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The Impact of Effective Educational Leadership on School Students' Performance in Malaysia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to find out the impact of effective educational leadership on school students' performance in Malaysia. Based on the current study, most of the researchers have used both qualitative and quantitative methods to conduct their research on several topics that related to effective educational leadership and student's performance. Therefore, in this research, the data were collected using both, qualitative and quantitative methods which was the interview and survey questionnaire. The selected participants for this research, using convenient sampling, were six teachers working for two international schools in Selangor, Malaysia. One teacher who had already involved in school administrative level was selected for the interview. The other five teachers were requested to answer the survey questionnaire. The interview and questionnaire were selected because, the researchers wanted to further understand on the participants' experience and knowledge on educational leadership and teaching perspective. In addition, it is aimed to provide insights in assisting to develop ideas, solution and hypotheses for future research. These methods were also used to further analyse the issues dealt with one of the effective educational leadership models (i.e. distributed leadership) and students' performance. The findings indicated that leaders need to build high degree of reciprocal trust to negotiate successfully the fault lines of formal and informal leadership. It is also highlighted that effective leadership (distributed leadership) and quality teachers are two main contributing factors on students' performance. Lastly, based on the analysis and results, related suggestions were given.

Keywords: Educational Leadership, Secondary School Management, Secondary School Teachers, Secondary School Students' Performance

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

It is interesting to look at leadership from the various perspectives. One can look at it from the relationship process, a leader's personality/ traits perspective, or a combination of all. Educational leadership is related with working besides practice by teachers, students, parents and its society. It leads towards improving and implemented the processes in any educational institution. According to Leithwood et al (1999, p. 8) educational leadership can be

linked to students' performance and development. They believe that educational leadership "typically assumes that the critical focus for attention by leaders is the behaviour of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students" (Leithwood et al 1999, p. 8). Thus, education and Educational leadership play an important role to a bright future for the young generation and the society that contribute towards the development of the country. Therefore, school teachers with an effective educational leadership and efficient management strategies are very important to ensure the effectiveness of learning is taking place in terms of students' performance and achievement.

Leadership is mainly on moral, democratic dimension. Kotter (2001:93) has understood moral line of opinion such as motivation and inspiration to satisfying the need. Leaders are the prime essence to the success of any organization, more so those within education. Traditionally it had been accepted that leaders act as the ultimatum to any changes, decisions, or progress that can be made. Principals and heads of schools have had difficulties in undertaking such huge tasks, burdening both physical and mental capacities in order to push the ultimate goal of educational organizations and at the same time to produce the holistic students. Comprehensive education is one of the main approach of most modern educational institutions. Most of nowadays schools are focusing for the improvement of students' learning and ensure them to develop the students on the aspects of an individual's intellect and equip with all balancing of capability of emotion, social, physical, and spiritual.

There are a few models of educational leadership that have been implemented in education including: (a) Autocratic or Hierarchal leadership, (b) Democratic or transformation leadership, and also (c) delegated or facilitative leadership. However, this research will focus more on democratized leadership model. This model emphasizes more on shared or distributed leadership. Based on the research done by Alma Harris (2004), the number of evidence that demonstrates increase in school improvement is affected heavily by capacity building as the main measure to maintain improvement and the core of the capacity-building model is 'distributed leadership along with social cohesion and trust'. Leading with shared leadership or known as distributed leadership and leading with purpose play an important role in underlying factor of students' achievement and school improvement. Distributed leadership, as defined by Spillane (2005), is a result of an interaction between leaders, followers and situation.

In this study, the impacts of an effective educational leadership (distributed leadership) on student's performance is the main focus. Therefore, the implementation of educational leadership among school leaders in one of the private schools in Selangor, Malaysia is contributed to this study. The main objective of this report is to investigate the impacts of an effective educational leadership among the leaders towards the students' performance and to explore the factors that contribute to the student's improvement and achievement. This paper, will focus on the aims, objectives and research questions of the report. Other than that, this paper will elaborate on the literature review to investigate and further analyze the understanding on the previous studies conducted for the topic of educational leadership. To see the differences at all in the findings from research related, the literature chosen are mixture of both research paper, international and also local.

