



## INVESTIGATING ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE PRINCIPLES OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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### Abstract:

This study investigates the perception of academic administrators on the basic principles of educational leadership in higher education. The aim is to identify the principles that increase the level of effectiveness in academic works. A survey method was used to collect the data of the study. Questionnaires were distributed to academic administrators at the Kulliyah of Economics and Management Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). The findings revealed that the principles of educational leadership could help enrich excellence in higher education institutions. Also, the principles of educational leadership are applicable in leveraging academic administrators' leadership qualities in higher education institutions.

**Keywords:** leadership; academic administrator; perception and principles

### 1. Introduction

Leadership is a key consideration in education institutions. Institutions draw upon the liberal arts to train the students for and about leadership. Good leadership training is highly valued, with many democracies placing a premium on leadership quality. Leadership exercises offer the chance to advance one's practical life and administrative skills like team development, decision making, conflict resolution, solving problems, team building, creativity and critical thinking skills (Gunter, 2001). A leader should work as a community builder inside the school, department and faculty and beyond. Leaders have to fashion a sense of civic duty in the academic environment that will inspire all academic members towards the collective advancement of the institution as opposed to individual gains. In education institutions, the department chairperson,

faculty dean, vice dean, department head and program coordinator are bound to ensure confidence and explore skills, knowledge and experience to articulate a vision of superiority for departments and faculties of the institutions.

Leaders are responsible for ensuring a positive school climate and develop good communication skills within the organisation, and with the community and stockholders. A leader should be aware of what transpires inside and outside of the institution. For Linda (2003), mastering administrative procedures to identify the techniques to solve problems is an outstanding quality of an effective leader.

## **2. Literature Review**

The literature on the important principles of educational leadership is investigated to glean the academic administrators' perception of the principles of educational leadership in institutions of higher education. The review seeks to provide a framework of principles of educational leadership in higher education institutions within which the researcher can answer the important research questions. This review can guide the researcher to know what has been done and what is yet to be done which invariably leads the researcher to a well-written, well-documented and well-planned report.

### **2.1 Leadership**

It is hard to define leadership as it provides different meanings to different people. One concise definition is that it is an act of leading people or a group collectively to a direction to achieve the goals of the organisation. Leadership is a process of directing a group of people or subordinates to a direction without force (Kotter, 1988).

### **2.2 Educational Leadership**

Leadership is a process of leading an organisation. In educational organisations, it means a process of leading which involves working with students, staff, teachers and other education professionals to achieve common educational aims (Philip and Darren, 2013). In the United States, educational leadership is commonly used, while the United Kingdom uses the term educational management. In brief, head teachers, superintendents, principals, program coordinators, head of the department, administrators, provosts and the dean and deputy dean of the faculty are known as educational leaders (Northouse, 2007).

### **2.3 Leadership Categories**

According to a huge number of empirical investigations on leadership categories, researchers have suggested six major leadership styles in the field of educational administration (Lunenburg, 2004). These styles are instructional leadership, transformational leadership, moral leadership, participative leadership, contingency leadership and managerial leadership.

### **2.4 Principles of Leadership**

Leadership is not just an order or direction to the subordinates, but it is a system grounded by the zeal of principles. It is an important issue for the success of any organisation (Yukl, 2010). A leader cannot simply lead a group, but he or she should lead the subordinates by following principles of leadership. Using these principles during leadership practice, leaders can have a significant impact on the followers. Leaders need to practice these principles to communicate, build teams, motivate professionals, embrace diversity, and resolve conflicts in an organisation (Shay et al., 2003). Below are principles for successful leadership and transform an expected goal of an organisation into a reality with and through a group of people.

### **2.5 Trust and Faith**

Trust is a vital factor that fosters a good working relationship with others. It is the consequence of a faithful service to the followers in an effective work environment. This principle makes a leader or person acceptable not only in the workplace but also in the society (Mineo, 2014). Due to his trustworthiness and honesty, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was known to the people of Makkah as 'Al Amin' meaning the trustworthy person (Jubran, 2002). By trusting each other and working accordingly, an organisation can create a peaceful and harmonious workplace. Through applying this principle, a leader can be an effective and truthful leader to all his followers in the organisation.

