

PERSONAL QUALITIES OF AUTHENTIC SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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ABSTRACT

Even though authenticity goes back to couples of decades, authentic leadership falls back to just more than a decade. Many scholars write on authentic leadership and what it constitutes. However, so far no research based clear construct of authentic leadership is formed. The notion of authentic leadership has not fully come into the school setting. This paper analysed the personal qualities of authentic school-principals. For this purpose, seven school principals in Brunei Darussalam were selected. Episodic interviews were conducted with all the principals. In addition, semi-structured interviews were also carried out with people who work with the principals (including teachers, colleagues and senior officers) as validation measure. Thematic analysis was used to analyse personal qualities of authentic school principals. The findings revealed baseline qualities which mark the entry point of authentic principalship.

Keywords: *educational leadership, authenticity, authentic leadership, leader personality*

INTRODUCTION

Schools have become more complex than many people have ever wondered. They have drastically changed from traditional transactional systems to modern transformational systems. In the traditional systems of education, learners (i.e. students) were very much alienated from the major elements of learning, especially the curriculum (Salimi & Ghonoodi, 2011). Twenty-first century schools have shifted from knowledge transferring institutions to a level that schools are considered as complex (Neubauer, 2008), living (Senge, 2000) and intelligent (MacGilchrist, Myers, & Reed, 2004) communities within communities (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2010).

This transformation of schools from society-alienation to community-collaboration has forced educational/school leaders to go beyond management and facilitation (Ordonez, 2008) and be more diverse and innovative (Hershock, 2008) in their professional practice. Leaders are forced to get directly involved in the wellbeing of the community (Goddard, 2003). School principals need to come out from their allocated space and participate in both internal and external activities

related to the school. They are expected to get actively involved in the instruction, which is their core business (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2010). Simultaneously, they are expected to give adequate input in taking the schools out into the communities and taking the communities into the schools. In short, they are expected to unify community goals and individual goals (ibid).

There were some school principals who showed high level of commitment in the initial stages of their career, and showed great improvements in their performance for a duration of time. However, after a few years, not only they start falling in their performances, but also ruin the whole institution in no time (Avolio, 2010). This sometimes causes these leaders to transfer to other schools, take a long break away from the system, or in very severe cases move out of the system.

It is also a common phenomenon to see publications on local and global media about ethical violations by the leaders (Neider & Schriesheim, 2011). This is not an exception for school principals. Some school principals and school staff are also accused of corruption, abusing of power, deceiving ministry and public, and most importantly, working for personal gain. Some exceptional leaders are also involved with this infringement.

This shows that there is something missing in renowned styles of leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). (Refer Avolio and Gardner, 2005, for a clear account of the differentiation between authentic leadership theory and other related leadership theories.) For instance, transformational leadership which focuses on positive and moral traits are primarily targeted on the transformation of the organization, people, resources, etc. However, the principals would be in trouble if s/he is not able to align his transformative ideas with that of the teachers. Critical questions like “Are the followers ready to be transformed?” and “Does the system and culture allow them to be transformed?” emerged.

As a result, authentic leadership emerges into the literature of leadership as to “responds to many of the concerns about the lack of honesty and integrity” (Duignan & Bhindi, 1997, p. 208). Even though some scholars see it as a root construct for all other forms of leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Luthans, Norman, & Hughes, 2006), the construct of authentic leadership is yet ambiguous (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner, Cogliser, Davis, & Dickens, 2011). For instance, Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans and May (2004, p. 806) raise some important questions about authentic leadership: “What constitutes authentic leadership? What behavior[s] constitute acts of authentic leadership? How can authentic leadership and followership be developed?”

These concerns of authentic leadership would exist in school principalship too. If authentic leadership works in other organizations, authentic principalship is essential in school setting, in order to cater for the social, political, professional and academic concerns. Therefore, in this continuously changing process of education, there is an urge to study authentic leadership in school settings; to identify what constitutes

authentic school principalship. Since it is assumed that authentic leader in one setting/field cannot necessarily be authentic in another setting/field (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Most literature written on authentic leadership is in the area of corporate businesses. Therefore, this study of authentic principalship in school setting is indeed noteworthy.

