

# Empowerment Entrepreneurship by Small Town School Principal as Catalysts for School Performance: This is How We Do it

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## Abstract

Entrepreneurship is increasingly becoming an integral part of school activities, contributing to the financial stability of educational institutions. It is an undeniable fact that schools need to incorporate entrepreneurship elements into their agendas to achieve stability and sustain their finances. As a result, school functions and objectives can be easily fulfilled through entrepreneurship activities. In Malaysia, schools are not exempt from this growing trend, recognizing the importance of financial resources in maximizing educational objectives. With the increasing number of students, schools must devise solutions to ensure children receive better and quality education. However, there is insufficient discussion regarding the implementation of entrepreneurship in schools located in small towns. Despite the lack of evidence supporting entrepreneurship in small town schools, this study aims to identify in-depth the mechanisms employed by school principal with entrepreneurial leadership in empowering entrepreneurship to enhance school performance and upgrade school facilities. To ensure the data collected from this study is robust within the educational administration discipline, the selected schools for this investigation exhibited a noteworthy performance spike in one of the Sarawak districts, despite being situated in small-town areas. The research involved interviews, observations of entrepreneurial activities, and document analysis to ensure comprehensive data collection. Surprisingly, this study contributes to the field of educational administration by understanding the role and active involvement of Teachers and Parents Association (PTA), with the school principal acting as the mediator to empower entrepreneurship in schools located in small towns in Malaysia. From this study, a Model of Empowerment Entrepreneurship by Small Town School Principals as Catalysts for School Performance were developed.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial Leadership, Principal, School Performance

## Introduction

The pivotal role of a school principal extends beyond the realm of a competitive leader within the school environment. Moreover, this leadership position assumes a significant responsibility in bolstering school effectiveness, student progress, and entrepreneurship efforts (Byrne, 2008; Crowder, 2013; Zaidatol et al., 2014). Additionally, school principals are

integral to the development of school practices (Feit, 2016) and hold the pivotal role in making critical decisions for school enhancement and improvement (Döş & Savaş, 2015). Contemporary literature points out the importance of school principals expanding their fundraising skills to ensure the stability of school operations (Mestry, 2016). Indeed, entrepreneurship mechanisms such as fundraising, as highlighted by Yemini and Sagie (2015), play a pivotal role in enhancing the holistic outcomes of a school. In this context, it becomes evident that the role of a school principal transcends mere management responsibilities (Crowder, 2013), especially in light of the ever-evolving global and educational landscape influenced by diverse cultural changes and geographical constraints (Falch et al., 2013), thereby underscoring the significance of school entrepreneurship. Despite of the emergence of entrepreneurial leadership in school administration, schools in small town also experiencing massive constraints in resources (Kormos, 2018; Rhodes & Warkentien, 2017).

The limitations in school resources have a direct impact on program implementation and school operations (Agyemang, 2010; Yemini et al., 2015; Salahuddin, 2016; Xaba & Malindi, 2010) whereas in the future leads to school performance decline. Recognizing that the students' performance and their future hinge on the school principal's actions, the principal believes that increasing school attendance relies on ensuring up-to-date and sustained school facilities. In this context, the principal's ability to communicate and collaborate with the school community becomes instrumental in raising awareness about the school's facilities and its impact on student performance (Syed, 2018). Furthermore, given the predominantly low socioeconomic status of the parents, the school must take additional measures to support students in maintaining their educational performance and attendance (Núñez et al., 2023; Syed, 2018; Yang et al., 2023). This study aims to explore the mechanism implemented by secondary school principal's capacity to perform entrepreneurship for facility improvements despite geographical constraints as the school located in a small town area. Therefore, the objective of this case study is to investigate the mechanism employed by school principals in small town areas in entrepreneurship as a mechanism enhancing the school facilities and performance.

### **Literature Review**

The allocation and distribution of funds in public schools are similar across countries. Existing reports and studies have consistently identified the government and state contributions as the primary sources of school budgetary (EdSource, 2017; Knight, 1993, Brunner et al., 2023). However, relying solely on government allocations for school funding is insufficient to cater to the diverse needs of schools, especially when it comes to extra activities and overall development (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010; Xaba & Malindi, 2010; Yemini & Sagie, 2015). The inherent diversity in school operational demands has rendered the basic government budgetary allocations ineffective for covering all necessary expenses (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010; Ferrandino, 2001; Yemini et al., 2015; Xaba & Malindi, 2010). To address these financial constraints, schools are advised to explore alternative mechanisms to increase school financial (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010; Xaba & Malindi, 2010; Yemini & Sagie, 2015). Moreover, in this digital transformation era, the necessity of the usage of technology increased rapidly and triggered the need for additional allocation.

From the past study, we learned that entrepreneurship efforts in public schools play a crucial role in providing students with additional opportunities and improving their chances of success within the education system (Winton, 2016). These entrepreneurship activities are

purposefully conducted for the benefit of students and the overall enhancement of the school, ultimately contributing to their brighter future (Thomas, 2000). Furthermore, it is suggested that public schools can establish partnerships for entrepreneurship activities with private schools, allowing public schools to provide services to external organizations and thereby increase their financial resources. This collaborative approach is seen as a promising strategy to bolster school finances.

### **School Budgetary Allocation**

Malaysia's public secondary schools are characterized by a rich tapestry of students from diverse cultural backgrounds. They consciously embrace this multiculturalism, with a primary focus on fostering national stability and upholding the value of diversity within the nation, as recognized by the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2013). This approach stems from a profound awareness of the far-reaching consequences of national educational policies. In alignment with this perspective, various policies must be implemented to manage these schools. The funding for Malaysia's secondary schools is primarily provided by the Ministry of Education (MOE) (Faizal et al., 2012). Consequently, in their role as the school leader, the school principal bears the responsibility of efficiently managing the school's finances (Shahril @ Charil bin Hj Marzuki, 2005) to prevent any financial shortfalls within the school's accounts. The allocation of funds is directly disbursed from the central government and is contingent upon factors such as the school's status, performance, and student population (Shahril @ Charil bin Hj Marzuki, 2005). These allocations are channeled through the District Education Office (PPD) or, in some cases, directly to the school, depending on the school's specific status and category (*Surat Pekeliling Kewangan Bilangan 8 Tahun, 2012, 2012*).

