

The Relationship of Primary School Principals' Leadership Practice on Teachers' Commitment

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Abstract

Objective: This study aims to discover the effect of principals' leadership practices on teachers' commitment in national primary schools in the Tabah Merah district in Kelantan. **Methods/Findings:** This study involved 136 teachers. Selection of samples was done through stratified random sampling whereby 44 male teachers and 92 female teachers participated in this study. The instrument used was Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) which consisted of 44 items related to the functions of the principals. All the items used 5 point Likert scale and have the Alpha Cronbach reliability value of 0.903 to 0.940. The instrument to gauge teachers' working attitude and commitment which was created by Collarelli and Bishop (1990) was adopted from without any amendments. It consisted of 17 items using the 5 point Likert scale and has the Alpha Cronbach reliability value of 0.91. The data was analysed using the SPSS version 21.0 which show the overall result of the variables including the mean and standard deviation. The result findings show that there is a significant relationship between the class observation dimension and giving feedback to the teachers ($r=.78, p<.01$) by instilling positive instructional climate. This study also shows that the dimension inculcating positive teaching climate has a significant relationship with existing school climate dimension ($r=.76, p<.01$). Besides, this study also found that instilling positive instructional climate has a significant relationship with evaluating teachers' teaching program ($r=.72, p<.01$). **Application:** The study result summarized that the elements in the principals' leadership practices have successfully influenced primary teachers' commitment and competency and have proved to increase the effectiveness of the organization. Specifically, from the study findings, the researchers suggest that primary school principals focus mainly on their own aspects of leadership practices during their working time. This is because the principals' leadership practices have proven to contribute positively towards teachers' commitment and teaching quality.

Keywords: Principals' Instructional Leadership, Teachers' Commitment

1. Introduction

The development of a nation is related closely to the education system provided by the government. The education field is said to produce a voluminous human resource in various fields needed and identified as contributing to the development of a nation^{1,2}.

In Malaysia, in line with the country's aspirations towards a developed nation by 2020, a lot of changes such as new innovations and approaches were infused into the education system. To attain the goal of a developed nation depends on the ministry's workforce to provide

quality service which focuses on holistic human development and the increase in students' innovation and creative ability³. Therefore, direct involvement of teachers is anticipated. Quality students come from quality teaching and learning, and quality instructions come from quality management or administration. In⁴ the goal to realize Malaysia as Asian center of excellence in education and at the international level in the 21st century needs the nation to reinforce its image and quality of education. This assiduous determination will ensure Malaysia to attain the World Class Education status^{5,6}. Efforts to attain excellence in education should start from pre-school level fol-

lowed by primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. School is an organization that is not based on trades or profits but its existence is not uncompetitive⁷. School is the agency for learning and it is also a social institution which plays an important role in changing the climate of a society towards becoming a developed nation. Without a sound education, a nation will not be properly developed and without solid commitment from the teachers, the education system will be ineffective. Since the role of education is significant therefore the government has positioned the education field as one of the NKRA cores in the KPI evaluation as proclaimed by the Prime Minister on 27 July 2009^{8,9}.

In¹⁰ confirmed that principals' instructional leadership is made up of three main dimensions namely defining school's aims manage curriculum and instructions, and instilling teaching and learning climate. School aims are written document which combines values, challenges and opportunities in the development of students' academic, social and emotions. When the aims are stipulated, they are then disseminated to both the academic and administration staff so that together these aims can be understood and advocated. The leadership is an effort to instill one's influence or inspiration through a communication process towards achieving a certain goal on the other hand, defined leadership as a process of influencing an individual or a group towards achieving certain goals. For¹¹ leadership is an influencing process between leaders and followers.

Teachers' commitment refers to teachers' identification, involvement, attitude, belief and loyalty towards school¹². In the context of this study, teachers' commitment is seen in the aspect of teachers' loyalty, readiness to cooperate and completing their duties excellently. Teachers' attitude or commitment refers to the extent a teacher psychologically identifies oneself with his or her career¹³.

1.1 Instructional Leadership Model

According to^{14,15} who employed the model created by¹⁶, there are three main dimensions postulated in the instructional leadership that are; the first dimension is to define school's aims, the second is to manage curriculum and instruction and the third is instilling positive school learning climate.

