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Servant Leadership: A Preferred Style of School Leadership in Singapore

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Abstract

The concept of ‘servant leadership’ becomes increasingly relevant in organizations while ‘authoritative leadership’ style continues to be in place as one of the effective styles. This paper aims at exploring which leadership style is perceived a preferred one in public sector in Singapore. Empirical data come from a survey with school leaders in several school clusters in Singapore with instruments designed by the researchers.

Findings: It was found in the study that ‘servant leadership’ is more acceptable than ‘authoritative leadership’ and that servant leadership is more effective because it reflects a better use of leaders’ power. The findings are displayed in this paper to demonstrate comparisons in the acceptability between servant and authoritative styles.

Practical implications: The paper demonstrates the perceptions of the organizational members towards the leadership styles with positive impact on their professional life. Drawing on the insights from our analyses, the paper provides organizational leaders with more awareness on the relevance and effectiveness of their leading styles.

Design/methodology: The paper is written up on the data drawn from our research project. Both quantitative and qualitative analysis approaches were applied to analyzing the preference of leadership between “Servant leadership” and “Authoritative leadership” styles.

Originality: The paper is the original product of the empirical research with instruments designed by the researchers.

Key words: Servant leadership, authoritative style, personal characters, leading behavior

Paper type: Research paper

I. Introduction

Since the 1960s, leadership studies have become a field of research. However, as Nohria and Khurana (2010) point out, the research on leadership with more than fifty-year history still has a long way to develop for providing satisfactory answers to various questions on leadership. This phenomenon is also true in the field of education leadership. Campbell (1999) mentions that there is a shift from education management to education leadership in late 1990s because the ‘managerialism’ in education has been criticized and proven by people like Ball (1990) and Kydd (1997) that it is not appropriate to education organizations. Although it is witnessed that there has been a significant growth in the number of research done in education leadership with the establishment of a good number of international journals, more empirical research is also on demand by the academics and the practitioners.

In recent years, education leadership gains a noteworthy status in research, teacher training program and the professional development program for school leaders in Singapore with a steadily increasing research (Gopinathan, Wong, & Tang, 2008; Lim, 2003; Lim & Low, 2008). These various case studies are more on the historical development and leader training and preparation in Singapore. It is similar to the global context that there is a huge demand on education/school leadership research in the local context. We identify that exploring the preferred leadership style among school leaders and teachers is one of the areas that needs more investigation.

II. Authoritative Leadership and Servant Leadership

It is argued that school leaders have been observed to exhibit various leadership styles. These styles are displayed on the spectrum with two opposing polarities: 1. authoritative end which represents more forceful, coercive and directive, and 2. advisory and participative end that aims to empower (Kruglanski, Pierro & Higgins, 2007). These two different ends will be discussed in the following sections.

1. Authoritative leadership

This authoritative leadership style is firstly proposed by Goleman in 2002 (Fullan, 2007, p. 174). Defining authoritative leadership style is to define what an authoritative leader is and what the

leading behavior is like. The authoritative leader is perceived to possess such attributes as ‘ascending, commanding, status conscious, decisive, coercive, and skillful in dealing with crises’. In terms of leading behavior, the leader tends to hold centralized authority, exercises the traditional chain of command and practices hierarchical authority, that is, a top-down leader and staff members model (Sergiovanni, 2006). Moreover the leader tends to direct others’ work (Robbins, 2005), make autocratic decisions, expects and requires staff members’ submissiveness. When subordinates have different perspectives and resistance to the leader’s request and has the power of resolution to manage unexpected crises, the leader uses coercion. Otherwise, as Fullan (2007) points out, the authoritative leaders are usually not good listeners. This leadership style is effective in situations where there are major issues to deal with, or staff members are producing low performance but resisting to improvement on their work.