LITERATURE

In the past few decades, the perspective of education has changed greatly. Traditionally education was passive that students were expected to absorb whatever the teachers said (Salimi & Ghonoodi, 2011). However, globalisation in the modern world requires education “to shift from passive modes of knowledge transmission – knower to learner – to active modes of knowledge engagement – learner to learner” (Neubauer, 2008, p. 56). Teachers are not any more considered as masters of everything, but continuous self-learners. Students are no more seen as masters of nothing, but potential explorers. Education needs to develop citizens beyond village/national level to global orientation (Mason, 2008). Contemporary globalisation has a great effect on the world’s educational navigation (Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Hawkins, 2008), and thus force a change in school context.

As the type and nature of schools in the past are not able to justify and remedy the issues in the 21st century (Kis & Konan, 2010), there is a deep desire for schools to change from industrial teaching/learning models to organic models (MacGilchrist, Myers, & Reed, 2004). Today, schools are considered as unique (Sergiovanni, 2001), complex (Kis & Konan, 2010), living (Senge, 2000), intelligent (MacGilchrist, Myers, & Reed, 2004) communities (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2010). Thus, modern schools require more value based leadership, which is a “sophisticated, knowledge-based, and skilful approach”, rather than traditional “mechanistic, short-sighted, precedent focused and context-constrained practice” (Begley, 2001, p. 354). The school principals are expected to be ethical, spiritual, contextual, operational, emotional, collegial, reflective, pedagogical and systemic (MacGilchrist, Myers, & Reed, 2004). They are further required to go beyond transactional, charismatic, instructional or spiritual (etc.) leadership styles to a more genuine or authentic form of leadership (authentic leadership).

Authenticity is a term related to Greek philosophy, in which it means “To thine own self be true” (Luthans & Avolio, 2003) and originated from the word *authento*, which means “to have full power”(Gardner, Coglisier, Davis, & Dickens, 2011). The historical meaning of authenticity can be identified in terms of philosophy and psychology (Novicevic, Harvey, Buckley, Brown, & Evans, 2006). “Philosophical meanings of authenticity have been historically articulated in terms of individual virtues and ethical choices, while psychological meaning of authenticity have been historically articulated in terms of individual traits/states and identities” (p. 65). This search for the historical meaning of authenticity encompasses four interrelated key components: “[self] awareness, unbiased processing, [authentic] behavior, and relational orientation” (Kernis & Goldman, 2006, p. 344).

Even though the concept of authenticity dates back to couples of decades, leadership authenticity has become a major focus among the leadership scholars only since the past decade (Gardner, Coglisier, Davis, & Dickens, 2011). Despite authenticity in leadership being still an emerging paradigm of leadership (Duignan & Bhindi, 1997), many definitions of authentic leadership can be identified today. Below are some of the significant definitions of authentic leadership from views of metaphor, process and pattern of behaviour.

“Authentic leadership may be thought of as a metaphor for professionally effective, ethically sound, and consciously reflective practices in educational administration. This is leadership that is knowledge based, values informed, and skilfully executed.” (Begley, 2001, p. 353)

“Specifically, we define authentic leadership in organizations as a process that draws from both psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behavior[s] on the part of the leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development.” (Luthans & Avolio, 2003, p. 243)

“Our definition of authentic leadership included the authentication of the leader by the followers, namely the judgment by followers that the leader’s claim for leadership is based on personally held deep values and convictions rather than on mere conventions of an appointed office or the desire for personal power, status or other benefits, and that the leader’s behavior[s] are consistent with his or her beliefs, values and convictions.” (Shamir & Eilam, 2005, p. 408)

“We define authentic leadership as a pattern of leader behavior[s] that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of the leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development.” (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008, p. 94)

The definitions of authentic leadership can be classified into intrapersonal (Shamir & Eilam, 2005), interpersonal (Gardner, Avolio, May, & Walumbwa, 2005) and developmental (Avolio & Gardner, 2005) definitions (Northouse, 2013). In general, whatever wordings the scholars choose to define authentic leadership, all the definitions and concepts of authentic leadership describes it as genuine-leadership, which underlies all the other components and aspects of it. This does not mean that authentic leaders are necessarily perfect people (without any weakness), but “genuine people who are true to themselves and to what they believe in” (George & Sims, 2007, p. xxxi).

