What makes an effective school leader?
The Singapore Story

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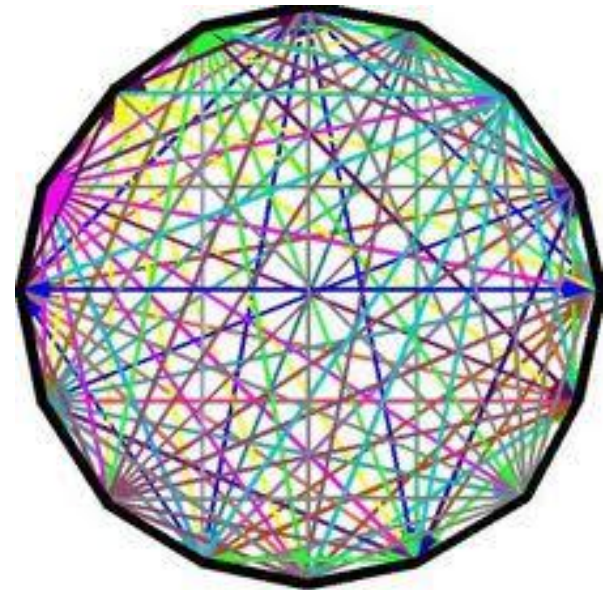Michel Saw

ACADEMY OF PRINCIPALS (SINGAPORE)

What is effective keeps changing

- Our education system is 51 years old
  - Inherited a British model
  - Kept the framework; modified everything else
  - Review with biggest impact in 1978
  - Review with latest impact in 1997
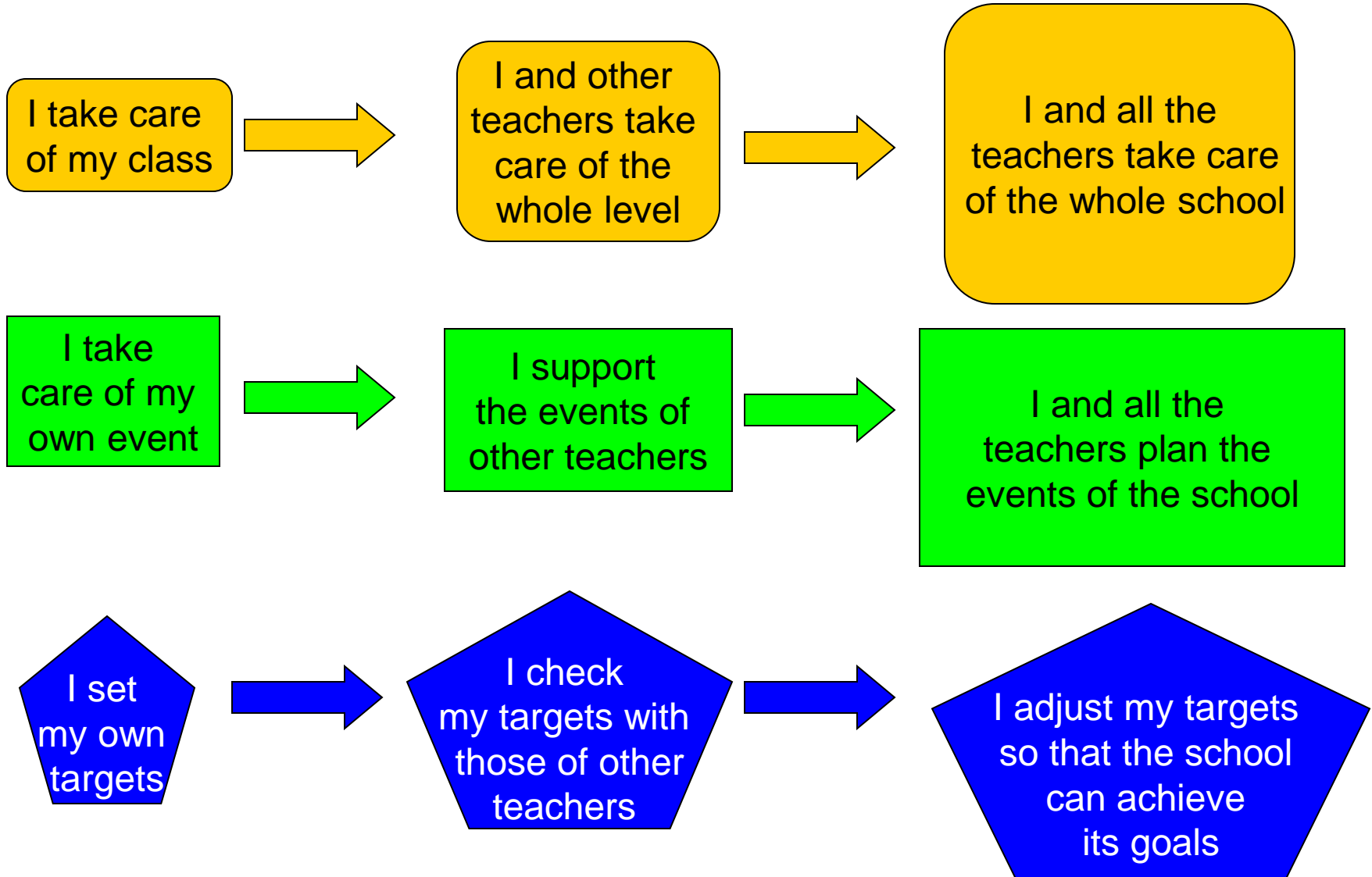- We are still making changes

