

# LEADERSHIP CAPACITIES OF PRINCIPALS

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## ABSTRACT

*The study examined future principal's perception of the leadership competencies of their principals. Forty seven teachers pursuing their Master Degree in Educational Leadership from Universities in Malaysia and fifty five teachers pursuing their Master Degree in Educational Administration in Universities in Thailand participated in the study. The modified version of Principals Leadership Capacities Questionnaire developed by Luo (2004) was used to collect data. Findings showed that the Malaysian teachers perceived their principals as having moderate capacity to strong capacity while Thai teachers perceive it to be somewhat to moderate capacity in all six areas of ISLLC Standards. No principal is considered as having no capacity, or excellent capacity.*

## INTRODUCTION

Leadership plays an indispensable role in effectiveness of an educational institution, right from vision to the outcomes. A genius leader utilizes both material and human resources to create the necessary atmosphere for school effectiveness. Various researches conducted have shown that leadership accounts for the best outcomes of any educational institution. In the view of Jiboyewa (1989), leadership involves much more than the behaviors exhibited by leaders in any other organization.

Leadership is therefore of particular importance in the schools to the extent that without it, goals may be difficult to attain and its effectiveness is not guaranteed. In fact, Cheng and Townsend (2000) reported that in the efforts of various countries for education change and effectiveness, the role of leadership at both the system and site levels is often crucial to their success.

## RELATED LITERATURE

It is in the light of this indispensable role of leadership that different researchers have tried to interpret the concept of elusive nature of leadership in different manner Yulk (1998). Some examples of such elusive concept are: leadership is the process of influencing the activities of an organized group toward goal – setting and goal achievement Stogdill (1974); leadership is the initiation of a new structure or procedure for accomplishing an organization's goals and objectives Lipham (1964); and leadership is a force that can initiate action among people, guide activities in a given direction, maintain such activities and unify efforts toward common goals Kenzevich (1975). Leadership is a process of social influence where leaders induce followers to apply their energies and resources toward a collective objective. It is an interactive relationship between leaders and followers, which is characterized by influence and identification Bolman and Deal (2003). And in the view of Ogunsaju

(2006), leadership is a position of dominance and prestige accompanied by the ability to direct, motivate and to assist others in achieving a specified purpose. Cheng (1996) found two general elements of leadership in the various definitions. First, leadership is related to the process of influencing others behaviors and secondly, it is related to goal development and achievement.

Peretomode (1991) stated that Leadership is also of particular importance in educational administration because of its far-reaching effects on the accomplishment of school programmes, objectives and attainment of educational goals. Cheng (1994) went further to proposed five major dimensions of educational leadership, namely: structural leadership, human leadership, political leadership, cultural leadership and educational leadership. According to him, structural leadership refers to the leadership that develops clear goals and policies, established appropriate organizational structure for different roles, holds staff accountable for results, and provides suitable technical support to plan, organize, coordinate and implement policies in the institution. Political leadership refers to the leadership that builds alliances and coalitions, encourages participation and collaboration in decision-making and resolve conflicts among constituencies. Cultural leadership refers to the leadership that inspires and stimulates members to pursue institutional vision and excellent performance, builds up new institutional culture and transforms the existing values and norms of staff in the institution. Educational leadership refers to the leadership that provides direction and expert advice on developments of learning, teaching and curriculum, emphasizes relevance to education in management, diagnoses educational problems and encourages professional development and teaching improvement.

The Commonwealth Secretariat (1993) also proposed the functions of the principal as to:

- a) Manage and deploy school resources efficiently
- b) Allocate school accommodation appropriately
- c) Ensure satisfactory standards of maintenance and cleanliness of school facilities
- d) Organize staff development in school
- e) Guide curriculum implementation and change
- f) Manage the developmental appraisal system, whole school evaluation and new integrated quality management system
- g) Create a professional ethos within the school by involving staff members in decision making, and
- h) Manage restructuring and redeployment of teachers.

