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Perceptions of Aspiring Malaysian Principals on Transactional, Transformational and Instructional Leadership Behaviours

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ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini ialah untuk menentukan darjah pelaksanaan tingkah laku kepemimpinan pengajaran, transaksional dan transformasional oleh bakal pengetua sekolah dalam pengurusan sekolah menengah. Data telah dikumpul daripada 89 pelajar siswazah yang mengikuti kursus kepemimpinan dalam program sarjana Pentadbiran Pendidikan di Universiti Putra Malaysia. Mereka merupakan guru-guru yang berpengalaman mengajar daripada 89 sekolah menengah yang berbeza di Malaysia. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bakal pengetua sekolah menengah mempersepsikan diri mereka sebagai berkebolehan dalam mengamalkan stail kepemimpinan transformasional. Dapatan juga menunjukkan bahawa bakal pengetua ini mendapat skor yang tinggi dalam semua aspek tingkah laku kepemimpinan transformasional seperti motivasi inspirasi, karisma, rangsangan intelektual dan pertimbangan individu. Berhubung dengan tanggungjawab kepemimpinan pengajaran, dapatan menunjukkan bahawa bakal pengetua ini mendapat skor yang tinggi dalam aspek menyediakan suasana teratur untuk pembelajaran dan menekankan pencapaian pelajar. Namun demikian kecenderungan mereka meningkatkan dan menilai prestasi guru adalah rendah. Kajian ini mencadangkan beberapa implikasi tertentu untuk penambahbaikan amalan kepemimpinan sekolah di Malaysia untuk keberkesanan sekolah.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the degree to which aspiring school principals will practise transactional, transformational and instructional leadership behaviour in managing secondary schools. Data were collected from 89 graduate students enrolled in the leadership course for the masters programme in Educational Administration conducted at UPM Serdang. They came from different parts of Malaysia and had teaching experience in 89 different schools. Findings indicated that aspiring secondary school principals perceived themselves as capable of adopting transformational leadership style. Results indicate that these participants scored high on all aspects of transformational leadership behaviour such as inspirational motivation, charisma, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. With regard to instructional leadership responsibilities, findings indicated that the aspiring principals scored high on providing an orderly atmosphere for learning and emphasizing student achievement. However, their inclination towards improving and evaluating teachers' performance was low. This study suggests certain measures to improve the Malaysian school leaders practice for school effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership may be defined as a process of social interaction between the leader and his or her subordinates, in which the leader seeks to influence his or her subordinates to achieve the objective of the organization (Petzall 1991). Transactional leadership was described by Burns (1978) as motivating followers primarily through

contingent reward-based exchanges. Typically, the main focus of transactional leaders is on setting goals, clarifying the link between performance and rewards, and providing contructive feedback to keep followers on task (Bass 1985). Burns (1978) described the most common form of leadership relationship found between leaders and followers as transactional.

In contrast, transformational leadership involves developing a close relationship between leaders and followers, one based more on trust and commitment than on contractual agreements. Transformational leaders help followers to see the importance of transcending their own self-interest for the sake of the mission and vision of their group and organization. Gardner and Avollio (1998) stated that by building followers' self confidence, self-efficacy, and self-esteem, such leaders are expected to have a strong, positive influence on followers' levels of identification, motivation and goal achievement. A transformational leader attempts to recognize followers' needs and raise those needs to higher levels of motivation and maturity while striving to fulfill human potential. Such total engagement (emotional, intellectual and moral) of both leaders and followers encourages followers to develop and perform beyond expectations. This form of leadership bonds leaders and followers within a collaborative change process which will have impact on the performance of the whole organization and results in a responsive and innovative environment.

Abrams (1998) found that successful principals placed the needs of students in the center of all their decision making. This appeared to be the prime transformational behaviour that awakened the intrinsic motivation among staff members. Moreover, they demonstrated transformational leadership behaviours that included meeting intrinsic needs of followers, visionary leadership, building collaborative school cultures, and putting teachers in roles of instructional leadership. In order to further understand transformational and transactional leadership, the following explanations help to see how it is being practised in the organization.

