AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP OF PRINCIPALS IN BASIC EDUCATION SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to investigate authentic leadership of principals in Basic Education Schools. In this study, descriptive survey design and quantitative approach will be used. A total of 66 principals by using purposive sampling and 396 teachers by using the equal size stratified random sampling from Mon State were selected as subjects. The required data for quantitative study were collected by using two sets of questionnaires. The first set of questionnaire was developed for principals and the second was for teachers. Questionnaire for principals was composed of two parts; factors affecting authentic leadership and authentic leadership practices of principals with eight dimensions. The questionnaire for teachers was also developed based on these eight dimensions of authentic leadership. The internal consistencies ($\propto$) of the questionnaire were 0.86 for principals' authentic leadership practices, 0.91 for psychological capital, 0.82 for self-leadership, 0.86 for self-knowledge and 0.76 for social intelligence. Descriptive statistics, multiple regression analysis were conducted to analyze the data. The result of multiple regression showed that psychological capital was the best predictor, self-knowledge was the second and self-leadership was the third predictor for principals' authentic leadership practices. This study also highlights the importance of authentic leadership practices of principals in Basic Education Schools.

Keyword: Authentic leadership

Introduction

In this day and age, there is an urgent need, both on a global and local scale, for a new type of leadership that will maintain the credibility and authenticity of individuals and organizations. Effective leadership has been shown to be the critical attribute of any successful enterprise and is essential for implementing strategies that engage followers and ensure organizational success. Leadership is a way to produce a vision for the organization and followers, and encourages followers with self-confidence and trust through coordination and communication (Bohn & Grafton, 2002).

Authentic leadership behaviors play a crucial role in creating and developing ethical culture in organizations (Ardichvili et al., 2011, as cited in Peter, 2016). Authentic leaders acting as moral agents responsible for validating the ethical and moral standards of their followers, and creating ethical culture within their organizations. The society must be assured that its professionals are faithfully fulfilling the weighty ethical obligation which their advanced training has thrust upon them (Khin Zaw, 2001). Authentic leaders have the ability to adjust their behavior in accordance with their own self, a clear personal identity, and the ability to harmonize their preferences with the demands of society.

In this regard, the presence of sincere and supportive leadership is essential to improving followers' performance and organizational success by positively changing followers' attitudes in the current educational environment (Alok & Israel, 2012).

Significance of the Study

There is vast agreement that ethics should be at the heart of the vision for 21st century schools. Authentic leadership has given a considerable emphasis in leadership literature amidst the prevalent hitches of economic failures, ethical meltdowns, corporate scandals, and corruption

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in the government. Begley (2001, p.353) states that authentic leadership is a metaphor for "professionally, effectively, ethically sound, and consciously reflective practices in educational administration". Also, authenticity must be prevalent in education, because experiences are value-based. Society derives a lot of its morals from education (Bhindi & Duignan, 2003).

One recently expected leadership from school administrators is authentic leadership. Thus, authentic leadership is an essential form of leadership that school administrators should demonstrate. Authentic leadership includes school administrators being like themselves with sincere behavior rather than giving them a leader impression, honest and transparent relationships, and the establishing a school climate based on trust and ethical principles. The trust factor at the core of authentic leadership is a very important concept as it affects the quality of education. The decline of trust in schools is an important factor leading to deterioration of school climate and poor quality of education (Başaran & Kıral, 2020).

This study also provides significant values to principals, teachers and responsible officers in the education field. This study shows why authentic leadership is important within an organization for organizational development and teachers' success.

Theoretical Framework

This research study will be led by the following theoretical framework.

Authentic leadership is a process based on both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, leading to increased self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self- development" (Luthan & Avolio, 2003). Based on aspects of authentic leadership developed by Walumbwa, et al., (2008), George (2003), George, et al., (2007), Robertson (2012) & Partrid (2016), the following dimensions of authentic leadership will be used in this research work.

- Self-awareness
- Balanced Processing
- Internalized Moral Perspective
- Relational Transparency
- Demonstrating Self-discipline
- Empowering Others to Lead
- Courage
- Integrity and Humility

Based on these research findings of Northouse (2013), Kotze (2016), Peus et al., (2012) and Harter (2012, as cited in Boateng et al., 2018) about the factors affecting authentic leadership, the following factors will be measured to identify the predictors for developing authentic leadership in this research work.

