

# THE INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR ON TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN SELANGOR, MALAYSIA

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#### **ABSTRACT**

It is important to observe factors that affect teachers' self-efficacy as they play a crucial role in students' achievements. Many factors are involved in teachers' selfefficacy, with one of them being principal leadership behaviour which plays an important role. This study aims to identify the level of principal leadership behaviour, the level of teacher self-efficacy and the relationship between them. This study adopted a quantitative method based on questionnaires and the data were obtained from 382 primary school teachers from Selangor, Malaysia. Descriptive data analysis was used to study the level of principal leadership behaviour and teacher self-efficacy meanwhile Pearson product moment the correlation to understand the relationship between both variables. Based on the data, the level of principal leadership behaviour and level of teacher self-efficacy is very high and there is a moderate relationship between both these variables (r=.420). These results hopefully will be helpful for the Ministry of Education and departments in implementing courses and programmes for both principals and teachers in improving the education quality. Furthermore, the findings are helpful for policymakers in mapping development courses that emphasise principal leadership behaviour and teacher self-efficacy. The researcher also suggested that further research can be done based on the behaviour of other school leaders and the effect on teachers' self-efficacy. This research can also be furthered to secondary schools to observe the influencing factors.

Keywords: Principal Leadership Behaviour, Teacher Self-Efficacy, Primary Schools

### **INTRODUCTION**

The leadership behaviour of a school principal has a great impact on teachers' self-efficacy. Studies have shown that suitable and appropriate leadership behaviour will enhance teachers' self-efficacy which will directly increase their motivation to perform better in their job. Each school principal needs to ensure that their teachers are ready to face any challenges in achieving the aspiration set by the Malaysian Education Blueprint. Leadership behaviour is based on sets of behaviours that were observed from effective leadership practices (Salihu, 2019). According to Zarina (2017), principals in successful schools must have some distinct leadership behaviour that ensures effectiveness, especially student achievement through effective principals. Also, to provide context, in Malaysia, primary school leaders are called headmasters or headmistresses. However, the term principal will be used in this study.

Teacher self-efficacy is an important factor that can ensure educational excellence. Teacher self-efficacy refers to the belief the teachers have in themselves that they can control their actions in bringing out



the best in students (He & Mica, 2006). Meanwhile, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998) stated that teacher self-efficacy is the confidence the teachers' have in themselves in delivering a successful teaching and learning process. They have further classified teacher self-efficacy based on three dimensions; instructional strategies, classroom management and student engagement.

With the current changes in the education system (Fuad et al., 2020) there is a need for schools to stay relevant in the competition and there is a requirement for the delivery of equal education for all (Ismail & Abdul, 2019). The main people who can make these changes work successfully are teachers (Dasan & Nawi, 2020). Teachers need to practise effective teaching methods and according to Ramli and Yusoff (2020), this can be achieved when they have high self-efficacy. It is important for us to identify the behaviours of principals that are associated with teacher self-efficacy as studies have shown principal leadership behaviour plays a major role in helping teachers with their confidence and belief in themselves to perform better in their classes (Ong et al., 2022; Dahiru & Gbolahan, 2022; Urick, 2020).

The need to understand the behaviours that are linked with teachers arises as the principal's role is critical in shaping the school culture and climate and in influencing their attitudes and behaviour. Meanwhile, teacher self-efficacy is an area that helps them identify the abilities to perform their teaching tasks and confidence in positively cultivating the students. However, Rasul and Jalaludin (2020) on research done in Malaysia stated that the level of teachers' self-efficacy still needs to be studied further as teachers have the most influence on students. Hsieh et al. (2020) associated teacher self-efficacy, teachers' behaviour, work stress, motivation and job satisfaction with student achievement. Based on a study done by Yee et al. (2020) in schools at Gombak, Selangor, there is a relationship between principal leadership behaviour and teachers' self-efficacy. This is because principals' behaviour has a great influence on teachers' effectiveness and self-efficacy plays a great role in their performance. Furthermore, Ramakrishnan and Salleh (2019) added that there is a need to study more on the effects of the relationship of principal leadership behaviour on teachers' self-efficacy as teachers' self-efficacy is determined by principals' behaviour (Fackler et al., 2020). In conclusion, both these variables are important in education research and there is a need for a continuous study on them.

#### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

Based on the above discussion, it is clear principal leadership behaviour has an effect on teacher self-efficacy which is a determinant in ensuring smooth teaching and learning process and there is a need for continuous study in this area. The main objective of this study is to identify the influence of principal leadership behaviour on teacher self-efficacy. Therefore, the following objectives were derived:

- 1. To identify the level of principal leadership behaviour of national primary school principals in Selangor, Malaysia.
- 2. To identify the level of teachers' self-efficacy among teachers in national primary schools in Selangor, Malaysia.
- 3. To identify the relationship between principal leadership behaviour and teachers' self-efficacy in national primary schools in Selangor, Malaysia.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

# Principal Leadership Behaviour

Leadership behaviour based on behaviour was first popularised in the 1940s by a study done at Ohio State University. The study indicated two dimensions which show the behaviour of a leader, namely initiating structure and consideration structure. This study was further researched at Michigan University (Shenhav, 2020). Both studies identify that initiating structure is more task-oriented and considerate structure is more to the relationship between employer and employee. Based on these two studies, the behaviour theory has evolved into many forms from Managerial Grid, Contingency Theory, Path Goal Theory, Tri-dimensional Theory of Behaviour Leadership and Full Range Leadership Theory. All have similar opinions on behaviour that can be described based on task-oriented and relation-oriented.



In the 1990s, another orientation namely the change orientation was added to this range. Yukl et al. (2002) adopted it into the Hierarchy of Leadership Behaviour. Yukl et al. (2002) developed change orientation as change is necessary for incorporating new knowledge in any leader's style for the betterment of the organisation. Meanwhile, path-goal theory which is based on four styles; directive, supportive, participative and achievement are all based on a combination of task and relation orientations (Schermerhorn et al., 2011). Full leadership range theory is based on three leadership styles; transformational, transactional and laissez-faire. Whereby Poels et al. (2020) described transformational leadership as based on relation orientation and transactional leadership style as based on task orientation. It is noted that a principal should always use different behaviour based on the situation.

Task orientation behaviour comes out with a directive and description of carrying out a task and the school members are to follow them to get the job done. Makgato and Mudzanani (2019) described that task-oriented behaviour is suitable when a project is urgent in meeting the deadline or sometimes there is trouble among the team members. The principal gives instructions on the steps to carry out the project and teachers need to follow them to avoid any reprimands. Meanwhile, relation orientation emphasises more on the relationship of the principal with other school members and it is a form of motivation and support for them to perform better. Principals with relation-oriented behaviour tend to respect and show support towards the well-being of their teachers and other school members (Wirawan et al., 2019).

Change orientation is more on a leader's behaviour in adapting to change that is happening globally and incorporating them into their organisation. The principal's actions and behaviour are more than enough to implement any changes in a school (Nehez & Blossing, 2020) and desirable behaviour would also motivate the teachers in helping to carry out the changes. Zarina (2017) in her research explained that the tri-dimensional theory of behaviour by Yulk (1999) is suitable to be used in investigating all the aspects of leadership behaviour. It is important to understand the type of behaviour that is suitable according to the task and situations to motivate teachers that help to produce effective schools.

#### Four Leadership Orientations Model

The four leadership orientations model was built based on research done by Zarina (2017) on principal leadership behaviour in transforming primary schools in Selangor, Malaysia. This model was derived from the tri-dimensional leadership behaviour theory by Yukl (1999). There are four orientations in this model and Sufean and Zarina (2016) added that most of the behaviours can be observed in most leadership styles.

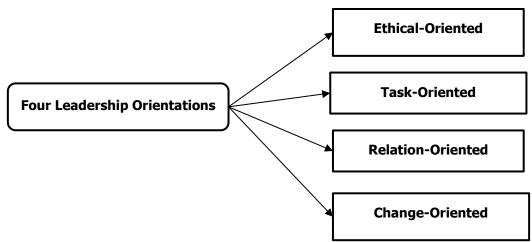


Figure 1. Four Leadership Orientation (Source: Zarina, 2017)

Ethical-orientation behaviour is gaining popularity as it can be seen as a behaviour that produces a conducive environment for teaching (Vikraman et al., 2021). Good communication skills, a friendly



approach and a trusting relationship are the main ethical conduct by principals that produce a positive climate. This also creates a comfortable environment for the teachers to perform under their principal's guidance. An ethically inclined principal is both dedicated and committed towards any task taken. According to Zarina (2017), ethical behaviour displayed by principals most of the time would be followed by other school members.

