## LEADING SCHOOLS IN TIMES OF CRISIS

The COVID-19 pandemic is a health crisis (Viner et al., 2020). Many sectors have been impacted but the effects on education have been particularly adverse (Bush, 2021). The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) estimated that 90% of students worldwide are out of school and had been impacted by school closures (UNESCO, 2020). As a result, many educators and school leaders are scrambling finding ways to continue schooling for their students (Bush, 2021; Gurr, 2021). As a result, uncertainty was commonplace as school principals guided their schools through unanticipated circumstances (Longmuir, 2021).

School principals need to deal with more challenging circumstances during the pandemic, often requiring swift actions with foresight, careful decision making while considering its consequences, communicate with empathy, and being a trustworthy voice for their school community (Adams et al., 2021; Netolicky, 2020). Leading schools during this pandemic requires a distinct form of leadership (Bush, 2020; Harris, 2020). Principals need to remodel their leadership practices into one that can lead their schools virtually (Sahlberg, 2020).

School leadership during the pandemic is a severe test of principals' crisis management skills (Bush, 2021). School principals must deal with the impact of the crisis on their staff and student welfare (Bush, 2021). This requires new strategies to build trust and sustain relationships with their school community (Adams et al., 2021). Renewing the school's vision and immediate goals while maintaining the learning and teaching processes of the school is essential especially when schools gradually return to 'normal' (Adams et al., 2021; Bush, 2021). To maintain the balance and for a successful outcome, principals are encouraged to be strong instructional leaders (Adams et al., 2019).

This issue of IOJEL features two papers on principals' instructional leadership practices. First, Maryam Ikram, Simin Ghavifekr, and Husaina Banu Kenayathulla examined instructional leadership practices among school principals in Asian countries by reviewing 14 relevant studies. They employed the Research Question Development Tool (RQDT) and used the Population, Interest, and Context (PICo) technique. Their findings found principals in Asian countries place a greater priority on instructional programs, student achievement, school mission and vision, and school climate than on curriculum management.

Norazlinda Saad and Surendran Sankaran present findings from principals' instructional leadership practices and 21st century teaching and facilitating methods. Their research examined the relationship between principals' instructional leadership practices and the 21st Century Teaching and Facilitating Methods among 243 secondary school teachers from three states: Kedah, Perlis and Penang in Malaysia. The findings showed there was a significant relationship between principals' instructional leadership practices and the 21st Century Teaching and Facilitating Methods in schools. They conclude that principals were aware on the importance of instructional leadership practices and consistently demonstrate these practices as part of their job.

Chi-Kuan Chia, Simin Ghavifekr, and Ahmad Zabidi Abdul Razak review the succession

planning practices in Malaysia's public universities and also discusses the challenges faced by them when trying to implement succession planning. A systematic literature review was conducted among 18 articles pertaining to the succession planning practices and issue in Malaysia's public universities. They identified four emerging themes: potential leader identification, leadership development, promotion, and centre-in-charge. At the same time, the issues faced are financial limitation in a university, brain drain syndrome, university recruitment requirements that do not require leadership, two houses of legislature in a university, short tenure of managerial leadership positions, and misconceptions among staff of leaders who were chosen by default. The authors hope the review can help the relevant stakeholders in Malaysia's public universities to plan for a better structured and systematic succession planning.

Zhang Yuting, Kenny Cheah Soon Lee, and Donnie Adams review provides insights on educational technology leadership from a visualizing bibliometric perspective. 339 articles were analysed using science mapping and presented in co-citation networks. They found a gap in the amount of research from academic institutions between developed and developing countries. The authors proposed a research network of education technology leadership that connects technology leadership to several factors. They conclude that the review is beneficial for scholars as it provides an overview of basic knowledge for further studies in this field.

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