- Psychological Capital (Confidence, Hope, Resilience and Optimism)
- Self-leadership
- Self-knowledge
- Social Intelligence

Research Objectives

General Objective

- To investigate authentic leadership practices of principals in Basic Education Schools

Specific Objectives

- To analyze levels of principals' authentic leadership practices

- To investigate the levels of psychological capital, self-leadership, self-knowledge and social intelligence of principals
- To identify the factors affecting the authentic leadership practices of principals

Research Questions
1. What are the levels of principals' authentic leadership practices?
2. What are the levels of psychological capital, self-leadership, self-knowledge and social intelligence of principals?
3. What are the factors affecting the authentic leadership practices of principals?

Limitation of the Study

The study is geographically limited to the Mon State. The subjects of this study are sixty-six High School principals, three-hundred and ninety-six teachers (including an equal proportion of senior teachers, junior teachers and primary teachers). The aim of the study is to investigate authentic leadership practices of principals in limited areas. The study will make a broad description of principals' current efforts of authentic leadership practices and the factors affecting this leadership and various issues concerning to the theme of this study.

Definition of Key Term

Authentic leadership

A process based on both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, leading to greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behavior on the part of leaders and employees, fostering positive self-development. (Luthans & Avolio, 2003).

Review of Related Literature

Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership is a process that emerges from both positive psychological skills and a highly developed organizational context, leading to both self-awareness and self-regulated positive behavior in leaders and employees, leading to positive self-esteem and promoting development (Luthan & Avolio, 2003).

Factors Affecting Authentic Leadership

Positive Psychological Capital

Confidence has to do with self-efficacy, namely, "the belief that one has the ability to successfully accomplish a specified task" (Northouse, 2013). This is one of the hallmarks of a virtuous person.

Hope has been described as a positive motivational state based on willpower and goal planning. Authentic leaders with hope have goals they know they can achieve; their hope encourages followers to trust them and believe in their goals (Northouse, 2013).

Optimism refers to the cognitive process of seeing situations positively and having favorable expectations about the future (Northouse, 2013). Optimistic leaders are also positive about their skills and their achievable outcomes.

The fourth positive psychological attribute is **resilience**. It refers to the ability to recover and adjust to adversity including the ability to positively adapt to hardships and suffering (Northouse, 2013).

Self-Leadership as an Antecedent of Authentic Leadership

Self-leadership is a process through which people influence themselves to possess self-direction and self-motivation necessary for achievement (DiLiello & Houghton, 2006).

In addition, Stewart et al., (2011) propose that self-leaders are more likely to leave if the organization does not share their standards or values.

Self-Knowledge as Antecedent of Authentic Leadership

Leaders who possess a high degree of self-knowledge are clear about their values and beliefs (Shamir & Eilam 2005). In short, self-knowledge about their values and beliefs as well as their personal strengths and weaknesses is a prerequisite for leaders to act in ways that are perceived as authentic by their followers.

Social Intelligence as Antecedent of Authentic Leadership

Social intelligence is the ability to think, apprehend, manage and act properly in human social relationships (Throndike, 1920). To work effectively as an authentic leader, there is a need for a better understanding of the environment of the environment and how this environment can be manipulated to serve the purpose of the organization-social intelligence (Boateng et al., 2018).

Methodology

In this study, descriptive survey design and quantitative approach will be used.

Instrumentation

The survey questionnaire was used to collect the required data for the study. Through the review of related literature and based on the established questionnaires, the two sets of questionnaire were developed: Questionnaire 1 for principals and Questionnaire 2 for teachers. Questionnaire 1 for principals was composed of two parts. The first part was the questions for factors affecting authentic leadership practices of principals and the second was questions for principals' authentic leadership practices.

The first part was composed of four dimensions (Psychological Capital, Self-leadership, Self-knowledge and Social intelligence) and based on Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ) developed by Luthans, et al. (2007), Abbreviated Self-Leadership Questionnaire (ASLQ) developed by Houghton et al. (2012), Integrative Self-knowledge Skill, developed by Ghorbani, N et al. (2008) and Social Intelligence Scale, developed by Kriemeen and Hajaia (2017) and through literature review. This was developed as four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 4 (*1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, and 4=strongly agree*) and comprised with 51 items. Out of these 51 items, 26 items were for "Psychological capital", 9 items for "Self-leadership", 8 items for "Self-knowledge" and 8 items for "Social Intelligence".