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Charisma

The leader instills pride, faith and respect and has a gift for seeing what is really important and transmits a sense of mission. It is the leader's ability to arouse devotion and involvement through personal dynamics such as self-confidence, ideological stance and dramatic and emotional appeal.

Inspirational Motivation

Inspirational motivation is closely related to charisma. Leaders inspire by increasing followers' awareness and understanding of mutually desired goals through symbols and simplified emotional persuasion.

Individualized Consideration

The leader delegates projects to stimulate learning experiences, provides coaching and teaching, and treats each follower as an individual. Hence, transformational leaders strengthen followers by raising their need perspectives and by providing opportunities for them to develop their capabilities. To elevate goals and develop their skills, they treat followers on a one-to-one basis. They provide support, encouragement, and developmental experiences to followers.

Intellectual Stimulation

It provides encouragement to challenge the status quo and take risks. Followers are supported for creativity and self-direction. The leader arouses followers to think in new ways and emphasizes problem-solving and the use of reasoning before taking action. He influences followers to view problems from a new perspective.

TRANSACTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Contingent Reward

The leader provides rewards if followers perform in accordance with the terms of the contract or expend the necessary effort. Appropriate rewards are for meeting agreed-upon objectives.

Management by Exception

The leader avoids giving directions if the old ways are working and allows followers to continue doing their jobs in their usual manner if performance goals are met. Leaders leave organizational members alone to do their jobs. If problems are perceived, only then will they correct, sanction or criticize behaviour. In essence, management-by-exception is a form of negative contingent reinforcement.

Bass (1985) views transformational and transactional leadership as distinct but not mutually exclusive processes, and he recognizes that the same leader may use both processes at different times in different situations.

Instructional Leadership

The principal or the instructional leader at the school is expected to be knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction and able to intervene directly with teachers in making instructional improvements (Hallinger 1992). Wildy and Dimock (1993) claimed that research into the instructional leadership behaviour of principals has been conducted largely within the framework of school effectiveness.

In education, the challenges of school restructuring have been cited as reasons for advocating a move from instructional to transformational forms of school leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi 1997). Leithwood (1992) concluded that an emphasis on instructional leadership was wholly appropriate and timely in the early 1980's when the term gained a widespread following. But instructional leadership conveys a meaning which encompasses only a portion of those activities now associated with effective school leadership. The school is now viewed as the unit responsible for the 'initiation' of change, not just the 'implementation' of changes. Schools need extraordinary leaders who are able to inspire followers to perform beyond commonly held expectations. As suggested by Burns (1978) and Bass (1985), transformational style of leadership focuses on the individual development of subordinates and thus helps to enhance their performance.

The purpose of this study was to investigate to what extent the aspiring Malaysian secondary school principals will practise transformational, transactional and instructional leadership behaviour in order to achieve school effectiveness. Specifically, the study attempts to seek answers to the following research questions.

1. What are the reasons for seeking principalship as perceived by aspiring school principals?
2. What is the perception of aspiring school principals regarding their own transformational and transactional leadership behaviour?
3. What is the perception of aspiring school principals regarding their own instructional leadership behaviour?
4. What is the perception of aspiring school principals regarding school effectiveness?
5. What is the relationship between aspiring principals' perception of school effectiveness and selected background variables?
6. What is the relationship between aspiring principals' perception of transformational and transactional leadership behaviour and school effectiveness?
7. What is the relationship between respondents' age, teaching experience, and administrative experience with their perception of every aspect of transformational behaviour?

METHOD

Sample

Participants of the study consisted of 89 secondary school teachers enrolled as graduate students in two different programmes. The first group comprised students in the educational administration programme conducted by the Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia. The second group followed the Educational Management programme jointly conducted by IAB and Universiti Putra Malaysia. Both the programmes were conducted in 1999.