In the context of Malaysia's secondary schools, the school principal serves as the overall manager of the financial process. This role aligns with their obligations as the school's head (Marzuki, 2005). Although the funding originates from the central government, it is imperative for the school principal to ensure that these allocated funds are used judiciously. This is because the funds earmarked for schools are collected through national taxation and other sources (Knight, 1993). Hence, the responsible utilization of these funds by school principals is of paramount importance.

Fund raising in public school is new in Malaysia education system for unexperienced school principals. This is because, school principals need to have skills and ability as an entrepreneurial leader (Mestry, 2016; Yemini et al., 2015). Moreover, being an entrepreneurial leader demands the principal to embrace the necessity of taking risks and have a strong vision (Shahril @ Charil bin Hj Marzuki, 2005). A previous study by Maimunah et al (2013) reported school experienced additional benefits in empowering school physical infrastructure and facilities from the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program with the private sectors. Through this study, we understand that the school's adequate infrastructure and facilities are the key to school performance. In Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (MEB 2013-2025), MOE encouraged school leaders to partner with parents, community and private sector at a scale by ensuring high performance leaders were positioned in each school. It shows the vitality of the MOE encouraged the school principals to work towards transformation and enhancing the education quality in Malaysia (MOE, 2013).

For that reason, within the context of Malaysian secondary schools, it is imperative to initiate fundraising efforts. School principals are encouraged to proactively engage with private sector entities. To achieve this, effective school marketing plays a pivotal role in attracting potential private sector partners, as emphasized by (Li & Hung, 2009). Moreover, school

principals must actively explore opportunities and display innovation in establishing partnerships with private sectors, as advocated by (Yemini and Sagie, 2015). In reciprocation, such partnerships can substantially enhance the school's physical infrastructure and facilities, as highlighted by (Maimunah et al., 2013).

In line with the vision of the Ministry of Education (MOE), school principals, who serve as the heads of their schools, are required to actualize this vision in their school's daily operations. School principals draw upon the same qualities as other organizational leaders. Consequently, followers expect to witness these similar qualities demonstrated by the school principal. However, the role of a school principal necessitates them to harmonize the interpretation of policies with their own goals, values, and strategies, as highlighted by Knight (1993) and Louis & Robinson (2012). Becoming a school principal in the current environment is particularly challenging, given that schools must adapt to external changes while maintaining effective operations, as discussed by (Feit, 2016; Lunenburg, 2010). A pertinent example of this is the digital learning implementation, which significantly altered the educational landscape. In line with the digital learning transition, schools began to embrace digitalization in their teaching and learning methods, shifting to online instruction.

### **Entrepreneurship**

In business discipline, financial sufficient help to ensure the survival of the organization and align with the demands of the community (Schumpeter, 1976). Despite being a non-profit organization, a school is considered as an organizational entity (Scott, 2008), distinguished from general organizations by differences in goals and vision (Brinckerhoff, 2009; Ruvio et al., 2010). Unlike general organizations that generate financial through business activities, schools receive allocations from the central government. However, the government's allocated funds must be utilized for essential school needs, such as water bills, electricity, management costs, and student programs. Therefore, effective management of school financial according to specific school requirements is crucial (Knight, 1993). Yet, depending solely on government allocations is insufficient for school operations, especially for additional activities aimed at school development (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010; Miri Yemini et al., 2015; Xaba & Malindi, 2010). Recognizing this, schools are advised to explore mechanisms for entrepreneurship to address resource constraints in school management (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010; Miri Yemini et al., 2015; Xaba & Malindi, 2010). To achieve this, schools can engage in entrepreneurship activities such as partnerships, personal grants, and foundations (Armistead et al., 2007; Bradshaw, 2000; Feuerstein, 2001; Knight, 1993; Lewis, 2010; Mestry, 2016; Nesbit, 1985; Peterson, 2014; Record, 2012; Thayer & Shortt, 1994; Winton, 2016)

Entrepreneurship is an essential undertaking aimed at mitigating the reduction in school budgets (Culbertson, 2008; Knight, 1993; Thayer & Shortt, 1994; Winton, 2016) and enhancing overall school performance (Thayer & Shortt, 1994), addressing the demands and policy changes in education (Culbertson, 2008; Winton, 2016). According to Winton (2016), contributing funds in public schools plays a pivotal role in providing students with additional opportunities and increasing their chances of success in the education system. Essentially, the entrepreneurship activities conducted by schools are focused on benefiting both students and the overall improvement of the school, ultimately contributing to a brighter future for the students (Thomas, 2000). Expanding on this idea, it has been suggested that public schools explore partnerships with private schools in entrepreneurship activities. This collaboration allows public schools to extend their services to external organizations, thereby augmenting their financial resources. Furthermore, it is recommended that public schools proactively

design themselves to be more market-friendly, facilitating a diverse range of fundraising activities. This strategic approach is seen as a means to bolster school funds and ensure sustained support for various initiatives. However, very few scholars have identified the challenge of implementing entrepreneurship in the school environment. Hence, it is almost impossible to implement entrepreneurship in schools located in small towns with limited resources. For that purpose, the necessity, skills, and implementation of entrepreneurial leadership by the school principal become a catalyst to help the school transform.

