Multi-functions of school-based teacher education

Yin Cheong Cheng
Director, The Centre for Research and Development, The Hong Kong Institute of Education, Hong Kong

Allan Walker
Faculty of Education, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Introduction

Throughout the last decade educational environments around the globe have changed rapidly. This has been particularly so in Hong Kong and throughout the Asia Pacific region. Diverse and often conflicting expectations emanating from all corners of society challenge the role and place of teachers and administrators, and the functions and purposes of schools. Growing expectations, for example, that schools move beyond simple instruction (the conveyance of skills and knowledge) to become vehicles for promoting social mobility and economic development, place schools on often unfamiliar ground. Schools now face the spectre of having to cope with a diverse range of functions, many of which are foreign to their traditional operation. How schools manage change and adjust their roles to meet these functions is of concern to all educational leaders.

Recent educational thought suggests strongly that teachers hold the key to successful change and improvement in schools (Fullan, 1991). As such, teachers must be empowered to meet the challenges provoked by the expansion of school functions and roles. Teacher empowerment comes through continuous teacher learning and development. To develop, teachers must have opportunities to learn and adapt as professionals. Unfortunately, the current status of professional development in schools remains centred on courses and workshops conducted away from the school site (Walker and Cheng, 1996). Whereas these can be valuable learning experiences, they are often unconnected to the specific needs of the school. For continuous teacher education to be meaningful in today’s fluid environment it must be school-based, address the unique needs of the school community and the wider society, promote teacher involvement and empowerment, and become an integral part of school life (Cheng, 1992; Cheng and Tam, 1994).

In this article we suggest that school-based teacher education (SBTE) needs to be reconceptualized to account for the multiple and diverse functions which face today’s schools. Without an adequate understanding of these multi-functions, teacher development efforts may not only remain fragmented, superficial, short-term and ineffective, but may also fail to meet the needs of the various constituencies intimately related to the school. This paper aims to develop a theoretical framework for understanding the complex nature of SBTE and facilitating its design and management. First, we discuss the changing explicit and implicit functions of schools and suggest how SBTE should respond to the needs of these functions. Second, based on an organizational perspective, we explain how SBTE serves five different functions within schools and contributes to the strategic management processes underpinning many recent moves towards school-based management and improvement. Finally, we advance a number of implications associated with the framework which may guide effective practice.

SBTE and changing school functions

Teacher effectiveness is linked intimately with school-specific needs. School needs are influenced unavoidably by environmental shifts at individual, institutional, community, society and international levels. Schools must address needs within these five levels. In tandem with these, schools must discharge certain functions. One way to classify potential functions can be seen in Table I. The functions are: technical or economic, human or social, political, cultural, and educational (Cheng, 1996). A matrix comprising these functions and their accompanying levels produces 25 categories which we believe can be applied usefully for reconceptualizing SBTE either by school practitioners or researchers.