Keeping in mind the importance of role of the principal as a leader within the secondary school system, it is imperative to examine the leadership capacities of school principals. Principals' competencies can be measured from various dimensions; from the perceptions of students, teachers, parents, communities and their employers. For instance, Scotti Jr. and William (1987) agreed that teachers' perceptions of their principals' leadership is one of the many variables, which affect a school's productivity. Teachers' perception of principals' leadership behavior is also positively related to teachers' morale Hunter-Boykin and Evans(1995). Luo (2004) further contended that perceptions about principals as leaders by their teachers indicate an important dimension to evaluate the leaders capacities. According to him, understanding how teachers perceive their principals leadership

capacities has a great significance and providing evidence for improvement of school leadership. Research has also demonstrated that teachers' perceptions of their principals' capabilities and their working conditions will determine the organizational climate and culture of the school. Such perceptions will also impact on the performance of the school Sweeney (1996).

In an attempt to explain the requirements of a competent principal, Cranston (2002) explained the skills and capacities which principals are expected to possess as follows:

1. Aspects of strategic leadership – people, school, educational.
2. Aspects of strategic management – facilities, budgeting, staffing, accountability.
3. Leading, visioning, cultural change
4. Knowledge of state, national and international educational developments.
5. Knowledge of wider organization and development issues beyond education section.
6. Capacity to manage and developments (educational and otherwise).
7. Capacity to make, manage and lead through uncertainty.

The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), provides the following six standards for the school leaders

#### **Standard 1**

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

#### **Standard 2**

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

#### **Standard 3**

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

#### **Standard 4**

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

#### **Standard 5**

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

## **Standard 6**

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understand, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

In a study in America, Hunter-Boykin and Evans (1995) commended that majority of the principals were rated as ineffective by their teachers. This reflects that there is a big discrepancy between what the principals' are and how they are perceived by the teachers. They however reasoned that because teachers do not have leadership experiences and cannot fully understand principals' work, they make subjective judgments, character assessment and stereotypical comments about principals who are dissimilar to themselves (Banks, 1991). In Hong Kong, the images of the principal in the mind of pre-service primary teachers were found to be negative. It was also discovered that these negative beliefs about principalship in Hong Kong were predominantly formed during pre-service teacher's experiences in school life and teaching practice, Lee, Walker and Bodycott, (2000). A recent study by Luo and Najjar (2007), investigated Chinese principal leadership capacities as perceived by master teachers. Findings indicated that principal's leadership capacities were generally perceived moderately negative. Internal leadership capacities in school vision, instruction and organization were perceived lower than external leadership capacities in collaborative partnership, moral perspective and larger-context politics. Principals with higher degrees were perceived to have higher internal and external leadership capacities.

Unlike in many developed countries where studies on principals' competencies are available in multitude, such studies are still at its low in Asian countries like Thailand and Malaysia. Most studies in these countries have focused on leadership styles, rather than leadership competencies. The study therefore intends to fill this gap by examining the perception of teachers of the leadership capacities of their principals from these countries

## **Objective of the Study**

The objective of this study is to examine how the future principals (teachers pursuing Master Degree in Educational Leadership) in Malaysia and Thailand perceive the leadership capabilities of their principals.

## **Methodology**

### **Sample**

The samples of the study were made up of the forty seven teachers pursuing their Master Degree in Educational Leadership in University in Malaysia and fifty five teachers pursuing Master of Educational Administration in Universities in Thailand. All the samples have a minimum teaching qualification of a first degree and working with their schools for over five years.

### **Instrument**

The instrument used for the study was the modified version of Principals' Leadership Capacities Questionnaire (PLCQ), developed by Luo (2004) to measure the leadership capacities of

Chinese Principals. The PLCQ included items that were developed from the statements of ISLLC standards. The 27 PLCQ items provided a representative sampling of the dispositions, skills and knowledge deemed necessary for principals as proposed by the ISLLC. The instrument was however modified to reflect the socio cultural background of Malaysia. The modified PLCQ used a 6-point Likert scale for teachers to rate their principal's leadership capacities by indicating their assessment with each of the items on the following

