

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research is to explore practices and experiences of current Myanmar secondary school principals in relation to embracing pedagogical leadership in order to adopt new educational changes.

Due to limited studies in Myanmar that contribute to robust empirical evidence concerning school leadership practices from the strength-based perspectives, the study was intended to explore positive experiences or perceived success of principals relating to pedagogical leadership practices. Thus, appreciative inquiry was employed in conducting the study.

Accordingly, the research would present the strong pedagogical leadership practices of the principals by providing rich descriptions of the participants' most positive pedagogical leadership experiences and the aspirations they invested in students and staff, as well as their practices for leveraging education quality and reform.

In terms of the findings, the principals focused on three central partakers such as students, teachers and the community for development along their pedagogical leadership experiences. The primary focus was the development of the whole child. It involves attending to both academic and non-academic features of the children's formation. In particular, more attention was paid to two aspects: academic development as required by the Ministry of Education, and moral development as influenced by the religious beliefs in general.

The secondary focus of principals was concerned with staff development. It pertained to staff professional development and moral and ethical development. Through these, principals strived to achieve the primary focus.

However, principals did not ignore the overall school community, which was their tertiary level of focus of attention. They believed that creating a supportive school community was essential for achieving both the secondary and primary focuses of their pedagogical leadership.

While demonstrating those strong pedagogical practices, the principals in the research also demonstrated their distinctive commitments to being a school principal: *cetana* (goodwill), *wathana* (love to profession) and *anitna* (self-sacrifice) (in Burmese, *na-thone-na*). Alongside these, they illuminated the Buddhist practices, which were clear throughout each of the layers.

In terms of Myanmar context, these are the essential and fundamental practices which can leverage the education reform programmes so they are achieved successfully in Myanmar. Having said that, to effectively and efficiently strengthen these practices, Myanmar education policy makers and the education planners must attend to the professional development of principals, focusing on the important aspects of pedagogical leadership.