Data were collected via a questionnaire administered to both groups of students during the Educational Leadership Class.

Instrumentation

The constructs of transformational leadership behaviour were viewed as represented by charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration. The transactional leadership behaviour was viewed as represented by contingent reward and management by exception. All items on transformational and transactional leadership and school effectiveness used in this research were an adaptation of the questionnaire used in Zainab's study (1997). The respondents were asked to answer a questionnaire by using 4 point Likert Scale items on school effectiveness, transformational and transactional leadership behaviour from 1 = "extremely disagree" to 4 = "extremely agree". Respondents were asked to rate their behaviour based on a scale of 1 to 4. The reliability of the instruments ranged from

.61 to .85. Total items used to measure transformational leadership behaviour were 20. The instrument consisted of 8 items to measure 'charisma', 4 items to measure inspirational motivation, 4 items to measure intellectual stimulation and 4 items to measure individual consideration. Sixteen items were used to measure transactional leadership behaviour and eight items to measure school effectiveness.

For the instructional leadership instrument, a questionnaire developed by Willis and Bartel (1990) was modified and revised with activities significant for instructional leadership practice in Malaysia. The reliability of the instructional leadership instrument was .86. On the instructional leadership items, respondents were asked to indicate their choice on a scale of one to four for the 16 given items. They were asked to identify to what extent they will practise instructional leadership responsibilities by using the following scale : 1 = will not perform, 2 = perform to a minor extent, 3 = perform equally with others and 4 = perform to a major extent.

An instrument regarding reasons for seeking principalship was originally taken from Willis and Bartel (1990) and the items were then modified to suit the tasks of aspiring Malaysian school principals.

RESULTS

Table 1 illustrates that most of the respondents are male, in the age category of 35 – 45 years, have more than 8 years teaching experience, and 60% have no administrative experience.

TABLE 1
Respondents' background

	Category	f	%
Gender	Male	53	60
	Female	36	40
Age	24 – 34	37	42
	35 – 45	39	43
	Above 45	13	15
Teaching experience	< 8 years	37	42
	8 years & more	52	58
Administrative experience	No experience	53	60
	< 4 years	22	24
	4 years & more	14	16

Research Question 1: What are the reasons for seeking principalship as perceived by aspiring principals?

Table 2 illustrates that most of the respondents perceived the highest ranking reasons to be a school principal as : to enhance professional advancement, to upgrade educational excellence, to work with people and students and to be a change agent. About 18 % of the sample indicate that they are not really interested in becoming school principals even though they follow the Masters Programme in educational administration.

Research question 2: What is the perception of aspiring principals regarding their own transformational and transactional leadership behaviour?

Looking at the mean score as illustrated in Table 3, the aspiring school principals will practise moderately high transformational

TABLE 2
Reasons for seeking principalship

Reasons	Agree (%)	Do not agree (%)	mean	s.d
1. Professional advancement	87 (98)	2 (2)	3.65	.50
2. To enhance educational excellence	87 (98)	2 (2)	3.65	.50
3. Interest in working with people/students	85 (96)	4 (4)	3.34	.52
4. To be a change agent/ influence policy & decision making	88 (89)	1 (1)	3.53	.50
5. Confidence in one's leadership abilities/ administrative skills	79 (89)	10 (11)	3.05	.50
6. To have an impact on instructional programs	72 (81)	14 (19)	3.14	.72
7. Only if appointed	76 (85)	13 (15)	2.80	.68
8. Increase in salary	64 (72)	25 (18)	2.95	.74
9. Not interested	16 (18)	73 (82)	1.82	.77

TABLE 3
Aspiring school principals' transformational leadership behaviour

Behaviours	means	ranks
Charisma	3.48	2
Inspirational motivation	3.67	1
Intellectual stimulation	3.55	3
Individual consideration	3.40	4

Note: 1 = totally disagree
4 = totally agree

leadership. The highest mean score was for the inspirational motivation category (mean = 3.67), followed by intellectual stimulation (mean = 3.55), charisma (mean = 3.48) and individual consideration (mean = 3.40).

