A Study on the Legal Literacy of Urban Public School Administrators

Fatt Hee Tie

*Education and Urban Society* published online 11 June 2012
DOI: 10.1177/0013124512446220

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://eus.sagepub.com/content/early/2012/06/06/0013124512446220

Published by:
SAGE
http://www.sagepublications.com

Additional services and information for *Education and Urban Society* can be found at:

Email Alerts: http://eus.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts

Subscriptions: http://eus.sagepub.com/subscriptions

Reprints: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav

Permissions: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav

>> OnlineFirst Version of Record - Jun 11, 2012

What is This?
A Study on the Legal Literacy of Urban Public School Administrators

Fatt Hee Tie

Abstract
This study investigates the legal literacy of urban public school administrators in Malaysia. Data were collected from 109 school administrators. The instrument that was administered to the respondents comprised two parts: Part 1, the background information of the respondents; and Part 2, items on the law related to schools, such as teachers’ duty of care, classroom supervision, and corporal punishment. The article discusses the findings of the research and provides some recommendations to school administrators to reduce the risk of litigation.

Keywords
accountability, administrators, leadership

Introduction
In a constantly changing litigious school environment, school administrators are required to carry out their daily responsibilities within the confines of an established legal framework. In most circumstances, mandatory compliance of the statute, legislation, and principles of law set down by the courts is nonnegotiable. School administrators must have the appropriate

1University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Corresponding Author:
Fatt Hee Tie, University of Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Email: tiefh@um.edu.my
legal knowledge to carry out their legal responsibilities. In a majority of the cases, the court does not allow a plea of ignorance of the law among school administrators (Findlay, 2007). Sometimes, school administrators make innocent mistakes that lead to a lawsuit that is costly and time-consuming. As a consequence, they tend to approach the law with a certain degree of fear and anxiety. Some may even perceive the law to be like a trap for those who make a mistake in the course of managing a school (Schimmel & Militello, 2007).

Public school litigation has an important impact on education. As the courts continue to interpret and expand the law on the legal rights and responsibilities of teachers and students increasingly, school administrators will continue to face a number of lawsuits. Thus, it is vital for school administrators to possess a basic understanding of the legislative and judicial decisions on the teaching profession as well as recognize how their actions can lead to litigation (Wagner, 2007). In many countries, teachers are promoted to become school administrators after teaching for a number of years. Usually, they have limited understanding of how the constitution, statutes, and judicial decisions affect daily school function (Dunklee & Shoop, 1986). Unfortunately, these administrators are entrusted with a tremendous responsibility, unlike ordinary classroom teachers, while making decisions that affects the constitutional rights of teachers and students. Apart from a sound knowledge of the ministry of education directives and regulations, they are required to understand the legal principles and requirements of landmark decisions and their effect on school management. School administrators are able to function more effectively in a litigious school environment if they are able to understand the complex school legislation that has been introduced by policy makers. Along with increased awareness of their own legal rights and responsibilities, school administrators are able to act with confidence in making decisions. On the other hand, lack of familiarity with statutes and case law leads to poor decision making, ineffective school management, and consequently, costly and time-consuming litigation (Findlay, 2007).

Public school administrators must have an appropriate understanding of the law related to education to be able to make legally sound decisions in school. An adequate knowledge of education law would enable school administrators to face the challenges posed by the threat of a school environment that has become increasingly litigious in nature (Russo, Stewart, & Groof, 2007; Russo & Tie, 2008). They will be able to fulfill their legal obligations more effectively and also avoid violating the rights of teachers and students. Research conducted in countries such as the United States (Dunklee & Shoop, 1986; Reglin, 1992), Canada (Findlay, 2007; Pritchard,
1993; Redfield, 2003; Walsh, 2001) and Australia (Stewart, 1998a) tends to show that school administrators possess an inadequate level of knowledge related to education law. As a consequence, confidence in making legally sound decisions in school is limited. In Malaysia, as in the United States, Canada, and Australia, the law is playing an increasingly significant role in public education. However, there is a lack of research in Malaysia on the legal literacy of urban public school administrators.

