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(IJEPC)**www.ijepr.com**INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF HEADMASTERS
AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH TEACHER
PROFESSIONALISM IN PRIVATE PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN
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DOI: 10.35631/IJEPC.1057021This work is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)**Abstract:**

The study examines the correlation between headmasters' innovative leadership practices and the professionalism among teachers in private primary schools in Selangor. Data from 341 teachers from 131 schools was analysed using a quantitative survey approach. Using Gliddon's (2006) Innovative Leadership Model and the Malaysian Teacher Standards (2009) as its core framework, it assesses motivation, creativity, commitment, role/power for each leadership dimension, knowledge, skills, and professional values as professionalism. The results indicate a moderate positive correlation ($r=0.688$, $p<0.05$) between leadership practices and professionalism, with motivation as the strongest predictor. Effective innovation catalyst software encourages collaboration and creativity among teachers and accountability to standards. However, they expose weaknesses in strategic planning and professional development. The study elaborates on 17 action-oriented ideas, such as leadership training programs, teacher development workshops, and the cultivation of collaborative school cultures. Future studies should extend into broader contexts, including longitudinal studies, and tailor initiatives to improve educational outcomes and provide sustainable professional development in Malaysia's private education sector.

Keywords:

Innovative Leadership, Teacher Professionalism, Private Primary Schools, Professional Development, Malaysian Teacher Standards

Introduction

The role that headmasters' innovative leadership practices play in the effectiveness of private primary school education in Malaysia cannot be understated. This research aims to study headmasters' innovative leadership styles and how they affect teachers' professionalism in Selangor's private primary schools. To introduce a detailed description of the leadership practices that enhance teaching and school performance at a stylistically high level, the research will further study theory-based foundations of leadership and professionalism of the teacher, including a frame of reference (Mansor et al., 2021). The headmaster is the heart of the School, the Students are the heart of the school, and the teachers are the brain of the school; the headmaster takes care of the brain and all over the body (School). Strong leadership practices not only make teachers want to think outside the box, but they also involve the staff both creatively and as a committed team. The study explored multiple dimensions of innovative leadership, such as assessment, creativity, and adaptability, and how they relate to teachers' ability to comply with professional standards (Lin (2022). Teacher professionalism in knowledge, pedagogical skills, and compliance with teaching standards is a key determinant of educational outcomes. The research will focus on exploring the relationship between principals' leadership practices and their impact on teacher professionalism in the hope of discovering strategies to help educators overcome the challenges they face and provide high-quality education as a result. This study hopes to serve well by providing practice-relevant insights to policymakers and educational leaders, showing effective dynamic and innovative leadership as vital in realising educational excellence and professionalism of the teaching workforce at Malaysia's private primary Schools (Ismail et al., 2023).

Problem Statement

Leadership practices are the key management tools for private primary schools, especially in the face of increasing demand for quality education. However, there are several obstacles that schools must overcome to embrace new leadership types focusing on creativity, adaptability and collaboration, which are key to solving the issues schools are dealing with today. However, gaps remain in the alignment between leadership practice and teacher professionalism (Daniëls et al., 2019). Moreover, teacher professionalism differs by gender, years of service and school context, yet this is often under-researched. Adding to this challenge is the neglect of teacher well-being and professional development. Due to heavy workloads, a shortage of resources and insufficient recognition, many teachers are strained, negatively affecting their motivation and performance. These challenges necessitate exploring how innovative leadership practices impact teacher professionalism and well-being. This study seeks to fill these gaps to discover mechanisms to help facilitate effective leadership, support teachers, and enhance the quality and efficiency of private primary schools (Robinson et al., 2022).

Research Objectives

1. To assess the level of innovative leadership practices among headmasters in private primary schools.
2. To examine the differences in teacher professionalism based on gender, years of service, and school location.
3. To determine the relationship between headmasters' innovative leadership practices and teacher professionalism.

Significance of the Study

These findings reinforce how essential leaders are and present key actionable suggestions that school heads, policymakers, and educational stakeholders can consider. The results will be a foundation for creating the training models and leadership frameworks explicitly designed for Malaysian education contexts.

Conceptual Framework

This study explores the relationship between headmasters' innovative leadership practices and teacher professionalism in private primary schools that integrate Gliddon's (2006) Innovative Leadership Model and Malaysian Teacher Standards (MOE, 2009). The independent variable is innovative leadership practices, with four dimensions: motivation, creativity and imagination, commitment, and roles and power. These ledgers highlight the headmaster capacity to inspire, promote collaboration, maintain organizational objectives, and prepare their schools. The dependent variable, teacher professionalism, is assessed on three dimensions (knowledge and understanding, skills in teaching and learning, and professional values and practices) (MOE, 2009). These dimensions represent the application of knowledge, effective pedagogy, and adherence to ethical practice and growth. The model suggests that innovative leadership contributes positively to the professionalism of teachers. In contrast, headmasters' leadership styles improve teachers' engagement and performance. Various moderating factors (e.g., gender, experience, and school location) are accounted for to capture diversity relating to this relationship among diverse contexts.

