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A Comparative Analysis on Leadership Qualities of School Principals in China, Malaysia & India

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ABSTRACT

Leadership of School Principal can be better rated by teachers as teachers are the followers. This study explores the rating of leadership qualities of principals of excellent schools in China, Malaysia and India by their teachers. Hundred teachers each from these three countries participated in study. Questionnaire titled 'Attributes of My Principal' was used as research instrument. This questionnaire comprises of eight dimensions and forty items. The data was analyzed using SPSS version 17 to compute Mean and Standard deviation to rate principals. Further T -test and one way ANOVA were performed to find significance difference in rating of principals by teachers on basis of gender, tenure and nationalities. No significant difference was observed in any inferential analysis. The principals were rated to be having excellent capacities in all eight dimensions of leadership qualities. This study thus infers that principals of excellent schools have excellent qualities.

Introduction

In last two decades the area of leadership has been studied more extensively than any other aspect of human behavior (Kets de Vries, 1993; Goffee and Jones, 2000; Higgs and Rowland, 2000).However leadership has been the most significant area of research in education especially principal ship. Hallinger (2005), and Hoy and Miskel (2008) have linked the school effectiveness with the leadership. In absence of leadership goal accomplishment and school effectiveness is never guaranteed. In view of Cheng (1994) 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).Research findings from various countries and different school systems have revealed powerful impact of leadership in assuring school development (e.g. Hopkings 2001a; West Jackson, Harris and Hopkings, 2000). Hopkings (2001a) emphasizes importance of transformational and instructional leadership practices for school development. Brenninkmeyer and Spillane (2008: 436) states that past researches paint a picture of a principal as someone who spends a lot of time solving instructional problems in the school, and whose performance in solving those problems has a tangible effect on the results of the students at the school.

What is clear from these, and from literature of effective schools, is that, successful leaders not only set direction but they also model values and practices consistent with those of the school, so that "purposes

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which may have initially seemed to be separate become fused" (Sergiovanni, 1995:119). Effective leaders are proactive and seek help that is needed. They also nurture an instructional program and school culture conducive to learning and professional growth. Nevertheless, effective instructional and administrative leadership is required to implement change processes (Hoy and Miskell, 2008). Models on instructional leadership by Hallinger & Murphy (1985) as cited by Hallinger (2005) has described principals' role in three dimensions Defining the Schools' Mission, Managing the instructional program and promoting a positive school learning climate. While Model by Jantzi and Leithwood (1996, pp. 514-15) defines six dimensions identifying and articulating vision; fostering the acceptance of group goals ; providing individualized support; intellectual stimulation; providing an appropriate model and high performance expectations. Such models strongly support principals' leadership as leadership of position beholder (Sharma, 2010).

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". Such skills are not technical but humanistic, (Sharma 2010). Research conducted by Sharma (2010), revealed that out of sample of four hundred teachers in Malaysia, over 380 teachers preferred humanistic skills of principal than technical skills. These humanistic skills preferred by the teachers are communication skills, comfort, empathy, decision making, influence, time management, self management and commitment. According to Sharma (2010), such skills not only strengthen the principal in carrying out his mundane work but attract followers towards his leadership that blends transformational and charismatic leadership.

However Leadership is not a concept for self but it should be rightly perceived by followers, Sharma (2011). Various researchers Scotti Jr. and William (1997), Hunter-Boykin and Evans (1995) have linked principals' competencies with perception of teachers. Luo (2004) stated 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 the principals' real self and their perception 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. 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 as moderately negative.

Though there are various researches conducted exploring the perception of teachers on leadership of principals specially leadership capacities of principals, instructional leadership, transformational leadership, using standardized instruments from west, no research has been conducted taking into consideration the dimensions that teachers need to rate their principals.

Also these researches could not bring any conclusion on basis of status of school as excellent school, underperforming schools etc. Hence this research about principals from the perspective of teachers from China, India and Malaysia has greater significance specially leadership of principals of excellent schools.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to explore the rating of teachers on selected attributes of leadership of the principals of excellent schools in three Asian countries. This study therefore answers the following questions

1. What is the rating of principals' leadership attributes selected by teachers in China, Malaysia and India?

2. Is there significant difference in ratings of principals' leadership attributes by teachers on basis of gender, tenure and nationalities of the teachers?