2. Servant Leadership

Servant Leadership can be concisely defined by the slogan: ‘First to serve, then to lead’ (Crippen, 2006). Sendjaya and Sarros (2002, p. 60) point out the similar character of servant leadership:

The motivational element of servant leadership (i.e. to serve first) portrays a fundamental presupposition which distinguishes the concept from other leadership thoughts. This presupposition forms the mental model of the servant leader, that is the “I serve” as opposed to the “I lead” mentality. The primary reason why leaders exist is to serve first, not to lead first. To put it differently, the servant leader operates on the assumption that “I am the leader, therefore I serve” rather than “I am the leader, therefore I lead”.

However, the detail definition needs to be traced back to its origin and characteristics such as: ‘follower-centric, altruistic, moral/ethical, and spiritual values’ (Pekerti & Sendjaya, 2010; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). Moreover, it can be defined from the difference between servant leadership and other leadership styles.

The appearance of the concept of ‘servant leadership’ marks an important change in terms of the way that power has been identify in education leadership study. Crippen (2004) points out the

differences between Servant leadership and the traditional leadership theory are that the former is to serve first and then to lead while the latter focuses on hierarchy, patriarchy and influence. To serve first is the fundamental difference between servant leadership and authoritarian leadership. Moreover, the notion of servant leadership marks the paradigm shift in leadership from power-based/authority-based approach to empowerment (Dambe & Moorad, 2008) and is viewed as ‘an extension of transformational leadership (Taylor, Martin, Hutchinson, & Jinks, 2007, p. 405).

Service appears to be a natural activity of the highly evolved persons who have come to a realization that too much ego and self-focus can stifle and eventually suffocate the best of human nature (Jacobsen, 1999, pp. 373-4). It is more than an urge to contribute to the progress and well-being of another fellow human being out of a sense of obligation or guilt or an appeal to the ego. It is simply a response to an increasing awareness that there is a genuine human need to give (Jacobsen, 1999, p. 374), to help and to serve. In other words, the ‘true leadership emerges when one’s primary motivation is to help others’ (Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 2009, p. 187).

Drawn from Greenleaf’s works, ten characteristics of a servant leader can be identified as follows: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of others and building community (Crippen, 2006, p. 14). With these attributes, the leader has moral authority to drive leadership practice. The leader is a ‘follower of ideas, minister of values, and servant to the staff membership (Sergiovanni, 2006)’. The patterns of behavior are typical of—

- 1) having the desire to serve the organization and the members;
- 2) using the position to reward good performance;
- 3) creating an environment for staff members’ personal growth; and
- 4) persuading rather than coercing.

This style is also labeled as ‘supportive leadership’ where the leader is ‘friendly and shows concern for the needs of staff members’ (Robbins, 2005). To serve is an attitude as well as a

choice. According to Greenleaf (1991), the servant leader is described as to be servant first and is different from those leaders who act as *leader* first. Equally important is that the servant leader should equip with moral courage. As Yukl (2006) puts it, servant leaders stand against the social injustice and inequality although it is not in the financial interest of the organization. This specific point is particularly true in school settings because one of the key purposes of education including school as an organization is to promote social justice.

Moreover, servant leadership is effective in situations where there is mutual understanding and aligned efforts towards the realization of the shared goals or subordinates are professionally mature and do not take advantage of such a leader who plays a low profile. Hunter (2004) names the servant leadership as the most powerful leadership principle in the world.

3. Servant Leadership in Singapore context

As it is mentioned previously, education leadership has become a popular issue in the field of education studies in Singapore in recent years. As a nation embraces both western and eastern cultures, there is a possibility to see some localized leadership theories or practices. Some implications of servant leadership such as service learning for student teachers (Roberts, 2006) and principal mentoring (Wallace, 2009) are introduced in teacher training (e.g. the service learning program for all student teachers in the National Institute of Education Singapore) and leadership mentoring (Lim & Low, 2007) in Singapore context. However, there is no related research about the principals' understanding of servant leadership in Singapore. It can be argued that servant leadership is in the beginning stage of its development in Singapore. Therefore, it is necessary to find out more about how this idea is developed or perceived by local educational practitioners. The findings from this paper may offer insights on exploring the comprehension of servant leadership among Singapore school leaders.