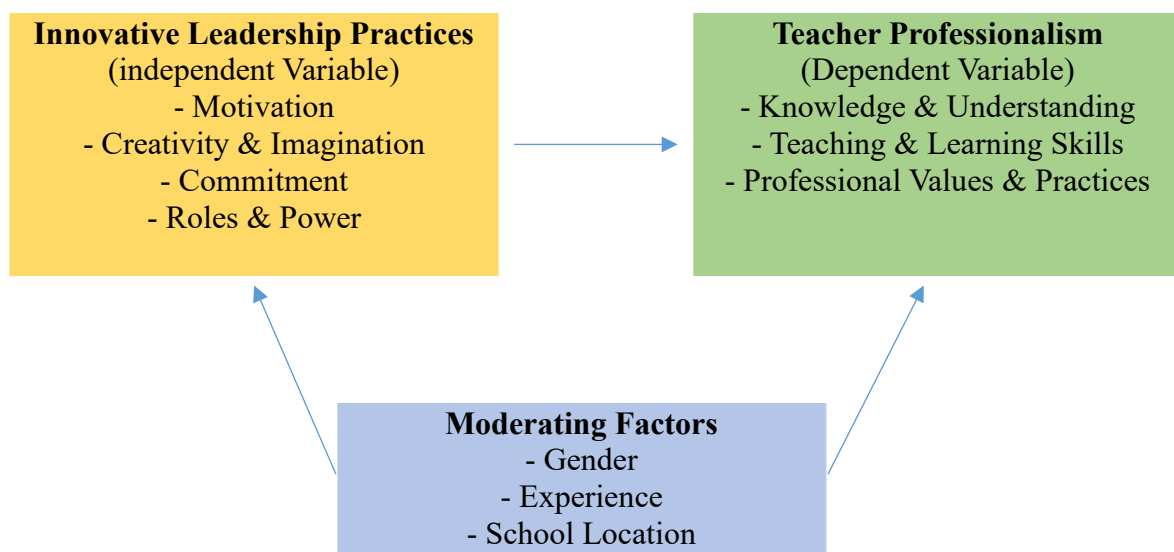


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Literature Review

Innovative Leadership Theories to explore this new concept offer helpful lenses to examine how leaders inspire creativity and organizational success. The Innovative Leadership Model by Gliddon (2006) identifies cross-sectional dimensions that provide a foundation for effective leadership. Creativity generates fresh thoughts and answers; enthusiasm is imperative, motivating the cohort; responsibility helps maintain focus on common objectives; and authority is peerless to guide and persuade others. By combining these dimensions, leaders can create a

robust model of excellence to help them navigate new challenges and encourage their people to strive for innovation and greatness (Gaynor, 2016).

This development is parallel in some ways with the framework proposed by Joseph and Cunniff (2014), which, in addition to the technical parts of innovating leadership, highlights the relational and human parts of leading an innovative team. Leaders can establish trust among their teams and recognize everyone's needs through empathy. Passion keeps the leaders engaged in their vision genuinely and enthusiastically and continues to encourage everyone else to do the same. On the other hand, strategic agility enables leaders to respond to fast-changing circumstances while ensuring that decisions are in service of long-term goals. These theories emphasize that innovative leadership is a multidimensional construct that balances strategy and emotional intelligence to achieve meaningful outcomes.

An overview of professionalism in education by Malaysian Teacher Standards (2009) These standards focus on three elements: values, which serve as a compass for ethical practice and integrity; knowledge, including subject matter expertise and pedagogical knowledge; and instructional skills, which embody effective management of the classroom and the learning process. In summation, these are frameworks intended to provide standards to teachers to ensure quality education and ongoing professional development (Ginting & Linarsih, 2022). Sockett (1993) and Tichenor & Tichenor (2009) support this framework, whose theories examine the aspects of teacher professionalism more deeply. Sockett highlights the significance of character — demonstrating moral integrity and ethical behaviour, along with a dedication to continuous growth and excellence in the classroom. Tichenor & Tichenor emphasize the importance of pedagogical knowledge, claiming that a teacher's knowledge of content and how to teach it is the primary determinant of their effectiveness. All these perspectives contribute to the multidimensional construct of teacher professionalism that combines a sense of moral purpose, dedication, and expertise for better educational outcomes.