The aspiring principals' perception of their own transactional leadership behaviour is rather

TABLE 4
Aspiring school principals' transactional leadership behaviour

Behaviours	means	ranks
Contingent reward	3.20	1
Management by exception	2.01	2

Note: 1 = totally disagree
4 = totally agree

low. Table 4 indicates that the mean score of the aspiring principals regarding their transactional leadership behaviour for 'contingent reward' is 3.20 and the mean score for 'management by exception' is 2.01.

Research question 3: What is the perception of aspiring school principals regarding their own instructional leadership behaviour?

Table 5 illustrates the mean ranking of instructional leadership practice or responsibilities as perceived by the respondents. Looking at the mean score, they ranked high on activities such as "providing orderly atmosphere for learning", and "emphasizing student achievement". Teachers as aspiring principals do not believe that they need to recognize teachers' performance since they ranked low on "evaluating performance of teachers", "selecting and reviewing of curriculum materials" and "introducing new instructional methods to teachers". Most of the items were perceived in the category of "will be performed equally with others" and items on

TABLE 5
Ranking of instructional leadership responsibilities as perceived by teachers

Instructional leadership activities	Rank/ mean	s.d
Providing orderly atmosphere for learning	3.91	.29
Emphasizing student achievement	3.90	.32
Articulating goals to staff	3.87	.33
Providing supportive climate for teachers	3.85	.36
Evaluating pupil's progress	3.82	.46
Involving teachers in decision making	3.69	.46
Setting expectation for student performance	3.67	.52
Managing resources allocated for instructional use	3.60	.56
Accepting responsibility for student behaviour in school	3.57	.52
Evaluating performance of teachers	3.56	.54
Selecting and reviewing of curriculum materials	3.48	.68
Devising instructional strategies	3.47	.67
Introducing new instructional methods to teachers	3.33	.69
Setting expectation for student behaviour	3.33	.66
Articulating school goals to public	3.31	.72
Accepting responsibility for student behaviour outside school	2.68	.78

Note: 1 = will not perform
2 = perform to a minor extent
3 = perform equally with others
4 = perform to a major extent

accepting responsibility for student behaviour outside school were perceived in the category of "perform to a minor extent".

Research question 4: What is the perception of aspiring school principals regarding their school leadership effectiveness?

Table 6 illustrates the perception of aspiring principals on school effectiveness. They were given 8 items and asked to identify their degree of agreement on the managerial practice of school leaders. Findings indicate that aspiring principals believed that they will be effective leaders in representing their staff in meeting organizational requirements (mean = 3.70) and representing their staff to higher authority (mean

= 3.65). The lowest ranking practice was for the statement "I will get my staff to do more than they are expected to do" with a mean score = 2.72 and "I will increase my staff willingness to try harder" with a mean score = 3.49. The overall mean for school effectiveness was 3.50 which indicates a moderately high agreement on all school effectiveness items as illustrated in Table 6.

TABLE 6
Aspiring principals' perceptions on school effectiveness

School Effectiveness Items	Mean	s.d.
I will get my staff to do more than they are expected to do	2.72	1.04
I will heighten my staff's desire to succeed	3.62	0.61
I will work with my staff in a satisfactory way	3.62	0.51
I will increase my staffs willingness to try harder	3.49	0.55
I will be an effective leader to meet my staff job related needs	3.55	0.62
I will be an effective leader in representing my staff to higher authority	3.65	0.50
I will be an effective leader in meeting organizational requirements	3.70	0.51
I will use methods of leadership that are satisfying	3.62	0.57

Note: 1 = totally disagree
4 = totally agree

Research question 5: What is the relationship between aspiring principals' perception on school effectiveness and selected background variables?