III. Methodology

1. The participants

In order to find out the relevance of leadership styles and the preferred style from subordinates, this study has focused on leadership in the school systems. A survey was conducted. The participants are from various primary and secondary school in Singapore. There are, in total,

417 members of school teaching staff and 107 school leaders. The questionnaires were disseminated by the method of snowballing.

The 524 participants were informed by the researchers about the objectives of this research. Moreover, they are realized that they have the right to return the questionnaire in blank. Meanwhile, the identities of all participants are confidential. There was not any personal information collected from this survey.

2. The design of instruments

The design of questionnaire aims to examine the increasingly emerging form of leadership, the servant leadership, in comparison with the commonly reported form of school leadership, the authoritative one.

In order to provide a theoretical base and to guide through the research process, a framework comprising the two types of leadership, namely, ‘Authoritative leadership’ and ‘Servant leadership’, was designed by the researchers after conducting the literature review. Besides the literature mentioned in previous section, the following literature also offered insights for the design of instrument (Greenleaf, 1998; Boyatzis *et al*, 2005; Goleman, 2001; Spears, 1995, 1998; Frick, *et al*, 1996, and Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

The detail of the framework is shown in Table 1 below. In this framework, the typical attributes (personal characteristics) and style (pattern of behavior) were listed respectively.

Table 1. Leadership: Attributes and Styles

Type of Leadership	Attribute (Personal Characteristics)	Style (Pattern of Behavior)
Authoritative Leadership	Articulate Commanding Confident Supportive	➤ Directs with scripts ➤ Manifests power of resolution ➤ Requires subordinates’ submissiveness

	Fortright Inspiring Courageous Risk taking Assertive Decisive Status conscious Emotional	➤ Controls information dissemination ➤ Challenges people ➤ Criticizes poor work (in front of others) ➤ Is concerned with growth ➤ Illuminates others when solving problems ➤ Manages crisis skillfully
Servant Leadership	Honest Humble Humane Understanding Approachable Available Appreciative (of others' ideas) Morally courageous Exemplary Humorous Broad-minded Facilitative Persistent	➤ Has the desire to serve the organization / people selflessly ➤ Provides opportunities for others to learn ➤ Creates an environment for personal growth ➤ As a healer, helps to alleviate human sufferings ➤ Works with people's assumptions, expectations, perceptions & values ➤ Persuades rather than coerces ➤ Does not accept failure ➤ Reflects periodically

Based on this framework, two questionnaires were designed for the purpose of survey (see Appendix). In each of the questionnaires, 30 personal characteristics (in Part I) and 26 patterns of behavior (in Part II) were specified. Questionnaire A was meant for staff members who would respond to the items in terms of 'acceptance' of the attributes of their leaders and 'preference' to the behavior of their leaders. Questionnaire B contained the same items as Questionnaire A and was meant for school leaders who would respond to the items in terms of 'possessing' the attributes, and 'presenting' the behavior.

3. The process of data collection and analysis

Participants were asked to indicate on the checklists (Questionnaire A) of personal leadership attributes and of leadership behavior. They identified respectively those qualities that were acceptable to them in part I and those patterns of behavior that they preferred in part II. While checking on the lists, participants just checked on the base of their perceptions and feelings without having the thoughts on which item belongs to which leadership style. To achieve this, the researchers arranged these items alphabetically. The statistical analyses would be carried out in Phase 3, to display the results from the most acceptable to the least acceptable leadership attributes and leadership styles or patterns. Meanwhile, all school leaders where the survey was administered were asked to indicate on the checklists (Questionnaire B) the personal attributes and patterns of leadership behavior that they considered that they possessed.

Statistical analyses were conducted on the collection of all questionnaires. The methods of analysis are descriptive statistics and correlation. The relationships were examined between the types of personal leadership characteristics and their receptivity as well as their preferences were ranked in accordance with the frequencies of responses. Thus, a picture of the preferred leadership style from the staff members' perspective and the leaders' own perception can be mapped out. The detail of the comparative result was displayed in the following sections of this paper.