The breath of authentic leadership has widened to many aspects and components. The core theory of authentic leadership converges around four main components

(Mazutis, 2013). They are self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalised moral perspective (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner, Avolio, May, & Walumbwa, 2005; Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008), which are based on Kenis's (2003) components – awareness, unbiased processing, (authentic) action/behaviour and relational orientation (Kernis, 2003; Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Subsequently, Avolio and Gardner (2005) have identified ten major components and related subcomponents of authentic leadership (Refer Table 1).

Table 1: *Components and related subcomponents of Authentic Leadership Theory*

Components	Related Subcomponents
Positive psychological capital	-
Positive moral perspective	-
Leader self-awareness	Values Cognitions Emotions
Leader self-regulation	Internalised Balanced processing Relational transparency
Leadership process/behaviour	Authentic behaviour Positive modelling Personal and social identification Emotional contagion Supporting self-determination Positive social exchange
Follower self-awareness	Values Cognition Emotions
Follower self-regulation	Internalised Balanced processing Relational transparency Authentic behaviour
Follower development	-
Organizational context	Uncertainty Inclusion Ethical
Performance	Positive, strengths-based Veritable Sustained Beyond expectation

Source: Avolio and Gardner (2005, p. 323)

Positive psychological capital: This is part of the human capital. It indicates the psychological readiness of the organisation manpower in achieving personal, organizational, national and global goals. Psychological capital “is an individual’s

positive psychological state of development and is characterised by self-efficacy – confidence to succeed; optimism – realistic and flexible; hope – the will and the way; and resiliency – bouncing back and beyond (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007, p. 3). These positive psychological states increase self-awareness and self-regulatory behaviours (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), and help in the development of positive work environment (Wooley, Caza, & Levy, 2011) and employee creativity (Rego, Sousa, Marques, & Cunha, 2012).

Positive moral perspective: Authentic leadership includes of an ethical/moral perspective (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). It is not only one of its innate components (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), but which fosters its development (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). Authentic leaders judge issues ethically and transparently by using their moral-capital, which includes moral-capacity, moral-efficacy, moral-courage and moral-resiliency, in order to act authentically and achieve sustained authentic behaviour (May, Chan, Hodges, & Avolio, 2003).

Self-awareness: In authentic leadership, self-awareness of both leader and followers play an essential role. Even though London (2002) sees self-awareness as situational, with regard to authentic leadership, it goes beyond situations to what London refers to as self-insight and self-identity. Understanding oneself is a continuous process of identifying ones strengths and weaknesses of personal identity, goals, motives, beliefs, attitudes, values and emotions (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner, Avolio, May, & Walumbwa, 2005; Kernis, 2003; Kernis & Goldman, 2006). “Authentic leaders remain cognizant of their own vulnerabilities and openly discuss with associates” (Luthans & Avolio, 2003, p. 248) in order to gain self-awareness, which is “a key for change in leadership development” (p. 257).

Self-regulation: Similar to self-awareness, self-regulation of the leader and followers positively affect one another and is important for authenticity. Self-regulation, which stems from self-awareness or self-insight (London, 2002) is the “process through which authentic leaders align values with their intentions and actions” (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 325). This process of achieving autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2006) includes of components that define authentic leadership (Gardner, Avolio, May, & Walumbwa, 2005). These components are internalisation of regulation, balanced (unbiased) processing, relational transparency and authentic behaviour (ibid; Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Deep self-regulation ensures the reliability of one’s words and validity of one’s actions (Sparrowe, 2005).

Leadership process: This can be described as the leader’s behavioural steps carried out in influencing self-development and followers towards the intended motives, goals and standards. This process of leadership depends on many other authentic leadership components, such as self-awareness, self-regulation, psychological capital and positive moral perspective. Leadership process comprises of many activities, through which leaders influence follower and develop them (Avolio & Gardner, 2005) through positive role modelling (Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005; Gardner, Avolio, May, & Walumbwa, 2005); personal and social

identification (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004; Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005); emotional influence (Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005); positive social exchange (ibid); and supporting self-determination (supporting all other components).