Task-orientation behaviour is achieving a goal by the principal in providing guidelines and workflow for the teachers (Tran, 2020). The principal gives less importance to fostering relationships with teachers (Zarina,2017). Although guidelines are provided, it is important for the principal to recognise the teachers' expertise and skills. Another factor that is needed in task orientation is supervision from the principal who monitors from time to time to ensure the project is flowing smoothly. Bahadur et al. (2017) stated another way to get a job done without any problem is by getting feedback and discussing any difficulty that the teachers are facing in carrying out the task.

Relation-orientation behaviour focuses more on the human relationship between principals and teachers. A considerate and caring principal not only promotes a healthy relationship between principal and teachers but at the same time gives satisfaction in their work for them (Ahmad et al., 2020). Relation oriented principals always give preference to teachers' emotions and feelings, although the main target is getting the job done without any force used. The principal acts as a coach in developing teachers' skills (Yukl et al., 2002) and teachers' opinions and consultation are sorted in implementing any projects. This makes the teachers feel their importance and value in a school and this increases their confidence and belief in delivering better in their teaching and learning process (Ozsahin, 2019).

Change-orientation behaviour is an important factor, especially since the 90s, which showcases a principal's desire to change. Although there are risks in undertaking some changes (Yukl et al., 2019), the principal's commitment to change is vital for the success of a school. Principals should have the desire to change the school to produce children that are well-equipped for the rapid growth that the world is going through. Majumdar (2018) stated that leaders who are change-oriented are always on the verge of improving and articulating their vision besides motivating their teachers to move towards the change.

#### Self-Efficacy

Ozdemir (2020) defined self-efficacy as self-confidence meanwhile Rezaein and Abdollahzadeh (2020) stated that self-efficacy is one's ability to achieve success in a task. Meanwhile, teacher self-efficacy is a popular topic in the education field as it is important to produce quality students (Martin & Mulvihill, 2019). Teachers have the ability to influence students to do better in their school and Perera et al. (2019) added that teachers also have a great impact on students. When the teacher's self-efficacy is high, they have more confidence in themselves in carrying out a task successfully.

Teacher self-efficacy is very important as it is associated with the teaching process they would carry out and self-efficacy theory provides clear direction in enhancing the efficacy in humans (Bandura, 1997). This is supported by Griffin (2009) that efficacy has the ability to influence the behaviour and the outcome of a project. High self-efficacy teachers are able to conduct their classes in fun and fruitful ways and at the same time able to manage the classroom and students. Besides, teachers high in self-efficacy have the capacity to learn new methods and approaches, using the latest technologies and techniques in managing and building students' skills while always setting achievable goals.

#### Teacher Self-Efficacy by Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2001)

Harris (2015) indicated that self-efficacy is suitable to be applied in many areas especially areas related to students and their learning. Destebasi (2020) added that teacher self-efficacy is associated with motivation based on self-perception and connected to instructional strategy, classroom management and student engagement.



This study adopts the Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) Tri-dimensional Teacher Self-Efficacy based on three dimensions; instructional strategies, classroom management and student engagement. Instructional strategies refer to the teachers' confidence in themselves in using suitable strategies and different teaching techniques to produce interesting and fruitful lessons. To get students involved in classroom activities, Agustina et al. (2020) and Putnam (2020) added the importance of teachers' management of both the physical environment and students' behaviour in showcasing their self-efficacy.

In classroom management, the teachers will be able to control and maintain the classroom in a peaceful environment by planning effectively and always managing to gain students' attention. Classroom management is more on managing students' behaviour, responses during the teaching and learning process and organisation of the classroom. Bacon (2020) stated that classroom management helps in student engagement and teachers can form positive engagement by creating suitable environments and supporting students in any situation.

Teachers with high self-efficacy are able to motivate and influence students to actively join any activities organised in class (Wilson et al., 2020). Based on the vast literature, self-efficacy is important for teachers in getting quality students and the three dimensions of instructional strategies, classroom management and student engagement help in achieving the objective set during the lessons.