Biggest change is in MINDSET

Teachers only need to teach their own class

Teachers working with each other and across classes

Organisational thinking

I take care of my class → I and other teachers take care of the whole level → I and all the teachers take care of the whole school

I take care of my own event → I support the events of other teachers → I and all the teachers plan the events of the school

I set my own targets → I check my targets with those of other teachers → I adjust my targets so that the school can achieve its goals

The class
is not
your
fortress

the school
is not
your
kingdom

Change must be supported by

TRAINING

Types of training

- For different stages of teacher experience
- For curricular changes
- For school-wide programmes
- For leadership
  - Teacher mentor
  - Faculty head
  - Vice principal and principal

Funding for training

- Standard teaching stages – (MOE)

- Curricular changes – (MOE)

- School-adopted programmes – (School) training fund provided by MOE

- Leadership training – MOE

Typical training received by the time teacher becomes school leader

- Pre-service training
- Training as beginning teacher
  - Classroom management, social-emotional learning, assessment, IT
- Curricular training for syllabus changes
- School-wide programmes training
- School duties training
  - Career guidance, robotics, school band
- Mentoring of younger teachers
- Faculty head training
- School leadership training

Change needs

Autonomy

because there must be trust

Autonomy in

- Programmes
  - Teaching approach
    - Differentiated Instruction
    - Understanding by Design
    - Teaching for Understanding
    - Skilful Teacher
  - Holistic emphasis
    - Outdoor education
    - Social emotional learning
    - Sports and Games
    - Aesthetics programme
- Staffing
  - Deployment
  - Development

Autonomy in

- Organisational culture
  - Learning organisation (LO)
  - Appreciative inquiry
  - Organisational development
  - Strategic planning
  - Communities of practice
  - Lesson study

