore than Indonesia, but school performance on PISA is lower than this would imply. Despite recent

reforms, in practice, Malaysian and Indonesian schools appear to have lower levels of autonomy, accountability to parents and real decision-making latitude than Singaporean schools. In particular, there is a marked difference in the approach to staff training and development. In Malaysia and Indonesia, decisions about key staffing, training and development matters appear to be reserved to government administrators, but in Singapore, training is controlled by and for teachers. Introducing PLTs within schools and PLCs across schools could be the most efficient way to target skills gaps and to generalise improvements in pedagogy quickly in school clusters and possibly even across ASEAN nations. Thus, it is not the apparent level of decision-making that is important, but the level at which important decisions are made. Empowering teachers to make more decisions about their own training and professional development could be a relatively simple and easy reform that would help to lift school performance in all the countries of South East Asia.

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