

PRINCIPALS' INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES IN PERAK SMALL SCHOOLS

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The Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) has expressed the importance of instructional leadership as an effort to strengthen the school leadership as stated in the Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM) 2013-2025. The 5th shift in PPPM 2013-2025 states that all principals and teachers should be prepared to meet the needs as a school leader through instructional leadership practices in all schools, including small schools. Perak state has a total number of 253 small schools, the highest number compared to other states in Peninsular Malaysia. Despite the highest number, only 3.3 per cent were classified as excellent small schools by getting Band One set by MOE, the best band ranked based on the school's public examination result. Meanwhile, findings from previous studies have shown that school's excellence has been strongly associated with principals' instructional leadership practices and their leadership attributes. The purpose of this study is to identify the small school's principals' instructional leadership practices, leadership attributes and teachers' self-efficacy level. Apart from that, the relationships of all variables and the contribution of principals' instructional leadership practices and leadership attributes towards teachers' self-efficacy were identified. This study is also conducted to identify how excellent small school's principals practicing their instructional leadership respectively. This study utilized convergent parallel mixed-methods design through a combination of survey (quantitative) and interview (qualitative). There were 420 teachers as respondents and six excellent small school's principals as informants participated in this study. It is found that the principals' instructional leadership practices, principals' leadership attributes and teachers' self-efficacy in small schools are at high level. Correlation analysis revealed that all three variables in this study have significant and positive correlations, while multiple regression analyzes indicated principals' instructional leadership practices [$b = 0.436$, $t = 7.031$, $p < 0.05$] and principals' leadership attributes [$b = 0.122$, $t = 2.109$, $p < 0.05$] had a significant impact on teachers' self-efficacy in small schools. The study also found that excellent small school's principals excelled in their dual roles, not only as school administrators but also as subject teachers. These are done by focusing on improving school's infrastructure and overcoming financial constraints as well as emphasizing integrated classroom teaching to enhance teachers' self-efficacy. Implications of the findings suggest that the MOE needs to empower and give more authority to small school's principals on managing financial and school's asset, whereas the principals need to maintain their instructional role model to increase small school teachers' self-efficacy level. Future studies suggest an exploration of small school's principal dual roles and instructional leadership practices from the perspective of middle leader teachers in small schools.