Autonomy in

- Finances
  - Budget
  - Expenditure

- School operations
  - Canteen
  - Bookshop
  - Field and playing courts

- Facilities
  - Maintenance, upkeep and repair
  - Change in use
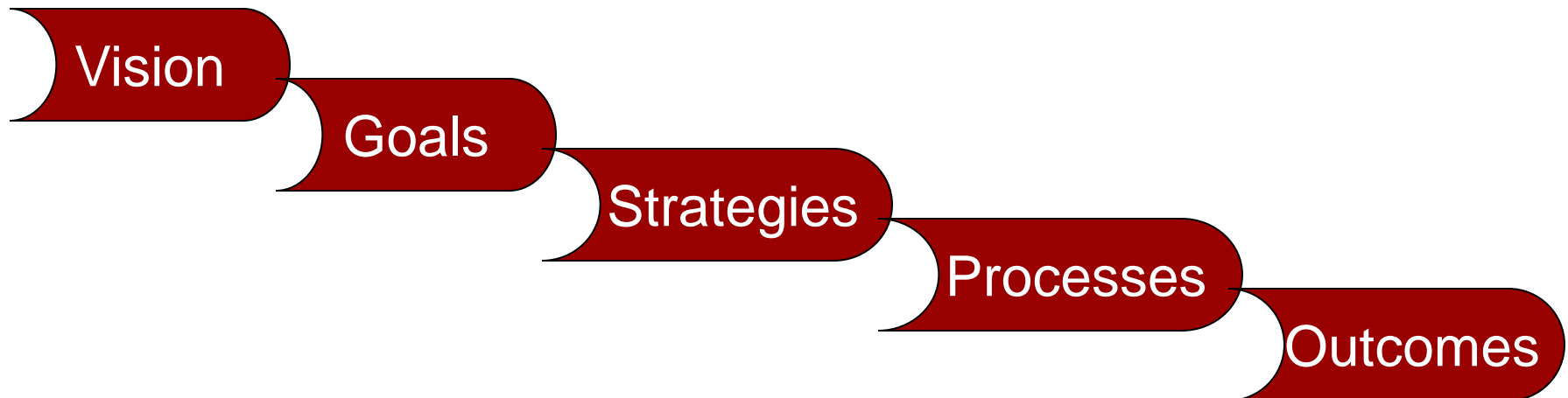
Change is driven by

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Of school

Of teachers

Autonomy in a school is monitored by Performance Management

Checking
- Goals against vision
- Strategies against goals
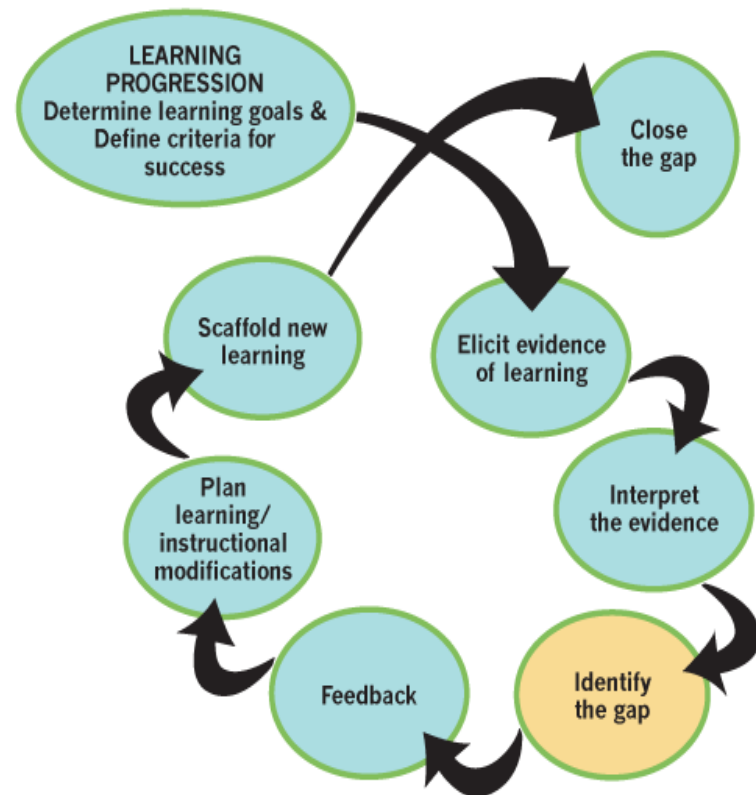- Processes against strategies
- Outcomes against processes

Vision

Goals

Strategies

Processes

Outcomes

A school is only as good as its teachers

Performance management helps teachers

- Set goals
- Check delivery
- Close gaps
- Evaluate progress

Change is evaluated

because there must be

Accountability

Accountable for

Adding value to the academic performance of students by

- Using student grades from previous stage of schooling as input

- Comparing academic performance of students with similar input grades

Accountable for

Overall educational experience of students in terms of

- Learning structures like curriculum, school support for learning
- Social processes like relationships between students and teachers, discipline
- Sense of pride in school

Accountable for

Staff engagement measured by

- Commitment to the job
- Satisfaction with school
- Perception of school leadership
- Perception of work load
- Perception of school support

Schools became effective
because of

- Organisational Awareness
- Training
- Autonomy
- Performance Management
- Accountability

It was a

common language

between school leaders, their supervisors and their teachers