

## **Malaysian Principals Leadership Model: The Quest in Developing Future-Ready School Leaders**

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**Abstract:** Technology and digital are rapidly changing the world and reshaping the learning environment. However, we still wonder about the specific competencies that future educational leaders will need. Without more accurate information about the knowledge, skills and behaviors required, it is difficult for educational leaders to implement the best leadership that impacts teacher effectiveness. Developing future-ready school leaders is a strategy for facing future challenges and seizing opportunities. Moreover, it enables us to reach the full potential of future leadership and empowers education to achieve maximum capacity and sustainability for what is. This presentation includes views on developing future ready leadership in the context of education using the Malaysian Principals Leadership Model produced by the Institute Aminuddin Baki. To create the future readiness of our generation, we must make the purpose and meaning of the present, as the vision and aspirations of the future. Before we can develop future ready teachers and students; as leaders, we must have a future-ready mind and attitude. In conclusion, the readiness of future educational leaders involves strategic and integrated changes at all levels in schools, whether in leadership training development or leadership roles and functions.

**Keywords:** Malaysian Principals Leadership Model, Future-Ready, School Leaders

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The world is challenged not only by climate change, future pandemics, misinformation, a world full of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity; but also, a future world that has exciting opportunities created by new technologies and the development of new industries. In the future, anything that can be connected, will be. Not just in terms of devices and products – although that is obviously a key consideration for education – but also the spaces in which we work. From smart, connected schools and offices to entire smart cities, the spaces around us will increasingly be equipped with the ability to monitor what’s going on and act accordingly. However, we are still less clear about the specific attitude and behaviour tomorrow’s school leaders will require in understanding their function and role in this situation.

School leaders are responsible for creating environments and implementing practices that are conducive for fostering habits of practices that are crucial for future ready outcomes. The inadequacies of traditional teaching and learning practices in supporting these habits elucidate how newer paradigms such as constructivism, connectivism, co-agency and communities of practice might be more useful in achieving this (David Ng, 2019).

## **WHAT DOES IT MEANS TO BE FUTURE READY**

Being future-ready means preparing oneself, an organization, or a system to effectively navigate and thrive in an uncertain and rapidly changing future. It involves developing the necessary skills, knowledge, attitudes, and strategies to adapt, innovate, and seize opportunities in an evolving landscape. In the context of education, being future-ready entails understanding and anticipating the changing needs of students, educators, and society as a whole. It means being proactive rather than reactive, staying ahead of emerging trends, and taking deliberate actions to ensure that education remains relevant and impactful.

For school leaders to be future-ready, learning objectives must be dynamic and matched to new realities that develop throughout time. New realities that depend on context and situation are what the future holds. The present paradigms of inquiry in leadership, management, teaching, and learning methods must specifically be questioned by school leaders. Adopting pertinent methods of inquiry (questioning, learning, and knowing) will result in fresh, innovative ideas and procedures that will address the problems presented by the new reality. On the other hand, faulty techniques of inquiry based on antiquated and obsolete presumptions will only result in inefficient leadership practices. Fundamentally, being future-ready will also test how educators learn. A larger notion of effective schools that goes beyond grades and achievements must be integrated into school leadership learning and development (David Ng, 2019).

To be future-ready, we must develop a plan for success that includes preparing for a world that will be quite different from the one we are accustomed to, or what is referred to as an era of the unknown. The goal of the Future Ready Strategy is to help us become more conscious of who we are, what decisions we make, how we function, and what outstanding leaders do. Being proactive and building a better future are both aspects of being future-ready. A source of resilience amid a crisis is being future-ready. Additionally, as normalcy resumes, it aids in opening up fresh growth prospects for our company. In the framework of education, it is our duty to educate ourselves so that we can confront the problems of the future and grab the opportunities it presents in order to be future-ready school leaders. No matter what degree or type of qualification, as a leader, we will put our attention on putting ourselves in a position where we may realize our full potential for the future and be empowered to attain our highest potential for what is ahead. For example, the curriculum we provide and the resilience and agility we foster in our pupils will future proof them. All the diverse sorts of students that are a part of our community, including pelajar orang asli and pelajar pendidikan khas, to mention a few, are included when we talk about future-ready citizens and student achievement. Make them prepared to overcome uncertainty. The ability of our organization to respond to disturbances is essential to its success.