### **School Leader Responsibilities**

Being a school principal in the current landscape is demanding due to the necessity of adapting to external changes while maintaining school operations (Feit, 2016; Lunenburg, 2010). Previous research has suggested various leadership styles and techniques to enhance school effectiveness, student development, and overall performance (Ferrandino, 2001; Gonzales & Bogotch, 1999). School principals are expected to engage in collaborative decision-making with school stakeholders and assume different roles in various initiatives. As leaders, school principals hold the power to inspire positivity, provide guidance, and support their staff (Dolph, 2016; Odhiambo & Hii, 2012). These expected competencies necessitate additional effort and training to equip school principals with excellent knowledge, skills, and experience (Ng & Szeto, 2016). Furthermore, in line with the MOE's vision of empowering school leaders in effective school management (Bush et al., 2018; MOE, 2013), school principals bear the responsibility of ensuring that schools continue to impart knowledge to their students amid the location of the schools and challenge experienced by the school principals.

### **Thornberry (2006) Entrepreneurial Leadership Theory Implementation**

The aim of this study is to examine how school principal in small town area empower entrepreneurship for school transformation. To ensure that the research findings align with the study objectives, the appropriateness of leadership theories that underpin the principals' leadership styles is explored. In this context, entrepreneurial leadership is recognized as the leadership approach adopted by the school principal to facilitate the school's transformation. The amalgamation of transactional leadership, transformational leadership, and charismatic leadership has led to the development of the entrepreneurial leadership model by Thornberry (2006). Thornberry extensively deliberates and categorizes entrepreneurial leadership at both the personal and organizational levels. Within this model's framework, Thornberry delineates four distinct environmental categories: activist, catalyst, internal, and external environments. The entrepreneurial leadership model is further subdivided into four dimensions: miners, explorers, accelerators, and integrators, encompassing both personal and organizational phases. Furthermore, the discussion of Thornberry's Entrepreneurial Leadership Model (2006) primarily centers on the internal and external environments and is illustrated in Diagram 1.

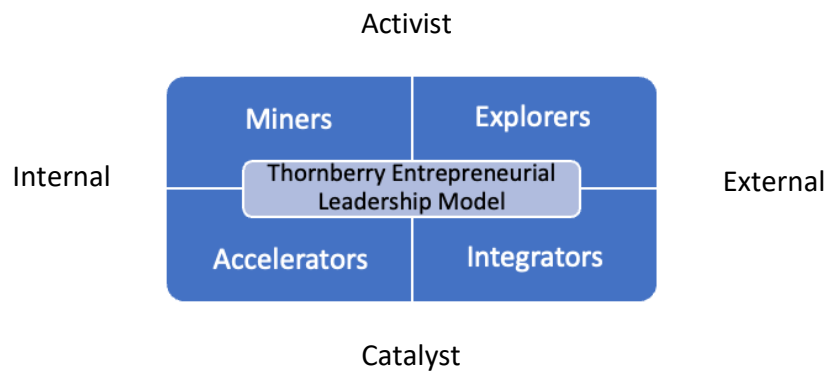


Diagram 1: Thornberry's Entrepreneurial Leadership Model (2006)

The Miners dimension pertains to the approaches that leaders employ to fulfill their responsibilities. Additionally, Miner behavior centers on enhancing followers' abilities, fostering creativity, and actively seeking opportunities for organizational development. This transformational process initiates from within the organization itself. In the realm of education, the refinement of practices and beliefs precedes further developmental steps.

Within Thornberry's Entrepreneurial Leadership Model (2006), the Explorer dimension is dedicated to capitalizing on opportunities and effectively managing the organization. The pursuit and utilization of opportunities stand as paramount concerns for achieving organizational growth and sustainability. Leaders possessing explorer qualities are adept at collaborating closely with external stakeholders. Furthermore, their ability to steer the organization towards the changes demanded by current societal dynamics is unquestionable within the school environment.

Thornberry's exploration also delves into the significance of the accelerator dimension within the entrepreneurial leadership model. In this context, it is paramount for school leaders to ignite creativity and innovative thinking among their followers. The leader's role involves fostering an entrepreneurial culture that motivates followers to embrace creativity and innovation. In the realm of education, the application of the accelerator dimension necessitates school principals to not only welcome novel ideas but also provide unwavering support to encourage their followers to be more creative and innovative.

Conversely, the integrator's role within the Entrepreneurial Leadership model revolves around guiding followers to achieve the school's vision. Leaders facilitate alignment between followers' performance and the organization's vision by disseminating external insights such as the latest education trends, policies, and practices. Ultimately, the followers' understanding of and belief in the organization's vision manifests vividly in their actions and performance. In a school context, the school principal continuously engages the staff with the school's vision through actions and decisions that are aligned with approved authority.

### Methodology

A single in-depth case study design was utilized to address the research question and align with the paper's intended purpose. This study aimed to investigate how school principal in small town areas empower entrepreneurship for school transformation. Therefore, the school principals served as the focal case for examination since they initiated the process of entrepreneurship empowerment while holding the role of a school principal.

The exploration of the school principal's entrepreneurship empowerment concerning school facilities to increase performance required the researcher to engage with the school

principals to gain insight into their perceptions and understanding of various questions related to the purpose of school facilities and school finances. This exploratory process encompassed interview sessions, observations, and document analyses, all conducted within the school's confines as the defined system.

Merriam & Tisdell (2016) emphasized that a case study involves a comprehensive description and analysis of a specific, bounded system. Consequently, the case study approach demands the researcher to actively explore the phenomena as the primary instrument of the study. The philosophical framework underpinning this study is rooted in the epistemological constructivism. This choice of epistemological assumption is informed by the aim to establish close proximity between the researcher and the study participants, as advocated by (Creswell, 2013). Consequently, the evidence gathered in this study aims to authentically reflect the viewpoints of the participants. Creswell (2013) underscores the key characteristics of this epistemological assumption, involving the acquisition of subjective evidence directly from the participants and the researcher's concerted effort to bridge the gap between themselves and the subjects under study. Consequently, this single in-depth case study necessitated an extended data collection period, allowing us ample time to thoroughly engage with the participants, as well as to conduct observations and analyze the gathered documents.