As in the United States, Canada, and Australia, most urban public school administrators in Malaysia are aware of the increasingly litigious nature of the school environment. As administrators become increasing concerned over the readiness and willingness of parents and students to take a court action against the school, feelings of uncertainty, misunderstanding, and even fear over the threat of litigation tend to increase. An appropriate and effective approach is needed to address these concerns. A working practical knowledge of the fundamentals of school law can be incorporated into the preparation programs for school administrators along with short in-service on-going professional courses and seminars. In most cases, administrators are relegated to understand and abide by the principles of law in retrospect because of the absence of professional preparation programs (Wagner, 2007). Furthermore, Reglin (1992) suggested that a sound understanding of school law should be the focus among administrators instead of studying the statutes since knowledge of school law is a better protector rather than a healer. Besides minimizing the threat of litigation, a sound working knowledge of school law provides for order and discipline in school.

There are three sets of regulations that govern the conduct of public school administrators in Malaysia: the Federal Constitution, the government’s civil service general orders, and the Ministry of Education administrative circulars. The Federal Constitution in Malaysia sets out the constitutional rights of all citizens, including public school administrators. It guarantees school administrators, teachers, and students certain basic fundamental rights. These constitutional rights include the right to equal protection, freedom of speech and expression, freedom of religion, and mandatory compliance with the principles of natural justice. The government’s civil service general orders, a set of rules and regulations related to the conduct of public officers, also governed the conduct and behavior of public school administrators. Additionally, the Ministry of Education also issues administrative guidelines on a regular basis to all schools. It is related to the behavior and conduct of administrators, teachers, and students. Generally, school administrators need to possess an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding of the law in order to minimize the threat of litigation. They need to
know the law related to student safety, student discipline, and teacher dismissal and the basic principles of the law of tort. Sanctions for noncompliance and the procedures involved in the administration of student punishment must be understood clearly. They need to identify and keep informed on the challenges of working in a complex legal school environment while at the same time attempting to balance the individual rights of students as against public interests.

A sound knowledge of the legal rights of students with respect to freedom of speech and expression, natural justice, and the due process of the law allows school administrators to establish school policies and procedures that abide with the law. They are able to adopt risk management strategies in order to prevent possible litigation. Most public school administrators in Malaysian schools are aware that schools are becoming more litigious in nature. There is a need to enhance understanding of legal principles and concepts of constitutional rights among the administrators as well as to enable them to be certain about the legality of their daily decision. In most cases, Malaysian teachers are usually promoted to school administrators based on their seniority and job performance. Most of the administrators had obtained their teaching qualifications almost 20 years ago. At that time, the teaching training program did not have school law component in the curriculum as during that period of time parents placed a lot of trust on teachers and a legal suit against a teacher was unheard of.

**Review of Literature**

Studies examining the level of school administrators’ knowledge of school law in Canada showed that school administrators lack knowledge of the law related to education (Findlay, 2007; Pritchard, 1993; Redfield, 2003; Walsh, 2001). A research conducted on the legal knowledge among secondary school principals in Australia revealed a similar research finding (Stewart, 1998b).

Parents are prepared to challenge the school for perceived arbitrary practices and capricious decisions. School administrators who possess sufficient understanding of education law can make informed decisions concerning legal issues in school. They can use preventive law strategies in school to limit their potential liability and reduce the risk of litigation, particularly the law regarding due process (Zuker, 1988). In a litigious society, administrators with limited knowledge on education law are vulnerable to the threat of litigation since the education system is governed by a legal framework that consists of a variety of statutory mandates, constitutional principles, and
common law principles. Decisions that violate the right of teachers and students will result in costly and time-consuming litigation that eventually affects the overall school climate and function. Research also showed that knowledge of school law is related to effective leadership, accountability, and professionalism of administrators (Findlay, 2007; Reglin, 1992). Teachers often depend on school administrators to obtain general information on legal issues. Administrators who are ignorant of education law are likely to have their relationships with the teachers affected and often are perceived to be inept, whereas administrators with immediate responses to issues in a legally correct manner demonstrate more effective leadership (Findlay, 2007). School administrators should have an understanding of education law and be able to apply legal principles in their daily practice in school. School administrators need a professional working knowledge of the statues and common law decisions that affect schools to be effective in managing and leading schools (Stewart, 1998a). Specifically, school administrators need to understand education law in order to be able to make daily decisions that are based on legally correct principles and become more effective school leaders. Knowledge of education law helps administrators identify legal issues that affect the school and respond more effectively to the demands for greater accountability and transparency in a litigious society. This would further help create a safe and orderly school environment and enhance their roles as professional administrators.

