

Authentic Leadership in the School Context: A Qualitative Meta-synthesis

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Authentic leadership is a contemporary leadership style in the school context. Although the concept of authentic leadership is started from business world, pursuit for authentic leadership should be context specific. Besides, authentic leadership studies in education that used qualitative research designs are distinctly few compared to quantitative studies. Hence, this meta-synthesis was conducted with the purpose of synthesising existing qualitative studies on authentic leadership (AL) in school settings to identify how AL is conceptualised in the school context and explore AL development among school principals. Employing a qualitative meta-synthesis approach, this study systematically sought relevant qualitative literature by conducting search using Scopus database. Seven studies are eligible for inclusion and included in the meta-synthesis. Data were synthesised using a thematic analysis. The findings indicated that the concept of AL in school context can be explained with a close link between values and behaviours of school principals in a collective work climate. The study identified two major themes related to authentic leadership development among school principals: understanding own self through learning process, and external elements for knowing inner self. Self-reflection is a part of learning process, while guidance and time are crucial for the leadership development. This meta-synthesis provides evidence of intrinsic and extrinsic factors that foster authentic leadership development among school leaders. The findings imply that conceptualisation of authentic leadership is just outset within educational perspective and authentic leadership development among school leaders can be an advanced leadership practice to lead and manage schools in the ever-changing educational landscape. This study recommends more in-depth qualitative studies to understand the phenomenon of authentic leadership in education, especially in the Asian context.

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