### **Sampling**

This study employed the purposive sampling, a commonly used method in qualitative research, as highlighted by (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In the context of a single case study, where the case represents a bounded system within a single unit, a two-tier sampling approach was employed to meet the research criteria in selecting school principal and participants. The utilization of purposive sampling aligns with the researcher's objective of conducting an in-depth exploration, as emphasized by (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The selection of school principals was determined based on the specific criteria relevant to the study's primary focus, which centers on understanding the empowerment entrepreneurship for school transformation purposely in upgrading the school facilities and increasing school performance. For this study, selecting suitable school is crucial for us due to the purpose of the study. We carefully observed, make a call to the District Education Office (PPD) and state Education Office (JPN) to seek an appropriate school match with our criteria. At the end of our searching process, a secondary school matching and fulfilling our criteria were emerged because of their spike performance.

### **Participants**

The selected case of this study is located in the small town area in Sibuluan, Sarawak. The selection of participants in this research was according to the potential of each participant's ability, which contributing to researcher's understanding of the case under investigation. According to Merriam (1998), the researcher need to consider the place, time, individual and what to observe in selecting appropriate sample of the study. All the participants selected as suggested by the school principal. This research utilizing the purposive sampling, which all of the participants are necessary and compulsory to be involved in the entrepreneurship activities or have an experienced involving in the school entrepreneurship activities. This research used the two-tier sampling approach. Two-tier sampling consist of selecting the case to be study and selecting sample within the case (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This study, in selecting the case, the identification based on the school entrepreneurship activities and

principal identification that fulfilling characteristic set by the researcher and the location schools represent. The school principal involved in this research is still in service.

The participants in this research consisted of school principals, school teachers, and school stakeholders. In details, the school principal selection is based on the cases selected in this study. The school teachers and the stakeholders was chosen through the purposive sampling approaches and suggested by the school principal. Ensuring all the participants are in line with the essence of this study, the research did request to interview the school teachers involved in the entrepreneurship activities and the school Parents Teachers Association (PTA) members. 9 participants were selected through purposive sampling-snowballing. Each of the participants were actively involved together with the school principal in entrepreneurship activities. The relationship between each entity in the school were clearly shown from the diagram connectors with all of the entities working together with the school principal empowering the school entrepreneurial transformation. For ethical considerations, the participants anonymous and pseudonyms were applied. The details of each participants were as follow:

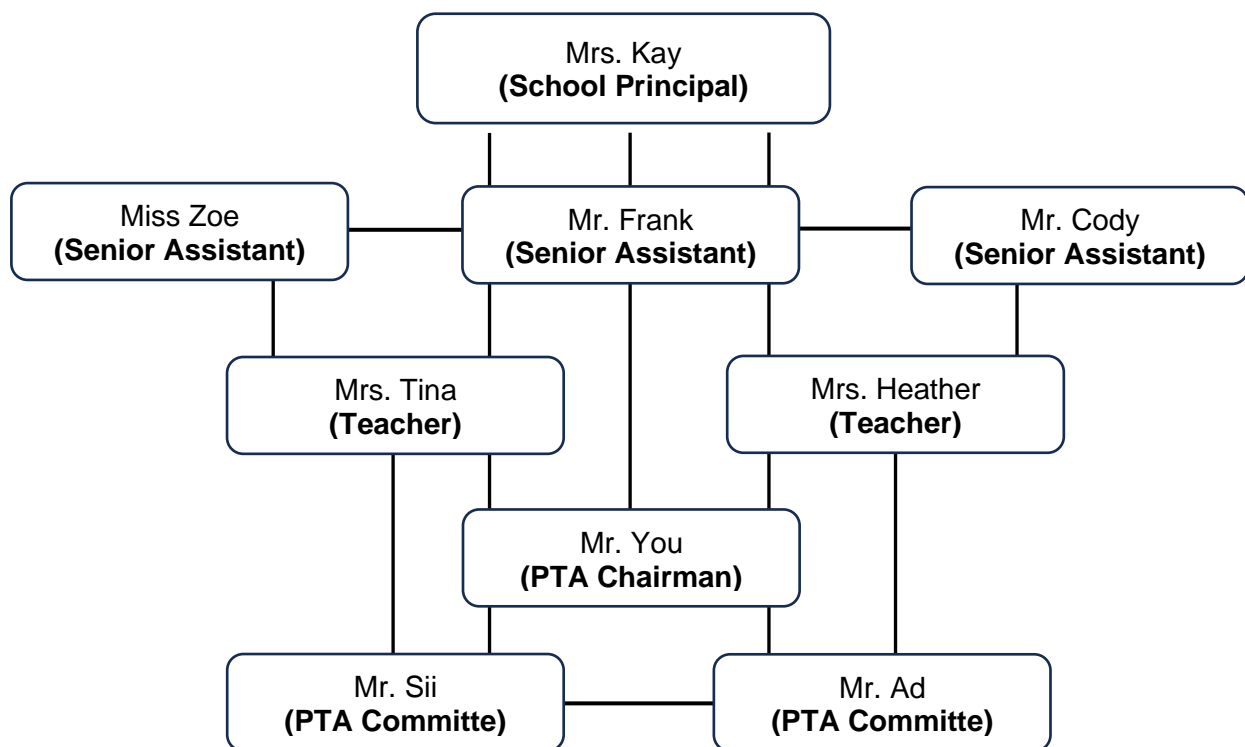


Figure 2: Participants hierarchy



Table 1

*Participants Detail*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position in School</b>
Mrs. Kay	Principal
Miss Zoe	Senior Assistant
Mr. Frank	Senior Assistant
Mr. Cody	Senior Assistant
Mrs. Tina	Teacher
Mrs. Heather	Teacher
Mr. You	PTA Chairman
Mr. Sii	PTA Exco
Mr. Ad	PTA Exco

This secondary school is located in a small town in Sarawak, Malaysia. It boasts a long-standing history as one of the oldest secondary schools in the region. It is a daily school that caters to a student body of 847 individuals. The majority of its students come from families with limited financial income. In the mind of school principal, the empowerment of entrepreneurial are necessary although there were constraints on the beginning of this entrepreneurship action. The main concerned as shared by the school principals is ensuring all the students had a chance for a better and quality education.

