

# ATTRIBUTES OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS- LEADERSHIP QUALITIES & CAPACITIES

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## **Abstract**

*Successful leadership is not the result of simply obtaining a position, but rather possessing the knowledge and understanding of successful leadership skills along with the personal ability to effectively implement those skills. Hence, "School leaders need impressive skills to provide effective leadership in our diverse school environments". However Leadership is not a concept for self but it should be rightly perceived by followers. The study examines the relationship of teachers' perception of the Leadership Capacities of their Principals to the Leadership Qualities of Empathy, Decision making, Time Management, Comfort etc. Three Hundred School teachers from Malaysia participated in the study. Self Developed Questionnaire on Leadership Capacities and Qualities was given to the sample. The findings showed that the Principals were perceived to be having Moderate leadership Capacities and Moderate level of Leadership Qualities. However there is strong and positive correlation between perception of teachers on leadership capacities and leadership qualities of principals.*

*Key Words: School Principalship, Leadership Capacities, Leadership Qualities, Leadership attributes*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Leadership plays an indispensable role in effectiveness of an educational institution, right from the setting of goals to accomplishment of goals. Various researches have linked the school effectiveness with the leadership. In absence of leadership goal accomplishment and school effectiveness is never guaranteed. In view of Cheng and Townsend (2000) for education change and effectiveness, the role of principal is often crucial to their success. The principal is challenged to create the culture of quality that penetrates to the smallest elements, processes and the systems of an institution. It is common experience that under the same set of rules and regulations, with same set of teaching staff and students from similar background, an educational institution degenerates or maintains status quo, or rises to prominence with a change of principal. This is also borne out by large number of research studies on management of change in education, Mukhaopadhyay (2001)

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Various researchers have tried to interpret school leadership in different manner. Peretomode (1991) stated the importance of Leadership in school for accomplishment of school programmes, objectives and attainment of educational goals. Cheng (1994) proposed that leadership in educational institutions compose of five major dimensions, namely: structural leadership, human leadership, political leadership, cultural leadership and educational leadership. These five dimensions describe the role and functions of school leader. However the functions of principal put a variety of demands and challenges for the

principal Mestry and Grobler (2004). In an attempt to explain the requirements of a competent principal, Cranston (2002) explained the skills and capacities which principals are expected to possess.

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 (1997) 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 .In a study in America, Hunter-Boykin and Evans (1995) found 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. And in Hong Kong, the images of the principal in the mind of pre-service primary teachers were found to be negative. Lee, Walker and Bodycott, (2000). A study by Luo and Najjar (2007), investigated Chinese principal leadership capacities as perceived by master teachers. Unlike in many developed countries where studies on principals' competencies are available in multitude, such studies are still at its low in Malaysia. 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 attributes of school principals. This is particularly so because of the fact that schools in this country serve for the large section of national students. Most studies in this country have focused on leadership styles, rather than leadership attributes. The study therefore intends to fill this gap by investigating the perception of teachers on the leadership attributes of their principals in terms of leadership capacities and leadership qualities.

### Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to examine perceptions of senior teachers regarding the leadership attributes of their principals. It tries to answer the following questions

1. What are the perceptions of Teachers on the Leadership Attributes (Capacities and Qualities) of their principals?
2. Is there any correlation between Leadership Capacities and Leadership Qualities of Principals as perceived by the teachers?

### Methodology

#### Sample

Three hundred teachers from thirty national schools participated in study. All the teachers have over six years of experience with same principal.

**Research Instrument** The instrument used for the teachers was titled "Attribute of My Principal" comprising two parts; Part I- My Principals' Leadership Capacities (MPLC) to measure the leadership capacities of Principals. The questionnaire included twenty seven items classified into six dimensions of school vision, instructional leadership, organizational leadership, community leadership, moral

dimensions and political concept, which were developed from the statements of ISLLC standards. The first three dimensions (school vision, instructional leadership, organizational leadership) are considered as School based potentials while the last three (community leadership, moral dimensions and political concept) as out of school potentials. Part II- Leadership qualities of My Principal. The questionnaire has eight dimensions comprising five items each, total items being forty. These dimensions are Communication skills, Comfort, Empathy, Decision Making, Influence, Self Management, Time management and Commitment

The questionnaire used a 6-point Likert scale for teachers to rate their principal's leadership potentials by indicating their assessment with each of the items on the following

