

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE LEADERSHIP STYLES OF  
PRINCIPALS IN SELECTED SECONDARY  
SCHOOLS IN THE DISTRICT  
OF MUAR, JOHOR

A Thesis Submitted  
to the Graduate School  
Universiti Utara Malaysia

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Science (Management)

By  
Ang Bay Lee  
December, 1995

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DEDICATION

I take a great deal of pride in dedicating  
this thesis to **my** beloved husband,  
Toh Cheng **Hwa**.

Your love, support and understanding  
have made this work possible.

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## ABSTRAK

Banyak telah tertulis mengenai pentadbiran dalam pendidikan. Nampaknya, pengetua-pengetua sekolah-sekolah menengah mempunyai stail pimpinan yang berlainan. Terdapat empat jenis stail pimpinan yang dikemukakan oleh Hersey dan Blanchard (1976, 1982, 1993) iaitu, "Telling", "Selling", "Participating" dan "Delegating". Kesesuaian dan keberkesanan setiap stail pimpinan bergantung kepada keadaan dan kematangan kerja kumpulan (Hersey dan Blanchard, 1982).

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menyelidiki stail pimpinan pengetua-pengetua di sekolah-sekolah menengah yang terpilih di daerah Muar, Johor. Khususnya, ia bertujuan untuk menentukan sejauh manakah pengetua-pengetua mengamalkan stail pimpinan "Telling", "Selling", "Participating" dan "Delegating" seperti dijelaskan dalam "Leader Effectiveness and Adaptability Description (LEAD)" yang diusahakan oleh Hersey, 1989. Kajian ini turut mengkaji persepsi guru-guru terhadap stail pimpinan pengetua-pengetua, mengikut jantina, kelayakan, pengalaman guru-guru dan gred dan lokasi sekolah.

Data-data dianalisis dengan menggunakan "Leader Effectiveness and Adaptability Description" (Hersey,



1989) dan skor dianalisis dengan menggunakan statistik "descriptive".

Responden dalam kajian ini terdiri daripada 20 orang pengetua dan 388 orang guru. Berdasarkan kepada hasil kajian ini, didapati pengetua-pengetua memilih "Selling" sebagai stail pimpinan Yang utama, "Participating" sebagai stail pimpinan sampingan yang utama. Mereka menunjukkan flexibiliti yang tinggi dalam stail pimpinan "Selling dan Participating" tetapi mempunyai penyesuaian stail pimpinan yang agak rendah. Juga didapati, persepsi pengetua-pengetua dan guru-guru adalah sama dalam stail pimpinan utama tetapi berbeza dalam stail pimpinan sampingan, stail pimpinan berjarak dan penyesuaian stail pimpinan. Juga didapati persepsi guru-guru terhadap stail pimpinan utama pengetua-pengetua berbeza dari segi jantina dan kelayakan guru-guru, tetapi tiada perbezaan dalam stail pimpinan penyesuaian dari segi kelayakan guru-guru, gred dan lokasi sekolah.

Nampaknya, hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa pengetua-pengetua sekolah masih kurang berkebolehan dalam menyesuaikan stail pimpinan mereka terhadap sesuatu situasi dan kehendak-kehendak guru-guru.

## ABSTRACT

Much has been written about educational administration. It appears that secondary school principals have different styles of leadership. There are 4 distinct types of leadership posited by Hersey and Blanchard(1976, 1982, 1993), that is, "Telling,,, "Selling,,, "Participating,, and "Delegating,,. Each style is appropriate and effective depending on the situation and the "maturity" of the work group (Hersey and Blanchard, 1982).

