UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP
AND
EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE**

NG CHEE HENG

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PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP
AND
EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

By

NG CHEE HENG

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NG CHEE HENG

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Supervisor: Azahari Ismail, Ph. D

Faculty of Educational Studies

This study, which was qualitative in nature, seek to find a better understanding on

how and why the seven experienced secondary school principals being interviewed, who

were considered to be high performers, had run their schools successfully and efficiently.

Data collected was organized into different themes and categories, which was then

compared to various school leadership and management theories observed in the

literature. The main literature and research finding which prompted this survey were: I)

the concept of school leadership as suggested by Pounder et. al (1995), where the

researchers contented that school leaders might include the Principal, senior teachers,

parents or even students; ii) the concept of `policy leadership' as suggested by Azahari

(1994); and iii) the Burke-Litwin's Model of change and performance (1992). In this

study, seven experienced secondary school principals (having a DG-2 grade in average)

in and around the Klang valley were interviewed and asked on a series of questions

regarding current educational issues and topics. Additional information was obtained through observations and documents in the schools. This study was intended to categorize opinions and experiences of the principals so as to have a better understanding on the concept of `effectiveness' in their schools and its relation to certain traits of the principals. Hence data collected was used to facilitate the discovery of knowledge about how leadership behaviour of administrators was organized. This was then discussed under six main categories, namely: 1) the principals' perceptions of their leadership roles and responsibilities; 2) the principals' perceptions on educational policies; 3) the principals' perceptions on role accountability; 4) the principals' perceptions on management theories; 5) the principals' administrative approaches; and 6) the principals' approaches to improve school effectiveness. Some of the opinions of the principals interviewed were summarized as follow: 1) School effectiveness depended on the academic achievement of the schools, and it depended on the `input' or the qualities of the students; 2) The `popularity' of a school does not equate to its effectiveness; 3) The objectives of the schools were more `shaped' and `influenced' by the aspirations of the parents, rather than the national objectives of the country; 4) School principals do not participate in deciding on policy' matters, as these are decided at the top. The school principals are `policy leaders'; 5) Performing principals had the capability of exercising the `limited power' as policy leaders to instruct their subordinates to perform. This they do it through the exercise of `informal powers' like being informative, leadership by example, having a `good network' with the people in high positions etc.; 6) The New Remuneration System (SSB) is good in theory, but it is tedious and time-consuming to have it fully carried out in the schools; 7) The SMART-school concept was received

generally with skepticism. The concept was perceived as one that links to high-tech aids like computers, Internet communications etc.; 8) Soliciting external funds was of the utmost priority and responsibility of the ambitious school principals; 9) School principals and school leadership should have a shift in the paradigm to adjust to the changing times of the Information Technology era; and 10) School principals should be leaders and managers in their own right.

KEPEMIMPINAN PENGETUA
DAN
KEBERKESANAN PENDIDIKAN

oleh

NG CHEE HENG

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Penyelia: Azahari Ismail, Ph.D

Fakulti Pengajian Pendidikan.

Kajian ini, yang bercorak kualitatif, berusaha untuk meneliti bagaimana dan mengapa seramai tujuh orang pengetua yang berpengalaman, serta dianggap berkaliber, telah berjaya menguruskan sekolah-sekolah mereka dengan efisyennya. Data-data yang diperoleh dalam kajian ini dikategorikan ke dalam tema-tema yang berlainan, yang kemudiannya dibandingkan dengan teori-teori kepemimpinan sekolah dan teori-teori pengurusan yang dikemukakan dalam bahagian sorotan literatur. Dapatan-dapatan kajian dan literatur yang menjadi pendorong utama dalam kajian ini termasuklah: I) konsep kepemimpinan sekolah yang dikemukakan oleh Pounder et. al (1995) di mana beliau menyimpulkan bahawa selain daripada pengetua sekolah, kepemimpinan sekolah juga meliputi guru-guru, ibu-bapa atau pelajar-pelajar; ii) konsep `Pemimpin polisi' yang dikemukakan oleh Azahari (1994); dan iii) Model Perubahan dan Prestasi Burke-Litwin (1992). Dalam kajian ini, tujuh orang pengetua sekolah menengah yang berpengalaman (Gred purata DG-2) di sekitar kawasan Lembah Klang telah ditemuduga dan disoal

