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Leading School Turnaround and Improvement in Malaysia and Indonesia

Alma Harris, Michelle Jones

University of Bath, UK

Donnie Adams, Bambang Sumintono

University of Malaya, Malaysia

Nashwa Ismail

University of Bath, UK



The
HEAD
Foundation

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Introduction

Improving the fortunes of low-performing schools, often in the most challenging circumstances, remains a persistent and pervasive challenge in many education systems (Meyers & Darwin, 2017). This working paper outlines the findings from a small, qualitative comparative research project funded by the HEAD Foundation. The working paper commences with some explanation and contextualization of the idea of ‘turnaround schools’ from the literature. It presents the research methodology and subsequently outlines the main findings from the research project.

While ‘no single definition of school turnaround exists’ (Hochbein & Mahone, 2017:15) it is generally accepted that the term refers to schools that have significantly improved their performance from a low threshold. Looking at the available research literature on this subject, it is evident that terms such as, ‘takeover’, ‘turnover’, ‘restructuring’, ‘reconstitution’, and ‘redesign’, are used interchangeably to define how low-performing schools are improved and transformed.

Scanning the international research literature concerning ‘turnaround schools’ highlights that most of empirical evidence tends to reflect Western perspectives. There is a substantial corpus of research that has focused on improving low-performing schools in the United States (Murphy, 2008, 2008a, Meyers & Murphy, 2008; Murphy, 2009; Meyers & Darwin, 2017; Stringfield, Schaffer, & Reynolds, 2017). These findings reinforce the importance of school leadership in creating the conditions for lasting improvement and change. There is also a growing body of

¹ A version of this working paper is currently under consideration for publication in Myers, C. et al (eds) (2018) *International Perspectives on Leading Low-Performing Schools* Infoagepub.com USA