### **2.6 Responsibility**

According to Al-Buraey (1994: 200), responsibility is *"the duty of using power and authority in an appropriate way in the pursuit of objectives given by others in the authority"*. Leadership is that kind of responsibility given to a leader to act accordingly. For Jubran (2002), responsibility is a fundamental and important principle for the leader of an educational administration. As an educational leader, he or she is responsible for providing the proper service to the students, teachers, staff and community. He or she is responsible for implementing the role given by the educational authority from the state government or central government. Administrative leaders of higher education

institutions should inspire their fellows and administrative staff and inculcate the importance of responsibility to finalise duties on time.

### **2.7 Accountability**

Accountability is a duty of a person that leads him/her to evaluate his work for which he will be questioned by his leader, manager or boss. Accountability in leadership is not an answer in itself; it is an ongoing practice of responsibilities (Strand, 2011). In educational leadership, the central goal of accountability is to create an effective teaching and learning environment. Accountability is a way to judge the performance of a head of the organisation, head of department and dean of faculty. It helps people do the right thing at the right time. Accountability in the educational institute seeks to increase the students' daily performance and keep students on track.

### **2.8 Humility**

Humility in a leader creates a positive environment in the workplace. It encourages followers to draw near to the leader and carry out his/her responsibility with sincerity and honesty to achieve the goals of an organisation. Humility is being modest, cordial, gentle and simple in manner, free of arrogance and pride, and to be kind to others and confess of one's defects or shortcomings (Strufing, 2014). It is a cordial and soft expression of a man. This principle of leadership prepares an administrator with a good personality. By having this character of submission and servant-hood, educational leaders are more likely to succeed in their administrative tasks by confessing and correcting their mistakes (Gupta & Singh, 2013).

### **2.9 Justice**

Justice in leadership is essential for fairness, equality and solidarity between leaders and followers. To ensure justice among the followers, educational leaders must have a clear understanding, relevant information and real skills focused on justice. For an administrator, justice is important in dealing with different groups of staff and workers in the organisation. The success of the administration depends on the understanding of different groups of workers and being just without discrimination and doing favouritism (Jean-Marie et al., 2009). Leaders should embody the rule of justice within their organisational belief and systems of values.

### **2.10 Self-confidence**

Self-confidence is the esteem one feels concerning their performance, qualities, personal judgement, ability and power. It is someone believing that he or she can carry out the

assigned duties. Self-confidence is very important for a leader for moral strength to his/her followers or administrative staff (George and Douglas, 2004). This is an important principle for educational leadership which helps leaders offer strong support to academic staff and introduce appropriate guidelines for the students to facilitate the process of teaching and learning.

### **2.11 Morality**

Morality in leadership means leaders are committed to instituting change to achieve the goals of the organisation. Leadership is not a matter of force; by definition, a leader is one, who guides, directs, manages and leads by example (Manoj and Shilpa, 2013). The Prophet (PBUH) is the best model for the Muslim Ummah because of his excellent behaviour. Educational leadership is highly connected with morality due to its commitment to promoting excellent services to the client. The method of attaining this objective is to practice and display an example of moral behaviour by the educational administrator. Leaders need to have a standard of morality as they are working with teachers who struggle to implement authentic learning in their schools and classrooms and students who will become the future leaders of the nation (Paul, 2013).

### **2.12 Power of Influence**

Influence is defined as an ability that changes an individual's perception. It can be conduct that effects a change or impact on others that affects the way they think or the work they do. Power is the capacity or possibility to direct the behaviour of others. Leadership is theorised as a process of influence that depends on an individual's behaviour being accepted by others (De Jong and Den Hartog, 2007). Influential power is very important for a leader to run an organisation smoothly. A good leader does his/her best to influence the followers by values and ethics in their leadership style and actions. Educational leaders should understand the power of influence for analysing the surroundings and achieving goals. An educational leader should display both power and influence in a positive manner (Wayne & Page, 2007).