For the first dimension, two behaviors are listed that are setting the school's aims and illuminating them. School aims that are found in the school vision and mission are vital components that make up instructional leaders in a school. According to¹² studies have proven that defining school aims has positive effect on principal's instructional leadership. The second dimension which is managing curriculum and instruction comprises of setting and planning curriculum and instructional objectives, followed by supervising, observing and evaluating the curriculum. Meanwhile the third dimension consists of elements such as protecting and maintaining teaching duration and time, planning training and development for staff to enhance their professionalism, assisting and supporting teachers, maintaining teachers' teaching quality and ensuring positive school climate¹⁷.

2. Problem Statement

To fulfill the vision of becoming a well developed nation in 2020 and producing skilled and highly knowledgeable human resource, great change is needed in the education sector because it is this sector that prepares human resource of the future. This sector is prioritized compared to other sectors because the nation's goal is to make Malaysia the centre of education excellence in Asian and at the international level in the 21st; and also attaining the World Class Education status¹⁸. According to¹⁹ World Class Education status refers to the ability and excellent achievement of the education sector in pioneering dynamic innovation and development. It is an aspiration, commitment and effort which aims towards improving the nation's quality of education to a higher standard and able to compete with other developed countries. Besides instructional leadership, teachers are also the important factor that determines school success. However, study findings reported that teachers often lose confidence or efficacy and focus on teaching and learning duty which resulted in low teaching competency²¹. These problems also have caused stress and burnout among teachers.

It is still unclear how instructional leadership can contribute towards the development of organizational characteristics especially teachers' teaching culture, specifically in the national education environment. In the

Malaysian context, studies to examine the relationship between instructional leadership and school organization are scarce especially the factors that contribute to school effectiveness²⁰.

In addition, the Ministry of Education has yet to plan a clear concept of professionalism whereby programs to improve the quality of the teaching profession are made effective and comprehensive the yearly performance report related to teachers' responsibility has not yet able to describe teachers' professional level. Therefore, one way to increase teacher's professional level is to enhance instructional leadership among teachers.

3. Study Objective

Generally, the objective of the study is to examine the effect of principals' instructional leadership on teachers' commitment in primary schools.

4. Methodology

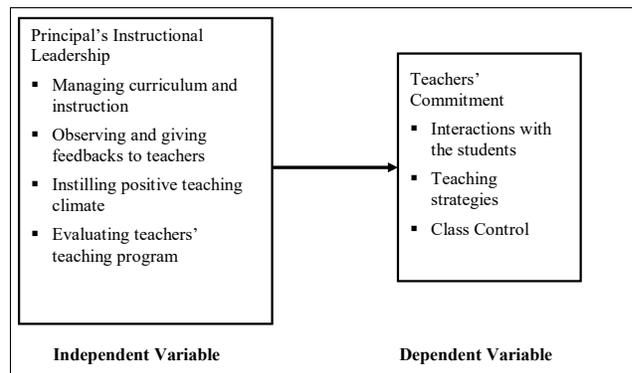
4.1 Sampling

4 schools were selected as study sample. The total population of primary school teachers involved in this study was 219 teachers in the Tanah Merah district (Tanah Merah District of Education Office, 2014). Structured random sampling was conducted so as to gather representatives from different groups and also guarantee that each representative in the strata is homogenous in which can decrease variability in the strata (Gay, 1996; Mohd Majid Konting, 1998). Morgan (1970) has formed a table to determine sample size as a guide for researchers. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), sample size for a population of 210 to 220 is between 136 and 140 people. Based on the calculation done, the sample size suitable for this study is 136 teachers.

4.2 Study Design

This study was conducted to examine the effect of principal's instructional leadership which is the independent variable, on teachers' commitment and attitude towards work, which is the dependent variable, in primary schools.

4.3 Research Conceptual Framework of Principal's Leadership Practice



4.4 Instrumentation

Since this study seek to examine the effect of principal's instructional leadership practice, the model by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) which was adapted who had used the original model created by Philip Hallinger from Centre of Peabody College of Teachers, Vanderbit Uiversity, Nashville, Tennessee U.S.A. called Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIRMS). All the instruments used were translated to the Malay language by Andi Audryanah (2007). This study instrument comprises of 6 sections A, B, C, D, E and F; which consists of 61 items.