Technical/economic functions refer to a school’s contribution to the technical or economic developments and needs at each of the five levels. At the individual level, teachers help students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to survive and compete in a modern society. At the institutional level,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical/economic functions</th>
<th>Human/social functions</th>
<th>Political functions</th>
<th>Cultural functions</th>
<th>Educational functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual</strong></td>
<td><strong>Knowledge and skills training</strong></td>
<td><strong>Psychological developments</strong></td>
<td><strong>Development of civic attitudes and skills</strong></td>
<td><strong>Acculturation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Career training</strong></td>
<td><strong>Social developments</strong></td>
<td><strong>Development of civic attitudes and skills</strong></td>
<td><strong>Socialization with values, norms and beliefs</strong></td>
<td><strong>Learning how to learn and develop</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Potential developments</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Learning how to teach and help</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Professional development</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional</strong></td>
<td><strong>As a life place</strong></td>
<td><strong>As a social entity/system</strong></td>
<td><strong>As a place for political socialization</strong></td>
<td><strong>As a centre for cultural transmission and reproduction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>As a workplace</strong></td>
<td><strong>As a human relationship</strong></td>
<td><strong>As a place for political coalition</strong></td>
<td><strong>As a place for cultural revitalization and integration</strong></td>
<td><strong>As a centre for learning and teaching</strong></td>
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<td><strong>As a service organization</strong></td>
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<td><strong>As a place for political discourse or criticism</strong></td>
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<td><strong>As a centre for disseminating knowledge</strong></td>
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<td><strong>As a centre for educational changes and developments</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Community</strong></td>
<td><strong>Serving the economic or instrumental needs of the community</strong></td>
<td><strong>Serving the social needs of the community</strong></td>
<td><strong>Serving the political needs of the community</strong></td>
<td><strong>Serving the cultural needs of the community</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Society</strong></td>
<td><strong>Provision of quality labour forces</strong></td>
<td><strong>Social integration</strong></td>
<td><strong>Political legitimation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Cultural integration and continuity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Modification of economic behaviour</strong></td>
<td><strong>Social mobilization/social class perpetuation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Political structure, maintenance and continuity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Cultural reproduction</strong></td>
<td><strong>Development of the education professions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Contribution to the manpower structure</strong></td>
<td><strong>Social equality</strong></td>
<td><strong>Democracy promotion</strong></td>
<td><strong>Production of cultural capital</strong></td>
<td><strong>Development of education structures</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Selection and allocation of human resources</strong></td>
<td><strong>Facilitating political developments and reforms</strong></td>
<td><strong>Cultural revitalization</strong></td>
<td><strong>Dissemination of knowledge and information</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Social development and change</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Learning society</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>International</strong></td>
<td><strong>International competition</strong></td>
<td><strong>Global village</strong></td>
<td><strong>International coalition</strong></td>
<td><strong>Appreciation of cultural diversity</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Economic cooperation</strong></td>
<td><strong>International friendship</strong></td>
<td><strong>International understanding</strong></td>
<td><strong>Development of global education</strong></td>
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<td><strong>International trade</strong></td>
<td><strong>International understanding</strong></td>
<td><strong>Peace against war</strong></td>
<td><strong>International education</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Technology exchange</strong></td>
<td><strong>International understanding</strong></td>
<td><strong>Common interests</strong></td>
<td><strong>exchanges and cooperation</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Earth protection</strong></td>
<td><strong>International understanding</strong></td>
<td><strong>Elimination of conflicts</strong></td>
<td><strong>Development of global culture</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Sharing information</strong></td>
<td><strong>International understanding</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Education for the whole world</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Cheng (1996)
schools provide quality service for clients, employers and others connected with the organization. At a community and societal levels, schools aid the economic and instrumental needs of their local community and economy, modify or shape economic behaviours, and contribute to the development and stability of the broader society. These then feed the international level through teachers and schools providing economically, technologically and environmentally sensitive adults to the constantly shrinking world community. Through SBTE, teachers can understand further the economic and technical functions of school education and develop sufficient competence to help perform these functions.

Human/social functions refer to the contribution of schools to human development and social relationships at different levels of the society. SBTE should help teachers to understand the nature and significance of human development and how to cater for this in schools. For example, at an individual level, teachers help students to develop as fully as possible psychologically, socially and physically. At the institutional level, teachers help invent and reinforce the human relationships which frame organizational behaviour. The quality of such relationships is a key determinant of the quality of the work and learning lives of students.

Cultural functions refer to the contribution of schools to the cultural transmission and development at different levels of society. SBTE can provide opportunities for teachers to understand and reflect on these cultural functions, and to build the skills necessary for their transmission. At the individual level, teachers help students to develop creativity and aesthetic awareness, and to become familiar with the dominant values underpinning their society. At an institutional level, teachers and schools act as agents for systematic cultural transmission, cultural integration among their multiple and diverse constituencies, and cultural revitalization. At the community and society levels, schools often serve as a cultural unit carrying the explicit norms and expectations of the local community. Again, conflict theory provides an alternative view. It suggests that schools and teachers socialize students from different levels of society with different sets of values and beliefs and, in the process, benefit some groups more than others (Apple, 1982; Cheng, 1995; Collins, 1971; Giroux, 1981). At the international level, schools and teachers can encourage appreciation of cultural diversity and acceptance of different norms, traditions, values and beliefs in different countries and regions.

Education functions of schools refer to the contribution of schools to the development and maintenance of education at different levels. Traditionally, education has been perceived as a means for achieving only the economic, social, political and cultural values. Rapid and widespread change, however, has now prompted an acceptance that...
education in and of itself is a crucial goal. The content, system and structure of education, then, need to be developed and maintained. SBTE is an important means not only for teachers to learn and develop themselves, but also to understand this increasingly recognized need. At the individual level, teachers help students to learn how to learn and colleagues to learn how to teach. At the institutional level, teachers work together to improve learning and teaching through mutual support and shared innovation. At the community and society levels, teachers provide service for different educational needs within their communities, facilitate developments of education as a profession, disseminate knowledge and information to the next generation and contribute to the formation of a learning society. In order to encourage mutual understanding among nations, teachers can contribute to the development of global education and the international exchange and co-operation of education.