It is also important to note about the research methodologies in authentic leadership studies. In a review of authentic leadership theory and research agenda, Gardner, Cogliser, Davis and Dickens (2011) have identified several facts about the research methodologies in authentic leadership studies. These facts showed that only few qualitative studies were conducted compared to quantitative studies. It also shows that out of nine qualitative studies, only three used interviews and two applied narratives as data collection techniques. Moreover, it does not state that any qualitative studies were conducted in Asia, whereas it states that only one quantitative study on authentic leadership was done in Asia (Singapore). This indicates that qualitative empirical studies are very much necessary in Asian countries, in order to extend and investigate authentic leadership theory in such cultures and contexts. Furthermore, Gardner, Cogliser, Davis and Dickens (2011) also highlight some suggestions for future research. They suggested strengthening the theory through practitioner and empirical studies; expansion of nomological networking to reduce the gap between theoretical and empirical framework; using rigorous and diverse methods in empirical studies; and authentic leadership studies need to be focused on authentic leader and follower development.

Therefore, authentic leadership gives hope to many ethical concerns in the field of leadership, especially school principalship. Almost all the scholars unanimously agree that authentic leadership offers genuine leaders. This does not necessarily imply that they are without weaknesses (George & Sims, 2007). As authentic leaders, they accept weakness as a human factor and thus result in the enhancement of authentic leadership components, especially authentic follower development (Diddams & Chang, 2012).

THE STUDY

As the literature of authentic leadership shows a necessity for the exploration of how authentic leaders develop (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004), a clear account of the development of authentic leadership can be easily identified by various other preliminary steps. Firstly, the aspects that play a critical role in authentic leadership have to be identified. Personal, organizational and social aspects of the theory are some of the possible aspects, which need to be focused in such studies. Secondly, the theory has to be studied and tested in specific professional fields and settings, such as education/school settings. Finally, it also has to be studied in various (value based) cultural contexts like East-Asian countries.

This paper is based on one of the research questions of an ongoing philosophical doctorate thesis, which is primarily aimed at understanding what constitutes authentic school-principalship. The focus of this paper is on the personal aspect of authentic

school-principalship: what are the qualitative personal aspects that describe a school principal as authentic? As mentioned in the question, qualitative elements of the aspect are given specific attention. This implies that the research is not targeted on quantitative elements. For the purpose of this study, qualitative is defined as anything which cannot be valued in terms of numbers, like maturity, anger, and confidence. It is universally understood that quantity has less effect without quality. For instance, the number of certificates or experience of a person has no significant effect on ones environment, without vision and commitment.

This study was done in Brunei Darussalam, which is an Islamic constitutional sultanate (locally referred to as Malay Islamic Monarchy). It is divided into four districts, namely Kuala Belait, Tutong, Brunei-Muara and Temburong. Even though the country's formal language is Malay, English Language is widely spoken across the nation and in schools. The country's latest educational reform movement of SPN21 is focused on helping pupils adapt to the arising changes of the 21st century (Abd Rahman, Undated). This has created an arising need for transformation and transformational leadership. Thus, leadership training programmes focus to drive principals towards the change of the schools and community (ILIA, Undated).

The study was conducted using two groups of respondents. A purposeful sampling approach was utilised to select the primary group (the target group) of seven school principals. They were selected based on the suggestions of Kernis's (2003) four components of authenticity. The principals are selected from all districts of Brunei based on the frequency of repetition. The secondary group of respondents includes 26 respondents who work with the principals. They consist at least of two teachers/staff, one colleague, and one senior officer for each principal. The measures used in the selection of the primary group respondents played a significant role in the validity of the findings. It was assumed that the primary respondents have some qualities of authenticity because they were selected based on social and professional recognition.

Since authentic leadership is an emerging theory and this study needs precise data, collection of personal stories were enriched with the orientation of interpretivism and constructivism. The collection of data was based on meaningful interactions using episodic interview (Flick, 2000), and semi-structured interview. After interviewing, narrations and other accounts were transcribed and informed to the respondents for verification. Sound Organizer Version 1.4 and Dragon Naturally Speaking 11.5 were partially used for transcribing, and ATLAS.ti Version 7, which is a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), was used to analyse data. This phase of data analysis was mainly based on thematic analysis (Flick, 2009) while Arksey and Knight's (1999) data analysis process was used as the general procedure. Figure 1 shows the methodological framework of the study.