Section A – Principal's Instructional Leadership Practice/ managing curriculum and instruction.

Section B - Principal's Instructional Leadership Practice / observing and giving feedback.

Section C - Principal's Instructional Leadership Practice / instilling positive teaching climate.

Section D - Principal's Instructional Leadership Practice / evaluating teachers' teaching program.

Section E - Principal's Instructional Leadership Practice / instilled school climate.

Section F – Teachers' commitment and attitude.

All the items use the Likert scale of 1 to 5 and have the Alpha Cronbach reliability value of 0.903 to 0.940.

4.5 Study Procedure

Before starting the data collection process, the researcher has gained approval from Awang Had Salleh Post Graduate School of Universiti Utara Malaysia and also the Ministry of Education through EPRD followed by approval from the State Education Department. The questionnaire and consent letter were distributed personally to the school teachers involved. They were briefed on how to complete the questionnaire.

4.6 Analysis

The data was analysed using the SPSS version 21.0 which presented the overall result of the variables including the mean and standard deviation. The first step was to conduct alpha cronbach validity test followed by descriptive and inferential analysis to determine the values for mean, average and standard deviation for all the variables. To measure the level of principal's instructional leadership and teachers' attitude, a guideline or cut-off value for mean is set.

5. Study Findings

The elaboration of data analysis result was done based on the study objective. The first section described the respondents' profile; the second section discussed the validity and reliability analysis for each instrument. Respondents' background comprised of gender, teaching experience, and academic qualification, ethnic group, teaching classes the duration of time working under the present principal, school location and school grade. The respondents'

Table 1. Number of teachers based on gender and school location

Gender	Urban	Rural	Total	Percentage
Male	37	7	44	32.4%
Female	59	33	92	67.6%
Total	96	40	136	100%

Table 2. Number of teachers based on gender and academic qualification

Academic Qualification	Diploma	Bachelor	Master	Total	Percentage
Male	11	33	1	45	33.0
Female	44	43	4	91	67.0
Total	55	76	5	136	100
Percentage	40.4%	55.9%	3.7%	100%	

demographic distribution is as in Tables 1 and 2 based on the statistic descriptive analysis.

Data analysis showed that majority of the respondents was female that is 67.6% while male was only 32.4%. Their teaching experience for teachers with 1 to 5 years is 42.7%, for 6 to 10 years is 45.5% and for those with more than 10 years is 11.8%. The distribution in terms of academic qualification showed that majority of the respondents in this study obtained a Bachelor's degree that is 76 teachers (55.9%). Teachers with diploma qualification were second in terms of number which is 55 teachers (40.4%) followed by only 5 with Masters' degree. In terms of ethnic group, all the respondents were Malay (100%). In the aspect of school location, 29.4% (40 teachers) were attached to urban schools while 70.6% (96 teachers) in rural areas.

The validity for each construct displayed a high level and suitable as the value exceeds 0.70 for each construct tested. The constructs for managing curriculum and instruction which are in sections D1 to D3 consisted of 44 items showed alpha cronbach validity of .895. The constructs for observing and giving feedbacks showed validity value of .888, followed by the constructs for instilling positive teaching climate which is .872. Meanwhile, the constructs for teachers' attitude has the validity value of .826 followed by the constructs for instilled school climate with validity value of .928.

Study findings showed that there is significant relationship between observing and giving feedbacks dimension and instilling positive teaching climate ($r=.78$, $p<.01$). This positive relationship shows that high level of observing and giving feedbacks to teachers will encourage high level of positive teaching climate, and vice versa.

This study also shows that the dimension for instilling positive teaching climate has significant relationship with the dimension for instilled school climate ($r=.76$, $p<.01$). This positive relationship means that high level of instilling positive teaching climate will enhance school climate, and vice versa.