1.2 Purpose

The aim of this study is to gather the information of the school leadership and its school working culture that influence students' performance or achievement. The project thus aims to see the impact of educational leadership on student's improvement and performance. The attention on definition of educational leadership, types of educational leadership and the impact of educational leadership towards the students' performance, achievement and to the organization are the main consideration when preparing this research project. Moreover, the literature reviews that have been done for this research paper, are more focusing on the distributed leadership. This type of leadership which is specific model that recommended and can be implemented in the school organization. In future, further ambition of this study is to obtain and gather all the information needed for the management of the school on how important of the educational leadership among the teachers and leaders for their own improvement and impact of the students' performance. This research is completed with the expert experience in the school management and administration. All the obtained information, able to prove the current studies related to this topic of educational leadership among the school leaders or teachers and most of the finding also shown the relationship of this educational leadership on Malaysian students' performance and its impact on the school.

1.3 Research questions

Therefore, the research questions of this research are:

- I. What are the impacts of effective educational leadership on the teachers, leaders, and school students' performance in Malaysia?
- II. What are the main factors that contribute to the school students' performance in Malaysia?

2. Literature Review

An effective and stronger educational leadership and management of the schools is necessary for the strategies that advocate more curriculum and to create direction to achieve mission and vision of the school organization. Leadership practices to have an impact on teacher performance and subsequently better student's achievement for school improvement. An educational leadership and development of school teacher can be achieved by continuous professional development program. The transformation of educational system through Malaysian Blueprint play an important role of students and school improvement.

The shared experiences that implemented with all the individual effort and contribution towards the effective leadership, indicate that schools able to have good effectiveness leadership. Therefore, the school result shows growth and continual improvements. There are clear indications of leadership styles having an effect towards effective school management hence give an impact to the student's performance, and improvement. In addition, one of the study found that distributed leadership is more ideal as compared to creative leadership because the distributed leadership is more involved and structured that can guarantee success compare to creative leadership that is more high risk, high reward approach where sometimes it doesn't bear with the school organization.

The other effects of distributed leadership would be the development of professional learning community (PLC). This development able to assist the teachers to improve their content knowledge therefore, influence in creating a positive and effective learning environment that will encourage students for better performance. When teachers are well equipped with the knowledge needed, so then the students able to build confident to the teachers and effective learning will take place in the classroom. Students will automatically have high form of respect for their teacher towards the knowledge and education that have been shared by the teachers. The consistent teachers that aware on the important of continuous development their skills and knowledge in teaching will ensure the understanding of students psychological also play an important role to attract student attention during the classroom. In addition, effective leaning that ensure students improvement only can be achieved with both interaction and effective communication. Good communication among the teachers in the school is important to ensure productivity. Furthermore, this positive working environment able to create a close relationship between the two halves of the organization thus, creating good rapport, builds trusts, and instilling loyalty among teacher's leaders and staff of the schools.

Implementation of effective educational leadership and teacher development is an important aspect both for school and students' improvement. There are variety of attempts to improve the quality of education to meet the standards for school improvement. This paper will focus on the educational leadership in Malaysia and challenges that have been highlighted in the area of politics, need for development and survival and also symbiotic need to look at school leadership and school improvement as a whole. Research has shown that, teachers and the school leadership must be involved actively in an effective educational leadership in the school system in order to improve schools.

The shift by national economies into the 21st century knowledge based frame require demanding students to look how instead of singularly what, measurable knowledge is learnt. Moreover, an improvement in educational quality will mean an improvement in student's outcomes. From the research Alma Haris (2004), the researcher explains on institution needed for school improvement which involve teachers, government and educational leaders. Therefore, to ensure the improvement of education system all need to play their role in effective educational school leadership. This paper also emphasizes on educational leadership and theories/ or model of leadership such as transformational leadership, distributed leadership and instructional leadership which may lead to effective educational leadership that needed for school improvement.

All in all, the economic, sociological, epistemological transformation in Malaysia and also a demand for the current industries, has contributed to the changes of social institution of schooling. Hence, the national government and communities of education have worked progressively in order to ensure how these 21st century young generation can be successfully educated in the social context. The well preparedness towards the challenges of global and 21st century can be achieved by the improvement of the educational leadership and teacher development in educational system in Malaysia. Therefore, educational leadership is the main contributing factor towards the achievement, performance and improvement of the students from the quality teacher and effective learning.