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berkenaan dengan beberapa isu dan topik pendidikan semasa. Maklumat tambahan diperoleh secara pemerhatian dan rujukan kepada dokumen-dokumen tertentu di dalam sekolah mereka. Kajian ini bertujuan mengkategorikan pendapat serta pengalaman pengetua-penetua yang dikaji supaya dapat lebih menerokai konsep `keberkesanan sekolah' dan hubungkaitnya dengan ciri-ciri pengetua. Data-data yang diperoleh juga digunakan untuk menerangkan bagaimana ciri-ciri kepemimpinan pentadbir-pentadbir sekolah terbentuk. Data-data dibincangkan di bawah enam kategori, iaitu: 1) Persepsi pengetua-pengetua ke atas rol kepemimpinan dan tanggungjawab mereka; 2) Persepsi pengetua-pengetua ke atas polisi pendidikan negara; 3) Persepsi pengetua-pengetua ke atas akauntabiliti rol mereka; 4) Persepsi pengetua-pengetua ke atas teori-teori pengurusan; 5) Pendekatan-pendekatan pentadbiran pengetua; dan 6) Pendekatan-pendekatan pengetua mempertingkatkan keberkesanan sekolah. Antara pendapat-pendapat pengetua yang ditemuduga adalah seperti berikut: 1) Keberkesanan sekolah bergantung kepada pencapaian akedemik sesebuah sekolah itu dan ia juga bergantung ke atas `input', iaitu kualiti para pelajar; 2) Tahap populariti sesebuah sekolah tidak semestinya berkait dengan keberkesanan sekolah itu; 3) Objektif-objektif sesebuah sekolah itu dipengaruhi dan ditentukan oleh aspirasi para ibu-bapa, dan tidak ditentukan oleh objektif kebangsaan negara; 4) Pengetua-pengetua sekolah tidak terlibat dalam pembentukan `polisi pendidikan' , ini ditentukan oleh pihak atasan. Pengetua-pengetua sekolah adalah `Pemimpin polisi'; 5) Pengetua-pengetua berkaliber tinggi dapat menggunakan `kuasa terhad' mereka untuk mengarahkan staf menjalankan tugas mereka dengan berkesan. Ini dilakukan melalui penggunaan `kuasa tak formal' dalam bentuk seperti `pengetua serba tahu', `memimpin melalui teladan' ,mempunyai hubungkait yang

atasan dan yang berpengaruh dan sebagainya; 6) Sistem Saraan Baru merupakan sistem yang baik dari segi teori, akan tetapi memerlukan masa yang banyak untuk pelaksanaan yang berkesan di sekolah-sekolah; 7) Konsep Sekolah Bestari pada amnya disambut dingin oleh para pengetua, dan dianggap sebagai satu cara pembelajaran yang berkait dengan teknologi yang canggih; 8) Keupayaan memperoleh sumber kewangan tambahan luar merupakan satu prioriti dan tanggungjawab utama bagi seseorang pengetua yang ingin berjaya; 9) Para pengetua dan kepemimpinan sekolah seharusnya memindahkan paradigma mereka untuk meyesuaikan diri ke era Maklumat Teknologi; dan 10) Pengetua-pengetua sekolah seharusnya berfungsi sebagai pemimpin dan pengurus yang lebih berautonomi dalam sekolah mereka masing-masing.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Malaysian children go to schools at the tender age of 7 until they graduate from the institutes of higher learning in their early 20s. School children attending secondary schools varies from the ages of 11 till 18. This is the adolescent age that is the most crucial stage of development in their lives, whether academically, socially, intellectually or morally.

The public schools of the Primary and Secondary levels in Malaysia, provide a total of 11 years of basic education for Malaysian children (12 years for students from vernacular Chinese and Tamil primary schools weak in the National language). These schools are headed by the Principals and the Headmaster/Headmistresses under the Ministry of Education of Malaysia (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia).

The Education Ministry of Malaysia as an organization is huge in size, with a total of 1538 secondary schools and 7084 primary schools (as until 1998), and with an estimate of 250 000 employees (Abdul Shukor Abdullah, 1998). The ministry of Education is under the helm of the minister of education and his two deputies, and assisted by the secretary general of education and the director general of education. The operation structure of the ministry is divided into 39 functional and geographical

divisions/departments. These individual departments deal with a variety of issues, ranging from Research and Development (R & D) to the everyday running of the schools.