We believe that an understanding of the above functions and accompanying levels is useful on two interrelated fronts. First, it provides a frame for school managers and teachers to understand and operationalize SBTE and, second, the framework is useful for increased theoretical understanding of SBTE and may form the basis for research in this important area. Clearly, as the functions of schools become more complex, administrators and teachers need to be better prepared to face their changing roles. At present, it is unlikely that teachers have the appropriate knowledge, attitude, commitment and competence to support the multiple functions in their schools and to carry out tasks effectively. Ignorance of the changes in the school’s role and of the multiplicity of the school’s functions can hinder the development of SBTE.

All schools are unique. Different schools have distinct expectations and beliefs about which functions are most important to them. Certain schools, for example, may be more concerned with the technical and economic functions, but others with the political functions. Yet other schools may pay attention to the functions at the individual levels and some focus more on the community or societal level. Such varying emphases may lead to different designs of SBTE. Whereas this is acceptable, and certainly understandable, schools should keep in mind the following:

- different emphases should be placed on the specific characteristics and needs of the school at a certain developmental stage;
- a full understanding of the spectrum of school functions is necessary; and
- a balanced SBTE programme should aim, in the long term, to address each of the functions, even if at different levels of emphasis.

We move now to examining the multi-functions, specifically at a school level.

Multi-functions of SBTE within the school organization

From a school perspective, SBTE may include different functions which contribute to the internal operation of the school in addition to the levels noted above. These may be viewed usefully through the guise of a strategic management process which has recently become an integral part of the move towards school-based and multi-level self-management in schools (Caldwell and Spinks, 1988, 1992; Cheng, 1996; Cheng and Ng, 1994; Cheung and Cheng, 1996). Greater teacher participation in school development planning and the strategic management process includes meaningful roles in environment analysis, planning and structuring, staffing and directing, and monitoring and evaluating. Through involvement in these processes, the teacher’s role shifts from an individual implementer to a team-oriented planner, partner, leader and professional (Barth, 1988; Cheng, 1993a). Involvement in these processes may help make school environments more conducive to teaching and learning.

SBTE can play an important role in empowering teachers to shift their roles and increase their participation in school management. Through SBTE, framed by multiple school functions, teachers can develop knowledge, confidence, commitment and competence leading, ideally, to improved school performance. In other words, SBTE can contribute to more effective internal school performance. Based on the organizational perspective (Bolman and Deal, 1991; Cheng, 1994; Sergiovanni, 1984), the contribution of SBTE to school strategic management processes can be divided into five different functions: the technical function, the human function, the political function, the cultural function...
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Table II
Classification of SBTE contribution to the strategic management process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic management process</th>
<th>Technical function</th>
<th>Human function</th>
<th>Political function</th>
<th>Cultural function</th>
<th>Educational function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning and structuring</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staffing and directing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitoring and evaluating</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

and the educational function (Table II). This classification fits neatly with the more general school functions discussed earlier. Each function of SBTE can contribute to the strategic management process in terms of environmental analysis, planning and structuring, staffing and directing, and monitoring and evaluating.

Technical function of SBTE
The technical function of SBTE refers to the content and activities of teacher education which can provide the necessary technical support for teachers to plan, organize, coordinate and implement teaching and learning activities in the school. Teachers are empowered to manipulate strategies and situations to ensure optimum teaching and learning effectiveness. The technical function of SBTE for strategic management in school can be explained as follows.

Environmental analysis
Through the activities of SBTE, teachers can learn the techniques for analysing the school situation, identifying the problems or needs of the school and gathering information about the external and internal influencing factors.

Planning and structuring
In SBTE activities, teachers can learn how to reflect on the findings of environmental analysis and clarify existing values and beliefs, develop school mission and goals, and establish programmes, policies and procedures. Teachers can also experience techniques to maximize effectiveness and efficiency in planning human resources for school management and programme implementation. SBTE can help teachers to ensure role clarity and accountability in the organizational structure.

Staffing and directing
SBTE activities often include staff induction, job orientation or training that can help teachers to implement programmes effectively. Teachers learn to accept meaningful responsibilities and use their discretion in carrying out work activities, handling problems and making important decisions to complete their tasks and attain school goals. The process of SBTE can provide opportunities for teachers to clarify role responsibilities and work directions, and appropriately coordinate and communicate with other school members in areas such as programme implementation.

Monitoring and evaluating
Through SBTE, teachers can learn techniques for assessing school performance. Teachers utilize various indicators according to the school plans, programme plans and individual developments. They can also become involved in conducting school-based evaluation and applying resultant findings to develop mechanisms for continuous improvement.