4. Significance of the study

Finding out the preferred leadership style preferred by staff members is as important as identifying people with leadership potential. Such significance was addressed as early as in the Chinese classics *The Six Series of Strategies* (Cao, 2007, p. 84): 'Capable leaders move the world; poor leaders stifle growth and waste resources—both human resources and material resources'. It can be argued that having good leaders are essential to the sustainable development of organizations. The study of leadership is important to various organizations (Nohria & Khurana, 2010). Results of this study will enrich the knowledge base in education leadership, specifically in the primary and secondary schools in Singapore. Moreover, the Singapore case study will also be contributing to the international study on education leadership.

IV. Major Findings

1. Personal Attributes of leaders

The 417 staff members checking on Questionnaire A (Part I) responded with:

- ‘Yes’ representing: ‘I am receptive to this attribute in the leaders;
- ‘Uncertain’ representing: ‘I am not sure if I would accept such an attribute in the leaders’;
- ‘No’ representing: ‘I will not accept such an attribute in the leaders’.

Each category was coded with a number, and the attributes with mean scores nearer to the ‘yes’ category were given in Table 2. Attributes with mean scores nearer to the ‘uncertain’ and ‘no’ categories were given in Table 3. The results of collective analyses of the 417 responses are shown in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2. Personal attributes of leaders (n = 417)

Style	Rank	Personal Attributes
S*	1	Appreciative (of others’ ideas)
A**	2	Supportive
S	3	Understanding
S	4	Approachable
S	5	Honest
S	6	Respectful
S	7	Trusting
S	8	Humane
A	9	Confident
A	10	Decisive
S	11	Broad-minded
S	12	Morally courageous
S	13	Kind
A	14	Inspiring

A	15	Enthusiastic
S	16	Facilitative
S	17	Humble
S	18	Exemplary
A	19	Courageous
A	20	Orderly
A	21	Forthright
A	22	Articulate
S	23	Available
S	24	Humorous
A	25	Risk-taking
A	26	Assertive
S	27	Persistence

Notes: 1. * S = Servant leadership

** A = Authoritative leadership

2. Ranking reveals the degree of acceptance from the most acceptable (1) to the least acceptable (27).

Table 3. Personal attributes of leaders (n=417)

Style	Rank	Personal Attributes
A	1	Commanding
A	2	Coercive
A	3	Status conscious

Note: Ranking from the least unacceptable (1) to the most unacceptable (3).

As displayed in Table 2, the top 10 most acceptable attributes which were ‘appreciative’, ‘supportive’, ‘understanding’, ‘approachable’, ‘honest’, ‘respectful’, ‘trusting’, ‘humane’, ‘confident’, and ‘decisive’. Using the instrument of ‘Leadership: Attributes and Styles’ (see Table 1), we found that 7 out of the 10 attributes are from ‘Servant Leadership’ style. The first

attribute, for example, ‘appreciative’ is one of the key characteristics of servant leadership. The 3 attributes belonging to ‘Authoritative leadership’ were ‘supportive’ (2nd), ‘confident’ (9th) and ‘decisive’ (10th). In the rankings from the 11th to the 27th, there was a mixture of attributes that belonged to ‘Servant leadership’ and ‘Authoritative leadership’ with the former ranked comparatively higher.

Among the attributes ranked in the middle, from the 11th to the 20th, more attributes, 6 out of the 10, belonged to ‘Servant leadership’. Among the 7 attributes ranked from the 21st to the 27th, close to the bottom of the list of the 30 attributes, more attributes, 4 out of 7, belonged to ‘Authoritative style’. It was obviously that staff members would not prefer this style, when they had the other style, ‘Servant leadership’, available from their leaders. Although staff members preferred ‘Servant leadership’, the attributes ‘humorous’ and ‘persistence’ were ranked low at #24 and #27 respectively. This indicated that such 2 attributes might be perceived as weak power of leadership with a negative connotation. Especially, ‘persistence’ might be interpreted as being ‘stubborn’ or ‘inflexible’ in the eastern cultures.