- |   |   |                           |
|---|---|---------------------------|
| a) Never descriptive about my Principal     | 0 | having no capacity        |
| b) Rarely descriptive about my Principal    | 1 | having little capacity    |
| c) Sometimes descriptive about my Principal | 2 | having somewhat capacity  |
| d) Often descriptive about my Principal     | 3 | having moderate capacity  |
| e) Usually descriptive about my Principal   | 4 | having strong capacity    |
| f) Always descriptive about my Principal    | 5 | having excellent capacity |

The modified version of PLCQ had a total of 27 items. The reliability of instrument was carried out by using twenty teachers in Thailand and twenty teachers from Malaysia. Their response was analyzed with the aid of split half method and it provided reliability co-efficient of 0.83 and 0.87 respectively. The instrument is therefore reliable to measure the leadership capacities school principals Malaysia and Thailand. Data collected for the study were analyzed calculating Mean and Standard Deviation.

### Data Analysis & Results

Data were analyzed using SPSS 17.0 software. Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for each of the 27 PLCQ items to determine the Malaysian and Thai master teachers' perceptions of their principals' leadership capacities

**Table 1: Leadership Capacities in the areas of School Vision**

Item	Malaysian		Thai	
	M	SD	M	SD
1. Principal develops Vision of learning to promote success of students	3.7021	1.12124	2.5818	.80946
2. Principal Communicates vision to staff, parents and students	3.5745	1.15617	2.4364	.85556
3. Principal uses effective strategies to implement the vision	3.5319	1.08048	2.4909	.83606
Standard 1-Leadership Capacities in School Vision	3.6028	1.04405	2.5030	.73387

It is evident from Table 1 that Malaysian Principals are perceived to be having moderate to strong leadership capacities in all three dimensions of school vision viz Developing Vision (M=3.7021;SD=1.12124),Communicating Vision(M=3.5745;SD =1.15617) and Using effective

strategies to implement school vision( M=3.5319;SD 1.08048) while their counterparts at Thailand are perceived to be having somewhat to moderate capacities in all the three dimensions viz Developing Vision (M=2.5818;SD=.80946),Communicating Vision(M=2.4364;SD =.83606) and Using effective strategies to implement school vision( M=2.4909;SD.83606).It can be observed from data for Standard 1-Leadership Capacities in School Vision that perception of Thai teachers is negative about their Principals(M=2.5030;SD=.73387) while Malaysian teachers have positive opinion about their principals(M=3.6028;SD =1.04405)

**Table 2: Leadership Capacities in the areas of School Instructions**

Item	Malaysian		Thai	
	M	SD	M	SD
4. Principal promotes positive school culture	3.7872	.97660	2.9091	.72706
5. Principal facilitates activities that apply principles of effective instruction to improve instructional practices and curricular materials	3.4255	.90277	2.7555	.67270
6. Principal uses and promotes technology and information system to enrich and improve curriculum and instruction	3.3191	1.10545	2.7636	.83807
7. Principal applies human development theory and motivational theories to the learning process.	3.6170	1.07447	2.8000	.89028
8. Principal is fully aware of learners' diverse needs and accommodate their needs.	3.4043	.99257	2.7636	.76893
9. Principal implements effective professional development programs based on reflective practice	3.5532	1.05930	2.7455	.90714
Standard 2-Leadership capacities in School Instructions	3.5177	.84000	2.7879	.58307

It is evident from Table 2 that Malaysian Principals are perceived to be having moderate to strong capacity in all six dimensions of capacities in School Instructions while their Thai counter parts are perceived to be having somewhat to Moderate capacities. Among these capacities Malaysian principals are rated highest in promoting positive school culture(M=3.7872;SD .97660) and lowest in promoting technology and information system to enrich and improve curriculum and instructions(M=3.3191; SD=1.10545),while Thai principals are rated highest in promoting positive school culture(Mean =2.9091;SD .72706) and lowest in implementing effective professional development program based on reflective practices (M=2.7455;SD=.90714).It can also be observed from the data for Standard 2-Leadership Capacities in School Instructions that Thai teachers have negative opinion for their principal's capacities(M=2.7879;SD =.58307)while Malaysian principals have somewhat positive(M= 3.5177;SD= .84000).

