

A Critical Review of Literature on the Effects of Cultural Intelligence on Administrative Behaviour among Head Teachers of Secondary Schools

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Abstract

This conceptual review critically evaluates the existing corpus of information to explore the relationship between Cultural Intelligence (CQ) and administrative conduct among secondary school head teachers. This evaluation includes papers released in the period span 2020-2024 from the academic sources such as JSTOR, Scopus, ERIC, Google Scholar, Academia.edu and Shodhganga. This research examines the influence of four major elements of cultural intelligence, namely metacognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioural on leadership practices in more diverse and multicultural educational situations. The findings indicate that there is a positive relationship between cross-cultural educational contexts and decision making, communication, adaptability and conflict resolution capacity of head teachers with higher Cultural Intelligence (CQ). The analysis finds significant gaps in the literature despite the increasing interest in Cultural Intelligence (CQ) especially in the longitudinal and regional contexts. It points out the value of culturally sensitive policies in promoting inclusive and successful school leadership in a globalised society, and suggests the inclusion of cultural intelligence training in educational leadership preparation programs.

Keywords: Culture, Intelligence, Cultural Intelligence (CQ), Administrative Behaviour

Introduction

The head teacher plays an important role in the development of the administrative framework of the modern educational system and in the creation of a supportive learning environment. Their administrative behaviour includes management of resources, decision making and dispute-resolution and is affected by a variety of organisational and human factors. Key determinants found are conflict resolution tactics, work satisfaction and cultural intelligence. The efficacy and concord of secondary schools generally are greatly influenced by the ability of the head teachers to manage cultural difference, resolve difficulties amicably and find satisfaction in their job. The study sought to evaluate the effects of cultural intelligence on the administrative conduct of head teachers with an aim of providing subtle views on their interactions and consequences. Cultural intelligence is an important talent of head teachers in an increasingly diversified cultural setting of schools' personnel, pupils and the culture at large. It enables them to respond to different expectations from different stakeholders and create inclusive learning environments. Cultural intelligence also enhances the decision making and interpersonal relations and ensures that the administrative behaviour is in conformity with the diversified culture of the modern educational institutions. Another significant element of administrative conduct is conflict management. These are the processes and procedures to resolve disputes and conflicts inside an organization. Headship is about the day-to-day of

disputes between staff, pupils, parents. Good conflict management fosters a culture of cooperation and respect for each other. It avoids arguments from escalating. The style used will depend on the situation and what you want to achieve and will involve avoiding, accommodating, competing and partnering. Headteacher's administrative style together with their cultural intelligence and overall job enjoyment often affects the success of these strategies. For example, a head teacher with high cultural intelligence would use more inclusive techniques in settling disputes which would result in greater administrative performance and more enjoyment in their professions. Similarly, unresolved arguments may put the head teacher under stress that can affect job satisfaction and endanger their capacity to lead successfully. This complex web of relationships underscores the necessity of studying these factors together and not in isolation, for this reason.

Culture is the shared patterns of actions, beliefs, values, norms, language and objects of a social group or community. It includes physical things such as clothing, cuisine and art and non-physical things such as values, ideas and worldviews. Culture, according to anthropologists, is the entire way of life of a people, passed on from one generation to the next through social learning. It is fluid, it evolves, by internal innovations and external stimuli. In 1871, *Edward B. Tylor* defined culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits a cultural intelligence (CQ) acquired by man as a member of society." Culture determines how people interpret the world, interact and make decisions. This is especially the case in multi-ethnic communities where diverse cultural identities exist and impact the functioning of institutions such as schooling.

"Intelligence" is usually defined as the capacity to learn and apply knowledge and skills. It encompasses cognitive abilities such as reasoning, problem solving, memory, attention and the ability to learn from experience. According to *David Wechsler* (1944), "Intelligence is the general capacity of a person to act purposefully, to think rationally, and to deal effectively with his environment." Historically, the notion of intelligence has derived from psychometric approaches, like IQ (intelligence quotient) tests, that try to assess intellectual aptitude. But new ideas identify several intelligences. *Howard Gardner's* theory comprises linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalistic intelligence. Intelligence is not a static thing, it can be increased and improved by learning, exposure and touch with the world around us. The reason intelligence is important in educational leadership is because it affects how administrators think critically, analyse data, and adapt to challenges, especially in varied cultures.

