



**ASIA LEADERSHIP  
ROUNDTABLE**

HO CHI MINH CITY  
March 11-13, 2012

## **Leadership and Learning in Asia Pacific: Challenges for Research and Practice**

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### **The Principal Profiles & The Road to Leadership A case study in Vietnam**

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This paper provides insights into Vietnamese school leaders who work in elementary schools that are evaluated by the provincial Department of Education and Training as model schools. The profiles of these principals originated from a joint cross-country study on instructional leadership roles of principals in school development. Studies in effective instructional leadership at the K-12 level show that principalship is one of the key factors for high quality education and improving student learning. Even though education reform is taking place in Vietnam, research on the roles and impact of school principals in Vietnam is still limited.

From a pilot qualitative study in Southern Vietnam, with a sample of 12 school principals from Ho Chi Minh City, the study presents findings about the portraits of elementary Vietnamese principals, particularly about their personalities, education background, experience, work ethics and their perspectives on school instructional leadership. Data collected consists of chronological, narrative records including transcribed interviews, observation field notes, documents, and interpretive asides recorded by researchers in each setting (Miles & Huberman, 1994). With these multiple sources of data, the researcher-analysts have the opportunity to the “triangulated” (Denzin, 2001) and “multi-method” data (Smith, 1979, pp. 344-347) which help them to maintain the objective views of the analysis and to be aware of the diverse perspective of the subjects.

Through face-to-face, in-depth and semi-structured interviews, the author studies how these individuals became principals, characteristics that they share and what makes them unique. In addition to showcasing the achievement of these principals, the study also critically builds the knowledge base of the Asian and Pacific region in understanding the development of school leaders in the context of Vietnam.



The Joseph Lau Luen Hung Charitable Trust  
Asia Pacific Centre  
for Leadership and Change  
劉鑾雄慈善基金  
亞太領導與變革研究中心

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