### **2.13 Ethics**

Ethics is an important issue in all aspects of life. It is the coordination of moral principles and rules in human action and a defining standard of a good person (Salim, 1999). Ethics initiates with the exercise of standards, both individual and administrative. Leaders must be conscious of their principles, morals, and system of beliefs and making the right decision. In educational institutions, leaders are not only dealing with students and lecturers but must also work toward developing an

educational system to frame strategies that promote the importance of the educational institution. Thus, educational leadership cannot be separated from this principle. Also, leaders play with power which can be used for good as well as for evil. Leaders should promote good ethics among the staff and followers in the organisation to help achieve the organisation's goals.

### **3. Purpose of the Study**

This paper explores and examines the perception of academic administrators towards educational leadership in higher education institutions. It seeks to identify the basic principles of educational leadership in higher education institutions and determine the leadership principles that can be practised by administrators. This will help to ascertain the effective leadership principles that need to be examined to increase the level of effectiveness in academic works.

### **4. Methodology**

Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis of quantitative methodology is adopted. SPSS version 15 is used to analyse the data. Around 70 respondents were selected from the Kulliyyah of Economics and Management Sciences (KENMS), IIUM to participate in this study. Only 65 respondents completed and returned the survey questionnaire. A purposive sampling technique was adopted due to the insufficient sample size. The survey questionnaires were distributed by hand to the respondents, and a Likert scale of 1-5 was used to measure the responses.

To assess the validity of the instrument, the researcher consulted with expert judges to seek their comments on the questionnaire. The researcher also distributed three questionnaires to the targeted population. They were requested to comment if the items were clear and could be easily understood and to underline the ambiguous items or words. The respondents offered suggestions for improvement. Consequently, the researcher clarified the ambiguous terms. For reliability, data was subsequently subjected to the Cronbach's alpha test and a result of 0.63 at alpha level 0.05 was found. This indicates that the data is reliable and thus further analysis can be done.

### **5. Data Analysis and Findings**

The collected data were subjected to statistical analysis using the descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation, to determine the perception of the respondents to the variables of interest.

Table 1 presents means and standard deviations scored on the principles of responsibility in educational leadership with reference to higher education institutions.

**Table 1: Principles of Responsibility**

Principle	Item	M	SD
<b>Responsibility</b>	1. Leaders should have responsibility to realise academic excellence.	4.63	.50
	2. Responsibility governs our daily routines to enable us to provide a productive learning environment.	4.54	.52
	3. As leaders, we hold ourselves responsible for enabling us to develop subordinates' social skills.	4.36	.50
<b>Overall</b>		13.54	1.03

Note: M= Mean and SD= Standard Deviation

The results indicated that educational administrators highly practice the principle of responsibility. Items of this principle scored the highest compared with other principles. Specifically, item number one (M=4.63, SD=.50), item number two scored (M=4.54, SD=.52), item number three revealed (M=4.36, SD=.50) respectively. The total mean score (M=13.54, SD=1.03) indicated that all respondents are committed to responsibility, which highlighted the existence of this principle in the departments investigated.

Table 2 reveals the means and standard deviations of the principle of trust based on the responses of the respondents.

**Table 2: Principles of Trust**

Principle	Item	M	SD
<b>Trust</b>	1. Educational leaders need to build trust to carry out the organisational goals and objectives.	4.81	.40
	2. Our practices are deep-rooted in trust practices to generate effective interpersonal cooperation.	4.27	.90
	3. Exercising trust in executing our duties prevents us from anarchy type of leadership.	4.27	.78
<b>Overall</b>		13.36	1.68

Note: M= Mean and SD= Standard Deviation

Interestingly, trust, accountability and moral aspects existed and were practised equally by educational leaders. It begins with trust followed by accountability and lastly ethical aspect, this is represented by item number one (M=4.81, SD=.40), item number two (M=4.27, SD=.90) and item number three (M=4.27, SD=.78) respectively. The total mean (M=13.36, SD=1.68) of the principle of trust placed this principle as the second most important and includes accountability and moral aspects.