# Relationship between Principal Leadership Behaviour and Teacher Self-Efficacy

Teacher's self-efficacy depends on leaders' ability to push them to work towards the goal set. Yalcinkaya et al. (2021) in their studies found democratic behaviour, a combination of autocratic and laissez faire by principal, creates a positive effect on teachers. Meanwhile, Hassan and Al-Asheq (2020) stated that ethical behaviour such as openness, trust and fairness create a sense of belonging among teachers.

Previous studies showed that principal leadership behaviour and teacher self-efficacy are positively related (Khozan & Mansor, 2017; Zainal & Matore, 2021). It is crucial for a principal to display desirable behaviour as it has a strong relationship with teachers either associated with their effectiveness, work performance, motivation or job satisfaction. According to Ismail and Wahid (2018), effectiveness can be enhanced through self-efficacy and self-efficacy will definitely be better with principal behaviour (Descrochers, 2020).

# **METHOD**

The quantitative research method is suitable for studying the level of principal leadership behaviour and teacher self-efficacy while establishing relationships between them. Furthermore, quantitative methods are also suitable for a large population. A cross-sectional design was adopted because it is the most suitable for collecting data in one go. Talib (2016) and Cohen et al. (2018) added that this method also helps in collecting data in a given duration. 2971 national primary school teachers from the state of Selangor, Malaysia were the population. The data were collected using simple proportional random sampling. The study collected data from 382 samples and these samples are considered good as they represent more than 10% of the population (Cohen et al., 2018). The instruments were transferred into Google Forms and the link was sent to the chosen school senior assistant for curriculum, followed by a gentle reminder after 2 weeks. All the data were collected within a month.

The principal leadership behaviour was measured using Four Leadership Orientations (Zarina, 2017) which was adapted from research done in TS25 primary schools in Malaysia. Teacher self-efficacy was adopted from Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001). Both the instruments were scaled with a five-point Likert Scale with 1 representing 'strongly disagree' and 5 representing 'strongly agree.' The leadership orientations behaviour instruments contain 24 items and the teacher self-efficacy instruments 12 items. Cronbach's Alpha value was used to measure the reliability of the instruments as stated by Idris (2010) that this method is suitable for Likert Scale instruments. The test showed all the variables for both instruments have a value range of .863-.950 which is acceptable. The three instruments were validated for both construct and content validity. The construct validation was done with the help of both Malay



and English language experts for easy understanding and ensuring its relevance. Meanwhile, the content validity was done by 2 experts from the education field.

#### Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistical analysis; descriptive mean and standard deviation analyses were done using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) for Windows Version 26.0 to answer the research questions. The relationship between principal leadership behaviour and teacher self-efficacy was obtained using the Pearson correlation coefficient (r). Table 1 shows the mean score interpretation and Table 2 shows the Pearson correlation coefficient (r), value.

**Table 1.** Mean Score Interpretation Source: Chua (2013)

Mean	Score	
3.67-5.00	High	
3.34-3.66	Moderate	
1.00-2.33	Low	

Source : Chua (2013)

**Table 2.** Pearson Correlation Coefficient(r)

Correlation Coefficient(r)	Score Interpretation		
±0.50 to ±1.00	High(positive/negative)		
±0.30 to ±0.49	Moderate(positive/negative)		
±0.01 to 0.29	Low(positive/negative)		

Source: Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2018)

#### **RESULTS FINDING**

Table 3 shows the findings on the mean score, standard deviation and level of principal leadership behaviour practises in national primary schools in Selangor, Malaysia. The overall mean for principal leadership behaviour is 4.18(SD=.722) which is high. From the mean dimensions for ethical orientation has the highest mean of 4.25(SD=.719) and task orientation has the lowest mean of 4.08(SD=.760)

**Table 3.** Principal Leadership Behaviour Mean Score

Variable			Mean	SD	Level
Task Orientation			4.08	.760	High
Relation Orientation			4.19	.720	High
Change Orientation			4.21	.682	High
Ethical Orientation			4.25	.719	High
Overall Behaviour	Principal	Leadership	4.18	.722	High