The more uncertain the world seems to be, the more important it is to become future ready. So it's a must to think about what we can do to prepare for the future, so we can improve areas of need today. Being future-ready in education is an ongoing process. It requires a willingness to adapt, learn, innovate, and collaborate to meet the evolving needs of learners and society.

## **IS OUR SCHOOL LEADERS FUTURE-READY?**

In other words, what are our school leaders' future readiness indicators? The more questionable the world is by all accounts, the more significant it is for our school leaders to participate in future-proofing. This is because success depends on one's preparedness for future disruptions; therefore, future readiness is a source of resilience for each and every school leader. As a matter of fact we do not yet have tools or instruments that measure how prepared our school leaders are for what's in store. But our future readiness indicator is the educational leaders in every part of KPM who are interested about the outer world and wish to assist the educational community

with exploring a truth of quick and regular change, to conquer misfortune, prod development and flourish in the midst of vulnerability.

It is difficult to determine if a school leaders are prepared for the future since it requires taking into account a variety of elements, including education, skills, resource accessibility, societal structures, and individual attitudes and actions. While some people and groups might show signs of being future-ready, others can encounter obstacles or lack the required preparation for an uncertain future. We must make the meaning and purpose of the present as the vision and ambitions of the future in order to develop our school leaders' capacity for the future. To put it another way, strategic mapping of how we currently learn, work, create, and manage must be a deliberate and continuing exercise in our core businesses and schools because it enables us to identify important objectives and spot weaknesses in our plan before we commit to anything and begin. Here are some key considerations such as technological fluency, lifelong learning mindset and global awareness. It is important to recognize that future readiness is not a static state, but a continuous process of growth and adaptation. Efforts should be made to ensure that all school leaders have equal opportunities and support to develop the skills and mindsets necessary for a rapidly changing future. This requires collaboration among governments, educational institutions, communities, and individuals to create an inclusive and future-ready school leaders.

### **WHAT KIND OF ATTITUDE/BEHAVIOUR WILL OUR ORGANIZATION REQUIRE TO BE FUTURE READY SCHOOL LEADER?**

Being a future-ready school leader does not entail using technology to replace current curricula and teaching methods. Instead, it is a chance to reconsider how best to support teachers in inspiring and motivating them to offer curriculum and instruction that will improve student outcomes. The future is about emerging, contextually located, contextually dependent realities (Matin, 2016). Developing future-ready educational leaders is an ongoing process. It requires a commitment to lifelong learning, continuous improvement, and adaptability to changing educational contexts and needs.

According to experts and study in 2020-2022 regarding education 5.0 or so called the education of the future, refers to focussing increasingly on the role of humans in the equation, and ensuring effective and efficient cooperation between humans and machines. If we want the educational transformation to have a profound long-term impact, we need to address it from the perspective of the Fifth Industrial Revolution which is putting human qualities in the center of education and cultivating those. Research has shown that attitude is the most important factor in determining how well you do in life and developing a positive attitude demands change (OECD, 2018). Mark Murphy, author of *Hiring for Attitude* (2012), said: "Eighty-nine percent of the time, if a new hire fails, they fail for attitude, not for skills". Sometimes a good attitude has a bigger impact than a certain talent. Positivity aids in overcoming potential challenges and maintaining motivation when the going gets tough. Studies show that those with positive attitudes showed active involvement in activities and used more strategies to tackle difficulties in their practices. In another study, it is found that there is a significant positive correlation between attitudes and their achievement.

Institut Aminuddin Baki, therefore, conducted a research that we hope will help our educational community, especially the school leaders who are responsible to take shape and could contribute to future-proof educators and students. To be future-ready, educational leaders should possess certain attitudes and behaviors that enable them to navigate the challenges and changes in the educational landscape. The study aims to produce a Malaysian Principals Leadership Model using the Design and Development research approach (DDR) by Richey and Klein (2007) which states that a development study is a study that covers several organized and

systematic processes where it includes the process of needs analysis, design, development and evaluation of a product. The selection of respondents is through purposive sampling and meets the set conditions for the selection of respondents which are 10 years of experience and above in the field of educational leadership and management and have handled training and teaching and learning. These criteria are set by the researcher so that the officer appointed as the expert has a lot of information about the case being studied to ensure that this research report is a meaningful source of information because it is obtained from an experienced and knowledgeable subject.