The second part was comprised with eight dimensions and based on Authentic Leadership Inventory (ALI) developed by Neider and Schriesheim (2011), Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (The ALQ) Survey developed by Fiona Beddoes-Jones (2015) and through the review of related literature. This was developed as four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 4 (*1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=often and 4=always*) with 60 items. Out of these 60 items, 7 items for "Self-awareness", 8 items for "Balanced Processing", 6 items for "Internalized Moral Perspective", 8 items for "Relational Transparency", 9 items for "Demonstrating Self-discipline", 7 items for "Empowering Others to Lead", 7 items for "Courage" and 8 items for "Integrity and Humility".

Questionnaire 2 for teachers was for their perceptions of principals' authentic leadership practices with eight dimensions of authentic leadership.

Instrument Reliability: Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the reliability of this instrument. The internal consistencies ($\propto$) of the questionnaire were 0.86 for principals' authentic leadership practices, 0.91 for psychological capital, 0.82 for self-leadership, 0.86 for self-knowledge and 0.76 for social intelligence.

Research Findings

Levels of Principals' Authentic Leadership Practices

Table 1 Levels of Principals' Authentic Leadership Practices   **(N=462)**

Variables	Mean	SD	Remark
Self-awareness	3.14	.37	High
Balanced Processing	3.26	.40	High
Internalized Moral Perspective	3.07	.39	High
Relational Transparency	3.20	.38	High
Demonstrating Self Discipline	3.28	.43	High
Empowering Others to Lead	3.20	.40	High
Courage	3.19	.44	High
Integrity and Humility	3.24	.41	High
Overall Authentic Leadership Practices	**3.20**	**.36**	**High**

**Scoring Direction:**

1.00-1.99=Low   2.00-2.99=Moderate   3.00-4.00=High

According to the Table 1, it could be analyzed that the sampled principals' authentic leadership practices were high in all dimensions as the mean values were between 3.00 and 4.00. Furthermore, it was found that principals' overall authentic leadership practices in their schools was high as its mean value was 3.20.
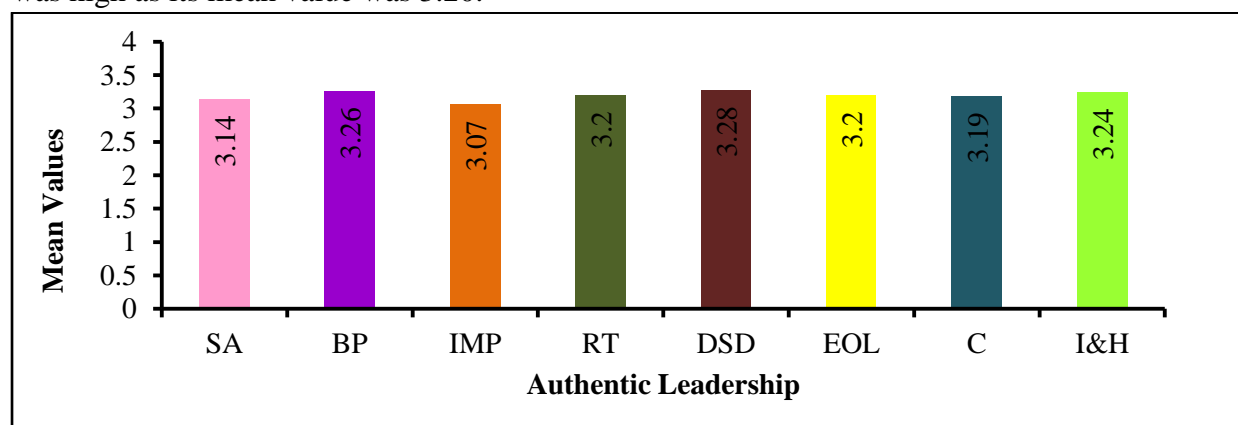
SA=Self-awareness   BP=Balanced Processing
IMP=Internalized Moral Perspective   RT=Relational Transparency
DSD=Demonstrating Self-discipline   EOL=Empowering Others to Lead
C=Courage   I &H= Integrity and Humility

Figure 1 Mean Values for Principals' Authentic Leadership Practices

Next, Table 2 shows the number and percentages of the sampled principals showing the level of authentic leadership practices.