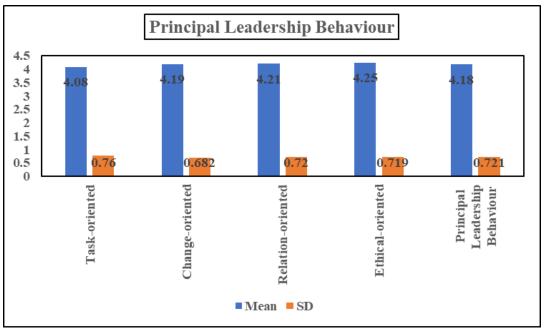


Figure 2. Mean and standard deviation of principal leadership behaviour

Table 4 shows the overall mean of teacher self-efficacy in national primary schools in Selangor, Malaysia as the means of three dimensions of teacher self-efficacy as perceived by teachers. The overall mean for teacher self-efficacy is 4.40(SD=.544) which shows most teachers' self-efficacy is high. All the dimensions have a high level of self-efficacy as perceived by teachers with both efficacy for classroom management and efficacy for instructional strategies sharing the same mean of 4.41(SD=.544) meanwhile efficacy for students' engagement has a mean of 4.38(SD=.541).

Table 4. Teacher Self-Efficacy Mean Score

Mean	SD	Level
4.38	.541	High
4.41	.544	High
4.41	.544	High
4.40	.547	High
	4.38 4.41 4.41	4.38 .541 4.41 .544 4.41 .544



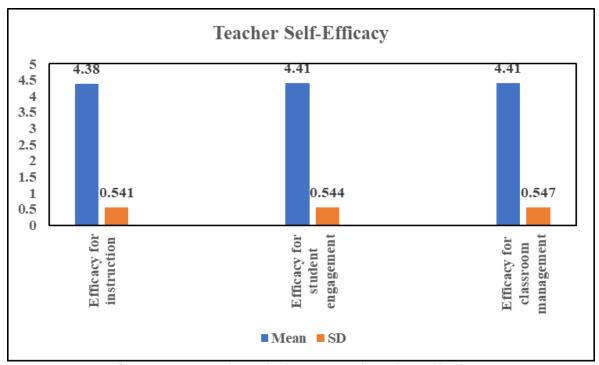


Figure 3. Mean and Standard Deviation of Teacher Self-Efficacy

Table 5 shows the relationship between principal leadership behaviour and teacher self-efficacy Pearson correlation coefficient(r). There was a moderately significant correlation relationship between principal leadership behaviour and teacher self-efficacy (r-.420, p<.01)

**Table 5.** *Correlation Coefficient (r)* 

			Principal Behaviour	Leadership	Teacher Self-Efficacy
Principal		Pearson Correlation	1		.420
Leadershi Behaviour	•	Sig. (2-tailed)			<.001
Dellavioui		N	382		382
Teacher S Efficacy	Self-	Pearson Correlation	.420		1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.01		
		N	382		382

#### **DISCUSSION**

This study examines the effects of principal leadership behaviour on teacher self-efficacy in national primary schools in Selangor, Malaysia. Based on the research, principal leadership behaviour based on orientation is perceived to be high by teachers. All four orientations have a high level of practice. Syarif et al. (2020) stated that principal leadership behaviour helps in teachers' work effectiveness. Furthermore, it was noted that the principal's behaviour plays a great role in shaping teachers' behaviour. Besides, the principals also have the ability to shape the culture of the school.

Urick (2020) stated that principal leadership behaviour that emphasises resources, work schedule, duties and discipline ensures the success of a school. This was supported by Indra et al. (2020) that a high level of behaviour is associated with a successful learning environment. This clearly indicates the need for a school principal to adopt different behaviours based on the sustainability of the task given. Ethical



orientation has the highest score of mean as the need to use ethical justification is important in any situation. As quoted by Zarina (2018), the presence of ethical values in any behaviour brings positive changes in the school outcome.

Although some research showed that relation-oriented are better (Pardosi & Utari, 2022), Mikkelsen and Olsen (2019) have stated that work performance is positively dependent on change orientation and it all depends on an effective approach to the situation. In another research by Henkel (2019), both task-orientation and relation-orientation are positively related. Nevertheless, principals who are ethically oriented are fair, selfless and treat school members well. Basically, principals in national primary schools in Selangor, Malaysia scored high in their behaviour leadership.

Meanwhile, teachers in national primary schools in Selangor, Malaysia perceived they have a high level of self-efficacy. This answers the second research question on the level of teacher self-efficacy. This clearly indicates that the teachers have a strong belief and confidence in themselves in carrying out their duties in the classroom and in handling the students. The findings are in line with Khairani and Makara (2020), Sandaraj and Hashim (2020) and Zakariya (2020). They also found that the level of teacher self-efficacy is at a high level. This indicates that most are willing to go the extra mile to ensure their students master the lessons. This is also a good sign that teachers in national primary schools are willing to embrace any changes and use new methods to achieve the target and this helps the Ministry of Education implement any changes.