Methodology

Sample

The study was carried out in three Asian countries China, Malaysia and India. All these countries have a list of schools that are proved to be excellent schools on basis of their performances in academic and non academic areas. Then such schools were randomly selected from each country. From all these selected schools ten teachers were randomly selected which represents the sample for the study. The sample representation is as follows

Table 1. Demographic profile of Respondents

		Gender			Work Experience	
	N	Male	Female	< 10 years	10-20 years	> 20 years
China	100	48	52	34	38	28
Malaysia	100	47	53	39	32	29
India	100	49	51	30	38	32
Total	300	144	156	103	108	89
%		48%	52%	34.30%	36%	29.70%

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of respondents from China, Malaysia and India in terms of gender and years of work experience. All these countries are represented by 100 teachers each. In China 48% of teachers are male while 52 % are female; Malaysia is represented by 47 % male and 53 % female while India 49% male and 51% female. It reflects out of 300 respondents 144 (48%) are male and 156(52%) are female. In terms of experience 34% of Chinese teachers, 39% of Malaysians and 30 % of Indian teachers have less than 10 years of work experience while 38% of Chinese and Indian teachers, 32 % of Malaysian have experience between 10 to 20 years. However 28% of Chinese teachers, 29% of Malaysian teachers and 32 % of Indian teachers have over 20 years of experience. Overall 103 teachers (34.3%) have less than ten years of work experience,108 teachers (36%) have experience between 10 to 20 years while 89 teachers(29.7%) have experience of over 20 years.

Instrument

The instrument titled 'Leadership Attributes of My Principal', developed by Sharma (2010) was used to collect data. This instrument comprises of eight dimensions of leadership attributes which are communication skills, comfort, empathy, decision making, influence, time management, self management and commitment, with five items each, total items being forty. The Cronbach Alpha Coefficient is 0.9248 for overall questionnaire. Respondents are required to rate the indicators of leadership attributes utilizing a five point Likert scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is never , 2 is rarely, 3 is sometimes, 4 is usually and 5 is always. For the interpretation means are graded as follows

Means	Indicator	Interpretation
1.00-1.80	Never	Little qualities
1.81-2.60	Rarely	Somewhat qualities
2.61-3.40	sometimes	Moderate qualities
3.14-4.20	Usually	Strong qualities
4.21-5.00	Always	Excellent qualities

The data collected from administration of questionnaire were analyzed by Statistical Package for the Social Sciences SPSS programme, their means and standard deviations were computed and techniques of T-test (for gender) and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) (for tenure and nationalities) were used in order to determine if there were any significant differences according to independent variables.

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Data Analysis & Findings

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Findings on Basis of Gender

Table 2 reveals the ratings of Chinese teachers on leadership qualities of their principals on basis of gender. According to T test results; there are no significant differences in ratings of teachers on the basis of gender for various dimensions of leadership qualities of principals. It is evident that both male and female teachers have rated their principals with excellent leadership qualities. The principals are found to be rated highest for their quality of self management(Mean Male teachers = 4.66 and female teachers =4.68), followed by time management (Mean Male teachers =4.60 and female teacher =4.56),Influence (Mean Male teachers=4.56 and female =4.58), Comfort (Male teachers = 4.34 and female teachers =4.40),Decision Making(Male teachers = 4.32 and female teachers =4.34), Commitment (Male teachers = 4.30 and female teachers =4.34),Communication skills (Male teachers = 4.26 and female teachers =4.32) and Empathy (Male teachers = 4.22 and female teachers =4.30).

Table 2. t test for Ratings of Chinese Teachers on Leadership Qualities of Principals (gender based)

Leadership Qualities	Male (N=48)		Female (N=52)		t test	p value
	M	SD	M	SD		
Communication Skills	4.26	0.71	4.32	0.66	1.42	0.13
Comfort	4.34	0.49	4.4	0.47	0.67	0.61
Empathy	4.22	0.52	4.3	0.71	1.5	0.17
Decision Making	4.32	0.51	4.34	0.48	0.61	0.54
Influence	4.56	0.69	4.58	0.64	0.11	0.9
Self Management	4.66	0.51	4.68	0.46	0.31	0.75
Time Management	4.6	0.54	4.56	0.4	0.76	0.13
Commitment	4.3	0.48	4.34	0.46	0.65	0.57

Table 3 reveals the ratings of Malaysian teachers on leadership qualities of their principals on basis of gender. According to T test results; there are no significant differences in ratings of teachers on basis of gender for various dimensions of leadership qualities of principals. It is evident that both male and female teachers have rated their principals with excellent leadership qualities. The principals are found to be rated highest for their quality of self management(Mean Male teachers = 4.62 and female teachers =4.60), followed by time management (Mean Male teachers =4.55 and female teacher =4.51),Influence (Mean Male teachers=4.54 and female =4.58), decision making (Male teachers = 4.35 and female teachers =4.37),commitment (Male teachers = 4.34 and female teachers =4.30), empathy (Male teachers = 4.31 and female teachers =4.27),comfort (Male teachers = 4.30 and female teachers =4.34) and Communication skills (Male teachers = 4.24 and female teachers =4.28).