Table 2 Number and Percentages of the Sampled Principals Showing the Level of Authentic Leadership Practices   **(N=66)**

Variable	No. of Principals (%)	Remark
Authentic Leadership Practices	51 (77.27%)	High
	15 (22.73%)	Moderate

Scoring Direction:

1.00-1.99=Low   **2.00-2.99=Moderate**   **3.00-4.00=High**

According to the scoring range in Table 2, 51 (77.27%) of the sampled principals possessed high level and 15 (22.73%) possessed moderate level of authentic leadership practices. So it can be realized that most of the sampled principals had high level of authentic leadership practices in their schools.

Investigating the Levels of Psychological Capital, Self-leadership, Self-knowledge and Social Intelligence of Principals

The descriptive results of principals' psychological capital, self-leadership, self-knowledge and social intelligence were described in Table 3.

Table 3 Levels of Psychological Capital, Self-Leadership, Self-knowledge and Social Intelligence of Principals in Basic Education Schools   (N=66)

Predictor Variables	Mean	SD	Remark
Psychological Capital	3.09	.51	High
Self-leadership	3.14	.46	High
Self-knowledge	3.23	.55	High
Social Intelligence	2.99	.27	Moderate

Identifying Factors Affecting Authentic Leadership Practices of Principals

Four variables were identified as factors to affect principals' authentic leadership: psychological capital (confidence, hope, resilience and optimism), self-leadership, self-knowledge, social intelligence. Simultaneous multiple regression was conducted to find out the factors affecting principals' authentic leadership. Means, standard deviations and inter-correlations were shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Means, Standard Deviations and Inter-correlations for Principals' Authentic Leadership Practices and Predictor Variables   (N=66)

Variables	Mean	SD	PC	SL	SK	SI
AL Practices	3.20	.42	.66***	.63***	.56***	.18
Predictor Variables						
PC	3.09	.28		.60***	.39**	.23
SL	3.14	.37			.48**	.17
SK	3.23	.41				.07
SI	2.99	.42				

***p<.001   **p<.01

Note: PC=Psychological Capital, SL=Self-leadership, SK=Self-knowledge, SI=Social Intelligence

The analysis of simultaneous multiple regression for factors affecting principals' authentic leadership practices were shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analysis for Factors Affecting Principals' Authentic Leadership Practices   (N=66)

Variables	B	Std.Error	Beta
Psychological Capital	.717	.215	.395**
Self-leadership	.103	.226	.242*
Self-knowledge	.536	.190	.288**
Social Intelligence	.112	.170	.016
Constant	2.764	.242	
Note. R=.76, R^2 =.56, F(8,57)=2.977			
**p<.01 *p<.05			

The Regression Equation is:
Authentic Leadership= 2.764+.717PC+.103Sl+.536Sk+.112SI

The beta coefficients were presented in Table 5. PC, SL and SK significantly predict when all four variables were included. The adjusted R squared value was .56 (R=.76). This indicates that 56% of the variance of principals' authentic leadership was explained.