**Table 3: Leadership Capacities in the areas of School Organization**

Item	Malaysian		Thai	
	M	SD	M	SD
10.Principal optimizes the learning environment by applying appropriate models and principles of organizational development and management.	3.4468	.92803	2.9091	.86651
11.Principal optimizes the learning environment with attention to indicators of equity, effectiveness and efficiency.	3.5319	.88098	2.8182	.72242
12.Principal develops plans of action for focusing on effective organization	3.6170	.96804	2.8545	.70496
13.Principal gives priority to student learning, safety, curriculum and instruction and development plans of action	3.7872	.97660	2.8182	.84087
14. Principal manages time effectively	3.5745	.92653	2.8909	.56676
15.Principal deploys financial and human resources in ways that promote student achievement	3.5206	.83072	2.7273	.80403
16. Principal involves staff in conducting school operations	3.7 234	.85216	2.9636	.74445
17. Principal uses group process skills to build consensus, communicate and resolve conflicts	3.5957	1.03545	2.6545	.88649
18. Principal allocates and uses fiscal, human and material resources effectively, legally and equitably	3.6170	.87360	2.8727	.84007
19 Principal focuses the use of resources on teaching and learning	3.5106	.90583	2.8000	.86923
Standard 3-Leadership Capacities in School Organization	3.5915	.72856	2.8309	.48985

It is evident from Table3 that Malaysian Principals are perceived to be having moderate to strong capacity in all ten dimensions of Leadership capacities in School Organization while their Thai counter parts are perceived to be having somewhat to Moderate capacities. Among these capacities Malaysian principals are rated highest giving priority to student learning,safety,curriculum and development plans of action(M=3.7872;SD .97660) and lowest in focusing the use of resources on teaching and learning(M=3.5106; SD=.90583),while Thai principals are rated highest in involving staff in conducting school operations(Mean =2.9636;SD= .74445) and lowest in using group process skills to build consensus, communicate and resolve conflicts(M=2.6545;SD=.88649).It can also be observed from the data for Standard 3-Leadership Capacities in School Organization that Thai teachers have negative opinion for their principal's capacities(M=2.8309;SD =.48985)while Malaysian principals have somewhat positive(M= 3.5915;SD= .72856).

**Table 4: Leadership Capacities in the areas of Collaborative Partnership**

Item	Malaysian		Thai	
	M	SD	M	SD
20.Principal brings together the resources of family members and the community to positively affect student learning	3.3191	.91143	2.7091	.91637
21. Principal uses public resources funds appropriately and effectively to encourage communities to provide new resources.	3.5319	.80355	2.8000	.96992
22.Principal collaborates with agencies, families and other community members	3.6383	1.03052	2.8000	.95063
Standard 4-Leadership Capacities in Collaborative Partnership	3.4965	.80118	2.7697	.82620

It is evident from Table 4 that Malaysian Principals are perceived to be having moderate to strong leadership capacities in all three dimensions of collaborative partnership viz bringing resources (M=3.3191;SD=.91143),Using resources (M=3.5319;SD =.80355) and collaborating with agencies, families etc( M=3.6383;SD 1.03052) while their counterparts at Thailand are perceived to be having somewhat to moderate capacities in all the three dimensions viz. bringing resources (M=2.7091;SD=.91637),Using resources (M=2.8000;SD =.96992) and collaborating with agencies, families etc( M=2.8000;SD =.95063) It can be observed from data for Standard 4-Leadership Capacities in collaborative partnership that perception of Thai teachers is negative about their Principals(M=2.7697;SD=.82620) while Malaysian teachers somewhat positive (M=3.4965; SD =.80118)

**Table5: Leadership Capacities in the areas of Moral Perspectives**

Item	Malaysian		Thai	
	M	SD	M	SD
23. Principal respects the rights of others	3.8723	.84999	2.7455	.86534
24. Principal makes and explains decisions based upon ethical and legal principles	3.6383	.76401	2.9273	.87886
25. Principal demonstrates on an understanding of the policies, laws and regulations enacted by local, state and federal authorities that affect schools.	3.6383	.87042	2.8364	.87694
Standard5 Leadership Capacities in Moral Perspectives	3.7163	.70874	2.8364	.74500