Table 3 reveals the means and standard deviations of the principle of accountability.

**Table 3: Principles of Accountability**

Principle	Item	M	SD
<b>Accountability</b>	1. Leaders should be accountable for their decisions and achievements of the organisation.	4.63	.67
	2. The feeling of being accountable stimulates us to excel and carry out our duties in the organisation accordingly.	4.63	.67
	3. Practising accountability in the organisation enables us to empower each other regularly.	4.63	.80
<b>Overall</b>		13.36	1.91

Note: M= Mean and SD= Standard Deviation

From Table 3, item number one is (M=4.63, SD=.67), item number two (M=4.63, SD=.67) and item number three (M=4.63, SD=.80). The total (M=13.36, SD=1.91) for the principle of accountability placed this principle as equally second most important in higher education.

Table 4 reveals the means and standard deviations of the principle of moral value.

**Table 4: Principles of Moral Value**

Principle	Item	M	SD
<b>Moral aspect</b>	1. Leaders should follow the moral aspects of leadership while administering the needs of their educational institution.	4.54	.68
	2. To fulfil educational needs, we follow moral aspects of leadership.	4.45	.68
	3. As leaders, we should possess the special responsibility to be deliberately moral.	4.36	.67
<b>Overall</b>		13.36	1.28

Note: M= Mean and SD= Standard Deviation

Item number one is (M=4.54, SD=.68), item number two (M=4.45, SD=.68) and item number three (M=4.36, SD=.67). The total (M=13.36, SD=1.28) for the principle of moral aspect placed this principle another equal second in the practices of higher education.

Table 5 indicates the extent to which the principle of justice existed in the practices of the sampled educational leaders.



**Table 5: Principles of Justice**

Principle	Item	M	SD
<b>Justice</b>	1. A combination of various characteristics of the leader must help the leader to identify the activities of subordinates.	4.54	.68
	2. The justice-oriented approach in leadership leads to the state of satisfaction among organisational members.	4.45	.52
	3. The success of leadership in higher education institutions depends heavily on equal treatment of all subordinates.	4.18	.60
<b>Overall</b>		13.18	1.34

Note: M= Mean and SD= Standard Deviation

The analysis shows that item number one scored (M=4.54, SD=.68), item number two (M=4.45, SD=.52) and item number three (M=4.18, SD=.60). The total (M=13.18, SD=1.34) for the principle of justice which placed this principle third in the practice of academic administrators.

Table 6 indicates the extent to which the principle of self-confidence existed in the practices of the sampled educational leaders.

**Table 6: Principles of Self-Confidence**

Principle	Item	M	SD
<b>Self-confidence</b>	1. Self-confidence helps a leader to pursue his/her organisational goals.	4.63	.50
	2. Moral strength can be facilitated to all subordinates in the organisation carrying out self-confidence programs.	4.45	.52
	3. To enable us to achieve organisational goals, we practice self-confidence as a driving force in all organisational settings.	4.00	1.00
<b>Overall</b>		13.09	1.37

Note: M= Mean and SD= Standard Deviation

The data analysis revealed that item number one scored (M=4.63, SD=.50), item number two (M=4.45, SD=.52) and item number three (M=4.00, SD=1.00). The total (M=13.09, SD=1.37) for the principle of self-confidence placed this principle fourth in terms of practice by the educational leaders at the Kulliyyah of Economics and Management Sciences.

Table 7 indicates the extent to which the principle of ethical values existed in practices of the sampled educational leaders.