According to the beta weights, "Psychological Capital (Confidence, Hope, Resiliency and Optimism)" (β = .395, $p<.001$) appears to be the best predictor of principals' authentic leadership. Also, "Self-knowledge" (β =.288, $p<.01$) appears to be the second predictor and "Self-knowledge" (β =.242, $p<.05$) appears to be the third predictor of principals' authentic leadership. On the other hand, another variable appears to be important for authentic leadership of principals.
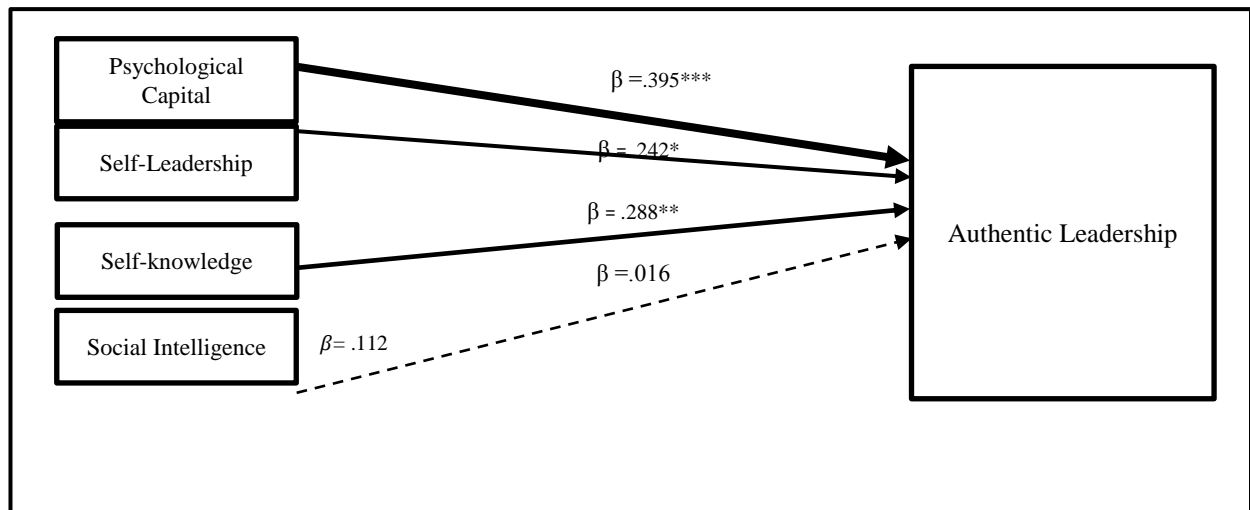

Figure2. Factors Affecting Autthentic Leadership of Principals

⟶ Predicting on Authentic Leadership of Principals (Statistically Significant)

- - - → Predicting on Authentic Leadership of Principals (Not Significant)

Conclusion and Discussion

Regarding **the levels of principals' authentic leadership practices**, the principals' practices were found with high level in the eight dimensions of authentic leadership. It was also found that the level of the overall authentic leadership practices of the principals was high. Furthermore, no principal possessed low level, 51 (77.27%) of the principals possessed high level and 15 (22.73%) possessed moderate level of authentic leadership practices. So it can be realized that most of the principals had high level of authentic leadership practices in their schools.

With regard to the investigation of principals' **psychological capital**, it was found that the principals' level of psychological capital was high (mean=3.09). As the result of investigation of the principals' **self-leadership**, the principals had high level of self-leadership (mean=3.14). Concerning with the results of the examination of principals' **self-knowledge and social intelligence**, it was found that the principals had high level of self-knowledge (mean=3.23) and moderate level of social intelligence (mean=2.99).

According to the results of finding the factors affecting authentic leadership of principals, it was found that principals' authentic leadership was significantly predicted by psychological capital (confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience), self-leadership and self-knowledge when four variables were included. According to the beta weight, it is likely to be concluded that psychological capital was the most striking, self-knowledge was the second and self-leadership was third.

Discussion

Self-awareness

According to Khin Zaw (2001), the professions are essentially occupations which have developed a heightened self-consciousness and an acute awareness of social distinctiveness. The findings of this study revealed that the level of the sampled principals' practices in self-awareness category of authentic leadership were high. The research finding of Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) gives insights for this study that employees are willing to reciprocate positively when they perceived that their high self-aware superiors treat them sincerely. Therefore, the researcher would like to suggest that the school leaders should make self-reflection almost all the time to have consciousness of their core values, emotions, strengths and weaknesses in leading the subordinates.

Balanced Processing

The sampled principals' balanced processing practices were found as high level practices according to the quantitative results. This finding seems to be consistent with Darvish and Razaei (2011) that self-awareness and balanced processing behaviors of leaders significantly contributed to high team commitment, job satisfaction and work engagement of followers. From the researcher point of view, it is extremely important that the school principals should avoid discrimination between the subordinates, empower them as well as School Board to participate in the process of decision-making by asking about their attitudes and opinions.

Internalized Moral Perspective

According to the maxim of Kant (as cited in Khin Zaw, 2001), each person should act in all situations as he believes the moral principle within him and all others would tell him to act. The finding of the study revealed that the principals' practices level was high in the dimension of internalized moral perspective. It would be suggested as a crucial factor that the school administrators should have consistency between their internal values, beliefs and their real conduct even though it had the situations of facing some dilemmas in order to win the authentic trust of followers.