**Purpose of the Study**

The study seeks to examine the legal literacy of urban public school administrators in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The legal literacy of the respondents was examined from two perspectives:

1. The level of legal knowledge
2. Legal literacy and its relationship with selected variables

**Research Questions**

The four research questions were as follows:

*Research Question 1*: What are the sources of legal knowledge of school administrators?

*Research Question 2*: What is the status of school administrators in terms of attendance and the desire to attend a course on school law?
Research Question 3: What is the level of legal literacy among school administrators?

Research Question 4: Is there a relationship between the legal literacy of school administrators and the selected variables of: number of years of teaching experience, current administrative position, attendance at a course on school law, and desire to attend a course on school law.

Method

This study employed a survey research method to investigate the legal literacy of urban public secondary school administrators. Administrators were asked to respond to a questionnaire that contains items related to school law, which include items on the legal rights of teachers and students.

Subjects

The subjects of this study consist of 109 respondents. The school administrators comprise secondary school principals, deputy school principals, senior teachers, and subject specialists. Three secondary school principals (2.8%), 58 deputy principals (53.2%), 35 senior teachers (32.1%), and seven subject specialists (6.4%) participated in the study. All the respondents in this study were working in urban public secondary schools. The respondents consist of 45 male (41.3%) and 64 female (58.7%) teachers. Four of the respondents have taught for less than 10 years (3.8%), 17 have taught between 11 and 15 years (16.3%), and 83 have taught for more than 15 years (79.8%).

Instrument

The school administrators were contacted via addresses obtained from the state education department. A questionnaire was used to elicit information from the participants. It consists of two parts. Part 1 of the questionnaire gathered information on the background of the participant, namely, gender, number of years of teaching experience in school, the current administrative position that is held in school, and attendance at a course on education law. The respondents were also asked about the sources where they obtained their knowledge on school law, their opinion on the influence of the law on education, and whether they would like to attend a course on school law. Part 2 of the questionnaire contains 20 items designed to determine the administrators’ actual legal knowledge. The items involved teachers’ duty of care, classroom
supervision, the legal rights of teachers, corporal punishment, student safety, and the legal rights of students. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to answer the research questions. The questionnaire was tested with the test–retest method and a reliability coefficient of .83 was obtained.

Results and Discussion

Sources of Legal Knowledge of the School Administrators

Most of the respondents (33.9%) expressed that they had obtained knowledge related to school law by attending a short course on school law. These courses, usually organized by the Ministry of Education and state education departments, are a major source of the administrators’ legal knowledge. The other sources of legal knowledge are from the newspapers (23.9%), information provided by the school principal (21.2%), colleagues (11.9%), and the district education office (4.6%).

The Status of the School Administrators in Terms of Attendance and the Desire to Attend a Course on School Law

A majority of the administrators (64.2%) indicated that they had not attended a course on school law during their teacher certification and other professional training program. This finding is consistent with the limited availability of courses on school law in teacher preparation and administrators’ professional development programs during the 1980s. Most education programs at universities and teacher-training colleges did not offer a course on school law even as an option before the 1980s. The result is similar to the findings of research conducted in the United States, which found that fewer than 10% of teacher preparation programs offer an educational law course as an option (Gullat & Tollett, 1997). In terms of the subjects’ expressed desire to attend a course on school law, the findings showed that more than 85.3% of the respondents indicated that they were interested in attending a short course on school law.