Methodology

The study employed a quantitative survey method to investigate the relationship between innovative leadership practices of headmasters and teacher professionalism. This approach was selected for its effectiveness in testing hypotheses and generalizing findings to the larger population. Data was collected across private primary schools in Selangor, chosen due to the state's high concentration of such institutions, with 131 private primary schools and approximately 3,000 teachers registered under the Malaysian Ministry of Education. The sample size of 341 teachers was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for sampling population sizes.

Structured questionnaires were the primary instruments, carefully designed to capture data on innovative leadership and teacher professionalism. The leadership component was adapted from Gliddon's (2006) Innovative Leadership Model, encompassing four dimensions: motivation, creativity and imagination, commitment, and the role of power. The teacher professionalism component followed the Malaysian Teacher Standards (2009). It measured three dimensions: knowledge and understanding, teaching and learning skills, and professional values. The questionnaires used a five-point Likert scale to gauge responses, ensuring clarity, validity, and reliability through expert reviews and pilot testing.

Participants included headmasters and teachers from private primary schools registered with the Malaysian Ministry of Education. The sampling utilized a simple random method, ensuring equal probability for all eligible individuals to participate. This approach allowed the study to generalize findings across the diverse educational landscape of Selangor, addressing the interplay of leadership and teacher professionalism in fostering quality education.

Findings

Leadership practices among headmasters in private primary schools in Selangor showcased varying degrees of innovation, reflecting their ability to adapt to challenges and inspire their teams. A detailed analysis revealed that headmasters excelled particularly in the dimensions of motivation and creativity. Motivation was demonstrated through their capacity to inspire teachers, maintain high morale, and encourage a sense of purpose within their teams. This dimension was instrumental in driving teachers to perform at their best, fostering a collaborative and energized school culture. Creativity, another notable strength, was evident in the headmasters' ability to generate and implement new ideas, problem-solving strategies, and innovative approaches to school management. They exhibited openness to change and the ability to think outside the box, enabling them to tackle complex issues effectively. Furthermore, their commitment to fostering a supportive environment was critical in building trust and a shared vision with their staff. These practices align closely with Gliddon's (2006) Innovative Leadership Model, which underscores the importance of motivation and creativity in cultivating an educational environment that encourages excellence, innovation, and continuous growth.

Table 1: Level of Practice Based on Innovative Leadership Dimensions and Interpretation

Dimension	Mean	Interpretation of Mean
Motivation	4.20	High: Headmasters consistently inspire and encourage teachers, balancing work responsibilities and morale.
Creativity and Imagination	3.80	Moderate: Headmasters often show openness to challenges and generate collaborative solutions.
Commitment	4.10	High: Headmasters are loyal to organizational goals, fostering trust and responsibility within the team.
Roles and Power	3.60	Moderate: Headmasters sometimes demonstrate effective leadership and decision-making influence.

Overall, teacher professionalism by gender, tenure, and school location showed significant differences. The results showed no significant effect of gender, with the level of professionalism being consistent between male and female teachers. On the contrary, teachers with longer service years, significantly more than 16 years, had a slightly less professional approach than new teachers having 6–10 service years. In urban areas, the teachers tend to be a bit more experienced than those in the countryside.

Table 2: Teacher Professionalism Levels Based on Gender, Experience, and School Location

Moderating Factor	Mean	Interpretation of Mean
Gender	4.10	High: Teacher professionalism is consistently upheld regardless of gender differences.
Experience	4.30	High: Teachers with more experience demonstrate greater professionalism in their roles and practices.
School Location	3.90	Moderate: Teacher professionalism shows slight variations based on the school's geographical context.

The finding revealed a positive relationship between headmasters' innovative leadership practices and teacher professionalism. This relationship illustrates the importance of positive leadership in creating a climate for professional development and success in schools. The correlation analysis indicates that a significance level of $p < 0.05$ highlights significant positive correlations. The overall correlation coefficient ($r = 0.688$, $p < 0.05$) demonstrates a moderate positive relationship between headmasters' innovative leadership practices and teacher professionalism. Among the individual dimensions analysed, motivation exhibited the strongest correlation with teacher professionalism, emphasizing its pivotal role in enhancing effective teaching practices.