- |   |   |                             |
|---|---|-----------------------------|
| a) Never descriptive about my Principal     | 0 | No potential/Quality        |
| b) Rarely descriptive about my Principal    | 1 | Little Potential/Quality    |
| c) Sometimes descriptive about my Principal | 2 | Somewhat potential/Quality  |
| d) Often descriptive about my Principal     | 3 | Moderate potential/Quality  |
| e) Usually descriptive about my Principal   | 4 | Strong potential/Quality    |
| f) Always descriptive about my Principal    | 5 | Excellent potential/Quality |

The reliability of instrument was carried fifty five teachers from Malaysia. Their response was analyzed with the aid of split half method and it provided reliability co-efficient 0.89. The instrument is therefore reliable to measure the leadership attributes of school principals in Malaysia. Data collected for the study were analyzed using SPSS version 17, by calculating Mean, Standard Deviation and spearman Rho.

## Data Analysis

**Table 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Gender		Age Group			Experience		
M	F	35<	35-45	> 45	<10	10-20	>20
165	145	1	210	89	37	240	23
(55%)	(45%)	(0.4%)	(70%)	(29.6%)	(12.3%)	(80%)	(7.6%)

From Table 1 it is evident that 165 teachers (55%) are male and 145 teachers (45 %) are female. 210 teachers (70%) are in age group 35-45 years followed by 89 teachers (29.6%) are in age group above 45 and only 1 teacher (0.4%) is in age group less than 35 years. The table also shows that majority of teachers 240 in numbers(80%) have teaching experience of 10-20 years ,followed by 37 teachers( 12.3%) have experience of less than 10 years while 23 teacher( 7.6%) have experience of more than 20 years. These figures suggest that all the teachers are well

experienced teachers and as mentioned earlier all the teachers have been working with same principal for over six years and such a long experience with same principal makes a teacher to know well about their principal.

**Table 2 Mean & Standard Deviation for Perception of Teachers on Leadership Capacities of Principals**

Leadership Capacities Dimensions	Mean	SD
School Vision	3.60	1.044
Instructional Leadership	3.50	0.840
Organizational Leadership	3.59	0.728
Community Leadership	3.49	0.801
Moral Dimension	3.71	0.708
Political Context	3.62	0.868
Over All	3.59	0.826

Table 2 shows the Mean and Standard deviations for perception of teachers on six dimensions of leadership capacities of the principals. The over all Mean is 3.59 with Standard Deviation 0.826 suggests that leadership capacities of principals as perceived by teachers is of Moderate level.

**TABLE 3 Mean & Standard Deviation for Perception of Teachers on Leadership Qualities of Principals**

Leadership Qualities Dimensions	Mean	SD
Communication Skills	3.59	1.025
Comfort	3.64	0.784
Empathy	3.69	0.763
Decision Making	3.62	0.765
Influence	3.73	0.764
Self Management	3.68	0.889
Time Management	3.67	0.820
Commitment	3.66	0.806
Over All	3.66	0.741

Table 3 shows the Mean and Standard deviations for perception of teachers on eight dimensions of leadership qualities of the principals. The over all Mean is 3.66 with Standard Deviation 0.741 suggests that leadership qualities of principals as perceived by teachers is of Moderate level.

**TABLE 4 Spearman Rho for Correlation between perception of Teachers on Leadership Capacities & Qualities of Principals**

Mean for Leadership Capacities	Mean for Leadership Qualities	Spearman's Rho
3.59	3.67	+0.87

Table 4 shows correlation between perception of teachers on Leadership Capacities and Leadership Qualities. The value of Spearman rho is +0.87 which suggest that there is strong and positive correlation between perception of teachers on leadership capacities and leadership qualities of principals. Hence it can be commended that leadership qualities and capacities of principals are related to each other.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results of the study revealed that the teachers' perception of their principals' leadership attributes were somewhat positive. The teachers have rated their principals to be having moderate level of leadership capacities and leadership qualities. The findings from Malaysian perspectives seemed to be in contrast 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 contradicted the Researches carried out in Hongkong by Lee, Walker, and Bodycott, (2000), and in China by Luo and Najjar, (2007). Its noteworthy that leadership capacities and leadership qualities of principals are strongly and positively correlated. It clearly indicates that if principals have excellent leadership qualities, they will be having excellent leadership capacities.

## **CONCLUSION**

The results of this quantitative study add to the research findings on how teachers perceive their principals' leadership attributes. It provides evidences to understand the situations of Malaysian principals leadership attributes. 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. 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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