Level of Legal Literacy Among the School Administrators

Table 1 shows the percentage of correct responses for selected aspects of legal literacy. The data on the knowledge of the respondents were analyzed
### Table 1. Respondent’s Correct Response to the Items on School Law

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Correct responses (n)</th>
<th>Correct responses (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>99.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>97.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>97.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>96.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>95.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>94.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>92.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>89.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>87.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>73.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>71.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>69.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>67.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>66.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>65.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>45.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
by comparing the percentage of correct responses on each of the 20 items in the questionnaire. The overall results showed that most of the respondents (80%) answered the questions correctly. The questions pertained to the following items: legal decisions made by the principal against a teacher, the principal’s and teacher’s duty toward the safety of students, specific instructions in a chemistry class, student expulsion, teachers’ failure to write their teaching record book, teachers’ attendance during students’ sports training, teachers’ duty to enter the classroom, termination of the services of a teacher, and corporal punishment.

The principle of natural justice requires a school principal to provide a teacher the opportunity to be heard before a decision is made against him or her. The results of the study showed that urban school administrators had an appropriate level of knowledge of the principle of natural justice as all (100%) were able to respond to the item correctly.

The doctrine of “in loco parentis” expresses that teachers and principals have a legal duty to protect students from foreseeable harm. Both must take reasonable steps to ensure that students are free from any risk of injury. The results of the study indicated that a large majority of the respondents (99.1%) answered this item correctly when they did not agree that the principal is the only person with a legal duty toward the safety of students.

The risk of injury to students during a chemistry lesson is high. Thus, a chemistry teacher is required to take extra precautions in order to prevent foreseeable harm to students. He or she has to provide specific instruction in class in order to minimize the risk of injury. Most of the respondents (97.2%) were able to answer this item correctly.

Schools must obtain the consent of parents before taking students for outdoor cocurricular activities. It is compulsory for parents to sign a consent letter that allows their children to participate in these outdoor activities. The letter is important as it informs parents of the planned program and allows schools to be sure that parents are aware of the activity. The consent letter usually contains a general waiver or exemption clause. Such clauses state that parents agree not to take an action against the school for any injuries to their children during the trip. Nevertheless, the clause is not valid and is not legally binding. Parents do not surrender their right to sue the school for any negligent action that lead to physical injuries to their children. The results of the study showed that only a small percentage of the respondents (26.6%) were able to provide a correct answer to the item concerning the rights of parents to sue a school for injuries to their children after having signed the consent letter that allowed their children to participate in a camping trip. Thus, only a small percentage of the respondents know that parents retain their right to sue the school even after having signed the letter of consent.
In situations where teachers are not able to foresee the risk of injury to the pupils, a general warning is deemed to be sufficient. The findings showed that only 45.9% of the respondents were able to provide a correct response to this item.

Students are prohibited from wearing religious attire known as the *serban* to school. School principals do not violate the students’ constitutional right to freedom of religion when students are suspended or even expelled from school. The respondents were asked if students can wear a turban to school when such practice is encouraged by his or her religion. Only 57.8% of the school administrators answered this item correctly.

**Relationship Between the Legal Literacy of School Administrators and the Selected Variables**

The knowledge score of each individual item was correlated with the selected variables. Correlations between the legal literacy of the respondents and the selected variables revealed some significant results. Table 2 shows the relationship between the legal literacy of the urban school administrators and the four selected variables: number of years of teaching experience, current administrative position, attendance at a course on school law, and, the respondent’s expressed desire to attend a course on school law. The results were analyzed using SPSS statistical package. The scales of the variables are nominal in nature. As a result, Cramer’s $V$ correlation coefficient test was used to further analyze the relationship between legal literacy and the four selected variables. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2.

The analysis showed that there is a significant relationship between the number of years of teaching experience and the item that a principal can terminate the services of a teacher for insubordination ($2, N = 109, \chi^2 = 16.99, p < .01$). Cramer’s $V$ correlation coefficient of .39 shows a weak strength in the relationship between the two variables. Many of the respondents (89.9%) answered this item correctly. The majority of the respondents (85.7%) have been teaching for more than 15 years.