The data collection procedure was using a structured interview method according to the study phase, which is the needs analysis phase, the design phase, the development phase and the evaluation phase. The instrument used in the needs analysis phase is a semi-structured interview protocol that has been developed after a literature review mapping analysis has been conducted. The results of the needs analysis phase, on the other hand, have been used as a basis in the design and development phase to obtain expert consensus. For the Design and Development phase, data was collected through a face-to-face method. Experts were gathered in the field to give consensus on the elements of Malaysian PGB leadership behavior through a process of brainstorming, discussion and consensus. After completing the process, the elements are re-examined by the researcher taking into account the expert's improvement suggestions before implementing the data collection for the Fuzzy Delphi.

For the evaluation phase, data was collected based on the consensus of 12 experts who were selected based on the agreement and willingness of the experts to evaluate the behavioral elements of the Malaysian PGB leadership model. All the experts are in their respective locations and the researchers have gone down to the field to get expert consensus. In the evaluation phase as well, experts work to confirm the theme set by the researcher to really fit the category for each element of Malaysian PGB leadership behavior. To ensure the smoothness of the data collection process, researchers have obtained permission from the IAB, the Education Policy Planning and Research Division (BPPDP) and followed by JPN and PPD. Appointed experts from all KPM departments are given letters of appointment as experts.

The data was collected through interviews based on four phases, namely the requirements analysis phase, the design phase, the development phase and the evaluation phase. For each phase, the interview data was analyzed using the Fuzzy Delphi (FDM) method. This study applies FDM in obtaining expert agreement to identify the elements of PGB behavior from an expert perspective and identify the ranking of each element of PGB behavior based on expert consensus. According to Ridhuan et al (2015), FDM involves the use of Fuzzy set theory which has been integrated in the classic Delphi method where the likert scale chosen by the expert will be converted to a Fuzzy scale by using Fuzzy numbering which consists of binary number. The integration of this Fuzzy numbering will produce three values which are the minimum value, the most reasonable value and the maximum value which will be selected by the expert. The number of experts as respondents for studies using FDM is based on the view of previous studies that the number of experts allowed is 10 to 15 experts if the agreement and uniformity of the experts is high (Adler and Ziglio, 1996).

The findings show that there are 28 final elements that are strongly agreed by experts as the main leadership behaviours needed by PGB in Malaysia. Team Work is the most important behavior in PGB Malaysia's leadership in the experts' consensus list; while Implementing the Mission and Vision is the leadership behavior that is in the last ranking in the list of experts' approval. The findings also show that there are eight (8) themes that can represent the behaviour elements of Malaysian Principals Leadership Model that are strongly agreed by experts as the main elements required by PGB in Malaysia as shown in Figure 1 below:

Table 1. Theme and Leadership Behaviour of Malaysian Principals Leadership Model

| No | Theme                         | Leadership Behaviour                                                                                                      |
|----|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Instructional Excellence      | Instructional Support<br>Giving Autonomy<br>Building Conducive Environment                                                |
| 2  | Developing Potential          | Developing Teachers<br>Promoting Professional Learning Community (PLC)<br>Sharing Leadership                              |
| 3  | Having Personality            | Excellent Character<br>Competent<br>Resilient<br>Spiritual Balance<br>Experienced<br>Emotional Maturity<br>Accountability |
| 4  | Cooperative and Collaborative | Team Work<br>Leading Leadership<br>Excellent Working Culture<br>Building Networking                                       |
| 5  | Giving Encouragement          | Giving Appreciation<br>Motivating<br>Giving Trust                                                                         |
| 6  | Providing Guidance            | Coaching & Mentoring<br>Active Listening<br>Consulting                                                                    |
| 7  | Being Dynamic                 | Having Vision<br>Futuristic Thinking<br>Cognitive Skills<br>Implementing The Mission and Vision                           |
| 8  | Effective Communication       | Effective Communication                                                                                                   |

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to Gilson and Goldberg (2015), conceptual paper is a step in bridging the gap with practitioners and expanding our capacity to think, design, and make a significant contribution to the subject. Growing a field and turning a field into a profession require the concepts of comprehending the universe (theory/model) and informing the practices found inside it (conceptual) (Rocco et al, 2022). So, this conceptual paper includes empirical evidence because it used to support the introduction section of the paper.