Relational Transparency

When leaders were transparent, followers earned respect for them, and utilized transparency as they developed their own heightened authenticity (Meacham, 2007). Leaders who transparently and positively interacted with followers created the opportunity for mutually beneficial positive social exchanges and this built trust and integrity within the leader-follower relationship. It is importantly suggested by the researcher that the principals should establish transparent relationship with the staff to earn trust and respect of followers by showing their authentic image (disclosing their ideas and beliefs concerning social and organizational issues).

Demonstrating Self-discipline

The result showed that the level of principals' practices for demonstrating self-discipline was high. As the consistent finding, Sigma Assessment Systems (2017) explored that leaders who are high on self-discipline are not easily distracted, and can maintain concentration despite other priorities or requirements for their attention. From the researcher point of view, principals should work with good habits to become disciplined leaders to stand as exemplary leaders in front of their subordinates.

Empowering Others to Lead

The finding indicated that the level of principals' practices for empowering others to lead was high. Participation in decision-making process, collaborating on a meaningful project by

staff, is related to individual cognitions of empowerment and consequently, positively related to increased satisfaction, greater motivation and engagement and more innovative and creative behavior (Spreitzer, 1996). Thus, it is importantly suggested that school principals should foster empowering their teachers in leadership duties for different roles as well as making their own decisions about professional advancement and everyday practice.

Courage

The quantitative finding indicated that the level of principals' practices in the dimension of courage was high. This finding was supported by the conceptualization of Zauderer (1992, cited in Yanginlar et al., 2013) that moral leaders distinguish right from wrong, seek justice, take responsibility, encourage commitments, show courage to stand up for what is right, encourage and develop others. Thus, it is really important that the school leaders should pursue and utilize courage-related characteristics for solving difficult problems for better results.

Integrity and Humility

In the quantitative result, the level of principals' practices was high. In addition, the school leaders who had the mind of integrity and humility undeniably earned the love and respect of their followers and possessed better achievements. Humility enables leaders to be aware of the limits of their knowledge avoid being overly opinionated in order to act as an example and accumulate social capital (Chiu et al., 2012). From the researcher point of view, it is crucial for school leaders to have moral integrity and humility in communicating with their subordinates to achieve mutual respect between them.

Additionally, the study investigated ***the levels of school principals' psychological capital, self-leadership, self-knowledge, social intelligence***. Firstly, the principals had high level of psychological capital in the quantitative study. The leader's authentic leadership style is related with the psychological capital which enables the leader to encourage the involvement and participation of followers in the decision-making process, which enhances the trust to the leader. The leaders will highly value honest and realistic relationships with their followers when they are highly authentic (Chen & Yang, 2017).

Self-leading individuals tend to leave if the organization does not share their standards or values. Peus et al. (2012) proposed that followers' perceptions about authentic leadership is directly related gaining the leader's self-knowledge. Moreover, the findings highlighted that high level of self-knowledge were found in the sampled principals.

Albrecht (2009, as cited in Boateng, 2018) stated that individuals with social intelligence have and outstanding personality of attracting others and demonstrate a genuine interest in their fellow workmates. Based on the results of findings, the school principals also had moderate level of social intelligence. Hence, it will need a better understanding of the environment and how this environment can be manipulated to fit the organizational purpose in order to work effectively as an authentic leader.

Suggestions

The following suggestions are based on the analyses of the research findings.

- All teachers and Board members should be allowed to involve in the decision-making process of important school affairs at meetings.
- Teachers should be treated equally and opportunities to express their ideas and perspectives should be provided by school principals.
- School principals should behave in accordance with leadership ethics, staff rules and laws in leading their organizations.

- The attitudes and beliefs of school principals should be transparently expressed to the subordinates and members of School Board.

- Teachers should be provided chances to lead by themselves at various activities of the school such as class and subject deans, leaders in sport teams, religious groups and other volunteer organizations.

- School principals should approach and solve all challenges and difficulties without fear, decisively and consciously relating to various roles of the school.

- School principals should not change their moral standpoint on important issues.

- School principals should actively participate in social activities at school.

- The responsible officers in education field should implement the training programme for school leaders which support the improvement of leaders' psychological capital, self-leadership and self-knowledge abilities which are the essentials to become authentic leaders.

Acknowledgements

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