Table 2: Correlation Between Innovative Leadership Dimensions and Teacher Professionalism

Dimension	Teacher Professionalism (r)	Significance (Sig.)
Motivation	0.635**	0.00
Creativity and Imagination	0.553**	0.00
Commitment	0.419**	0.00
Role and Power	0.485**	0.00
Overall	0.688	0.00

Discussion

This study found that innovative leadership is the crucial factor that leads to a professional teaching environment in Malaysian private primary schools in Selangor. That there is a significant relationship between headmasters' innovative leadership practices and teacher professionalism suggests that the leadership strategies that schools adopt directly affect their teachers' commitment and performance. Motivation was the strongest predictor of teacher professionalism among the dimensions of innovative leadership. This indicates that school principals can encourage and motivate their teachers by recognising them, taking a balanced consideration of their work-life, and creating excitement among them, which will practically empower the teachers to work with a more significant impact. Such a mentality correlates to the belief system outlined by Gliddon (2006), which states that motivation forms a foundational pillar of innovative leadership.

Substantive impacts on the professionalism of teachers were also illustrated in leadership characteristics such as creativity and imagination. This creates the correct dynamic for innovative learning, fosters a spirit of collaboration and builds the knowledge it takes to be a great head. It demonstrates that the leaders in charge can mould a dynamic and supportive culture. However, several areas for improvement are outlined in the study. This category is

aligned with the theory around strategic leadership, where leaders set clear organisational goals and mobilise the organisation toward them, which was less emphasised by headmasters, indicating the need for the initiatives of headmasters to promote their capacity of strategic planning and execution (Wahab et al., 2014). Likewise, the concern about professional development is similar for teachers. More structured and frequent training modules targeting current issues and new educational policies would have been more beneficial.

These results highlight the importance of leadership training programs that incorporate and develop innovative and strategic leadership skills. Such efforts could enable principals to improve their leadership skills, creating a culture of sustained professional growth among teachers. Future research could investigate the long-term effects of leadership interventions on the professionalism of teachers and on student outcomes, so we would gather further information about the long-term benefits of innovative leadership practices (Kang, 2021).

Conclusion

This study thus underlines the importance of innovative leadership practices to foster teacher professionalism, leading to improved teaching practices in Selangor private primary schools. Motivation was found to be the most powerful of the dimensions studied, highlighting the need for leaders who inspire and support teachers through recognition, encouragement, and balance between professional obligations. Moreover, ŞENOL (2019) states that creative and imaginative leadership characteristics help by supporting collaboration, developing solutions and presenting alternative teaching methods.

Nevertheless, the analysis accentuates the sources of existing challenges, like the necessity for improved strategic leadership proficiencies and much-needed continued professional development (Magrane et al., 2018). These gaps indicate that while headmasters demonstrate innovative characteristics, they should formalise their education's planning and resource allocation and provide customised programs to equip teachers with the skills to meet changing educational requirements. Private schools in Selangor can thus establish a sustainable professional culture that will allow their teachers to maintain efficiency and quality teaching service delivery in the long term (Ismail et al., 2023).

Future Suggestions

So that the findings of this study lead to tangible improvements, several steps are recommended for the future. For one, longitudinal studies can offer a more in-depth understanding of how innovative leadership practices impact teacher professionalism and student outcomes over an extended period. The studies allow for pattern identification and show the long-term sustainability of leadership interventions, which provides essential data to iterate leadership implementations in schools. Second, future studies should broaden to additional educational contexts such as secondary schools, rural schools, and international institutions. A more expansive focus would enable a better understanding of the impact of innovations in leadership practice on teacher professionalism in diverse contexts with context-specific challenges and opportunities.

A second main recommendation is the tailored development of leadership training programs. The programs need to develop strategic planning, resource management, and collaboration skills at the headmaster level. Adding scenario-based boards and applications would prepare school leaders to meet real-world challenges and an environment of innovation and growth.

Private schools also need to put a greater emphasis on ongoing professional development for their teachers. Workshops and training on innovative teaching methods, technology integration, and dealing with contemporary educational challenges would improve teachers' competencies and adaptiveness. All these efforts will dovetail if the school makes a concerted effort to build a culture of collaboration: team-building activities, shared leadership, and venues for educators to share ideas and practices.

Lastly, policymakers must play a role in introducing policies to support innovative leadership and professional development in schools. Proper funding and standard execution guidelines on such initiatives shall ensure a fair improvement of the private education sector. By engaging with not just education institutions but also policy shapers and the implementation of public and private stakeholders, this framework could help develop a strong foundation for the long-term betterment of the educational ecosystem. The research concluded by three recommendations: 1) an identification action plan to bridge the gap in perceived workload; 2) releasing the power of teachers as educators in a structured manner with centralisation of decision-making made with the participation of teachers and considered aspects of the issues; 3) creating a sustainability plan according to the best practice model of teacher education from Ministry of Education Malaysia.

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