Employees of the ministry of education are public/government servants, and thus they come under the jurisdiction of the Public Service Department (PSD) of the Prime Minister department. The PSD, operating under the Education Service Commission or the SPP (Suruhanjaya Perkhidmatan Pendidikan) has its Diplomatic and Administrative Services personals or PTDs (Pegawai Tadbir Diplomatik) taking charge of 11 of the KPM's divisions/departments. These PTDs work at the KPM and reports to the SPP. (Appendix A)

On the other hand, the responsibility of the Educational Inspectorate (Jemmah Nazir Institusi Pendidikan) is to provide feedback so as to help achieving the nation's educational mission and to upgrade professionalism. At present, the Educational Inspectorate institution is directly answerable to the ministers (Appendix A).

In Malaysia, school administrators are appointed from the ranks of trained teachers whose academic training had not provided them with any appropriate preparation in school management and administration. Furthermore, because of the rapid change and growth in our complex society, the school principal who is not taught or trained to manage change and growth is destined to fail, and could be a hindrance to the development of the teaching profession in the long run (Ong, S.C., 1992). This is particularly true in view of the increasing pressure put on our schools during this

transitional period of the implementation of the New Primary Curriculum KBSR, the New Integrated Secondary School Curriculum KBSM and the SMART school concept which places high emphasis on Information Technology.

The functions of schools are changing over the decades as more disciplines; tasks, knowledge and responsibilities etc are being introduced into the formal educational system. It is not surprising, therefore, to expect changing roles of the school administrators over the years.

In a more recent development, the Public Services Department, which governs the Ministry of Education employees, had embarked on the implementation of MS ISO 9000 (Malaysia Standard, International Organization for Standardization). (Circular on Improvements of Public Administration, No. 2/96; or Pekeliling Kemajuan Pentadbiran Awam Bil. 2/96). This was based on four main principles: 1) ISO 9000 is a standard for quality systems and it does not depend on the products or the services rendered; 2) ISO 9000 is based on documentation; 3) ISO 9000 emphasizes on prevention of problems occurring rather than finding solutions; and 4) ISO 9000 is an Universal standard.

In 1997, the SMART school concept, advocated by Perkins, (1992) was introduced. The definition of the SMART school being;

> A Smart School delivers education in a dramatically better way to
> significantly enhance the achievement of the goals of the National
> Philosophy of Education, utilizing technology as the prime enabler, and

supported by appropriate people, skills, policies and processes. It uses information to select and implement effective tools and practices accompanied by the necessary organizational support and continuous professional development. (Mehan, 1998).

Hence, it is obvious that the Malaysian Educational Institutions are going through a period of change and uncertainty. (Mehan, 1998). The roles of the secondary school principals change as the situations vary. Since school institutions resemble agents of change in the society thus these change agents are vital in determining and guaranteeing our well being in the future and threatens to affect the very existence of a prosperous community.

So, one can see that the Malaysian secondary school principalship has evolved from a classroom teacher, a teacher with few administrative duties, to the supervising principal (Ong, S.C., 1992). The modern secondary school principal can no longer fulfill the role of an instructional leader in view of the increasing specialization of the curriculum as well as the increasing professionalism of the teaching profession. These principals have to carry out their duties, receiving their instructions and trying to maintain the education standards in Malaysia as a `policy leader' or a `transactional leader'.

These situations within the school institutions give rise to various probable suggestions as to how secondary school principals today carry out their responsibilities. It is, therefore, the interest of many scholars and educators to examine closely how school

leaders today react to various changes in their school set-ups; and even at times, how certain school leaderships function without a principal.

Nevertheless, school exists for teaching and learning, and the basic purpose of school administration is to enhance teaching and learning. However, as time went on, schools had become communities that reflect the complexity of the existing societies as well. The organization structure of the schools thus moved towards professionalism and job specialization, and it is under this context that Ogawa and Bossert (1995) and Pounder et al., (1995) had conceptualized school leadership as an organizational quality, making the role of the school principal, as the chief school administrator, heavy as never before.

The Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as A Profession (1986) and the Holmes Group (1986) suggested alternatives in `job enlargement' and `job enrichment'. Job enlargement adds breath to a job by increasing the number and variety of activities performed by an employee, whereas job enrichment adds depth to a job by adding `administrative' activities (decision-making, staffing, budgeting, reporting) to an employee's responsibilities. Thus the restructuring of the schools gave rise to the new school leadership with emphasis on shared governance, particularly management, and site-based decision-making, whereby teachers play a more active role in the operation of the schools.