Cultural Intelligence (CQ) is a relatively recent concept that defines the ability of an individual to operate effectively in multiple cultural environments. Cultural intelligence is a system of interacting knowledge, motivational and behavioural characteristics that enable an individual to adapt effectively to culturally diverse settings (Thomas et al., 2008). Cultural Intelligence (CQ) is made up of metacognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioural dimensions introduced by researchers such as *Christopher Earley and Soon Ang*. Metacognitive refers to the awareness and control over cultural knowledge, cognitive refers to the knowledge of norms and practices, motivational refers to the interest and confidence in functioning across cultures and behavioural refers to the ability to adapt verbal and non-verbal actions appropriately. Cultural intelligence needs sensitivity to cultural cues and the ability to overcome cultural differences in communication and leadership. In comparison to general intelligence which is generally context independent, cultural intelligence is context specific. Head teachers need

cultural intelligence (CQ) in the school setting as they deal with various students, staff and communities. It promotes inclusivity, minimises cultural misinterpretation and facilitates collaborative decision-making, all of which are essential to efficient educational management.

Administrative behaviour is the behaviour of individuals in a position of authority or management to achieve the objectives of the organization through behaviour, strategies and decision-making processes. It deals with planning, organising, leading, co-ordinating and evaluating the operation of an institution. *Herbert A. Simon*, one of the pioneers of administrative theory, defined administrative behaviour as a study of the decision-making process in administrative situations. He highlighted the idea of “bounded rationality” the idea that decision-making is constrained by knowledge, cognitive constraints and time. In the education arena, the administrative conduct of the head teachers comprises the administration of human and material resources, the promotion of good school atmosphere, the implementation of policies and the supervision of teaching and learning. The combination of cultural intelligence and administrative behaviour enhances a head teacher’s capacity to lead effectively in culturally diverse environments and promotes equity, harmony and academic achievement.

To sum up, the contemporary educational terrain compels secondary school head teachers to transcend conventional administrative responsibilities and emerge as culturally sensitive leaders. The literature shows that a head teacher’s administrative conduct is not an isolated set of operational tasks but a dynamic process heavily influenced by human and context-specific elements. As schools become more and more diverse, cultural intelligence (CQ) becomes a necessary competency, not an optional skill. Head teachers, by mastering the metacognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioural dimensions of cultural intelligence (CQ), may successfully decode cultural nuances, avoid institutional friction and build inclusive learning environments. In addition, the incorporation of high cultural intelligence cultural intelligence (CQ) significantly improves the management of conflict and increases overall job satisfaction. When administrators have the cultural sensitivity to resolve disputes amicably and adjust their leadership styles to a variety of stakeholders, they reduce leadership stress and avoid interpersonal friction from increasing. Finally, the review of cultural intelligence (CQ), administrative behaviour and conflict management as an integrated system proves to be a very effective approach to school management. It is imperative that we make the investment in the cultural intelligence (CQ) of school leaders to promote administrative efficiency, staff harmony and the overall success of modern multi-ethnic educational institutions.

Rationale of the Study

The secondary school has become a very complex, multi-ethnic ecology due to rapidly changing demography. At the heart of this diversity are the head teachers, who manage diverse workforces, multicultural student bodies and contradictory demands from the community. Most traditional leadership theories focus mainly on technical, managerial or emotional qualities. But these paradigms typically overlook how cross-cultural dynamics change leadership. In diverse environments, day-to-day activities such as decision-making, resource allocation and policy enforcement are constantly evaluated through multiple cultural lenses, sometimes resulting in institutional friction and miscommunication. Thus, cultural intelligence (CQ), the ability to function and manage effectively in culturally varied environments, becomes a must-have operational requirement for school leaders. Although the current literature acknowledges the importance of diversity, there is a vital study vacuum in

that we do not have a clear sense of the way in which cultural intelligence (CQ) directly determines a head teacher's administrative conduct. More research is needed to demonstrate how the four elements of cultural intelligence (CQ) - metacognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioural, translate into tangible administrative duties such as collaborative oversight and cross-cultural conflict resolution. The present work directly fills this empirical void. Structurally it links abstract theories about leadership to the pragmatic governance of schools. In practical terms, the findings will give ministries of education and training institutes a data-driven blueprint to revamp obsolete professional development programs. This study reveals the impact of cultural intelligence (CQ) on administrative activity, which gives the diagnostic information necessary to create inclusive, stable and highly effective modern educational institutions.