**Data Collection**

Data collection in a case study encompasses a diverse range of procedures aimed at crafting a comprehensive understanding of the case at hand, as outlined by (Creswell, 2013). In this particular study, the researcher utilized interviews, observations, and document analysis as the primary means of gathering data. Merriam (2002) concur that these methods—interviews, observations, and document analysis—are well-suited for data collection. Given that the researcher employed these three data collection approaches, it is crucial to underscore the significance of maintaining the study's core focus during this phase. This ensures that participants' discussions during the interview sessions remain aligned with the study's primary objectives and prevent the introduction of irrelevant issues.

Interviews constitute the primary method of data collection in this research. Prior to conducting these interviews, the researcher meticulously identified potential teachers and school stakeholders to ensure that the selected participants would be capable of providing the necessary information for the study. The school principal served as the gatekeeper for access to the school, and during a meeting with the principal, the researcher presented an approval letter obtained from the Educational Planning and Policy Research Division (EPRD). Through discussions with the school principal, a list of recommended individuals was provided for the researcher to interview as part of the research process.

The process of observation in this research is guided by the research purpose and questions, following Creswell's (2013) approach, which involves observing elements like the physical setting, participants, activities, interactions, conversations, and the researcher's own behavior (p.166). In this study, the observation process is an integral part of the data collection, enhancing the subsequent interview analysis phase. The significance of

observation in this research lies in its ability to offer the researcher the opportunity to directly witness and hear the activities related to school fundraising and the school principal's interactions with others. This approach complements the interview data by providing an additional perspective beyond participants' viewpoints. Observation is also relevant to the data triangulation process during the interview phase in this study. Hence, it helps concretize the findings of this study. Consequently, the observation process in this study involves multiple participants, necessitating the researcher's understanding of their behavior, actions, and non-verbal communication.

Before researcher started the observation, the researcher collaborated with the participants to identify and select specific events and activities. The participants shared details about several activities planned by the school, which the researcher then documented. While the school was actively organizing entrepreneurship activities, the researcher discreetly selected particular activities for observation without direct involvement with the school administration. This approach provided the researcher with the opportunity to gain firsthand insights into the organization and execution of entrepreneurship efforts. Importantly, this practice facilitated data triangulation, helping to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information gathered while also preventing participants from modifying their behavior during the observation process.

Documents, in reality, serve as readily available sources of data and are easily accessible for the data collection process, as noted by (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In the school context, these documents are primarily established for auditing purposes and future reference rather than for the researcher's specific needs. Therefore, we reviewed certain documents following the conclusion of the interview and observation processes as part of data triangulation. Given that this research pertains to school budgeting and financial, it was expected that that we would examine financial documentation. However, school principal hesitated to allow us access to these documents due to concerns related to confidentiality and privacy. In consideration of their concerns, we requested a brief period to review the document without engaging in any photography. The school principal granted us permission to examine the documents solely to reinforce our assumptions with the principal supervision and explanation.

We also studied the minutes of meetings for the document analysis during the data collection phase for triangulation purposes. While some challenges arose due to the confidential nature of the documents, the minutes of meetings revealed that the empowerment through entrepreneurship activities by school were effectively utilized for enhancing school infrastructure and supporting student development in academic and extracurricular activities. The allocation details were presented in the minutes of meetings, along with the validation of the school principal and the PTA Chairman.

Pictures depicting entrepreneurship activities such as Culture Night activities where another set of documents that school administrators willingly shared during the document analysis phases. The school adopted a different approach by consistently updating the school's social media pages to ensure that all of the programs organized by the school were accessible to outsiders. Numerous photos showcased the success of both schools in organizing the entrepreneurship events. Consequently, entrepreneurship activities have become a crucial

element in the planning of school administrators, contributing to the improvement of school infrastructure and student development. This underscores the importance of fund raising as one of the mechanisms schools use to address allocation challenges, as Knight (1993) noted.

### **Data Analysis**

In a qualitative study, data analysis entails the process of deriving meaning from the gathered information. This process involves the consolidation, reduction, and interpretation of what participants have conveyed and what the researcher has observed and read, as outlined by (Merriam, 1998). In the context of this research, the construction of categories and the identification of themes were employed to organize and classify data into specific sections, allowing for a deeper understanding of its significance. It is essential to note that data analysis occurred concurrently with data collection. Once all the data had been collected, the analysis of both cases commenced, utilizing the software tool Atlas Ti for this purpose.

The data analysis process for the interviews began with the transcription of audio recordings of participant interviews, preserving their exact verbiage, using Microsoft Word. Subsequently, the interviews were imported into the Atlas Ti software for the purpose of analysis and management. The process followed with reading procedure to recall and refresh the memory of the interview session. While reading the interviews, we made notes, comments, and recorded their impressions in the margins, periodically referring back to their observations and related documents. Following this reading process, Merriam (1998) suggests that the researcher should revisit the marginal notes and comments and attempt to group together those that appear to be related (Merriam, 1998, p.181). This same process was repeated for another set of data. Subsequently, the coding of each participant's interview was undertaken to address the research purpose. From our analysis, 18 codes were emerged and each code was given a free name, in vivo codes were assigned before similar codes emerged, and categories were formed. As suggested by Merriam (1998), these categories should reflect the study's purpose, align with the research questions, be exhaustive, sensitizing, and conceptually congruent. Eventually, the categorized data led the researcher to the network section in Atlas Ti, where certain categories re-emerged, and research findings were distilled into a theme and transferred into a model.