In Malaysia, education administrators are being trained formally at the Institute Aminnuddin Baki; with various in-service training programmes lasting from 10 days to 3 months; or by even shorter courses organized by various local education agencies. During these courses, various basic management theories are being introduced. The Institute of Aminuddin Baki, as a formal training institute for educators, was established in 1981 based on the recommendations put forward by the Cabinet Committee set up in September 1974 (Institut Aminuddin Baki, 1994/95, Ong, C.S., 1992).

There are certain `established' schools in Malaysia that are perceived as `good' schools by the public, even though the principal is not accepted as a performer. In this case, the public perception is that the organization culture plays a more influential role. Thus, when coupled with the traditional management practices, these schools are deemed to excel (Cheng, K.M. & Wong, K.C., 1996, pp.44). On the other hand, it is equally possible to observe the reverse --- a supposedly `efficient' and `excellent' principal do not perform to expectations as a result of unfavourable working climate, passive organizational culture or other unfavaourable factors.

Generally, most of the established schools nowadays are handled by principals who had earned their promotions through time and experience and excellence in the Educational services (DG-2 principals). Thus it is safely assumed that all big and established schools are manned by experienced senior administrators, and any difference in achievement among these schools would be the result of different traits of the leadership, the different organizational culture, or tradition.

Statement of the Problem

As stated earlier, Malaysian school leadership today need to do a lot of planning, staffing, organizing, controlling, (staff and students), budgeting, directing activities in order to run a school effectively. Many of these situations need immediate and quick actions; thus the thinking and behaviours of the school administrators in general, and the school principal in particular, becomes a major deciding factor in the management of schools today.

The effectiveness of a school had various definitions and perceptions from different parties. There has been assertion that Malaysian secondary school principals of today perceived effectiveness differently, and thus, different approaches were used to achieve their missions. Hence, there was a lack of a common understanding on the right behaviours of the principal necessary to produce desirable students of tomorrow. In furtherance, it would be useful to determine how school principals utilize management theories, which are a plenty, in managing schools, or do they fall back on their experiences as a teacher to execute most of the instructions received from the higher authorities.

On the other hand, it would be useful to observe how participating principals view the effectiveness of the Institute of Aminuddin Baki, which had been training past and present school administrators for the past 17 years. Are innovations required from the

institute to meet the increasing demands on the qualities of the principals would then resemble a challenge to the directors of the institute.

Purpose of the Study

This study seek to observe a better understanding on how experienced school principals, who were considered to be `efficient' and `excellent', had run their schools successfully and efficiently. It is the objectives of this study to understand how the practices of the seven principals, exercising their roles in the `school leadership' context had managed their schools. It seeks to further understand how the `popularity' and `effectiveness' of these school institutions were related to the behaviours of these principals. As suggested, principals, teachers, parents, and the school culture all contributed to a positive image as an effective school. It was further hoped that the observed relationship would inspire more research and innovations to be done to enhance future training of school administrators in Malaysia. This would then increase the creativity, the credibility and the accountability of the schools; of which the responsibility falls heavily on the Institute Aminuddin Baki or the IAB.

The study also intends to address the following questions:

1. How was `school leadership' related to `school effectiveness' and `school popularity' in the schools being studied;

2. How did schools respond to the wishes/ desired schooling objectives of the parents upon their school-going children;

3. How did the seven principals exercise their managing capabilities to attain optimum performance from their subordinates;

4. What were the general perception of the principals on certain current educational issues' like the New Remuneration System (SSB), the SMART-school concept and their views on any possible further educational reforms in the local educational arena;

5. What were the priorities and areas being emphasized by the principals being interviewed;

6. How did the seven principals functioned as policy leaders and hat would be the adjustments they need to have to be in line with the Information Technology era.

Significance of the Study

In a rapid changing environment and ever-advancing society, most of the management theories can only serve as guidelines on how to monitor performance and manage change. We need, therefore, to depend mostly on the wisdom and skills of the secondary school principals to solve the present-day school problems. It is hope that through this study, certain common practices of the principals, which resulted in useful procedures and techniques in management, can be observed. The results would then shed some light on how to manage and solve crucial problems like decreasing of education standards in certain disciplines, the erosion of moral values, discipline problems etc. which, in turn, can improve the efficiency of the schools. On the other hand, it is hoped