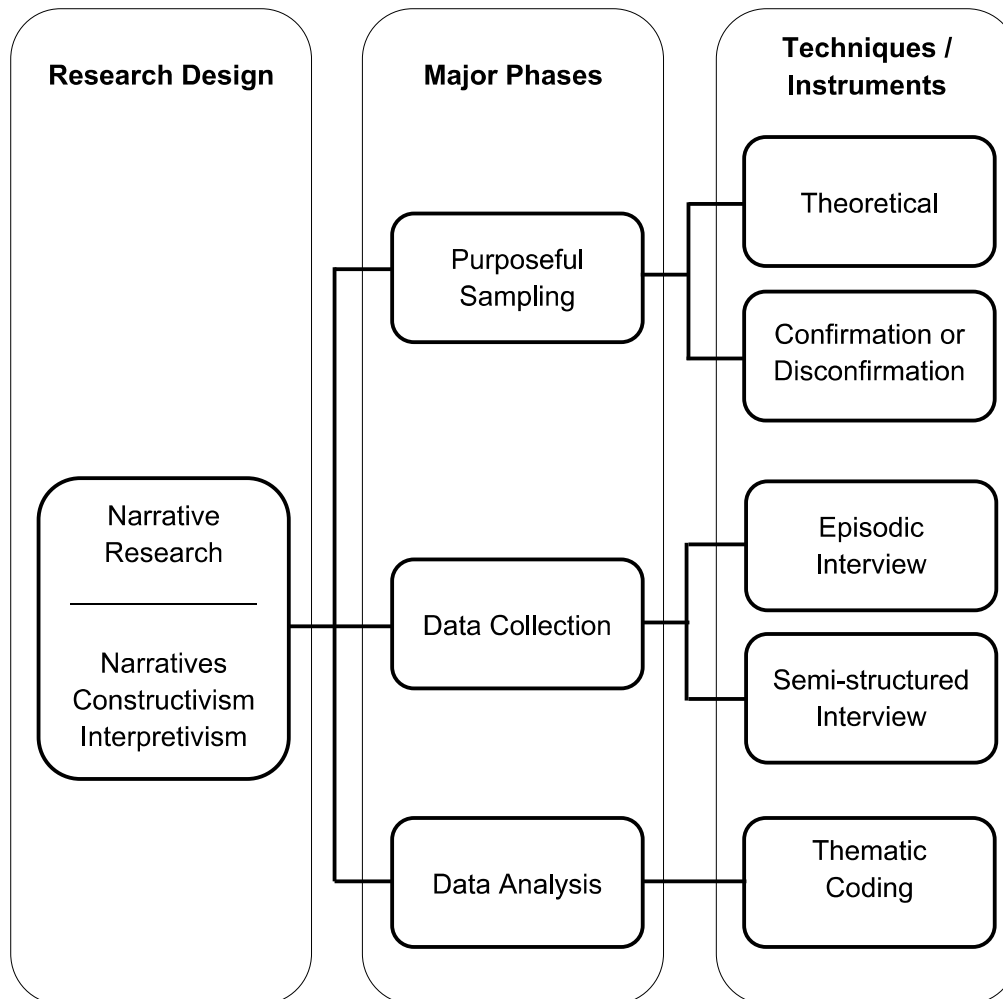


Figure 1: Methodological framework

The study was planned in a way that it could be analysed easily. It triangulated the rank of respondents in the frequency of repetition in the suggestions list, the self-narrations of the respondents, and the responses from staff, colleagues, and superiors. Thus, qualities which were seen to be positive when triangulated and do not go against the notion of authenticity as in the literature were noted as personal qualities of authentic school principals. Also comparisons of personalities between respondents were made in order to further understand the significance of the authenticity of the school principals.

FINDINGS

The findings of this study showed that personality plays a significant role in the description of an authentic school-principal. It also showed that the effectiveness of all other aspects foreign to self completely depend on the presence of authentic personal qualities. Some of the respondents were found to be more authentic than others.

Unanimously, all the respondents were found to be *psychologically harmonious*. They also faced challenges in their career and personal life. However, there is no significant evidence in the data that they took home problems related to school, and vice versa. This relaxation in mind is very much based on their *self-confidence*. Some of them are confident to the extent that they did not hesitate to admit self-weaknesses and mistakes. They were also very *hopeful* in achieving their targets and they think positively regarding almost everything. They were not worry much about the challenges they faced and handled it well. The trust they had in others, especially their staff, also helped them to be less worried. Most importantly, the faith they have in God plays a vital role in their psychological harmony. Almost all the respondents were found to be highly *faithful to God*. As all the respondents in this study were Muslims, they strongly believed that nothing, including the desires or thoughts, could be hidden from Allah – their one and only God. Moreover, some of the respondents choose to be faithful because of their love to God as the Creator and Caretaker of everything.