Although there are some studies showing that there is a moderate efficacy level (Cansoy et al., 2020; Rasul, 2020) and McCullough et al. (2021) showed that teacher self-efficacy does not have a significant effect on teachers' attributes. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that self-efficacy plays a big role in uplifting teachers' spirit to perform well in delivering their lessons and handling any other tasks that come along. Elrayah (2022) added that teacher self-efficacy is associated with behaviour which influences their students' learning behaviour. This was supported by Johar (2022) that teacher self-efficacy is an important instrument in helping teachers to be effective in the classroom.

The results of the correlation show that there is a moderately significant relationship between school principal leadership behaviour and the teachers' self-efficacy. A study done by Khozan and Mansor (2020) found that principal behaviour influences teacher self-efficacy and improves their performance and ensures schools' effectiveness. The findings in this study are also supported by Jefri and Hamid (2022). Their findings, based on primary schools in Putrajaya, showcase that leadership plays an important role in teacher self-efficacy. This is a clear indication that principal leadership behaviour plays a great role in developing teacher's self-efficacy. According to Tariq (2022), this prepares the teachers to face any difficulties that come along the way.

Principal leadership behaviours that are interchangeable according to the situation help in improving teacher self-efficacy which plays the biggest role in students' achievement. Besides Versland & Erickson (2019), Bugawak (2022) also stated that principals must exhibit behaviours that develop teachers' belief and confidence in themselves to perform. Allowing teachers to be involved in any decision-making or at least asking their opinion on any task would increase their motivation in their work performance (Isa et al., 2020). Ozgenel (2020) added that supportive behaviour by principals is important in building teachers' cooperation positively which influences the school climate towards better effectiveness.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Principal leadership behaviour is a crucial aspect in shaping and influencing teachers in their performance as they have the authority to determine the well-being of their teachers. It is important for a principal to practise suitable behaviours according to the needs and behaviours. These can be learned and sharpened over time with experience and knowledge. A principal who recognises and supports teachers either in their work or emotionally helps in increasing their performance in producing excellent results. Therefore, it is crucial for a principal to identify suitable behaviour according to the need of the task so that the level of teacher self-efficacy increases.



When teachers' self-efficacy increases, they deliver their lessons successfully since they have a strong urge to learn and implement new and innovative methods that make it interesting. Furthermore, principal behaviour has been proven to be an important factor for staff development (Bach et al., 2020) and behaviour display should cover all areas including resources, duties and disciplines. Such behaviour including coaching, mentoring, supervision, evaluation and reflection should bring out the maximum output from all the school members, especially teachers' performance. Based on the findings, school teachers perceived they are happy when principals adopt suitable behaviours that enhance their performance and this is supported by the data on high levels of self-efficacy. Anis (2017) added that the principal's behaviour communicates teamwork and is a motivation among teachers. Due to this, most of the teachers have high confidence in themselves in ensuring high achievement among their students.

Furthermore, the findings of this research based on principal leadership behaviour and its effect on teacher self-efficacy can be used as a reference or as a guideline for other school principals to practise it in their schools. This can enhance teachers' performance which will help in building an effective school. The development of a new model for principal behaviour based on orientations gives a perspective on principal leadership in Malaysia. This in turn would be helpful for education policymakers in designing suitable training for existing and new principals in ensuring the teachers are treated accordingly. Behaviours that are important for teachers' decision-making involvement, communication and trust-building make teachers feel valued and increase their confidence in delivering lessons in class. Principals with problematic teachers and underperforming schools can be trained in practising behaviours that can enhance their teachers which will boost school effectiveness. The schools should be given greater space to practice good leadership behaviour to improve teachers' self-efficacy. All in all, all of these factors help in the betterment of the school.

The researcher hopes that this study can be further developed by focusing on behaviours based on orientations despite their leadership style and the teacher self-efficacy throughout Malaysia primary schools and secondary schools in Malaysia. Furthermore, leadership behaviour and its effect on teachers' self-efficacy can be studied based on senior assistants. A qualitative approach can be used as it gives a clearer picture of understanding the principal leadership behaviour and its effect on teacher self-efficacy.

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