To ensure internal validity, we employed triangulation, a method involving the use of multiple investigators, data sources, or data collection approaches to validate emerging findings. In this study, three specific strategies were utilized, namely interviews, observations, and document analysis, with the explicit aim of bolstering the internal validity of the research. The second strategy pertains to reflexivity, which involves the researcher's conscious separation of their own experiences, preconceptions, and assumptions throughout the data collection and analysis process. The third strategy is known as "member checks" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p.229), wherein we take the data and tentative interpretations back to the individuals from whom they were originally derived. This process involves seeking feedback to determine if the interpretations are plausible. After the transcription process, we reconvened with all the participants to obtain their validation of the transcribed interviews. A validation form was provided along with the hard copies of the interview transcriptions for the participants to review before the data were analyzed.

## **Results**

We collected results through the analysis of a case using Atlas Ti. The study identified themes and sub-themes related to the strategies employed by the school leader in entrepreneurship as an education transformation for education transformation. The findings of this research hold significance as they highlight the leadership skills crucial for enhancing school facilities through effective fund generation. Notably, the school under investigation is situated in a small town area. The school principal believes that entrepreneurship which leads to updating the facilities contributes to the student's performance in their study. Moreover, it helps the school in upgrading its school performance per year. To extract relevant information, the researcher intentionally posed questions to the participants, shaping the inquiry for this study. The questions are

1. What factors prompt you to initiate entrepreneurship efforts?
2. In situations where the school experiences sources and financial limitations, are there particular approaches or signs that you typically employ? How do you respond to such challenges, and could you provide a detailed explanation of the process?
3. Achieving successful entrepreneurship in a school requires collaborative efforts from various parties within the institution. How do you bring them together to work in harmony with your entrepreneurship initiatives?
4. In motivating your teachers and other stakeholders, such as the Teachers Parent Association, to ensure their comprehension of the objectives you aim to implement for the school, how do you go about encouraging and communicating with them?

Navigating the role of a school principal in a rural setting poses perpetual challenges for any leader. In this study, the school principal acknowledged the inherent risks and embraced the challenge by incorporating entrepreneurship as a transformative mechanism for the school under the principal responsibility. The data analysis unveiled 3 noteworthy categories as findings of this study.

### **i. Fostering Connectivity with External Entities**

This category surfaced from the study's discoveries. In the context of the school, integrating with the external environment involves the school's actions and responses to external entities.

This were repeated by Mr. You, the Chairman of PTA as he said

“The school principal has successfully established a network with various organizations. Given that the school is an integral part of the community, community involvement is deemed crucial. Currently, the principal is actively working to enhance the school's appeal to attract more opportunities from external sources. Recognizing that an attractive school is more likely to receive investments, contributions, and partnerships from external organizations, the principal has implemented the practice of opening the school as a mechanism to secure funding.”

In this case, school principal are the key person who holds the autonomy in school administration. Therefore, school principal is the individual responsible in fostering connectivity with the external parties. Mr. You confirmed this by saying

“This is one of the community's responsibility; they play a crucial role in the success of the school. The school's mission is to support the education of their own children, but it should not impose a burden on them. Nonetheless, maintaining connectivity with the external entities necessitates the school principal carefully considering specific government terms and regulations, given the school's status as a government institution with government employees.”

Mr. Frank confirmed the school principal's meticulous approach in cultivating connections with external entities, emphasizing the significance of this effort in shaping the school's reputation and image

“For example, if a contractor expresses a desire to contribute, we firmly disallow such occurrences to prevent potential corruption or any uncomfortable situations in the future. This goes against our principles, and it's not a practice we endorse in our school. While acknowledging that there are individuals willing to contribute to our school, we must carefully weigh various factors to steer clear of unrealistic funding from external sources as well”

Moreover, fostering a good relationship with external entities required the school principal to have a strong connections with the PTA chairman and committee members as confirmed by Mr Frank

“In our current practices, initially, the school principal has fostered a positive rapport with both the PTA members and external entities, including the community. Our principal is particular on this aspect. You can see that he builds a good relationship with both the PTA and the community, ensuring that the well-being of both inside and outside stakeholders is prioritized”

In Malaysia, each public school is equipped with its own Parents-Teachers Association (PTA), comprising committee members who are school teachers and parents of students. In this study, the geographical location of the schools posed no constraint, as the school principals seamlessly integrated the PTA's role with the school vision they articulated. Despite the parents' backgrounds being from low-income families, the school principals' capability to involve them in entrepreneurship reflects an exemplary attitude. This sets a potential standard for future school leaders with entrepreneurial abilities.

However, establishing a robust connection with the school PTA, ensuring their support for entrepreneurship requires the development of a strong relationship between the school principal and the PTA Chairman. This positive rapport, characterized by understanding and commitment, is crucial for the success of entrepreneurship initiatives. It not only enhances the chemistry between the school principal and the PTA Chairman but also secures PTA support for external connections. These connections, in turn, contribute to successful entrepreneurship activities and foster a positive relationship between the school and external entities, such as the community and other organizations.

## **ii. Interpersonal Synergy: The Symbiotic Relationship Between the School Principal and the Chairman of the School's Parents-Teachers Association (PTA)**

The research findings indicate that a positive relationship between the school principal and the School Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) Chairman significantly contributes to the

overall success of school entrepreneurship. During the interview sessions, participants consistently emphasized the PTA Chairman's commitment to the school. Despite the school being led by a knowledgeable principal, participants acknowledged the pivotal role of the PTA Chairman in the success of fundraising activities. Observations further revealed that the school principal of the school always maintained a harmonious relationship and mutual respect with the PTA Chairman and committee members. With a shared vision and understanding between these key figures, the implementation of entrepreneurial leadership through entrepreneurship empowerment in the school emerged as a critical factor in achieving success. This sentiment was echoed by Mr. Frank who remarked:

Our principal maintains a close and positive relationship with our PTA Chairman. This is the same with the previous PTA Chairman as well, who consistently fostered positive relationships with everyone.