The purpose of the study was to investigate the leadership styles of principals in selected secondary schools in the district of Muar, Johor. Specifically, it was to determine the extent to which the principals demonstrate the leadership styles of "Telling,,, "Selling", "Participating" and "Delegating" as delineated in The Leader Effectiveness and Adaptability Description (LEAD) designed by Hersey in 1989. The study also looked into the perceptions of teachers of the leadership styles of their principals by gender, qualification, working experience, grade and location of schools. Data was analyzed using the "Leader Effectiveness and Adaptability Description,, (Hersey,

1989) and scores were then analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Respondents in the study were 20 principals and 388 teachers. Based on the findings, it was found that principals chose "Selling" as the dominant primary leadership style and "Participating" as the dominant secondary leadership style. They demonstrated high flexibility in "Selling and Participating" but rather low style adaptability in general. It was found that the perceptions of principals and teachers were similar on the dominant primary leadership style but differed concerning secondary leadership style(s), style range and style adaptability. It was also found that teachers' perceptions of primary leadership styles of principals differed by gender and qualification but there was no difference in the leadership style adaptability, by qualification of teachers, grade and location of schools.

The results appear to indicate that principals still lack the ability to adapt their styles of leader behavior to meet the particular situations and needs of their teachers.

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# CHAE'TERI

## STUDY RATIONALE

### 1.1 Background of study

Ibrahim **Ahmad** Bajunid (1994: p. 11) stated that:

"The Educational Vision of Malaysia draws from and translates the concerns articulated in Vision 2020 into the educational context. It is a synthesis of various major ideas in circulation in the educational arena for some time. The governing ideas of the national Educational Vision are : Knowledge Culture, Reading Culture, Culture of Excellence, Caring Culture, Empowerment, Zero Defect and Leadership Management Style".

Ibrahim Bajunid **Ahmad** also stated that in 1988, the government accepted the Statement of the Philosophy of Education. The Philosophy of Education highlights the goal of developing the learner intellectually, emotionally, physically, spiritually in a balanced way to enable the person to realize his fullest potentials.

In schools, principals can be seen as leaders instrumental to the realization of Vision 2020.

The literature on leadership in education for the past decade has been extensively on the principalship (Edmonds, R.R. 1979; Blumberg and Greenfield, 1980; Liphman, 1981; Synder and Anderson, 1986). Much has been written about school leadership affecting organizational health and climate, school change and innovation, staff morale and professionalism - and thus school effectiveness and students' achievement. As cited by Ladd and others (1992: p. 398) in "School leader as motivator", Maehr, Midgley and Urden argued that school leaders influence the motivation of students and attend to the psychological environment of the school by "inaugurating, supporting and monitoring certain school wide policies, practices and procedures".

Razik Taher (1995: p. 548 ) expresses the role of the principal as follows:

"As the key educational actor, the effective school principal is seen as one who is primarily responsible for school improvement and who ensures an atmosphere of order, discipline and prepares a climate of high expectation for staff and students, collegial and collaborative staff relation-

ships, commitment among staff and students to school goals, adequate time for instruction and adequate staff development."

From personal observation and the experience of others in the teaching profession, there is an apparent need for a study of the leadership styles of principals in Malaysian schools to shadow some light on leadership behavior of principals. Prevalence of cliques have been reported, together with the dissatisfaction of teachers on several issues regarding their work situations. Dissatisfaction among the teachers have been attributed to various factors, chief of which has been the anomaly in the salary scheme (Thani, 1972 ). The reason for this dissatisfaction could be the lack of feedback given by principals during the appraisal. This may be related to the leadership styles of the principals. The existence of cliques in a school may suggest dissatisfaction with the daily administrative routine within the school, especially with the quality of interaction between the superiors and the subordinates. (Thani, 1972). Teachers react in specific ways to the leadership style exhibited by the principals. They have certain expectations of the way their principal should behave. The behavior of the principal with respect to

the expectations of the teachers, whether of his or her role, governs whether or not the teachers are satisfied.

Darcy and Kleiner (1991: pg. 12) stated that "Changes both large and small, simple and complex - dominate and define today's business world."