Delimitation of the Study

Within the scope of this research, the conceptual scope is limited to the investigation of the relationship between administrative conduct and cultural intelligence especially in the setting of secondary school head teachers. The database consists of only a few academic databases like JSTOR, Scopus, ERIC, Google Scholar, Academia.edu, and Shodhganga, and includes works from 2020-2024. The review only deals with the metacognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioural dimensions of cultural intelligence and its relation to school management. Excluded include non-educational industries, primary data collection, and leadership roles outside of secondary education.

Methodology

This study, using a conceptual review methodology, critically reviews and synthesises the corpus of research on the relationship between cultural intelligence and administrative behaviour of secondary school head teachers. Academic databases such as JSTOR, Scopus, ERIC, Google Scholar, Academia.edu, and Shodhganga were used to identify and choose relevant academic papers. The admission requirements mainly focused on peer-reviewed journal papers, theoretical frameworks and PhD dissertations (2020-2024). The literature review was conducted on the effect of the four parts of cultural intelligence (behavioural, cognitive, motivational, and metacognitive). The effect of cultural intelligence on administrative functions such as decision-making, communication, leadership style, and conflict resolution was studied. The results were organised through a thematic analysis approach contributing to identify theoretical gaps, emerging trends and practical implications.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the concept and dimensions of cultural intelligence Cultural Intelligence (CQ) within the discipline of educational leadership.
2. To study the effect of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) on the administrative behaviour of secondary school head teachers.
3. To identify meaningful patterns and themes in the present literature on Cultural Intelligence (CQ) and educational leadership in multicultural situations.
4. To determine research gaps and provide directions for future empirical research on culturally responsive school administration.
5. To explore the implications of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) for leadership development and educational policy design.

Review of Related Literature

A survey of contemporary academic research on these constructs is needed to understand the complex relationship between head teachers' administrative behaviour and cultural intelligence. The next section provides a critical examination of 21 relevant papers published between 2020 and 2024. The studies presented here, drawn from a range of educational contexts, illustrate the ways in which leadership behaviours in multicultural schools are shaped by cultural intelligence and its four domains. Furthermore, the reviews identify methodological approaches, recurring themes, and gaps in the literature that might guide future research and policy in the area of culturally responsive educational leadership.

Yin, (2024) performed research on "Cultural Leadership and Cultural Intelligence Level of School Administrators" using mixed methods survey and interview methodology. The results showed that administrators with greater Cultural Intelligence (CQ) were more likely to develop culturally responsive leadership initiatives and to dynamically engage with multicultural staff.

Gopilalparihar & Advani (2024) used literature review process to perform a study titled "Exploring the Complexity of Educational Leadership: Challenges Faced by Secondary School Principals in Administration". The study revealed that culturally aware leadership techniques are helpful in addressing equality, inclusiveness and crisis management concerns in secondary schools.

Çetin & Karsantik (2024) conducted research named "Leadership Development Needs of School Leaders in the 4.0 Era" using the literature synthesis methodology. The study proves that the combination of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) with digital leadership abilities contributes to improving management effectiveness while considering technological heterogeneity in schooling.

Arnaud (2023) carried out a research investigation titled "Teachers' Perceptions of the Educational Leader's Cultural Intelligence in International Schools: A Cross-National Comparative Case Study" utilising mixed methods case study technique. Teachers in the research considered leaders as culturally competent and openness and role modelling as important Cultural Intelligence (CQ) characteristics.

Holmes & Hope (2023) conducted a survey and interview-based study titled "An Assessment of Principals' Cultural Intelligence, Leadership Efficacy, and Preparedness". The study found no direct relationship between overall Cultural Intelligence (CQ) and leadership efficacy or preparation, but substantial interrelationships among the four Cultural Intelligence (CQ) aspects were found.

Özdemir, Kaya & Yılmaz (2023) did a research named "The Mediating Role of the Principal - Teacher Relationship in Culturally Diverse Schools" using cross sectional survey methodology. The study indicated that the higher the Cultural Intelligence (CQ) of the principals, the stronger the ties with teachers, and the more innovative the leadership and professional learning.

Gokalp & Yasar (2022) conducted a study named "The Relationship Between School Principals'

Cultural Intelligence Level and Teachers' Job Satisfaction and Intention to Leave the Job" by utilising a correlational survey approach. Results showed that higher levels of principle Cultural Intelligence (CQ) strongly predicted teacher work satisfaction and decreased teachers' desire to leave, with satisfaction somewhat mediating this connection.