In Table 3, the 3 attributes ranked from the least unacceptable to the most unacceptable were ‘commanding’ (#1), ‘coercive’ (#2), and ‘status conscious’ (#3). They were actually ranked from 28th to 30th in Table 2 if the table included these 3 attributes. The 3 attributes all belonged to the negative side of authoritarian style, which in the list the attributes of ‘Authoritative leadership’ were at the other end of the spectrum.

A close examination of the responses from the 107 leaders working on Questionnaire B (Part I) showed that the 3 attributes of ‘coercive’, ‘commanding’ and ‘status conscious’ unacceptable by staff members were claimed not possessed by the leaders. There have been three significant findings:

- 1) Staff members preferred ‘Servant leadership’ style of their leaders than ‘Authoritative leadership’ style of their leaders.
- 2) The attribute of ‘supportive’ that belonged to ‘Authoritative style’ was ranked as the second, indicating that staff members would also accept leaders using ‘Authoritative

style’. This was supported by the other attributes ‘confident and decisive’ ranked the 9th and the 10th respectively.

- 3) Both ‘Servant leadership’ style and ‘Authoritative style’ were acceptable. Servant leadership, however, was clearly the preferred style.

Table 4. Comparisons between staff members’ and leaders’ acceptance

Style	Leaders	Staff members	Personal Attributes
S	4	1	Appreciative (of others’ ideas)
A	9	2	Supportive
S	2	3	Understanding
S	3	4	Approachable
S	10	5	Honest
S	5	6	Respectful
S	14	7	Trusting
S	6	8	Humane
A	1	9	Confident
A	22	10	Decisive

Combining the results from the survey among leaders (n=107), using Questionnaire B (Part I), we found that there have been some discrepancies among staff members’ and leaders’ acceptance. As shown in the Table 4, while ‘appreciative’ was ranked #1 by the staff members, it was ranked #4 by the leaders; ‘supportive’ was ranked #2 by the staff members, but #9 by the leaders; ‘confident’ was ranked #9 by the staff members, but #1 by the leaders. The most important attributes ranked highly by the leaders were ‘confident’ (#1), ‘understanding’ (#2), ‘approachable’ (#3) and ‘appreciative of others’ ideas’ (#4). It was noted that 3 out the 4 attributes belonged to ‘Servant leadership’ style, with 1 of them, namely, ‘confident’, belonging to ‘authoritative leadership’ style. This finding was significant because both staff members and leaders were in agreement that they preferred ‘Servant leadership’ style than ‘Authoritative leadership’ style.

2. Personal leadership behavior of leaders

Staff members (n=417) responded to Questionnaire A (Part II) with:

- ‘Yes’ meaning: ‘I am receptive to this behavior by the leaders’;
- ‘Uncertain’ meaning: ‘I am not sure if I would accept such a behavior by the leaders’;
- ‘No’ meaning: ‘I will not accept such a behavior by the leaders’.

Each category was coded with a number and the patterns with mean scores nearer to ‘yes’ category were given in Table 5. Attributes with mean scores nearer to ‘uncertain’ and ‘no’ categories are given in Table 6.

Table 5. Leaders’ styles/behavior that are acceptable (n = 417), ranked from the most acceptable

Style	Rank	Statement of behavior	Degree of acceptability
S	1	Provides opportunities for others to learn	Most acceptable
S	2	Shows love and respect (to subordinates)	.
S	3	Creates an environment for personal growth	.
A	4	Manages crisis skillfully	.
A	5	Reflects periodically	.
S	6	Has the desire to serve the organization / people	.
S	7	Is concerned with growth	.
A	8	Gives choices within boundaries	.
S	9	Persuades rather than coerces	.
A	10	Illuminates others when solving problems	.
S	11	Works with people’s assumptions, expectations, perceptions & values	.

A	12	Manifests power of resolution (has high resolve)	.
A	13	Often gives 'constructive' criticism	.
A	14	Is determined to remain consistent in enforcing consequences of boundaries	.
S	15	As a healer, helps to alleviate human sufferings	.
A	16	Challenges people	Least acceptable

Table 6. Leaders' styles/behavior which are unacceptable (n=417), ranked from the most unacceptable.