Mr. You, the school PTA Chairman, concurred with the following sentiment

"There's no issue with abstaining from this entrepreneurship effort if we choose not to pursue it. However, the question remains: where will we obtain the necessary funds? Relying solely on the federal government is not a sufficient solution."

Hence, he also added

"We leverage the strengths of both perspectives to formulate a solution. If our aim is merely to express our opinions, that's inconsequential. This aligns with my communication with the previous principal, where a lack of understanding was evident. I must speak the truth – when I assumed the role of YDP, I committed to honesty. Even if my stance is at odds, I won't waver. Unfortunately, past leadership resisted this approach, failing to accept my role as a representative of external parents. It's essential to convey the sentiments of parents to foster a harmonious relationship with the school management. Mrs. Kay comprehends this dynamic, allowing us to collaborate effectively in any scenario. Our ability to find common ground despite differences enables us to work together seamlessly."

This is also supported by Mrs. Tina, as she said

"The rapport between the YDP PIBG and the school principal is exceptionally strong. This positive relationship serves as a key motivator for the YDP's consistent presence at the school. Every matter is thoroughly discussed between the YDP and the principal. When the school faces financial constraints, the YDP demonstrates a commendable willingness to contribute by offering sponsorship."

### **iii. Secure PTA Support for External Engagement**

The PTA comprises parents and school teachers collaborating closely. Notably, actively participating parents within the school PTA also hold external jobs. The engagement of the school PTA with the school plays a crucial role in facilitating fundraising activities involving external parties. Given that these schools operate under government authorities and seek to establish connections with external entities, the support of the school PTA becomes indispensable. For both schools, the PTA serves as a vital foundation for establishing connections with external stakeholders. Participants affirm that the PTA is a strength for the schools, contributing to the success of the school principal's implementation of

entrepreneurial leadership, particularly in fundraising endeavors. Furthermore, both schools, during observation sessions, organize significant events requiring collaborative efforts from both schools and their respective PTA.

In this school, the engagement of the PTA with the school reflects a similar significance to other schools in establishing connections with external entities. The participation of the school PTA is deemed essential in all school activities to maintain a robust connection between the school and the PTA. Mrs. Kay emphasizes the pivotal role of the PTA in entrepreneurship activities within the school

“I will reach out to the PTA. In the upcoming PTA meeting, we'll address the need for entrepreneurship. Subsequently, they will assist us in promoting and garnering support. This collaborative effort illustrates how we unite as an integral part of the school.”

As previously mentioned, the positive relationship between the school principal and the school PTA Chairman results in strong support from PTA members. In this school context, the school principal can count on the support of the school Chairman to facilitate external connections for entrepreneurship. Mrs. Kay talk about this collaborative dynamic:

“I will have a conversation with the PTA Chairman, Mr. You, as my first step. His unwavering support has been instrumental, as he has played a crucial role in assisting me with various tasks.”

Establishing a strong rapport with the PTA has led to substantial external contributions for the school. Given that many parents in the school hail from low-income families, direct financial contributions from them were deemed implausible. In response, the school principal has strategically cultivated a positive relationship with the PTA, particularly in coordinating entrepreneurship activities. Consequently, this initiative has not only overcome financial constraints but has also fostered the development of external contributions and connections, as affirmed by Mr. You

“At the fundraising event, YB also declared a substantial allocation for enhancing school infrastructure, specifically designated for a comprehensive overhaul of student chairs and desks. The contribution received was immediately approved.”

This school also received a numbers of sponsorship from the PTA Chairman for the school in several activities. As said by Miss Zoe:

“We do have sponsored from others. For example, our PTA, normally they sponsored personal. It is not from the PTA alone, we also get sponsored from our former students. He loved this school and willing to sponsored for the school development.”

## **Conclusion**

This study aims to explore the mechanism implemented by secondary school principal's capacity to perform entrepreneurship for school facilities upgrading and performance despite geographical constraints as the school located in a small town. Therefore, the objective of this

case study is to investigate the mechanism employed by school principals in small town areas in entrepreneurship as a mechanism enhancing the school facilities and performance. An in-depth case study were conducted and data were gathered from the interviews, observations and documents analysis. All the data gathered from the study were carefully analyzed to reincarnate the model of entrepreneurship empowerment by small town school principal to increased school performance as shown in Figure 1 below.