Among 28 leadership behaviours in the Malaysian Principals Leadership Model that should be practiced by PGB to have an impact on the effectiveness of teachers, we have identified eight that are particularly critical for PGB to meet the expectations of stakeholders in realizing the change agenda to produce future ready school leaders, and to be able to evolve so they continue to have impact in the future. They fall one in each of the eight themes of Malaysian Principals Leadership Model which is creating conducive instructional environment (Instructional Excellence), developing teachers (Developing Potential), resilient (Having Personality), building networking (Cooperative & Collaborative), giving trust (Giving Encouragement), coaching and mentoring (Providing Guidance), futuristic thinking (Being Dynamic) and effective communication (Effective Communication).

### **Creating Conducive Instructional Environment**

The roles of school leaders in meeting the challenges to develop the future-readiness of students is creating a conducive environment for teaching and learning. Other educational practices must also change to achieve future-ready outcomes (Wong & David Ng, 2020).

Students who learn in a setting that is future-ready are prepared to thrive in a technologically advanced society that will need them to be creative problem-solvers, flexible thinkers with their cognitive processes, and emotionally intelligent. They also give students opportunity to use their abilities in real-world settings and to have deeper educational experiences. Facilities must change as the educational landscape does in order to support effective instruction and a flexible learning environment.

### **Developing Teachers**

Schools are being put under more pressure to show how well their kids are learning in the twenty-first century. Teachers who can reform schools are needed by school leaders in order to achieve these objectives. Leadership in education has an impact on teachers' performance as well as the efficiency of the school (Oleszewski et al., 2012). Developing the future ready teachers will need to be prepared for a future when change will be the only constant. It will be necessary to equip teachers with the kind of adaptable expertise that enables them to use professional judgment in modifying their practice for various learner types, new learning environments, and technologies, so teachers, in turn, can equip students with the skills they need to thrive in the future (Grossman, 2018).

Future teaching will be influenced by more than just new technologies, curricular revisions, and instructional strategies. The teachers itself will be renewed as new generations bring their own ideas and experiences to the table if developed well. Thus school leaders play a role to help unleash potential in teachers to help them realise their strengths.

### **Resilient**

When a leader is resilient, they put forth a lot of effort to go through the internal and external challenges their organization encounters and come up with creative solutions even when numerous unfavorable circumstances exist. These difficulties have demonstrated that working in a highly complex setting is a requirement for school leadership. And we may argue that successful school leaders in the present and the future are those that recognize the complicated environment and intelligently respond to the problems in it (Ozmusul, 2017). As a result, the entire plan will fail if school leadership lacks the resilience and competence to face difficult situations. The organization's performance reflects the caliber of its leaders.

### **Building Networking**

Everyone should network, but those who want to lead their organization should network more than others. One of the most effective strategies for job advancement may be a well developed

and maintained professional network. In order to aid people you are leading, you need access to resources like information, know-how, and financing, which can only be obtained through internal and external networks. Networks help leaders learn by introducing them to individuals in other organizations who have different viewpoints, backgrounds, and settings from your own. An effective leader is aware of the value of networking. Building, developing, and engaging with a professional network should therefore be a crucial part of any plan for leadership development (Stobierski, 2019).

An important question is why schools should network and what advantages they should derive from doing so in view of the expansion of networks and the support for networking and collaboration as a strategy for school improvement. School administrators can accomplish a number of objectives by creating an effective internal network. Strong connections with important stakeholders might facilitate project approval or boost one's standing if a promotion chance arises. Similar to this, by forming connections with organizational decision-makers, you can develop channels of communication and keep up with any changes in strategy that can affect the job. To reduce the cost of materials and personnel, school leaders can network in the same way that businesses do. Additionally, this procedure can support ongoing professional development (CPD). School leaders are excellent collaborators who leverage interpersonal skills to realize the benefits of teamwork; this philosophy has now permeated social media platforms where users can forge empowering connections with people who work in the educational sector. Being a part of a network allows them the chance to advance their knowledge and skills, rediscover their drive and sense of purpose, collaborate with like-minded peers to come up with solutions, be the change they want to see in education, and locate future employment prospects.