“I practice religious teaching fully. I follow moderately. In my everyday life, I pray with my family and then before coming to school, I recite Du’a. I read Surah Al-Waqi’ah, Al-Mulk, Al-Ikhlaas, Al-Falaq, An-Naas [chapters of Quran], before I come to school every day. Because we need Allah to protect us, to give us Hidayat, wisdom. ... So to be successful, we need to do three things: work hard; pray to Allah because only He has the power to do anything; and Tawakkul [trust in God]. Sometimes we work hard, but miss one of these things, then we fail. Because Allah knows everything. He knows what will happen today, tomorrow. That is what I implement in this school. Teachers work hard, perform prayers; we read Surah Yassin every Thursday. We obtain the results. We work hard. We recite the Du’a. Only Allah can help”. (R3)

Respecting others and self is another quality found as an important characteristic of the respondents. Most importantly, they respected the staff as professionals, as much as they respected themselves. They wanted others to get everything they wanted as individuals. Even though the degrees of respecting others and self differ between respondents, they did not have the intentions of bossing others. They actively participated with the teachers in every task in the school. Similarly, they respected the parents, colleagues, seniors and others. They see these people as important stakeholders for the success of the school. They talked to them politely and helped them in any regard possible. This causes them to be *truthful* and *transparent* in every

move they made. They had no intentions of hiding any of their actions from the public. In most of the cases they made collaborative decisions, which dissolve the possible necessity for hiding those actions.

“I did not think as the head, I am their friend. I do not want to talk confidential things in front of others. So I call the individual teachers. ... So when the teacher comes, I praise first, then only I talk about solving the issue. Then I advise them regarding the issue”. (R6)

The collaborative nature of their management is based on their *loyalty* to everything that surrounds them – from themselves to the community. They are committed in the development of themselves with no less attention to the development of the school and community. They have individual goals to achieve, and they have strong visions for the school. However, they do not show biasness towards any of the individual or action. They are *unbiased* in their action. They neither sacrifice themselves nor others, rather they maintain a balance between everyone and everything.

Self-determination is another personal quality, which was evident from the respondents. Whatever task they are working on and whatever responsibility they accept, they show determination in achieving the set targets. They are ambitious in helping themselves and others in achieving the targets. They are also determined to direct others towards the vision. These respondents' determination causes them to be *autonomous*. Even though operation in bureaucratic structures is not easy, some of the respondents were found to be having high level of self-regulation, whereas others also operate at different levels of autonomy. They are aware of what they are doing and what they have to do. They maintain a “glocal” network, from which they seek help when necessary. The network is mostly based on popular mediums like Facebook and Whatsapp.

As fairness is a major concern of all the respondents, they were found to be *balanced in their action*. They have no intentions of exercising personal agendas in the school. This may be due to the reason that they are truthful to others and faithful to God. Many teachers, colleagues and seniors also acknowledged their un-biasness in dealing with personal and professional issues. Most important, they maintain a balance in everything they do. They do not spend their time too much on particular tasks, but look at the importance and urgency of the tasks and issues, based on the information collected from the “glocal” networks.

In order to run the school effectively all the respondents give importance in building up *transparent relationship* with teachers, parents, colleagues, students, seniors and others. There is no evidence in the data that any of the respondents holds secret and uncertain relationships with teachers and students. Their relationship with the stakeholders is their greatest effort in reaching the targets. Professionally they use this relationship as a mode of collaboration, whereas personally they use it to gain and extend respect. In both ways, this acts as a mode of eradicating contextual

conflicts/disharmony and building personal, professional, organizational and social harmony.