Table 7 illustrates the correlation between respondents' perception on school effectiveness and respondents' age, teaching experience, and administrative experience. Findings shows that there is a significant moderate positive relationship between the age of respondents and their perception on effectiveness. This means that the older the respondents are, the higher will be their perception on school leadership effectiveness. There is also a significant but moderate positive relationship between effectiveness and teaching experience. This means that the degree of school leadership effectiveness as perceived by teachers increases if they have had more teaching experience. Finally, there is also a significant relationship between respondents' perceptions on school leadership effectiveness and administrative experience. This means that those teachers with more administrative experience will have a higher perception on school leadership effectiveness.

TABLE 7
Relationship between respondents' perception of school effectiveness and age, teaching experience and administrative experience

	Age	Teaching Experience	Administrative Experience
Effectiveness	.27 *	.25 *	.39**

* < .01
** < .001

Research question 6: What is the relationship between aspiring principals' transformational and transactional behavior and school effectiveness?

Table 8 explains the relationship between the aspiring principals' transformational and transactional leadership behaviour and their perception of school effectiveness. Findings indicate that there is a moderately high and significant relationship between transformational leadership behaviour and school effectiveness.

Research Question 7: What is the relationship between respondents' age, teaching

TABLE 8
Relationship between aspiring principals leadership behaviour and school effectiveness

	Effectiveness	transformational	Transactional
Effectiveness	-	.47**	.25*
Transformational	.47**	-	.26*
Transactional	.25*	.26*	-

** p < .01
* p < .05

experience and administrative experience with their perception of every aspect of transformational leadership behaviour?

Findings indicate that 'age' has a significant moderate relationship with all transformational leadership categories and effectiveness. Table 9 shows that teaching experience was found to have a moderate correlation with 'charisma', and 'inspirational motivation'. There is no significant correlation between administrative experience and all category of transformational leadership behaviour.

TABLE 9
Correlation between transformational leadership categories and respondents' backgrounds

Background	Ch	IM	IS	IC
Age	.28*	.22*	.24*	.25*
Teaching experience	.32*	.25*	.19	.21
Administrative experience	.05	.28	.11	.08

*p < .01

Ch = charisma
IM = inspirational motivation
IS = intellectual stimulation
IC = individual consideration

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aspiring school principals perceived that they will practise higher level transformational leadership behaviour if they are given the chance to lead their school. They perceived that their ability to demonstrate transformational leadership behaviour is moderately high. For all categories of transformational leadership behaviour, the mean score ranged from 3.40 – 3.57. The aspiring principals are perceived to practise in the transactional behaviour less frequently, since the mean score is rather low.

Looking at the reasons why teachers select principalship, the top ranked reasons are: to be a change agent (99%), to enhance educational excellence (98%) and for professional advancement (98%). About 89% seek principalship because they perceived that they had leadership abilities and administrative skills. The increase in salary is not considered as the top ranking reason for seeking principalship, and about 85% agreed that they will be principals if they are appointed.

An interesting finding was the significant relationship between the practice of transformational leadership and school leadership effectiveness as a whole as perceived by the aspiring school principals. The higher they perceive that they will practise transformational leadership behaviour, the more effective their school will be. The aspiring principals' transformational leadership behaviour correlates significantly with effectiveness. This finding supports the findings of Burns (1985) who found a stronger relationship between transformational leadership and school effectiveness.

As a whole, aspiring principals will perform to a major extent instructional leadership responsibilities related to promoting a positive school climate. If they were the school principals, their most practiced instructional leadership responsibilities will be to provide an orderly atmosphere for learning and emphasizing students' achievement. The least practised responsibilities as perceived by the aspiring principals will be accepting responsibility for student behavior outside school and articulating school goals to the public.

Evaluating teachers' performance was not ranked high in importance even though this is one of the top ranked responsibilities of instructional leaders as identified in the literature (Willis and Bartel 1990). Teachers ranked it number 10 from the 16 responsibilities listed. Aspiring principals also focus less on the responsibilities related to "managing the curriculum" especially on "selecting and reviewing of curriculum materials", "devising instructional strategies" and "introducing new instructional methods to teachers".