Table 3. Number of teachers based on academic qualification and teaching experience

Experience	Diploma	Bachelor	Master	Total	Percentage
1 – 5 years	23	34	1	58	42.6
6 – 10 years	24	34	4	62	45.6
More than 10 years	8	8	0	16	11.8
Total	55	76	5	136	100
Percentage	40.4%	55.9%	3.7%	100%	

Table 4. Pearson correlation values between variables

	Managing Curriculum and instruction	Observing and giving feedbacks	Instilling climate	Evaluating program	Instilled school climate	Teachers' attitude
Managing Curriculum	-	.57**	.45**	.48**	.34**	.19**
Observing and giving feedbacks		-	.78**	.68**	.61**	.40**
Instilling climate			-	.72**	.76**	.37**
Evaluating program				-	.62**	.39**
Instilled school climate					-	.43**
Teachers' attitude						-

* p< .05, ** p< .01 *** p< .001

In addition, this study also showed that instilling positive teaching climate has significant relationship with evaluating teachers' teaching program ($r=.72, p<.01$). This means that instilling positive teaching climate can increase evaluating teachers' teaching program activities. Data showing the relationship between principal's instructional leadership and teacher commitment and attitude is shown in Table 3 and 4.

6. Discussion

The discussion is focused on the effect of principal's instructional leadership practices on teachers' commitment in primary schools in the Tanah Merah district in Kelantan which addresses the research questions to ensure that the study objective is achieved and at the same time ideas to enhance principal's leadership and teachers' commitment will also be suggested. The findings confirmed the instructional leadership theory by²¹ who proposed that the principal's instructional leadership comprised of three main dimensions that are defining school aims, managing curriculum and instruction; and instilling teaching and learning climate. Therefore, it can be summarized that the proposed theory is in concord and equivalent to the principals' performance in Tanah Merah District primary schools.

This study supports²² study findings which found that positive school climate helps teachers in their teaching duties and students towards a better learning process. In addition, the findings of this study also support the findings by Bossert et. al (1982) mentioned in the study by¹⁰ that leaders' behavior directly affects the school climate and, teaching and learning organization.

The finding of this study explained that instilling positive learning climate has significant relationship with the commitment of the organization in the primary schools involved in this study. Therefore, school climate can be said the element that has direct relationship with teachers' working commitment. This will enable the school organization to operate smoothly towards its stipulated aims.

This study has also shown that principal's instructional leadership has positive relationship and contributes significantly towards teachers' commitment and teaching. This finding supports the finding which found that there is positive relationship between principal's instructional leadership and teachers' commitment. In¹⁰ found that teachers have a high level of commitment, feel comfortable to continue teaching when they are given the opportunity to make decisions in curriculum and instruction.

Teachers will commit themselves to the school if they know that their principals are ready to help them solve issues involving teaching and learning. However, if they

feel sidelined, this will dampen their commitment and readiness to stay loyal in the organization.

Further, this study finding also supports²³ who claimed that principal's teaching observation and evaluation activity can ensure teachers' teaching to be more effective and at the same time increase teachers' commitment to work. Teaching observation and evaluation is one of the elements in the managing curriculum and instruction dimension.

Finally, the findings this study have succeeded to summarise that the elements in the principal's leadership practices affect teachers commitment and teaching competency in schools and is seen as able to enhance the effectiveness of the school organization.

Specifically, from the findings the researcher suggests that principals in primary schools give great emphasis on their leadership practices. This is because principal's leadership practices have been proved to contribute positively towards teachers' commitment and quality in teaching.

7. Limitation of the Study

This study focused only on principal's leadership practices and teachers' commitment which used only questionnaire as the instrument to collect data, thus the findings depended only on the respondents' sincerity and honesty in giving their responses towards the statements in the questionnaire. This study which was conducted only in primary schools in the Tanah Merah district in Kelantan was based on several theories and models related to the variables involved selected by the researcher. Therefore, the study findings obtained might not be similar or in concord with previous researches which have used the same theories or models.

8. Suggestions for Future Researchers

Based on the study findings, several suggestions are proposed. This study was conducted using exogenous independent variables whereby these variables were used as the basic framework to enhance the instruments.

In this context, there are only four factors namely managing curriculum and teaching, observing and giving feedbacks to the teachers, instilling positive learning climate and evaluating the learning program. Therefore,

in the future it is suggested that researchers present independent variables such as defining and disseminating school aims, and staff development.

As mentioned previously, this study was conducted with primary schools in a district in Kelantan. Thus, to get a more detailed and comprehensive view, interested researchers could select schools with different levels of academic achievements as samples. Through the same theoretical framework, further studies can be conducted in other primary schools, boarding schools, MRSM, government funded religious-type schools or even private schools in Malaysia.

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