Maqbool, Khan & Ahmed (2022) carried out research on "Leadership Styles and Academic Excellence in Secondary Education" utilising quantitative survey methods. The study indicated that leadership styles with Cultural Intelligence (CQ) components like instructional leadership and strategic leadership were strongly linked to academic achievement.

Longmuir, Smith & Kumar (2022) explored "Transcultural Dispositions and Culturally Responsive Leadership" in an exploratory qualitative study. The study indicated that school administrators with transcultural attitudes and strong Cultural Intelligence (CQ) were better able to conduct culturally responsive instruction.

Martins & Dickhäuser (2021) studied "Inner City School Leadership: Cultural Competence and Organisational Outcomes" and employed mixed methods case study approach. The study indicated that culturally competent leadership in inner city schools helped to attract and retain teachers and helped establish a healthy school culture.

Cobanoglu (2021) carried out a research entitled "The Relationship Between Transformational Leadership, the Cultural Intelligence of Teachers and the Skills of Principals' Diversity Management" by using correlational survey methodology. The study revealed that teacher Cultural Intelligence (CQ) and principals' diversity management abilities combined substantially predicted principals' transformative leadership.

Bush (2021) carried out theoretical review research titled "School Leadership and Organisational Culture in Diverse Contexts: A Theoretical Review". The study stated that high power distance cultures generally produce directive leadership, advocating Cultural Intelligence (CQ) informed training for head teachers.

Velarde, Adams & Ghani (2020) worked upon "School Leadership in Multicultural Secondary Schools" Mixed method methodology (survey + interviews) The study indicated that higher Cultural Intelligence (CQ) among secondary school heads promoted intercultural relationships, increased cultural understanding, and enhanced adaptive leadership practices.

Nosratabadi, Bahrami, Palouzian & Mosavi (2020) examined the title "Leader Cultural Intelligence and Organisational Performance: A Structural Equation Modelling Approach" using the SEM methodology. The study established that leader Cultural Intelligence (CQ) has considerable positive direct benefits on organisational performance. Indirect effects were mediated through organisational structure.

Cardona, Corrales, Miller & Peters (2023) conducted research titled, "School Principal Cultural Proficiency and Transformational Leadership" utilising correlational survey approach. The study indicated that principals with greater cultural proficiency scores were more likely to demonstrate transformational leadership behaviours, including strong results and equitable awareness.

Arnaud & Trottier (2023) investigated upon “Cross National Perspectives on School Leaders’ Cultural Intelligence” using mixed methods survey approach. The study indicated that Cultural Intelligence (CQ) enhanced inclusive practices and staff cohesion among secondary leaders in varied international contexts.

Viberg, Grönlund & Nouri (2023) carried out research named “High Performing School Management Teams and Cultural Intelligence” through qualitative interviews. The study identified that Cultural Intelligence (CQ) related qualities of communication, collaboration, and resilience were crucial for effective management of secondary schools.

Designing Culturally Aware Learning Analytics: Value Sensitive Design Approach was the title of the study by Viberg, Hatakka & Sutinen (2022) which explored the design of culturally aware learning analytics using the value sensitive design approach and the design-based methodology. The study indicated that incorporating cultural values within analytics tools facilitated culturally responsive decision making among school administrators.

Lu & Smith (2022) did a research investigation entitled “Leadership in Chinese Higher Education: Sociocultural Constructs and Orientations” utilising comparative case study approach. The study indicated that Cultural Intelligence (CQ)-informed leadership promoted institutional responsiveness, providing transferable lessons for secondary school head teachers.

Wang et al. (2021) performed a study titled “Exploring AI to Support Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in K-12”, which went via exploratory pilot technique. The study indicated that AI technologies helped teachers adapt instructional materials to students’ cultural contexts, suggesting potential for Cultural Intelligence (CQ)-enhancing administrative tools.

In their qualitative policy analysis of a school district’s five-year plan, Cumings Mansfield & Lambrinou (2021) labelled their research “Culturally Responsive Leadership: Critical Analysis of a School District’s Five-Year Plan.” The study indicated that district-level policies guided by Cultural Intelligence (CQ) more equitably distributed leadership and created more inclusive school cultures.