### **Giving Trust**

Trust in leadership is a key element in organizational effectiveness and the foundations of a successful school (Baxter & Ehren, 2023). An environment of great trust encourages employees to take chances, express themselves freely, and innovate. Tasks are completed more easily when there is trust among members of an organization because they are more inclined to work together and communicate effectively. As a result, results are frequently more fruitful. In fact, according to a study in Harvard Business Review, people at high-trust companies report 74% less stress, 106% more energy at work, 50% higher productivity, 13% fewer sick days, 76% more engagement, 29% more satisfaction with their lives, and 40% less burnout than people at low-trust companies (Lewis, 2022).

According to research, reciprocal trust, effective communication, and genuine cooperation are essential elements of a school environment that fosters teacher development and transformation (Li et al., 2017). Three trust behaviors in schools that led to productivity are organic, contractual, and relational. The term "organic" refers to friendships and professional relationships that develop naturally within a school; "contractual" refers to people's legal responsibilities in their roles; and "relational" refers to how well each group understands its own and the other group's expectations and responsibilities (Bryk and Schneider, 2003; Baxter & Ehren, 2023). In order to create a culture of trust inside organizations, leaders are essential. Leaders create cultural standards and the tone for behavior. Communication, collaboration, and creativity will suffer if leaders don't prioritize building trust (Lewis, 2022).

### **Coaching and Mentoring**

Whether intentionally or not, being a leader entails being a coach. It is our responsibility to grow our workforce as leaders of leaders and as leaders of the future generation of leaders. And perhaps it falls to us as unofficial leaders to bring out the best in people who are around us.

Coaching is a tool that empowers people and teams to do more than just fulfill their fundamental duties and responsibilities; it also helps them reach their full potential. Developing coaching abilities within your teams will energise your workforce, foster a sense of shared responsibility among employees, and improve your organization's readiness for the future. Coaching also help to strengthen innovation as an organizational behavior, build a culture of consistent leadership behavior through developing strong coaching skills in individual leaders and close the generation gap. Coaching is a critical skill that enables leaders at all levels to move from operational leadership to strategic leadership, from reaction to responsiveness and from surviving to thriving (Dagenais, 2021).

By developing and demonstrating effective pedagogical approaches intended to increase teacher instructional capacity, school leaders serve as instructional coaches that assist their institutions become future-ready. They create innovative, learner-centered experiences that accommodate instructors' current capacities and foster their professional development.

### **Futuristic Thinking**

Being an education futurist entails incorporating future thinking and design principles into our leadership and student learning experiences. Future thinking helps in our ability to see a larger range of conceivable and likely futures in which we will be learning and living in a world that is changing quickly. By giving ideas a physical form, quickly testing, and learning through iterative procedures and feedback, design aids us in the construction of more favored futures. Through these glasses, we are able to perceive the world not only as it is, but also as it might be if we adopted a more sympathetic and human-centered strategy to identify and address difficult problems in the pursuit of a more fair and compassionate future (McBain, 2020).

Future-oriented school leaders frequently anticipate market demands before the market even becomes aware of them, maintaining one step ahead of the competition and it could support, develop, or expand an educational field.

### **Effective Communication**

The purposeful production and transmission of messages between the principal and staff is referred to as communication in educational settings. Leadership values candid discussions and starts with communication. When they advised leaders to approach communication skills as the cornerstone of classroom activity, Gouran et al. (1994) emphasized the crucial connection between communication and leadership. Although earlier research has been more sparse, it has been argued that communication is crucial for principals to support teachers in advancing their professional growth and teaching (Li et al., 2017) to make them future-ready.

Without strong communication, all other leadership traits are useless. To maintain work groups' alignment with school strategies, leaders must effectively communicate with their staff. Too frequently, school leaders fail to listen to their staff and communicate with them in a confusing manner. Both parties usually get each other wrong and frequently ignore what the other is attempting to express. Every school must have leaders who are proficient in the fundamental talent of communication. When school leaders communicate well, their staff members remain informed, take part, and contribute.

In conclusion, future-ready leaders bring together the future-ready mindset, attitude, and tools necessary to survive, thrive, and develop their teams through recovery and beyond.



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