Style	Rank	Statement of behavior	Degree of unacceptability
A	1	Controls information dissemination	Least unacceptable
A	2	Penalizes people for violation of rules/regulations.	.
A	3	Directs with scripts	.
A	4	Criticizes poor work (in front of others)	.
A	5	Distributes blame	.
A	6	Control is my goal	.
A	7	Uses punishments and suspensions frequently	.
A	8	Requires subordinates' submission	.
A	9	Does not accept failure	.
A	10	Shames subordinates	Most unacceptable

An examination of the top 10 most acceptable patterns of behavior in Table 5 and Table 6 showed:

- 1) The first 3 statements, i.e., 'Provides opportunities for others to learn', 'Shows love and respect (to subordinates)', and 'Creates an environment for personal growth'

belonged to ‘Servant leadership’ style. In the left-hand column in Tables 5 and 6, ‘S’ stands for ‘Servant leadership’, while ‘A’ for ‘Authoritative leadership’.

- 2) There were 6 patterns of behavior out of the 10 that belonged to ‘Servant leadership’; and there were 4 patterns of behavior that belonged to ‘Authoritative leadership’, which indicated that while ‘Servant leadership’ was the staff members’ preferred style, they would also accept their leaders’ ‘Authoritative leadership’ behavior. Hence ‘Manages crisis skillfully, and ‘reflects periodically’, which were ranked highly as #4 and #5 respectively.
- 3) The behavior ranked from the 11th to the 16th, lower than the first 10, mostly belonged to ‘Authoritative leadership’ style, which was less acceptable to the staff members.
- 4) The last 10 patterns of behavior as shown in Table 6 all belonged to ‘Authoritative leadership’ style. This clearly indicated that the negative side of this type of leadership style at the other end of the spectrum labeled as being ‘authoritarian’ was much stronger than that of ‘Servant leadership’. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that there could have been a cultural perception in the east that the behavior of ‘Does not accept failure’ has been regarded as a weak indicator of a leader who was not realistic or pragmatic.
- 5) The above results were consistent with staff members’ acceptance and preference with regard to the leaders’ attributes analyzed earlier.

Combining the results from the survey among leaders (n=107), using Questionnaire B (Part II), we found that a) the leadership styles unacceptable by staff members were claimed not demonstrated by the leaders; b) the majority of the leaders also reported not having the style of ‘controls information dissemination’ on the average; and c) there were no significant discrepancies among staff members’ and leaders’ acceptance with regard to the top 10 leadership behavior, as shown in the Table 7 below.

Table 7. Comparisons between staff members' and leaders' preferences

Style	Leaders	Staff members	Statement of Behavior
S	1	1	Provides opportunities for others to learn
S	3	2	Shows love and respect (to subordinates)
S	6	3	Creates an environment for personal growth
A	4	4	Manages crisis skillfully
A	5	5	Reflects periodically
S	2	6	Has the desire to serve the organization / people
S	13	7	Is concerned with growth
A	8	8	Gives choices within boundaries
S	9	9	Persuades rather than coerces
A	11	10	Illuminates others when solving problems

The results were almost the same in 7 out of the 10 behavior statements. This finding strongly supported the idea that both staff members and leaders held very similar perceptions and preferences towards leadership styles and their effectiveness.

V. Conclusion

With 524 participants responding the questionnaire, the result represents a significant number of teaching professionals and school leaders in Singapore schools. It can be concluded that servant leadership is a preferred leadership style in Singapore. The key findings are summarized as follows:

The most significant contributions to the leadership in the organizations were pointed up in the following aspects:

- The leaders became more aware of what their staff members preferred.
- They realized that in the more important items among both ‘personal attributes’ and ‘leading behavior’, staff members and leaders were in agreement with regard to their preferences.
- They have enhanced their understanding and practice of ‘Servant leadership’ style which was ranked higher than ‘Authoritative leadership’ style.
- ‘Authoritative leadership’ style was also acceptable, especially in crisis management and when subordinates needed support in their work.