As mentioned earlier, educational leadership and teacher development in Malaysia have been highlighted on how to develop effective and quality teachers. The quality teachers also can be improved through the continuous professional development (CPD) by developing an individualized CPD program with supervisors. This CPD program has an impact on creating the quality teaching; they can pursue based on their capabilities and development needs. Many researchers have proved that the term ‘quality of teaching’ from quality teachers is the main factor that related to students’ performance. Muijs and Harris’s (2007, p. 961) study in three UK schools indicated that “teacher leadership was seen to empower teachers, and contributed to school improvement through this empowerment and the spreading of good practice and initiatives generated by teachers”. Few programs have also been established by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to enhance the quality of leadership and teachers. MOE collaboration ensures that the quality of the curriculum and teachers are able to upgrade and deliver the kind of quality teacher.

In other research, Justin (2016) stated that distributed leadership model seems consistent and effective for schools. As it has been suggested leadership is a kind of practice among leaders and followers (Spillane, 2006). According to Spillane (2006), there are seven dimensions involved with student’s performance and this type of leadership is the involvement of interrelated dimensions which is derived of leaders, followers, and environment (see Fig.1).

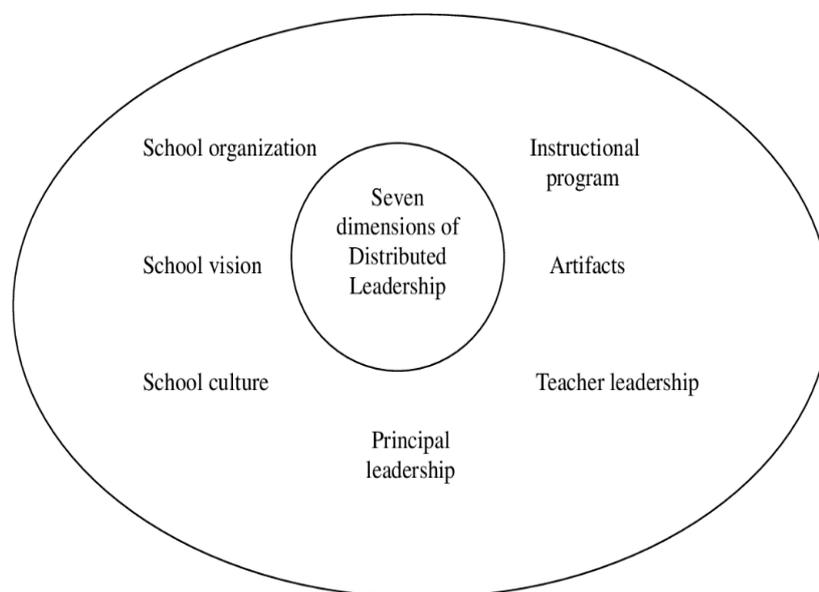


Figure 1: Seven Element of Distributed Leadership, (James P. Spillane, 2006)

However, this research argues on this statement because according to Justin (2016), distributed leadership is still in its infancy changes for widespread acceptability. He suggested more research needed to understand its implementation within the schools in Malaysia. He highlighted on Instructional leadership which makes the leader of schools, in general, successful instructional leaders.

3. Methodology

The objective for this research was to see the impact of educational leadership on Malaysian students' performance and improvement in schools. Other than that, this research explored the main factors that contribute towards the outcomes of students' performance. Methodology for this study is the mixed method: qualitative and quantitative research methods. The method used by the researchers was an individual interview & distribution of questionnaire. The researchers used both methods to gain and obtain an understanding of effective educational leadership among teachers and leaders on Malaysian students' performance and achievement. The sample size for this research is small which involved one of the teachers that involved in management level in Private school, in Subang Jaya, Malaysia. She is a female teacher with 28 years old and has worked for about five years in that school. The respondent was selected based on her background and experience in the school which was directly involved with management and leadership of the organization. The informed consent obtained from the participant to withdraw from the study at any time and also have assured that, that her name or any identifier connecting her to the study would not be used for the publication of the study. 5 unstructured questions were asked during the interview which lasted about 12 minutes. The questions mainly consisted of the opinions and points of view regarding educational leadership.