It is evident from Table 5 that Malaysian Principals are perceived to be having moderate to strong leadership capacities in all three dimensions of Moral Perspectives viz respecting rights of



others (M=3.8723;SD=.84999), Making and explaining decisions based upon ethical and legal principles (M=3.6383;SD =.76401) and demonstrating on an understanding of policies and regulations( M=3.6383;SD=.87042) while their counterparts at Thailand are perceived to be having somewhat to moderate capacities in all the three dimensions viz. respecting rights of others (M=2.7455;SD=.86534), Making and explaining decisions based upon ethical and legal principles (M=2.9273;SD =.87886) and demonstrating on an understanding of policies and regulations(M=2.8364;SD=.87694) It can be observed from data for Standard 5-Leadership Capacities in moral perspectives that perception of Thai teachers is negative about their Principals(M=2.8364;SD=.87694) while Malaysian teachers somewhat positive(M=3.6383;SD =.87042).

**Table6: Leadership Capacities in the areas of Larger Context-Politics**

Item	Malaysian		Thai	
	M	SD	M	SD
26.Principal demonstrates an understanding of the economic factors that shape local schools.	3.5106	.92952	2.6182	.68017
27.Principal fully considers political, social, legal and cultural context in policy development and operation.	3.7447	.94335	2.6364	.72937
Standard 7 Leadership Capacities in Larger Context Politics	3.6277	.86896	2.6273	.57910

It is evident from Table 6 that Malaysian Principals are perceived to be having moderate to strong leadership capacities in both dimensions of larger context politics viz demonstrating an understanding of the economic factors (M=3.5106;SD=..92952)and considering political, social legal and cultural context in policy development and operation(M=3.7447;SD =.94335) while their counterparts at Thailand are perceived to be having somewhat to moderate capacities in all both dimensions viz. demonstrating an understanding of the economic factors (M=2.6182;SD=.68017)and considering political, social legal and cultural context in policy development and operation(M=2.6364;SD =.72937) It can be observed from data for Standard 6-Leadership Capacities in higher context politics that perception of Thai teachers is negative about their Principals(M=2.6273;SD=.57910) while Malaysian teachers somewhat positive(M=3.6277;SD =.86896)

### Discussions

The results of the study revealed that the Malaysian teachers' perception of their principals' leadership capacities were positive while that of Thai teachers were negative. Throughout the PLQC 27 items, the Malaysian teachers have rated their principals to have moderate to strong leadership capacity, which in contrast to other studies while ratings by Thai teachers are consistent with other researches. These findings of Malaysian context seemed to be in contrast to with the result of a study conducted by Hunter-Boykin and Evans (1995) in America that 67% of the principals were rated as ineffective principals by their teachers. This study has totally contradicted the Researches carried out

in Hongkong by Lee, Walker, and Bodycott( 2000), in China by Luo and Najjar ( 2007) and in Nigeria (Arikewuyo, 2007), while the Thai context have totally agreed upon with the theses studies. One of the reasons for such a high rating for Malaysian principals relies on the efforts of Education Ministry headed by the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia and various training programs and courses offered by certain institutions.

### **Conclusion:**

The results of this quantitative study add to the research findings on how teachers perceive their principals' leadership capacities. The results also contribute to the large body of school leadership literature by adding the Malaysian and Thai perspectives. On the other hand, it provides evidence to understand the situations of Malaysian and Thai principal leadership capacities compared to the American educational leadership program standards. These results provide valuable information based on the empirical study for both educators and government who are exerting more and more efforts in the improvement of education in Malaysia and Thailand. All the six ISSLLC standards, it is encouraging to see that the leadership capacities and the leadership capacities are stronger in Malaysian principals. First of all, a primary avenue of influence was the principal's role in shaping the school's direction through vision Hallinger and Heck (1998). Principal leadership influences student learning outcomes by the paths of school goals, and school organizational structure and culture. On the other hand, schools in which students achieve are led by principals who make a significant and measurable contribution to the teaching and learning practices Andrew and Soder (1987); Bossert et al. (1982), Murphy and Hallinger, (1992). Fullan (2002) also suggested that at the heart of school capacity are principals emphasizing the development of teachers' knowledge and skills, professional community, program coherence, and technical resources.

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