



## TEACHERS' INSIGHT ON DIGITAL COMPETENCIES AND MATURITY AMONG SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS IN SARAWAK, MALAYSIAN SCHOOLS

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## ABSTRACT

Digital in education is always evolving at a quick pace and Malaysia experienced a slower rate of adaptation among the some Southeast countries. The administrators at the schools possess inadequate digital competence. This article aims to investigate the competence of school administrators from the perspective of teachers, as well as to classify Malaysian schools' level of digital maturity. Moreover, digital maturity is a prerequisite for the success of digital transformation, yet research on digital maturity in Malaysian education is lacking. Six Malaysian teachers participated in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) by utilising a qualitative method. This study identified school administrators' competence for digital leadership are vision and mission, digital culture, digital professional development, digitally go-forward, digital safety and digital resilience. The subthemes are problem-solving, communication, teamwork, creativity, critical thinking, ethical and cultural awareness, adaptability, self-direction, technical skills, lifelong learning, and information management. Malaysian schools' digital maturity, as measured by the Educational Process-Capability Digital Maturity (EPCMM), is at level 3, which is designated as "Management". In order to empower and improve school administrators' competences to fully integrate digital technology into daily administrative tasks while leading the digital cultural changes in their schools, it is helpful to know the level of digital maturity in Malaysian schools.

**Keywords:** *Digital Leadership; Digital Maturity; School Administrators*

## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Malaysian education is changing dramatically because of digital transformation since the pandemic of Covid-19. The modern workplace is changing due to growing digitization, which presents administrators with new issues and has an impact on organisations (Edmead, 2016; Van Veldhoven & Vanthienen, 2019). It is critical to assess the existing level of digital maturity in schools to develop a purpose and vision and implement interventions. This implies that they might perform their leadership responsibilities over the teachers while ill-prepared. The current state of digital maturity in Malaysian schools is to identify the advantages and disadvantages of the strategy for promoting digitalization. As stated by Ferry (2018), leaders in Malaysia and the Asia-Pacific region are not prepared for the digital age, which could impede the advancement of digital maturity. Therefore, school administrators in Malaysia should apply the digital leadership competence to achieve the highest level of digital maturity. It is critical to assess the existing level of digital maturity in schools to develop a purpose and vision and implement interventions. This implies that they might perform their leadership responsibilities over the teachers while ill-prepared (MOE, 2013). The current state of digital maturity in Malaysian schools is to identify the advantages and disadvantages of the strategy for promoting digitalization. As stated by Ferry (2018), leaders in Malaysia and the Asia-Pacific region are not prepared for the digital age, which could impede the advancement of digital maturity. Therefore, the school administrators in Malaysia should imply the digital leadership competence to achieve the highest level of digital maturity.

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## Research Objectives

As schools digitise, administrators who possess digital leadership competency can influence transformation processes. Administrators in schools need to be prepared to

handle these digital shifts and organisations. In this study, we investigate the digital leadership competence of school administrators and the current level of digital maturity in Malaysian educational institutions. By knowing the school administrators' digital leadership competence and the current level of digital maturity, interventions can be made to increase digital transformation in schools. The development of policies and initiatives, such as empowering and upgrading school administrators' competencies to fully integrate digital technology into daily administrative tasks while leading the digital cultural changes in their schools, is aided by knowledge of the degree of digital maturity in Malaysian schools. The appropriate education agencies (JPN, KPM, and IAB) can organise professional development to assist school administrators in digital leadership and assess the digital maturity of digital change in schools. Furthermore, the school leaders and administrators plan continuous professional development (CPD) in school. They can also review the routine and adopt digital leadership in schools. Human resource management (HRM) can structure future development for the education system and upgrade the level of digital maturity in Malaysia.

## **Methodology**

This study uses focus group discussions (FGD) as a qualitative research method. Six teachers participate in one FGD group through Google Meet. The emerging themes have been analyzed using the software Atlas.ti Version 23. The educators come from various education office districts and schools in Malaysia. The sampling was purposeful. The instructors' names and the names of the schools where they operate were kept private in accordance with the ethics of scientific study. The teachers were only identifiable by coded acronyms of "P" followed by a number (P1, P2,... P6). Out of the six participants, two are school administrators, the remaining three are teachers, and one is an education district officer. Given this context, there are various uses and methods for managing digital technology. Success in digital transitions requires top-down management, according to several authorities (Westerman et al., 2014).

## **Results & Findings**

The digital leadership competence among school administrators and the classification of digital maturity in Malaysian education's digital transformation are explored. Themes that have been identified can be used to illustrate points regarding the research questions of a study as well as the responses or interpretations made of each one (Attride-Stirling, 2001). For the digital leadership competence, the participants did state about vision and mission, where P5 quotes, "Their critical thinking of vision and mission by emerging from traditional and digital learning in school." Besides, P1 stated that "digital leadership practices will help to build the digital culture in schools. This is the result of the theme, Digital Culture. The theme of digital professional development was quoted by P3: "During the pandemic, the school administrators encouraged some teachers to help the other teachers in conducting online classes, and the training was done from time to time." The other theme is digitally go-forward, where P1 stated that "the school administrators are using Google Sheets and

Google Forms to collect the data systematically.” Digital safety was also identified as a theme of competence, where P6 stated,

“School administrators must inform the teachers and the students on the ethics of handling digital technology.” P3 stated “We can use digital technology everywhere and anywhere, and it is about flexibility.” This is the theme of digital resilience. For the second objective, consider the current state of digital maturity in Malaysia. The researcher finds that the school in Malaysia is at Level 3: Management under the Educational Process Capability Maturity Model (EPCMM), where the school administrators are still managing the experiences of the staff, the training programs conducted, and the work team in the organization. There is still a digital learning environment where school administrators and teachers are not focusing on continuous enhancement by integrating successful practices and lessons into their future strategies.

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