Changes are also happening in the educational environment. The move towards realizing the country's goals is expected to bring about changes in the school system. Changes are intended ultimately to benefit an organization, other changes are met with both fear and uncertainty by teachers and thus become the true challenge for the principal to implement successfully. Such changes produce a turbulent environment within an organization (Darcy and Kleiner, 1991). Darcy and Kleiner added that to implement change successfully, a principal must understand the impact of the change on the people who will be affected. The principal must positively orient himself or herself towards the upcoming change in a manner which will ensure his or her effective leadership. The principal should endeavor to employ many of the management techniques including the concepts of managing practically, actively, flexibly and sensitively. Petit and Hind (1992) cited in Duignan and Macpherson (1992: p. 106) also suggested that

reorganization involves major changes to the existing way that an institution operates and it also encompasses internal changes such as major reform to the curriculum involving the creation of new depths and the demise of others, major changes in teachers' roles or very different and more direct forms of accountability.

Leader effectiveness is complex and has to be defined in a variety of ways. Stogdill (1974), for example suggested that the effectiveness of a group be defined in terms of group output, satisfaction of its members and its morale. The choice of leadership effectiveness criteria depends on many factors including the value of the evaluator, leadership theory and the time perspective and the managing of the change process. Duke (1992) noted that administrative effectiveness can be measured as a function of traits, compliance, competence and attained school outcomes.

Various perspectives have been used to study and analyze leadership, among them, the trait approach, the behavioral approach and the contingency approach. Keith and Girling (1991: p. 58-60) expressed the three approaches as follows:

"Trait theories place emphasis on the personal characteristics of leaders. Research within the trait theory tradition tries to identify



a set of personal characteristics that separate effective leaders from ineffective leaders. However, researchers have been unable to establish a single leadership profile associated with effective managerial **outcomes**. Moreover, although the studies of leadership traits have provided interesting **taxonomies**, they fail to provide insight into how one might develop the necessary skills."

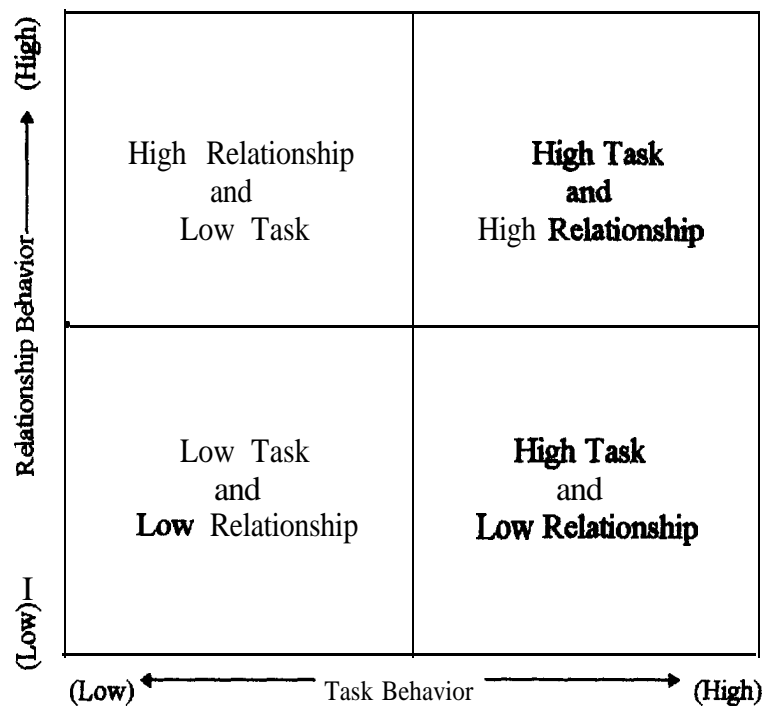
Keith and Girling (1991) stated that behavioral theories focus on a **combination** of personal and situational variables or on the interaction between the expectations and perceptions of leaders and followers within differing organizational conditions. Based largely on **comparative** studies of effective and ineffective leaders, behavioral approaches, including most contingency theories, suggest that effective leadership requires one to adjust his or her style to fit differing situations. Contingency theory defines good leadership as the ability to match the right leadership style to the situation (Keith and Girling, 1991). Utilizing the two styles of leadership (that is relationship orientated and task orientated), the contingency approach suggests that depending on the

situational configuration, one of these styles will be appropriate.