Human function of SBTE
The human function of SBTE refers to the contribution of SBTE towards enhancing teachers’ satisfaction, commitment, personal growth and interpersonal relationships. Activities may include workshops on social skills, team building, mentoring or career counselling. These skills aim to increase collaboration, work satisfaction and professional development (Hackman, 1987). Specifically, the human function of SBTE for the strategic management process is as follows.

Environmental analysis
Through SBTE, teachers can develop a positive climate and more open interpersonal relationships. These encourage more open reflection on the problems and needs of the school, and greater participation in analysis of environmental impacts on the school’s future.

Planning and structuring
The activities of SBTE can encourage teachers to participate actively in establishing school mission and goals. Through involvement in planning, team spirit and a shared
sense of ownership are more likely to develop. In addition, planning activities can double as SBTE opportunities and help teachers to learn, grow and develop.

**Staffing and directing**

Similarly, SBTE helps teachers to understand the importance of participation and solid interpersonal relationships through the process of staffing and directing. Through SBTE, teachers can develop confidence and commitment to face challenges arising from changes in personnel adjustments and fluctuation. Staffing and directing activities themselves can be perceived and organized as important components of SBTE.

**Monitoring and evaluation**

SBTE can enhance teachers’ understanding of the role of monitoring and assessment to the development of human resources in the school. Further understanding can help eliminate teachers’ traditional resistance to processes such as teacher appraisal. With the support of appropriate SBTE activities, performance appraisal can be conceptualized more easily as a formative process for teachers’ professional growth and development.

**Political function of SBTE**

According to the political perspective, conflicts, competing interests and disputes over resource allocation are inevitable in schools (Bolman and Deal, 1991). SBTE can contribute to conflict resolution among teachers or various interest groups. Appropriately designed SBTE activities can help teachers to understand that the conflict can have constructive as well as destructive effects. Conflict will always be a part of organizational life; therefore, it is important to support teachers through SBTE to gear conflict constructively (Covey, 1989; Tjosvold, 1992). Positive politics may evolve when teachers and other administrators can select actions that appeal to higher motives and higher stages of moral judgement (Block, 1987). Through SBTE, teachers can recognize a shared vision that they must work together to create a better school (Tjosvold, 1992). Specifically, the political function of SBTE for strategic management can be summarized as follows.

**Environmental analysis**

SBTE can raise awareness of environmental impacts on the school and promote solidarity when faced with external or internal challenges. Teachers learn to balance and integrate the diverse interests among school constituencies through identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the school. Through SBTE activities, teachers can achieve appropriate attitudes and skills to facilitate the resolution of conflicts aroused in the process of environmental analysis in a “win-win” manner.

**Planning and structuring**

Again, teachers can learn to adopt a constructive view of conflict in planning and structuring for school development. They can also be encouraged to understand that diversity can be an important asset if managed sensibly. Through SBTE, teachers develop a basic understanding of common interests in the process of goal formulation, curriculum development and resource allocation. They attempt to minimize the destructive conflicts between programmes in planning and between roles in structuring.

**Staffing and directing**

The activities of SBTE can help teachers to build confidence and competence to achieve consensus in staffing and organizing. Programme consolidation and congruence are encouraged through collaboration among staff.

**Monitoring and evaluating**

There is often resistance to the monitoring and evaluating of teacher and school performance. Such resistance often forms blockages to the implementation of evaluation and appraisal systems (Cheng and Ng, 1991). SBTE can be the vehicle for helping teachers to understand their role of evaluation and to minimize resistance to the growing trend towards quality assurance in schools.

**Cultural function of SBTE**

The cultural function of SBTE refers to the contribution of SBTE to the development of a strong and positive school culture which can shape teachers’ beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviours, and encourage them to pursue increased individual and school effectiveness (Bolman and Deal, 1991; Cheng, 1989, 1993b; Sergiovanni, 1984). Through SBTE’s cultural function, teachers’ attention can be focused on what is important and can promote the enduring values and beliefs which provide the school with its unique identity. The contribution of the cultural function of SBTE to strategic management is summarized below.

**Environmental analysis**

Through SBTE, teachers’ attention can be drawn to internal and external forces which influence the school’s operation. Through exploring the school’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, teachers can make
sense of the school’s position in the environment.

Planning and structuring
SBTE provides opportunities for teachers to reflect on what is most important to the school’s future. The process of developing the school mission, goals and action plans should be in itself a SBTE opportunity for teachers to develop shared meanings, values and vision for the school and teachers. The SBTE’s cultural function can help to raise teachers’ level of awareness about the school goals that transcend their own self-interests (Bass, 1985).

