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Learning about teachers' resilience: Perceptions,
challenges and strategies of policy implementation in
two secondary schools in Malaysia

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AHMAD ZABIDI ABDUL RAZAK

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Abstract

Between 1996 and 2010 the Ministry of Education in Malaysia implemented several policies to ensure that the education system in Malaysia was able to fulfill current national and international demands. The Ministry argued that the policies being implemented had many potential benefits. However, changes in education also create new challenges for teachers because, while concentrating on teaching and learning, they are also required to focus on implementing the new policies.

These unavoidable challenges can influence the nature and quality of teachers' practice. To ensure the success of important policy changes, the Malaysian education system needs resilient teachers, who are able to face all the challenges successfully. In the school context, educational leadership is expected to play a key role in supporting teachers in this challenging situation.

The intent of this study was to explore educators' and parents' views and experiences in these areas, including educational leadership practices which aimed to ensure that teachers sustain their resilience in times of facing real pressure. Data was collected through interviews with (i) members of Senior Management Teams (ii) selected teachers and (iii) selected members from committees of Parent and Teachers Associations in two secondary schools in Malaysia. In total 46 participants were involved in this study. Data analysis was carried out through analytic categories based on hermeneutics philosophy. The findings indicated that teachers faced various challenges during the implementation of national education policy, but teachers' own inner strength, the role of PTA members, colleagues' collegiality and the location of teachers' schools in their hometown assisted them to sustain their resilience. All groups of participants claimed that educational leaders, as represented by members of Senior Management Teams at their schools, have played the main role in assisting teachers to face challenges and, indirectly, sustaining their resilience. Five approaches were utilised by the educational leaders: they provided a congenial working environment that did not place undue pressure on teachers, eased the burden for teachers in implementing the policy, provided encouraging monitoring, showed continuing appreciation; and promoted school success.

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List of commonly used acronyms and abbreviations

EPU	Economic Planning Unit
IAB	Institute Aminuddin Baki
IPS	Institute of Principalship Studies
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
MEPADC	Malaysian Education Principal and Executive Development Centre
MOE	Ministry of Education
MUHEC	Massey University Human Ethics Committee
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headteachers
NUTP	National Union of Teaching Profession
PLI	Poverty Line Income
PTAs	Parent Teacher Associations
SED	State Education Department
SMTs	Senior Management Teams

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