Situational theory provides some valuable insights into leader-follower behavior; it helps leaders diagnose the situation and develop strategies to adapt their leader behavior to meet the demands of the situation. According to Hersey and Blanchard (1982), stated Schein (1975) captured the intent of the theory when he observed that leaders must have the personal flexibility and range of skills necessary to vary their own behavior according to the needs and drives of subordinates.

Situational **theory attempts** to provide understanding of the relationships between the effective styles of leadership and the level of maturity of followers. Simply stated, the basic assumption of the theory is that leader effectiveness depends on the appropriate matching of leader behavior with the maturity of the group or individual (Hersey and Blanchard, 1982). Here the maturity of the group or followers is emphasized as a critical situational variable that moderates the relationship between leadership behavior and effectiveness. In Hersey and **Blanchard's** Situational theory (1982), the leader's behavior and situation are considered together to

determine the primary style, secondary style and style range of a leader, in addition to his or her leadership style adaptability. Hersey and Blanchard used the terms "task behavior" and "relationship behavior" to describe concepts similar to the terms "Consideration" and "Initiating structure" of the Ohio State studies initiated in 1945 by the Bureau of Business Research at Ohio State University. "Initiating structure" or task behavior refers of the leader's behavior in delineating the relationship between himself and members of the work group and in endeavoring to establish well-defined patterns of organization, channels of communication, and methods of procedure. "Consideration" or relationship behavior refers to behavior indicative of friendship, mutual trust, respect and warmth in the relationship between the leader and the members of the staff (Hersey and Blanchard, 1982). The four basic leader behavior quadrants as shown in Figure 1 (P. 9) are labeled: high task and low relationship; high task and high relationship; high relationship and low task; and low relationship and low task. The theories pertinent to this study will be expanded upon in Chapter 2.



**FIGURE 1 : THE BASIC LEADER BEHAVIOR STYLES (HERSEY AND BLANCHARD, 1982)**

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

Leadership in an institution dedicated to education **must** itself be educative (Duignan and **Macpherson** 1992).

They stated **that**:

" An educative leader is a person who challenges others to participate in the visionary activity of defining 'rightness' and preferred ways of doing and acting in education. We see an educative leader as a person who challenges educators to **commit** themselves to approaches to administration and professional practices that are, by their nature, **educative.**" (1992: p.4)

Thevar (1994) stated that Paul **Hersey** (1978) quoted President Bill Clinton, then **Chairman** of the U.S. National Governors Association, as saying that the school principal is the key to educational change in schools. Being directly involved in bringing about the change, principals should be aware of the characteristics of effective leadership styles and to what extent their own styles can be considered effective. **The Southern Regional Education Board (1981)**, U. S. cited in a thesis project by **Thevar (1994: p.1 )** stated that,

"**The success** or failure of a public school **depends more** on the principal than any

other single person."

Therefore, Malaysian principals must be able to read the changes in schools and apply the correct mix of leadership styles in order to be effective leaders and to lead the teaching and non-teaching staff and students towards the **achievement** of a shared mission. The principal must be able to adapt his or her leadership style to any situation be it the central office, working with the Ministry of Education, existing **community** cooperation, supervising assistant principals, **improving** students' performance, **motivating** the teaching staff or leading staff and **community** in **instructional** improvement. At this point, much is still unknown about principals' leadership styles in the Malaysian context.

### 1.3 Aim of study

The **aim** of this study was to investigate the leadership styles of secondary school principals in the district of **Muar**, Johor. Specifically, it was to determine the extent to which the principals demonstrate the leadership styles of "**Telling**", "**Selling**", "**Participating**" and "**Delegating**" as delineated in the Leader Effectiveness and Adaptability Description (LEAD) designed by Hersey and Blanchard. (See page 13 for explanation of terms). The study also looked into the

perceptions of teachers of the leadership styles of their principals.