**Table 7: Principles of Ethical Values**

Principle	Item	M	SD
<b>Ethical Values</b>	1. The best leaders exhibit their values and ethics in their leadership style actions.	4.45	.68
	2. Leaders' ethical inclination helps to compel the educational system and formulate effective policies in higher educational institutions.	4.27	.68
	3. Leaders should play a role in cultivating good ethics among members of higher educational institutions	4.00	1.09
<b>Overall</b>		12.18	1.72

Note: M= Mean and SD= Standard Deviation

Data analysis shows that item number one has (M=4.45, SD=.68), item number two (M=4.27, SD=.68) and item number three (M=4.00, SD=1.09). The total (M=12.18, SD=1.72) for the principle of moral values placed this principle fifth concerning the practices by the educational leaders with the Kulliyyah of Economics and Management Sciences.

Table 8 indicates the extent to which the principle of humility exists in the practices of the sampled educational leaders.

**Table 8: Principles of Humility**

Principle	Item	M	SD
<b>Humility</b>	1. The best leaders exhibit values and ethics in their leadership actions.	4.18	.60
	2. Leaders' ethical inclination helps to compel the educational system and formulate effective policies in higher educational institutions.	4.36	.67
	3. Leaders should play a role cultivating good ethics among members of higher educational institutions	4.18	.40
<b>Overall</b>		12.72	1.34

Note: M= Mean and SD= Standard Deviation

Item number one revealed mean and standard deviation of (M=4.18, SD=.60), item number two (M=4.36, SD=.67) and item number three (M=4.18, SD=.40). The total (M=12.72, SD=1.34) for the principle of humility placed this principle sixth concerning the practices of the educational leaders with the Kulliyyah of Economics and Management Sciences.

Table 9 indicates the extent to which the principle of power of influence exists in the practices of the sampled educational leaders.

**Table 9:** Principles of Power of influence

Principle	Item	M	SD
<b>Power of influence</b>	1. The power of influence helps leaders control their subordinates in the organisation.	3.81	.75
	2. Leaders' power of influence has a significant impact on changing organisational culture.	3.18	.75
	3. Leaders' ability to influence permits the educational institution to maintain institutional values and norms.	4.27	.64
<b>Overall</b>		11.90	1.44

Note: M= Mean and SD= Standard Deviation

The analysis shows that item number one revealed (M=3.81, SD=.75), item number two (M=3.18, SD=.75) and item number three (M=4.27, SD=.64). The total (M=11.1.90, SD=1.44) for the principle of the power of influence placed this principle seventh concerning the practices of the educational leaders with the Kulliyyah of Economics and Management Sciences. Moreover, this result revealed that power of influence among educational leaders is considered the lowest principle in all the sampled departments.

Taken as a whole, the findings revealed that the principles under study did exist in the Kulliyyah of Economics and Management Sciences and had contributed to effective and excellent leadership, even though there is are slight differences between the principles in terms of application. Meanwhile, the study found that educational leaders highly exercise the principle of responsibility, while the power of influence is the least utilised compared to the other principles.

Table 10 presents frequencies and percentages of academic administrators' perception towards educational leadership.

**Table 10:** Frequencies and percentages of respondents' perception on academic administrators in higher education institutions

Dimension	Item	SDA	DA	N	A	SA
Perception of academic administrators on educational leadership	28. I think I have the potential to influence my subordinates at the department.	F %		4 36.4	3 27.3	4 36.3
	29. I think competent and experienced leaders can help reform educational quality.	F %			2 18.5	4 36.4
	30. I think ethical leadership can help overcome inefficiency in higher educational institutions.	F %		2 18.2		6 54.5
						18.2

Note: SDA= strongly disagree, DA= disagree, N= neutral, A= agree and SA= strongly agree.