The findings also showed a significant relationship between the type of administrative position held by the urban school administrators and the item that teachers have a legal duty toward the safety of students ($4, N = 109, \chi^2 = 19.33, p < .01$). Cramer’s $V$ correlation coefficient of .42 shows a weak strength in the relationship between the two variables. Almost half of the respondents are deputy principals (55.4%). However, the majority of the deputy principals (96.6%) answered the item correctly.
In addition, the statistical analysis revealed a significant relationship between the type of administrative position held by urban school administrators and the item that teachers have to pay damages to students when they are found negligent by the court \((4, N = 109, \chi^2 = 16.43, p < .01)\). Cramer’s \(V\) correlation coefficient of .39 shows a weak strength in the relationship between the two variables.

About one third of the respondents (35.8%) had attended a course on school law. However, only a small number of these respondents (18.2%) were able to answer the item “teachers need to employ their own lawyer when sued by parents” correctly. The results also revealed that there is a significant relationship between the respondents who have attended a course on school law and the item that teachers need to employ their own lawyer.
when sued by parents \((1, N = 109, \chi^2 = 6.38, p < .01)\). Cramer’s \(V\) correlation coefficient of .24 shows a very weak strength in the relationship between the two variables.

Beside that, the data in Table 2 also indicated that there is a significant relationship between the respondents who have expressed a desire to attend a course on school law and the item that parents can sue teachers for injury to their children when teachers do not enter the class. Cramer’s \(V\) correlation coefficient of .38 shows a very weak strength in the relationship between the two variables \((1, N = 109, \chi^2 = 15.77, p < .01)\).

**Implications of the Study**

The findings of the study showed that urban secondary school administrators opined that the law has increased its influence in the area of education. As such, school administrators need to acquire the appropriate legal knowledge for leading and managing schools successfully. School administrators need to have the relevant legal knowledge in order to be able to make the right decisions, minimize the threat of litigation in school, and face the challenges of a litigious society.

School administrators must also be able to accord the due process of the law to students and teachers, respect the constitutional rights and freedom of students and teachers, and act in a fair and reasonable manner.

Courses on school law can be introduced to urban school administrators in order to equip them with an appropriate understanding of the law. These courses can be conducted by officers from the Legal Division of the Ministry of Education or by the universities’ own education or law faculties. The courses can focus on basic topics related to the tort of negligence, constitutional law, and appropriate strategies in order to establish a safe school environment. Knowledge of school law enables administrators to make a fair and reasonable decision as they become aware of the principle of the reasonable person standard as well as the duty of care needed to maintain school safety. Opportunities to work with legal professionals from the ministry help promote a positive working relationship as both parties would be able to cooperate together in the best interest of the student.

It is vital for school administrators to foster collaboration with other stakeholders such as the ministry of education, the community, and the law enforcement agency in order to develop proactive policies and practices that are legally right and safe. This includes a policy on school uniform and dress code that can promote student discipline and a safe school culture. In some circumstances, consultation with law enforcement officers is needed to address other safety issues related to violence and gang activities.
Urban school administrators must also develop proactive policies that set out the rights and responsibilities of students, teachers, and parents while in school or during extracurricular activities, such as field trips that are organized by the school. Schools must be aware of the risks associated with a blanket parental consent form that also reveals the personal and confidential information of parents. The importance of confidentiality of information must be communicated to parents, students, and teachers by providing opportunities for discussion.

School administrators need to encourage teachers to acquire the appropriate legal knowledge to abide with the ministry’s policies, and public law and develop a safe school climate. A safe and positive school environment is the result of a well-established set of rules and regulations related to student discipline. It gives school administrators the authority to develop, implement, and enforce rules, regulations, and policies in a systematic manner. This minimizes the use of punitive policies because of overreaction toward issues such as disciplinary problems. In some cases, urban school administrators often deal with student suspension and expulsion. In this regard, a specific discipline policy that provides students fair warning of the prohibited conduct, an opportunity to appeal before an independent tribunal, and the right to cross-examine witnesses are vital to minimize allegation of violation of the due process of the law. Urban administrators need to know that compliance with the formal due process is important when violation of the school law results in suspension or expulsion. A specific policy provides clear guidance rather than violates the substantive due process.