#### 1.4 Research questions

This study hopes to answer the following questions:

1. What are the leadership styles of principals in selected secondary schools in the district of Muar, Johor?
2. What are the perceptions of secondary school principals of their own leadership styles?
3. What are the perceptions of secondary school teachers of the leadership styles?
4. To what extent are the secondary school principals demonstrating the leadership styles of "Telling", "Selling", "Participating" and "Delegating"?
5. What are the perceptions of teachers of the primary leadership style, by gender?
6. What are the perceptions of teachers of the primary leadership style, by qualification?
7. What are the perceptions of teachers of the primary leadership style, by working experience?
8. What are the perceptions of teachers of the leadership style adaptability, by grade of schools?
9. What are the perceptions of teachers of the leadership style adaptability, by location of schools?

10. What are the perceptions of teachers of the leadership style adaptability, by qualification?

#### 1.5 Significance of study

The findings of the study would be of significance to the Ministry of Education, State and District education departments , various training organizations, state agencies and university departments and teachers' training colleges.

The results of this study may aid the Malaysian Ministry of Education to plan and develop professional leadership training programs for principals so that they can effectively lead Malaysian schools into the future. It is hoped that this study will help administrators realize the need to be particularly proficient and effective in management. It is also hoped the information provided by such a study would help in the fundamental matter of reviewing educational administration training programs to assess and improve their effectiveness.

#### 1.6 Definition of terms

1. Leadership styles: Different ways to approach situations when working with people (Hersey and Blanchard, 1972).



2. Four styles of leadership:

a. "Telling" - a style characterized by one-way communication in which the leader defines the roles of followers and tells them what, how, when and where to do various tasks (Hersey, 1976).

b. "Selling" - a style whereby most of the direction is still provided by the leader. The leader also attempts through two-way communication and socioemotional support to get the followers psychologically to buy into decisions that have to be made (Hersey, 1976).

c. "Participating" - a style where leader and follower share in decision making through two-way communication and much facilitating behavior from the leader, since the followers have the ability and knowledge to do the task (Hersey, 1976).

d. "Delegating" - this style involves letting followers "run their own show". The leader delegates since the followers are high in readiness, have the ability and are both willing and able to take responsibility for directing their own behavior (Bersey, 1976).

3. Principal: The head of secondary school who is primarily responsible for administration and instruction.

4. Secondary school: A school which has Remove class through Upper Six. However, some of the schools may not have Form six. It holds students aged 13 to 20 years old.

5. Grade of school is determined by the Ministry of Education. However there are 2 grades that is:

a. Grade A school is managed by a school principal with a DG2 salary scale and assisted by 2 assistant principals , an afternoon supervisor and 4 senior subject teachers. Enrollment of students is between 1,000 to above 2,000.

b. Grade B school is managed by a school principal with a DG3 salary scale and assisted by 3 assistant principals and an afternoon supervisor. Enrollment of students is less than 1,500.

6. Location of school: Rural and town schools are defined by their localities in towns, defined by the local Municipal Town Council of Muar, Johor.

### 1.7 summary

The purpose of the study is to investigate the leadership styles of principals in selected secondary schools in the district of Muar, Johor. Various perspectives of leadership theories are discussed, chief

of which was Hersey and Blanchard's Situational theory (1982).

The study includes the perceptions of principals and teachers of the primary style, secondary style(s), style range and style adaptability of principals. Teachers' perceptions of principals' primary leadership style and style adaptability, by gender, qualification, grade and location of schools are included in the study. The study will focus on ten research questions that will provide grounds for discussion and conclusions.

## CHAPTER11

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### 2.1 Introduction

This literature review will discuss leadership, leadership theories and leadership styles with a focus on those relevant to the study, that is, relating to the Situational model of leadership and the perception of teachers of the leadership styles of principals.

Leadership is a sophisticated concept and there are as many definitions as there are writers on the topic. Leadership has long held a central place in the field of educational administration (Ogawa, 1992).

Gardner (1990) identified leadership as "the process of persuasion and example by which an individual (leadership team) induces a group to take action in accord with the leader's purpose or the shared purpose of the group. This view is supported by Hogan (1994) who stated that leadership involves persuading other people to set aside for a period of time their individual concerns and to pursue a common goal that is

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