Thus this study contradicts the findings of Willis and Bartel (1990) who found that evaluating teachers' performance was ranked first and second respectively by the outstanding American and Japanese school principals. However, similar findings were found by Wildy and Dimock (1993), since their findings also indicate low rating for 'monitoring teaching performance'. Besides, this current study also supported Wildy and Dimock whose study concluded that instructional leadership appears to be a shared responsibility involving staff at all levels, and that 'managing the curriculum' and 'evaluating and providing feedback' are the areas of responsibility in which principals are the least involved. Aspiring principals in Malaysia perceived that they bore a greater level of

responsibility to promote a positive school climate especially for providing an orderly atmosphere for learning and emphasizing student achievement. This is due to the fact that the culture is still to achieve 'academic excellence' and the teachers are influenced to work towards this goal.

The overall mean of school effectiveness of the aspiring principals is moderately high. The highest mean score is for the item "to be an effective leader in meeting organizational requirements" but they still score low for the item "to get staff to do more than they are expected to do". This proves that they need more training to practise transformational leadership behavior. There is a moderate but significant relationship between leadership effectiveness with teacher's age, teaching experience and administrative experience. This means that the older the teachers are, the higher will be their perception of their school effectiveness, and the more experience they have in teaching and administration work, the higher will be their perception of leadership effectiveness.

Aspiring principals should be given an opportunity to learn to be transformational and instructional leaders. Understanding the responsibilities of instructional leaders is a must to ensure that future principals can focus on the improvement of instructional quality. If learning is a life-long process and the school goal is to improve the quality of education, then aspiring principals need to be continually educated. Furthermore, transformational leadership has been shown to have a direct, positive relationship with performance.

Aspiring principals should understand the basis of shared instructional leadership because more people should be involved in improving instructional quality. In order to meet the rapidly changing needs of Malaysian students, teachers as well as parents must be given the authority to make appropriate instructional decisions.

Instructional leaders must be knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction, must be able to plan continuous improvement of instructional programs and be actively engaged in staff development. They should also be encouraged to utilize the latest teaching instructional strategies. Most important of all, future instructional leaders should be active participants in staff development.

The concept of excellence in school management should be focused on the 'effort' contributed by the workforce, and successful schools build their mission statements and organizational values around the recognition and value of their teachers. The performance of each school rests on the skills, knowledge, attitudes and other characteristics of the teachers. Thus the practice of transformational leadership may result in a higher level of satisfaction and effectiveness among the teachers. This study supported Leithwood (1992) who discovered that there was a significant relationship between transformational leadership and instructional behaviour and this study found that the aspiring principals showed a positive attitude towards school improvement. Indeed, transformational leadership is the most appropriate style for achieving better teacher performance. Finally, transformational leadership is concerned mainly with developing a teacher's full potential. Abrams (1998) claimed that principals in their study believed that their pre-service educational administration program was inadequate in preparing them for their role as principals. This study supports Abrams (1998) who believes that pre-service programs need to define a body of knowledge and create a cohesive curriculum to teach the skills that administrators need to know to be effective leaders in their schools. Rue and Byars (2000) believe that a transformational leader cultivates employee acceptance of the group mission. The leader–employee relationship is one of mutual stimulation and is characterized by charisma on the part of the leader, inspiration by the leader, consideration by the leader of individual needs, and intellectual stimulation between the leader and followers. Transformational leaders go beyond transacting with their followers and transform not only the situation but also the followers. Thus, aspiring principals need to be trained to be transformational leaders. Blasé and Blasé (2000) suggested that the preparation and continuing development of instructional leaders should de-emphasize principal control and encouragement of competition among teachers. Programs should teach practising and aspiring principals how to develop professional dialogue and collegiality among educators. Blase and Blase (2000) also found that their model of effective instructional leadership was derived directly from their research data which consist of two major themes: talking with teachers to

promote reflection and promoting professional growth.

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