Urban school administrators can dismiss a teacher where there is insubordination, neglect of duty, or incompetence. Cases on teacher suspension or dismissal concern litigation that tends to focus on the due processes and procedures. As such, in these cases, administrators must give careful considerations to the procedural due process requirements as it is fundamental to the principle of fairness and natural justice. An understanding of the fundamental legal rights and employment responsibilities of teachers among urban school administrators is paramount for successful school leadership. On the other hand, urban school administrators sometimes find difficulty in finding a balance between the legal rights of teachers and the need to foster a harmonious working relationship in school.

Urban school administrators need to:

1. Understand fundamental legal principles that are related to schools and the application of the principles for effective leadership.
2. Remain current with laws that affect education.
3. Establish a clear school policy on student safety.
4. Develop policies and practices that relate to religious expression.
5. Develop a clear guide on school cocurricular activities.
6. Maintain close collaboration with parents, education authority, and the law enforcement agency regarding student safety.
7. Encourage teachers to have a clear understanding of the law related to student discipline.
8. Understand the law regarding the use of corporal punishment.

The findings of this study indicate that there is a lack of the component on school law in both teachers’ and school administrators’ professional training programs. Universities and colleges of education need to include components of school law in their teacher education and principal-training curriculum as well as in the in-service programs. However, in the absence of a school law course, the Ministry of Education can incorporate topics on school law into their training programs. Models that integrate school law component into the administrators’ in-service programs are important (Davis & Williams, 1992). Education policy makers in teacher preparation programs at public universities and state education departments as well as the Ministry of Education have to consider the need to implement courses on school law for present school administrators.

Further research can determine what should be taught in the school law program for in-service administrators. The research findings can identify the key legal issues that administrators wish to be included in the administrator’s preparation programs.

The findings about administrators’ legal knowledge have practical implications for public school administrators and teachers. Legally and educationally appropriate action can be taken only if administrators have an adequate level of knowledge on school law. Administrators are able to protect themselves from liability when students are injured because of the negligence of the school. Awareness of sound and established legal principles allows administrators to act within the law and avoid violation of student’s constitutional rights. Administrators will be able to equip themselves with the appropriate legal knowledge to protect themselves and their students in an increasingly complex and litigious school environment.

Conclusion
School administrators are more open to lawsuits because of the nature of their professional responsibilities and positions. They are required to manage
and maintain a safe learning environment and adhere to the due process of
the law in managing students. An appropriate level of knowledge of the
laws governing schools and the way the courts are interpreting the differ-
ent principles of law can help administrators avoid a lawsuit. The aggrava-
tion, stress, and time attending court to answer for one’s action create
severe emotional strain. The costs, negative publicity, and stigma that
often accompany suits mandate that administrators become aware of their
rights and responsibilities. A course on school law should be made manda-
tory for all future school administrators to enable them to be able to face
these challenges. It is vital to incorporate school law into the curriculum
for school administrator preparation programs and in-service professional
development programs.

The most important theme in this study is the need to incorporate school
law into the administrator preparation program. In addition to this, there are
currently administrators who need to undergo training in the basic principles
of school law. Most administrators did not obtain any training in school law
during their teacher preparation program about 20 years ago. They cannot
rely on information from misinformed sources. Recommendations from the
findings of research in the United States, Australia, Canada, and the United
Kingdom on the need for school administrators to possess an appropriate
level of legal literacy are significant and need to be given utmost consider-
ation (Davis & Williams, 1992; Gullat & Tollett, 1995; Harris, 2001;
Schachter, 2007). These courses would help administrators to make educa-
tionally sound and legally correct decisions.

Furthermore, school law operates in a dynamic state of change with new
cases and new legislations that affect the public perception of administrators.
Administrators need to update their legal knowledge, and the relevant educa-
tional authorities can contribute more effectively when they can collaborate
with the legal unit of the Ministry of Education.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared that they have no conflicts of interests with respect to the author-
ship or the publication of this article.

Funding

The author disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research,
authorship, and/or publication of this article:

This research was supported by the University of Malaya Research Grant
RG024/09SBS.
References


**Bio**

Fatt Hee Tie is an associate professor at the University Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. His research interests include educational leadership and education law and policy.