The first finding shows that the leader would like to listen to their staff members’ needs and may be able to perform empathy. In other words, the leader has awareness. These are the three characteristics of servant leadership. The second finding demonstrates another characteristic of servant leadership: building community. Both staff members and school leaders in the community share the similar understanding on items in personal attributes and leading styles. It means that, in the same community, the perception of leadership performance is quite adjacent. The third finding is not focusing on servant leadership only. In the comparison of servant leadership and authoritative leadership, most participants express their general preference towards servant leadership. However, it does not mean that authoritative leadership is unacceptable. On the contrary, it is the choice of leaders and staff members while managing crisis.

From the first three findings, it can be argued that servant leadership has its market in the daily practice of education leadership in Singapore. Both staff members and school leaders are aware of some essences of servant leadership. Moreover, some characteristics of servant leadership have been existed in their leadership practices. Although servant leadership is a preferred style in Singapore school settings, it should not be ignored that authoritative leadership is still one of the alternatives. A mixture approach toward leadership is the trend. In organizations where the operational processes are getting more complex, the standards are getting higher, and professional development is becoming more imperative than before, this is especially so. Among the findings of this study, the servant leadership behavior which has been ranked #1 was ‘Provides opportunities for others to learn’. Such behavior is the most relevant because it is

directly related to individuals' professional development in their organization. Hence 'Servant leadership' is becoming increasingly relevant.

When Singapore experiences the reform in its education system, the change of leadership style is one of the crucial issues. What the schools have faced at this moment is very different from at ten years ago. The global competition and collaboration are increasingly intensive. In this paper, we explore the preferred leadership style, the servant leadership, in Singapore context. However, there are more research needed to further expand the knowledge base and good local practices of servant leadership. Except the current service-learning program for student teachers in the National Institute of Education, there is not any other training courses or workshop for school leaders to learn more about servant leadership. How to offer professional development program of servant leadership could be one of the research direction for future research. Moreover, another potential is to look at how this western leadership theory and practice get localized and what the impact of cultural context has on a borrowed leadership theory.

Appendix. Questionnaire A (Part I): Personal Attributes

I am receptive to these attributes in leaders Yes Uncertain No

1. Appreciative (of others' ideas)
2. Approachable
3. Articulate
4. Assertive
5. Available
6. Broad-minded
7. Coercive
8. Commanding
9. Confident
10. Courageous
11. Decisive
12. Enthusiastic
13. Exemplary
14. Facilitative
15. Forthright
16. Honest
17. Humane
18. Humble
19. Humorous
20. Inspiring
21. Kind
22. Morally courageous
23. Orderly
24. Persistent
25. Respectful
26. Risk-taking
27. Status conscious
28. Supportive
29. Trusting
30. Understanding

Note: Questionnaire B (Part I), 'Personal Attributes', contains the same items and is for leaders to respond, with a different statement as follows: 'I have the following attributes'.

Questionnaire A (Part II): Personal Styles / Patterns of Behavior

I am receptive to these styles / behavior in leaders: Yes Uncertain No

1. As a healer, helps to alleviate human sufferings.
2. Challenges people.
3. Control is my goal.
4. Controls information dissemination.
5. Creates an environment for personal growth.
6. Criticizes poor work (in front of others).
7. Often gives 'constructive' criticism.
8. Is determined to remain consistent in enforcing consequences of boundaries.
9. Directs with scripts.
10. Distributes blame.
11. Does not accept failure.
12. Gives choices within boundaries.
13. Has the desire to serve the organization / people selflessly.
14. Illuminates others when solving problems.
15. Is concerned with growth.
16. Manages crisis skillfully.
17. Manifests power of resolution (has high resolve).
18. Penalizes people for violation of rules/regulations.
19. Persuades rather than coerces.
20. Provides opportunities for others to learn.
21. Reflects periodically.
22. Requires subordinates' submissiveness.
23. Shames subordinates.
24. Shows love and respect (to subordinates).
25. Uses punishments and suspensions frequently.
26. Works with people's assumptions, expectations, perceptions & values.

Note: Questionnaire B (Part II), 'Personal Styles / Patterns of Behavior', contains the same items and is for leaders to respond, with a different statement as follows: 'I have the following behavior'.

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