Table 3. t test for Ratings of Malaysian Teachers on Leadership Qualities of Principals (gender based)

Leadership Qualities	Male (N=47)		Female (N=53)		t test	p value
	M	SD	M	SD		
Communication Skills	4.24	0.72	4.28	0.71	0.84	0.35
Comfort	4.3	0.52	4.34	0.49	0.76	0.71
Empathy	4.31	0.66	4.27	0.69	0.28	0.92
Decision Making	4.35	0.71	4.37	0.74	0.65	0.86
Influence	4.54	0.48	4.58	0.45	0.34	0.77
Self Management	4.62	0.63	4.6	0.61	0.29	0.91
Time Management	4.55	0.57	4.51	0.58	0.32	0.84
Commitment	4.34	0.71	4.3	0.76	0.54	0.79

Table 4 reveals the ratings of Indian teachers on leadership qualities of their principals on basis of gender. According to T test results; there are no significant differences in ratings of teachers on basis of

gender for various dimensions of leadership qualities of principals. It is evident that both male and female teachers have rated their principals with excellent leadership qualities. The principals are found to be rated highest for their quality of Influence (Mean Male teachers = 4.62 and female teachers =4.58), followed by self management (Mean Male teachers =4.60 and female teacher =4.66),time management(Mean Male teachers=4.53 and female =4.57), Decision making (Male teachers = 4.36 and female teachers =4.42),Comfort (Male teachers = 4.32 and female teachers =4.38), Commitment (Male teachers = 4.31 and female teachers =4.35),Empathy (Male teachers = 4.25 and female teachers =4.27) and communication skills (Male teachers = 4.22 and female teachers =4.26).

Table 4. t test for Ratings of Indian Teachers on Leadership Qualities of Principals (gender based**)**

Leadership Qualities	Male (N=49)		Female (N=51)		t test	p value
	M	SD	M	SD		
Communication Skills	4.22	0.63	4.26	0.65	1.36	0.21
Comfort	4.32	0.46	4.38	0.47	0.72	0.63
Empathy	4.25	0.47	4.27	0.44	1.25	0.19
Decision Making	4.36	0.71	4.42	0.77	1.48	0.84
Influence	4.62	0.64	4.58	0.71	0.28	0.87
Self Management	4.6	0.48	4.66	0.51	0.52	0.82
Time Management	4.53	0.52	4.57	0.54	0.66	0.29
Commitment	4.31	0.55	4.35	0.57	0.59	0.22

Findings on Basis of tenure (years of experience)

Teachers are divided into three tenure groups
(1) 1-10 years of experience
(2) 11-20 years of experience
(3) 21 year and above years of experience

Table 5 reveals the ratings of Chinese teachers on leadership qualities of principals on basis of years of experience. According to one way ANOVA results there are no significant differences between ratings of teachers on eight dimensions of leadership qualities of teachers on the basis of years of experience. It is evident from findings that all the three categories of teachers, teachers with 1-10 years of experience; with 11-20 years of experience and teachers with over 21 years of experience feel that their principals have excellent leadership qualities on eight selected dimensions of leadership qualities.

Table 5. Chinese teachers' ratings on leadership qualities of principals tenure based(one way ANOVA results**)**

Leadership Qualities	1-10 years		11-20 years		21 years and above		Variance	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F	p
Communication Skills	4.31	0.69	4.27	0.72	4.29	0.67	2.24	0.108
Comfort	4.35	0.49	4.39	0.46	4.37	0.43	2.36	0.21
Empathy	4.24	0.51	4.23	0.54	4.31	0.53	2.32	0.15
Decision Making	4.34	0.54	4.32	0.53	4.33	0.49	2.18	0.13
Influence	4.59	0.64	4.56	0.71	4.55	0.66	2.21	0.32
Self Management	4.65	0.49	4.7	0.54	4.66	0.53	2.33	0.27
Time Management	4.57	0.53	4.62	0.56	4.55	0.61	2.41	0.16
Commitment	4.29	0.45	4.33	0.47	4.34	0.48	2.22	0.104

Table 6 reveals the ratings of Malaysian teachers on leadership qualities of principals on basis of years of experience. According to one way ANOVA results there are no significant differences between ratings of teachers on eight dimensions of leadership qualities of teachers on the basis of years of experience. It is

evident from findings that all the three categories of teachers, teachers with 1-10 years of experience; with 11-20 years of experience and teachers with over 21 years of experience feel that their principals have excellent leadership qualities on eight selected dimensions of leadership qualities.