I always tell my teachers that our relationship with people must be good too. Sometimes people see you... Make them your friends! Sometimes we have enemies, but if we change we may change the enemy to be our friend. That is what I believe. If you have lots of friends, you have a strong team, you can enjoy. But if you have lots of enemies, you cannot stand here. That is also what I tell my colleague. (R1)

Self-reflection is another personal quality that the respondents have. All the respondents try to reflect on their everyday actions. However, some of the respondents are less efficient than others. Those who have learnt to do productive reflection, do it better than those who have just heard about it. They also have gone far beyond in understanding themselves (*self-aware*). Some are just merely aware about themselves, whereas others can see multiple perspectives about them. Generally, all the respondents know their weaknesses and strengths to some extent. However, only few have gone to the extent of taking actions to remedy the weaknesses and consolidate the strengths. Those who are highly self-aware know how to attend to their weaknesses, even though they are not able to change those behaviours right away. As part of being self-aware, they also understand how to integrate others' views with theirs. They rather identify themselves as important substances in their environment. This causes them to be *morally ethical* in dealing with issues. They take the necessary ethical consideration to ensure that students, teachers, others and themselves are not neglected due to their ignorance about themselves and the community. They follow good mechanism of decision making with high level of courage and hope.

There was an incident [once]. ... Normally I do not let the teachers see the parents [regarding issues]. In this case I arranged a meeting with the parent. So the parent talked to the teacher. I just let the parent express his dissatisfaction until the teacher apologised to the parent. So in cases like this, I will deal it this way. I do not think many principals will let the parents meet the teachers. But my concern was my kids, teachers are second. (R2)

Most of the respondents were found to be *empathetic* in their day to day life. They do not take issues simply, but critically. Every issue is critical and big for them. They attend to the teachers' professional and personal issues with kind hearts. They are accepted as emotional soothers by their staff. If they have to laugh with the teachers, they laugh, and if they have to cry with the teachers, they cry. Some of their staffs see them as a father/mother figure, while some of their colleagues see them as a kin. In this regard, they attract and soothe people by sharing incidents in their lives. They are *good narrators*, especially those who had encountered vital experience. They relate their stories to their family members, teachers, colleagues and others in order to motivate them towards the vision and mission.

Two years back I had a very big problem regarding my admission to [the university]. ... [S/he] tried to calm me down. I was so disappointed at that time. So when [s/he] saw me in the staffroom, [s/he] called me and tried to comfort me, and tried to tell me everything. [S/he] said that I got that position, [s/he] felt sorry about what happened. [S/he] actually did not have to feel that way, because [s/he] has done [her/his] part. [S/he] took about 3-4 months like that to comfort me. When [s/he] saw me, thinking that I was disappointed, [s/he] said that may be Allah has something better for me; it is that I am not supposed to be in that university, so not to worry. [S/he] suggested me many things. [S/he] suggested me to take study leave too. [S/he] helped me a lot. Slowly I could accept it. But during that time my health was also not very good. I was having blood pressure problems. So I got comfortable when [s/he] called me in. I realised that [s/he] is somebody supportive. The principal is helpful and encourage us to upgrade ourselves. [S/he] tries [her/his] best to make us understand things. Maybe [s/he was right], Allah has another plan for me. (R18's comment about R6)

Irrespective of their age and experience in the field, all the respondents were found to be committed in teaching. They were very good teachers in their subject areas before they were promoted to be the principals and are still actively participating in the teaching processes. Some of the respondents taught classes, while others special remedial classes. In addition to that, they also actively participate with the teachers in different phases of teaching. It looks like that they are born educators.

Surprisingly, there is no evidence in the data that showed age or year of experience has a change in the degree of positive personal qualities of the respondents. In fact, the data shows that all the respondents are *mature and wise*. However, there is no evidence that this maturity is related to age or number of years of experience. The data showed that respondents who are young make more informed, conscious and mature decisions than those who are close to their retirement. This is further found to be related to some qualitative personal factors, like self-reflection, critical incidents, intensity of the qualification (not certification), and active involvement in professional and personal life.

On the whole, all the respondents have many good personal qualities. However, the depth and breadth of these qualities depend on the authenticity of the principals. It is also understood that those respondents who are socially and professionally recognised as authentic principals by external sources do not necessarily be considered as authentic by internal sources. Teachers and other staff are found to be important stakeholders who can comment on the personality of the authenticity of their principals. It is important to note that none of the respondents were found to have acquired all the qualities described here. However, most of these qualities were identified in respondents who had encountered critical experiences and learnt to carry out self-reflection.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study about personal qualities of authentic school-principals, very much aligned with most of the current literature of authenticity (Kernis, 2003; Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Authentic school-principals exhibit personalities of self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced action, self-regulation, (Kernis, 2003) and moral perspective (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Even though the wordings are different, this view is also supported by George and Sims (2007). However, the literature does not support that personal qualities of authentic principals can be limited. Hence, this study shows that there are other dimensions of personal related factors which describe a principal's authenticity.