Research Gaps

Despite the growing interest in cultural intelligence (CQ) and its role in educational leadership around the world, there are still several gaps in the research. Empirical longitudinal research on the development of head teachers’ cultural intelligence (CQ) over time and the long-term implications on academic outcomes is limited. Most regional research focuses on Western or international school settings, there is a lack of research on how Indian head teachers use cultural intelligence (CQ)-informed leadership to navigate the country’s immense linguistic, cultural and socio-economic variety. Methodologically, very few studies in India compare leadership behaviours across urban and rural settings or use mixed-method methods. There is little information theoretically regarding how cultural intelligence cultural intelligence (CQ) can be incorporated with Indian leadership techniques like community-based or participatory administration. In practice, little is known about how cultural intelligence cultural intelligence (CQ) approach is integrated into administrative development or teacher education programs in India. These gaps have to be bridged if Indian secondary school has to have leadership frameworks that are culturally sensitive and contextually relevant.

Fundamental Findings from the Research

1. Higher level of cultural intelligence (CQ) is associated with stronger leadership such as improved ability to make decisions, communicate and solve problems in multicultural school environments.
2. In the case of school leaders, it is the metacognitive and motivational types of cultural intelligence (CQ) that are most associated with flexible and welcoming management.
3. Culturally Intelligent (CQ) Principals Are More Effective at Building Positive Relationships with Their Teachers. This makes teachers happier at work, and less inclined to leave.
4. The level of cultural intelligence of school leaders has a positive impact on their transformative and culturally sensitive school leadership.
5. Culturally competent leaders are expected to be more understanding, accepting, and successful by teachers, especially in environments with many diverse or foreign students.
6. Studies have indicated that there is a positive relationship between cultural intelligence (CQ) and problem-solving skills, especially in schools with a wide variety of types of students.
7. Developing cultural intelligence helps workers be fairer and more equitable in modifying the curriculum, including language learners, and in working together as a team.
8. Generally, school leaders in cities have higher cultural intelligence (CQ) than school leaders in the country. One of the reasons is that school administrators in urban areas have greater opportunities for professional development and encounter more diverse populations.
9. India is culturally rich, yet cultural intelligence (CQ) is not particularly taught in primary education there.
10. School leaders frequently build cultural intelligence (CQ) themselves, for example through experience, rather than through other organisations or rules and regulations.

Educational Implications

1. Build the ability for inclusive management by integrating Cultural Intelligence (CQ) into leadership training programs for principals and future school heads.
2. The teacher education curricula should be adapted to integrate modules on intercultural communication, cultural awareness and the multiple elements of cultural intelligence (CQ) (metacognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioural).
3. Develop policy guidelines for assessing cultural intelligence (CQ) as a criterion for the recruitment and promotion of head teachers notably in culturally diversified regions.
4. Offer professional development programs in urban and rural contexts with a primary focus on cultural intelligence (CQ), diversity management and culturally sensitive leadership



techniques.

5. Encourage administrators to engage in reflective practices such as self-evaluation of cultural biases and use of intercultural decision-making journals.
6. The sixth stage would be to create peer-learning forums for head teachers to exchange effective practices in CQ-based management of diverse student and teacher populations.
7. Schools should arrange and monitor school-based activities (e.g. multicultural activities and inclusion audits) with the support of administrators who have cultural and personal understanding, to enhance community participation.
8. Embed cultural intelligence (CQ) tools and assessments in school development plans and frameworks for assessing the effectiveness of leadership teams.
9. The ninth recommendation is to provide opportunities for school leaders to participate in immersion programs, virtual partnerships or exchange programs to increase their exposure to intercultural environments.
10. Rural and semi urban head teachers should be given emphasis and taught in cultural intelligence (CQ) so as to overcome the leadership gap that exists between urban and rural populations.

Conclusion

The results of this conceptual assessment confirm that cultural intelligence (CQ) is a fundamental skill for successful educational leadership, especially in secondary schools negotiating growing socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural diversity. Higher cultural intelligence (CQ) head teachers are more capable of managing cross-cultural conflicts, creating inclusive school climates, and exercising empathy and flexibility in their leadership. As schools become increasingly diverse, culturally savvy leadership becomes not only important but also necessary to guarantee student welfare, teacher retention, and educational justice. Despite its importance, cultural intelligence (CQ) is still under-represented in official training and leadership development programs, particularly in the vast but frequently unmanaged Indian educational system. Mainstreaming cultural intelligence (CQ) into leadership assessments, school improvement frameworks, and principal preparation programs is practically necessary. Furthermore, school leaders can improve their intercultural competencies with the support of context-specific interventions including workshops, exchange programs, and self-assessment tools, especially in underprivileged and rural areas. Essentially, funding cultural intelligence means funding inclusive and successful school leadership in the future.

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