Table 6. Malaysian teachers' ratings on leadership qualities of principals tenure based(one way ANOVA results)

Leadership Qualities	1-10 years		11-20 years		21 years and above		Variance	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F	p
Communication Skills	4.24	0.71	4.26	0.72	4.28	0.69	2.15	0.14
Comfort	4.32	0.5	4.31	0.48	4.33	0.46	2.24	0.13
Empathy	4.32	0.64	4.29	0.66	4.26	0.63	2.36	0.21
Decision Making	4.33	0.72	4.39	0.73	4.36	0.71	2.44	0.23
Influence	4.55	0.45	4.56	0.44	4.57	0.44	2.16	0.34
Self Management	4.62	0.62	4.64	0.63	4.59	0.62	2.67	0.27
Time Management	4.49	0.55	4.52	0.6	4.55	0.59	2.21	0.29
Commitment	4.3	0.69	4.34	0.72	4.32	0.71	2.23	0.22

Table 7 reveals the ratings of Indian teachers on leadership qualities of principals on basis of years of experience. According to one way ANOVA results there are no significant differences between ratings of teachers on eight dimensions of leadership qualities of teachers on the basis of years of experience. It is evident from findings that all the three categories of teachers, teachers with 1-10 years of experience; with 11-20 years of experience and teachers with over 21 years of experience feel that their principals have excellent leadership qualities on eight selected dimensions of leadership qualities.

Table 7. Indian teachers' ratings on leadership qualities of principals tenure based(one way ANOVA results)

	1-10 years		11-20 years		21 years and above		Variance
Leadership Qualities	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F
Communication Skills	4.23	0.62	4.25	0.64	4.25	0.63	2.17
Comfort	4.34	0.45	4.36	0.43	4.35	0.45	2.21
Empathy	4.27	0.51	4.25	0.48	4.26	0.52	2.33
Decision Making	4.34	0.72	4.37	0.71	4.39	0.73	2.41
Influence	4.58	0.63	4.6	0.74	4.62	0.65	2.18
Self Management	4.6	0.46	4.63	0.48	4.66	0.49	2.64
Time Management	4.53	0.52	4.55	0.55	4.57	0.54	2.19
Commitment	4.32	0.56	4.33	0.57	4.35	0.53	2.21

Findings on Basis of Nationalities

Table 8 compares the ratings of teachers from three countries China, Malaysia and India on leadership qualities of principals. According to one way ANOVA results there are no significant differences between ratings of teachers on eight dimensions of leadership qualities of teachers on the basis of nationalities of teachers. It is evident from findings that teachers from these three countries feel that their principals have excellent leadership qualities on eight selected dimensions of leadership qualities.

Table 8. Comparison on teachers' ratings on leadership qualities of principals nationality based(one way ANOVA results)

Leadership Qualities	Chinese		Malaysian		Indian		Variance	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F	p
Communication Skills	4.29	0.69	4.26	0.71	4.24	0.64	2.21	0.14
Comfort	4.37	0.48	4.32	0.5	4.36	0.47	2.32	0.24
Empathy	4.26	0.64	4.29	0.67	4.26	0.46	2.29	0.17
Decision Making	4.33	0.5	4.36	0.73	4.39	0.74	2.15	0.12
Influence	4.57	0.66	4.56	0.47	4.6	0.68	2.19	0.38
Self Management	4.67	0.49	4.61	0.62	4.63	0.5	2.31	0.19
Time Management	4.58	0.55	4.52	0.57	4.55	0.53	2.38	0.1
Commitment	4.32	0.47	4.32	0.74	4.33	0.56	2.24	0.11

Discussion & Conclusion

This study has focused on leadership attributes of principals as envisaged and selected by teachers. The eight dimensions of leadership indicated throughout the study reflects the leadership qualities of principals that are always expected out of them by their teachers, Sharma(2010).Its noteworthy that all the principals were rated excellent by the teachers in all eight dimensions. Such findings have contradicted earlier findings by Hunter-Boykin and Evans (1995), Lee, Walker and Bodycott (2000) and Luo and Najjar (2007) where perceptions of teachers regarding leadership of their principals were found to be negative. This positive rating for principals is indicative of strength of leader-follower relationship between principals and teachers and is in accordance with Sharma (2011) which states, " *leadership is not a concept for self but it should be rightly perceived by followers*" and *"such skills not only strengthen the principal in carrying out his mundane work but attract followers towards his leadership that blends transformational and charismatic leadership"*, Sharma (2010).One of the interesting findings that has emerged out of this study is that rating of principals by teachers from three countries China, Malaysia and India has no difference on basis of gender, tenure and nationalities. This clearly infers that if a school principal is really an excellent leader, he would be viewed excellent by all teachers irrespective of gender, tenure and nationalities as such. Besides it is evident from this study that excellent schools have excellent principals which is in line with statement by Barth (1990, p. 64), "Show *me a good school, I will show you a good principal"*. This study contributes to the new knowledge of leadership qualities that a school leader must possess. None of the previous researchers have ever talked or studied any of these qualities. The results of this study contribute to the large body of school leadership literature adding to the qualities of excellent principals in three Asian countries. In contradiction to previous researches this study has emphasized on humanistic skills of leadership, it's essential to study both technical and humanistic skills of principals together in order to establish relationship between the two.

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