As authentic leadership is drawn partly from positive organizational behaviour (Luthans & Avolio, 2003), psychological capital (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007) plays an important role in the existence and development of authentic principals. On this regard, this study also has found that authentic principals are psychologically harmonious, which is based on their cognitive and emotional capacity. It further shows that psychological harmony is a pathway for elements of psychological capital – confidence, hope, optimism and resiliency, which are also important personal qualities of authentic school principals.

The research also concludes that one of the most prominent qualities of authentic school-principals is strong believe in God. Having faith in God helps principals to be at peace at all times, especially when they face challenges. Being faithful to God, on the other hand, insures their positive moral perspective and behaviours, such as authentic behaviour, transparency, fair and self-awareness. As religion's two main functions are "promoting personal stability and others' welfare and social harmony" (Aghababaei, 2013, p. 197), the result of having faith in God and being faithful to God as an essential personality of authentic principals (at least in religion based societies) is strengthened.

Since Brunei has a highly value based culture, respectfulness and loyalty, are widely practiced in the community. It is not surprising for the school principals to show such behaviour in their professional interactions as well. However, the degree of these qualities observed in the respondents is noteworthy: for instance, they give the deserved respect and aids to students and other people in the school community. Thus, this shows that respecting others and self is also a baseline personal quality of authentic school principals.

The quality of authenticity in principals depends on the personal maturity and qualification. Even though some scholars' descriptions of the development of authenticity depends on age (George & Sims, 2007), the finding of this study shows that maturity directly affects authenticity, but not age. The data strongly support that personal maturity and qualification are directly related, that is, when the quality of one increases the other increases too and vice-versa. Similarly, self-reflection process of authentic principals helps in upgrading the maturity and professional qualification.

This process further is enhanced through narration of personal critical experiences (Sparrowe, 2005).

Authentic school-principals as instructional leaders engage in the total development of the school. Their commitment in the improvement of instruction is their greatest success in achieving professional and social recognition. They are dedicated towards school vision/mission, teacher-student development, school context enhancement, and community development (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2010). The autonomous involvement in these aspects, especially teaching and learning, is the core business of authentic school-principals.

Finally, three major conclusions can be driven from this study. Firstly, personal qualities of authentic school-principals include many positive personal qualities of other forms of leadership, like transformational leadership, ethical leadership, and instructional leadership. The finding of this study concludes that personal qualities of authentic principals are very much similar and can be summarised into MacGilchrist, Myers and Reed's (2004) nine intelligences that are ethical, spiritual, contextual, operational, emotional, collegial, reflective, pedagogical and systemic. This view is also concurrent with many other available literature (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004; Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Secondly and most importantly: faithful to and having faith in God; commitment towards instruction (core business), and respectfulness (towards self and others) are found to be the baseline of personal qualities, which are entry points of authentic school-principals. In other words a principal may happen to be recognised as authentic through higher level of acquisition of one of these three qualities, while the other two qualities may be at any lower degree at the entrance, but later develops those to a higher level. It is evident that all the other positive personal qualities are developed on one of these qualities and sustained when these three qualities are integrated, at least in the context of Brunei. Finally, it can be considered that principals who have more positive qualities present in their personalities are more authentic than those who have less personal qualities present in their personalities.

However, neither the qualities highlighted in this paper are adequate to judge a school-principal as fully authentic, nor the opposites of these qualities are adequate to judge a school-principal as inauthentic, for two major reasons. Firstly, the findings need to be thoroughly validated in order to generalise it to a mass group. Secondly, an authentic principal in one school context might not necessarily be authentic in another school setting (Shamir & Eilam, 2005).

The findings of this study can be useful for in-school professional development sessions, short-termed in-service training programmes and college/university based academic-training courses for school principals and other educational personnel. In order to incorporate authenticity components in such programmes designers and organisers can take these findings into consideration. Moreover, self-reflecting school-principals can use these personal qualities as a guideline for reaching higher authenticity.

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