Table 10 shows that three items were constructed to answer research question number two. Item number 29 revealed that the majority of respondents (n=9, 81.9%) stated that they believe that competent and experienced leaders in higher education institutions contribute positively to educational excellence. However, (n=2, 18.2%) of them chose not to express their view. Noticeably, item number 30 demonstrated that (n=8, 72.7%) of academic administrators have agreed that these principles could help overcome setbacks in higher education institutions. While, only (n=2, 18.2%) have chosen not to express their view. As for item number 28, (n=7, 63.6%) of respondents avowed that principles of leadership could positively equip leaders to play a vital role in higher education institutions. Interestingly, (n=4, 36.4%) of them did not comment.

Overall, the study found that academic administrators hold strong perceptions that effective education leadership has a great deal to contribute towards excellence in higher education institutions, and none of the respondents expressed disagreement against this standpoint.

**Table 11:** Frequencies and percentages of respondents towards applicability of principle of educational leadership in higher education institutions

Dimension	Item	SDA	DA	N	A	SA
Trust	31. I think effective leadership can help bridge the gaps between theory and practice in higher educational institutions.	F %		3 27.3	6 54.5	2 18.2
Responsibility	32. We used approaches that build trust among all members of staff at our departments.	F %		4 36.4	5 45.5	2 18.2
Accountability	33. To achieve the department's mission, we are concerned with all tasks to be executed for the betterment of the department.	F %		2 18.2	5 45.5	4 36.4
Humility	34. All our practices are administered by the fundamental concepts of accountability.	F %		4 36.4	5 45.5	2 18.2
Justice	35. We exercise humility in executing our managerial practices to achieve the department's mission.	F %		3 27.3	7 63.6	1 9.1
Moral aspect	36. We often share our innate experience with our colleague for quality improvement.	F %	1 9.1	1 9.1	7 63.6	2 18.2
Self-confidence	37. Programmes are occasionally held to empower self-confidence of employees in our departments.	F %	1 9.1	1 9.1	7 63.6	2 18.2
Power of influence	38. All our managerial practices are deep-rooted on the fundamentals of morality.	F %		1 9.1	6 54.4	4 36.4
Ethics	39. Programmes are purposely held at our department to build employee's power of influence in performing professional duties.	F %	2 18.2	1 9.1	4 36.4	4 36.4

Note: SDA= strongly disagree, DA= disagree, N= neutral, A= agree and SA= strongly agree.

Another descriptive analysis was performed to answer research question number 3 on the applicability of principles of educational leadership in higher education institutions. The data overwhelmingly indicated that respondents believe (n=10, 90.9%) that power of influence is considered as the most vital principle that can be applied for an effective management of higher education institutions. Interestingly, respondents also pointed out that the principles of accountability (n=9, 81.9%), moral aspect (n=9, 81.8%) and self-confidence (n=9, 81.8%), were often applied to execute effective management practice at their respective departments. This confirmation was followed by their assertion that they often apply ethics (n=8, 72.8%), trust (n=8, 72.7%) and justice (n=8, 72.7%) to realise educational goals. Only (n=2, 18.2%) disagreed with this standpoint. The least applied principles were responsibility (n=7, 63.7%) and humility (n=7, 63.7%).

Overall, the study found that academic administrators did apply the sampled principles in higher education institutions. Nonetheless, it was also found that academic administrators did not highly practice the principles of humility and responsibility. This could be because academic administrators are more accustomed to bureaucratic procedures while carrying out their duties, and professionalism is another factor that could likely sway academic administrators' managerial practices with reference to the two dimensions.

## 5. Conclusion

The study concluded that principles of educational leadership did exist and were practised by academic administrators in the Kulliyyah of Economics and Management Sciences. Given the existence of these principles, the study further affirmed that there is a positive perception towards these principles which predicted and justified that academic administrators strongly believed that principles of educational leadership contributed positively to their academic and administrative performances. The study also concluded that among the principles of educational leadership, humility, responsibility and power of influence were the least applied by academic administrators at the Kulliyyah of Economics and Management Sciences. Although the principle of responsibility was highly valued, in practice, it was not.

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