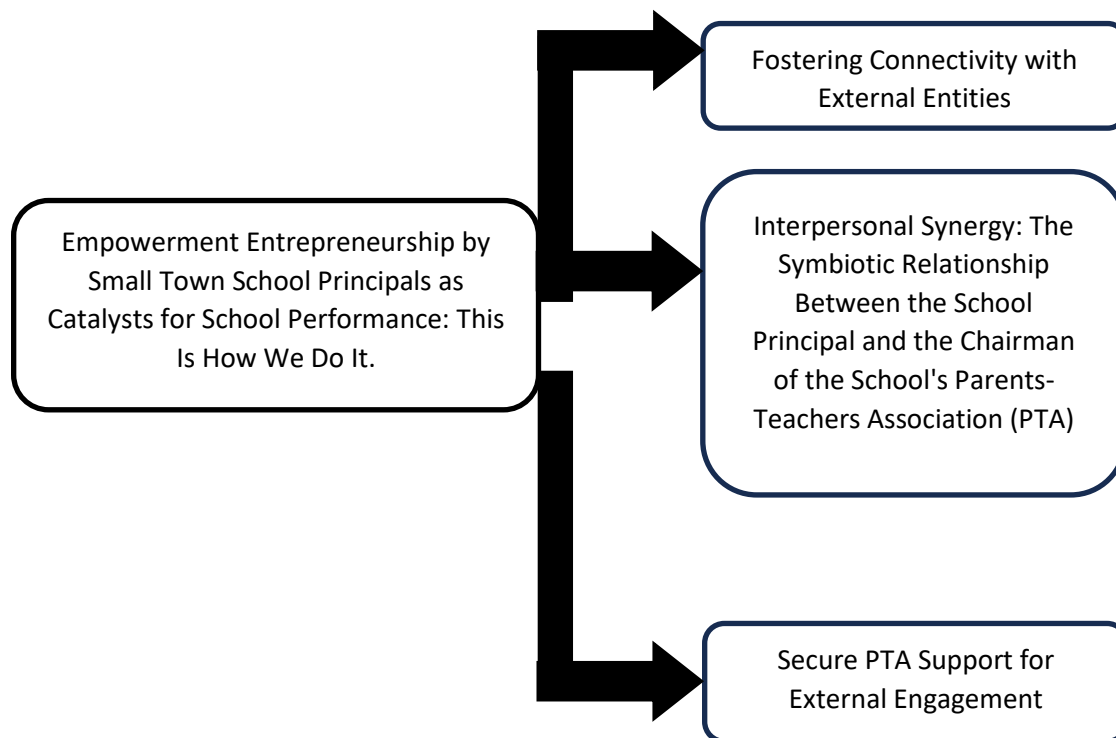


Figure 1: Model of Empowerment Entrepreneurship by Small Town School Principals as

**Catalysts for School Performance**

From our data analysis whereas the interviews, observations and document analysis, we found that above all of the categories emerged, each of the categories could be numbered based on their importance action in empowerment entrepreneurship in small town school school principal as below. Our calculation is based on the number of codes represent by each of the category:

Table 2

*Empowerment Entrepreneurship by Small Town School Principals as Catalysts for School Performance*

Empowerment Entrepreneurship by Small Town School Principals as Catalysts for School Performance		
No.	Category	Percentage
1.	Secure PTA Support for External Engagement	61 %
2.	Fostering Connectivity with External Entities	27 %
3.	Interpersonal Synergy: The Symbiotic Relationship Between the School Principal and the Chairman of the School's Parents-Teachers Association (PTA)	38%



From this data also, we assume that the entrepreneurship empowerment in school starts with ability of school principal to get support from the PTA. With a strong support gathered by the PTA, the good relationship with the PTA and connection development with the external entities will be easily developed.

### **Conclusion**

Various studies reveal that implementing entrepreneurial leadership in schools contributes to an increase in their performance (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010; Esfahani & Pour, 2013; Miri Yemini et al., 2015; Pihie et al., 2018; Xaba & Malindi, 2010). However, a critical issue arises as there is insufficient information and evidence regarding the implementation of entrepreneurship in schools located in small towns. Consequently, schools in small town areas face numerous challenges due to their specific location (Kormos, 2018). Nevertheless, the school principal's initiative in empowering entrepreneurship brings about comprehensive changes in school performance. Through data analysis, our findings demonstrate the school principal's ability to integrate the school with external entities, such as the Parents-Teachers Association (PTA), contributing to the effectiveness of entrepreneurship despite the school's location in a small town.

Moreover, in this in-depth study, we found the success of entrepreneurship empowerment exhibited by the school principal hinges on the collaboration between the principal and the School Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). This partnership, particularly start with the PTA Chairman through school principal approaches, represents a crucial step in achieving success in entrepreneurship for the school. This is aligned with the literature on the role of school principal in shaping the schools vision . Despite of just being a school principal, the school principal realize their accountability in school (Hagemann & Stroope, 2013; Mcdermott et al., 2011).

Based on our findings, we have confirmed that the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) serves a purpose in the school that goes beyond being just an association (Luo & Wei, 2023; Obafemi et al., 2023; Syeed, 2018). The PTA plays a crucial role in supporting and empowering the entrepreneurial initiatives initiated by the school principal (Body, 2017). Our findings align with Allen's (2014) study, where she discovered that PTAs play a significant role in supporting the school's funding sources. However, our study demonstrates the capability of the school leader, in this case, the head of a secondary school located in a small area, to catalyze entrepreneurship through their relationship with the PTA. Therefore, the success of entrepreneurship hinges on the entrepreneurial mindset possessed by the school principal. In this context, the PTA's role within the school and the entrepreneurial leadership of the school principal are essential components for empowering entrepreneurship (Nesbit, 1985). In line with our findings, in Malaysia, the PTA's role is making a resurgence, as outlined in the Malaysia National Blueprint 2013-2015 (MOE, 2013). The Ministry of Education anticipates that the PTA will play a pivotal role in school development in the future. The present study contributes valuable evidence regarding the involvement of the PTA in school development, particularly in conjunction with the entrepreneurial leadership of school principals in entrepreneurship activities. This is aligns with the Ministry of Education's proposal to strengthen the role of the PTA in school development. In this study, the entrepreneurial leadership of the school principal in entrepreneurship include developing a symbiotic relationship with the PTA chairman. This strong bond is crucial for aligning the visions of the school and the PTA with the school development goals. As mentioned by the PTA Chairman during the interview, the success of entrepreneurship in the school is significantly attributed

to the understanding between the school principal and the PTA. Consequently, the school actively involves PTA members in various events, as observed during the study. This practice has become one of the mechanisms employed by the school principal to secure PTA support for external engagements. Through this study, our study shows the involvement of external parties with the school is contingent upon the school's willingness to engage and communicate with the external environment for overall school development (Lunenburg, 2010) as done by the school principal in this study.

In conclusion, as a school leader, guiding students toward a successful future is extremely linked with the moral purpose of the school principal (Fullan, 2014). Leaders in the field of education should harbor positive intentions for both students and the school within their leadership role. Schools location should not become an excuses for school development. From our study, we do realize the gratitude and positivity of the school principal with the PTA's to help students experienced a better education. Hence, it is the responsibility of the school principal to address and overcome any unnecessary issues arising in school management. School performance becoming the purpose of entrepreneurship empowerment, and the findings of this study offer guidance to school principals on starting to empower entrepreneurship by involved the PTA's with school in their school management.

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