Staffing and directing
SBTE activities can articulate the meanings of professional growth and development of teachers. The process of staffing and directing can be conceptualized and organized as an important SBTE opportunity for the development of school culture.

Monitoring and evaluating
With the support of SBTE, the meaning and importance of monitoring and evaluation to the school’s future development can be articulated to teachers, and the value of the continuous learning inherent in such evaluation can be emphasized. Teachers’ attention can be focused on what is most important to the school’s development.

Educational function of SBTE
The main role of teachers is to improve learning and teaching. Teaching quality inevitably depends on teachers’ professional development, the learning environment and curriculum improvement. As the external and internal educational environment changes, teachers may not be empowered to adapt to the change. Through SBTE, teachers can deepen their understanding of educational processes, diagnose educational problems, improve teaching strategies, develop new teaching competences, co-operate with colleagues and other professionals, advance professional knowledge, develop new curricula to meet students’ needs and school goals, and improve the learning environment for students. In other words, the educational function of SBTE is directly relevant to teachers’ major task of improving teaching and learning. The educational function of SBTE also contributes to long-term school development and instructional effectiveness.

Environmental analysis
SBTE can help teachers to become aware of the social, economic, technological and political changes which affect education and their approaches to teaching. Through SBTE, teachers can develop the competence to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the school’s educational process and also to recognize their own and students’ educational needs.

Planning and structuring
SBTE helps teachers to ensure the development of school plans and instructional programme plans which relate closely to shared educational goals. Teachers can learn to maximize opportunities for student learning and staff development through appropriate organizational arrangements and structures.

Staffing and directing
SBTE can empower teachers to ensure staffing meets the educational needs of institutional programme plans and to maximize human resources for student learning, curriculum development and instructional improvement. Also SBTE may be an important means of directing teachers’ teaching efforts and initiative to the professional development of staff and the learning effectiveness of students.

Monitoring and evaluating
The SBTE programme can strengthen teachers’ beliefs and skills for using the findings of teaching evaluation and supervision to improve instructional process and staff development. The SBTE activities can help teachers to become familiar with recent developments of educational evaluation and their applications for enhancing educational effectiveness. Recently there has been a strong emphasis on using the technology of educational indicators to monitor and improve the teaching process and educational outcomes. SBTE can provide the necessary technical support to teachers.

Conclusion
The changing educational environment demands continuous, school-based teacher education for school development, teacher effectiveness and quality assurance. The classification of school multiple functions at the individual, institutional, community, societal and international levels provides a frame to design and manage the content of SBTE. SBTE should help teachers and the school to perform the structural/technical, human/social, political, cultural and educational functions at these five levels. Based on the specific characteristics and needs of individual schools at certain stages of school
From an organization-wide perspective, SBTE also includes multi-functions. These functions of SBTE can contribute to the strategic management process which, in turn, can facilitate school development and enhance long-term school effectiveness. A thorough understanding of the multi-functions of SBTE is necessary for effective design and implementation of the content and activities of teacher education in school. A solid awareness of the multi-functions of SBTE and an appropriate balance in designing SBTE programmes may help to maximize the benefit of SBTE activities for teacher effectiveness and school development.

The five multi-functions of schools at five levels, and the five multi-functions of SBTE within the school organization proposed in this paper provide a comprehensive framework for practitioners and researchers to understand the complex nature and potential contribution of SBTE. The framework may be used to guide the design and implementation of SBTE. Also, based on this framework, different research conceptions and questions can be generated for investigation. The following are some examples:

- to investigate the strengths and weaknesses of existing teacher education practices (including external types and school-based types) in terms of performing the five multi-functions of school at the five levels;
- to explore how SBTE can be designed, managed and implemented to support teachers and the school effectively to perform these school functions;
- to study the potential dilemmas when designing and implementing SBTE to achieve and maximize multi-functions within school organization;
- to investigate the relationship between school leadership and maximizing the multi-functions of SBTE;
- to explore the development of SBTE's multi-functions within school organization and the evolution of school culture;
- to study the impacts of different SBTE programmes with different emphases on multi-functions on teacher performance and student outcomes, etc.

The findings of these studies may have further implications for the development of the theory and practice of SBTE. Although the framework is obviously in its preliminary developmental stage, we hope our initial ideas provide a starting point to stimulate the development of research on SBTE from the perspective of multi-functions and facilitate its effective implementation in both local and international contexts.

References