For quantitative research method, the questionnaire was distributed to 5 respondents (Secondary School teachers). The two schools selected in Klang Valley, Malaysia based on non-probability sampling and purposive sampling whereby the main focus was on secondary school teachers which were at the management or administrative level.

The questionnaire is comprised of 2 parts. Part one consisted of demographic data of gender and the age of correspondent. The second part listed 5 statements on the impact of an effective educational leadership on the Malaysian students' performance. The participants used the answer with Yes and No for 3 questions meanwhile other 2 questions needed to circle the best answer. The needed action was being considered in order to ensure that all the interviewee's rights was protected throughout the study and the interview session. In fact, confidentiality with respect to both participants and all data were being maintained.

Question related to the impact of educational equality and excellence was based on a study by Alma Haris (2004) and by reference to this research, the draft question was developed as follows:

Demographic data, the impacts of an effective educational leadership among the management and administrative staffs towards the students' performance, and the factors that contribute to the students' performance and improvement.

3.1 Data Collection

Another survey was carry out to find out the impact of an effective educational leadership on Malaysian Students performance. The sample for this study involved 5 participants, including both males ($n = 2$; Malaysian males) and females ($n = 3$ Malaysian females of secondary school teachers from 2 different school. The participants ranged in age from 20 to 55 years, with the majority of the participants between 35 and 39 years of age ($n = 2$). Participants for this study were volunteers and most of them recruited via electronic mail. Materials included a demographic questionnaire and a questionnaire involving the effective educational leadership on Malaysian Students performance.

3.2 Data Analysis

In this sub-section, the data were analysed and converted into the following tables:

Table 1: Total Demographic Data for Gender, Age and years of experience

GENDER	
MALE	FEMALE
2	3

AGE	
20-24	0
25- 29	1
30- 34	1
35 - 39	2
40 & above	1

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	
1-5 years	0
6-10 years	3
11-15 ears	1
>11 years	1

Table 2: Statements on the impact of an effective educational leadership on School students' performance

Statements
<p>1) An effective educational leadership among the management and administrative staffs will give a big impact on the students' performance.</p> <p>a) Yes b) No</p>
<p>2) An effective educational leadership is one of the contributing factor for the students' performance.</p> <p>a) Yes b) No</p>
<p>3) Implementation of effective educational leadership and teacher development is an important aspect of school and students' improvement.</p> <p>a) Yes b) No</p>
<p>4) Which are the best model of educational leadership that can be implemented in education</p> <p>a) Autocratic or Hierarchal leadership, b) Democratic or transformation leadership c) Delegative or facilitative leadership</p>
<p>5) Which are the main contributing factor of students' achievement or performance</p> <p>a) Effective Leader b) Quality Teacher c) School Organization</p>

For Table 2, the first statement an effective educational leadership among the management and administrative staffs will give a big impact on the students' performance, from all respondents of secondary school teachers, 5 answered with Yes and agreed with this statement. Meanwhile for the second & third statements only 4 respondents answered with Yes, meanwhile 1 respondent did not agree with both statements on an effective educational leadership which is one of the contributing factors for the students' performance and Implementation of effective educational leadership and teacher development is an important aspect of school and students' improvement. For the fourth question on which is the best model of educational leadership to be implemented, 3 respondents answered with democratic & transformative leadership. Meanwhile, 2 respondents answered declaratively. For the fifth question on the main contributing factor of students' performance, 2 respondents answered with effective leader contributes to students' performance, meanwhile 2 respondents answered with quality teachers is the main contributing factor of students' achievement and 1 respondent answered with school organization is the main factor.

From this survey, in summary, all respondents agreed that an effective educational leadership among the management and administrative staffs will give a big impact on the students' performance. Meanwhile, 1 respondent felt that, an effective educational leadership not is one of the contributing factors for students' performance. At the same time, 2 respondents agreed that, other than an effective leadership, quality teachers are also one of the main contributing factors on students' performance.

4. Findings

In order to recognize and identify the impacts of an effective educational leadership on the students' performance, the authors have conducted the interview session with the candidate who had an experience in the administration level of the school. As mentioned earlier, her working experience, involve directly with the management of the school as an administrative staff. According to the interviewee's views, her educational leadership considered as how the leaders practice the best leadership style as tools that a leader require. She expressed that effective educational leadership can give an impact to the teachers and the motivated, passionate teacher and quality teacher can ensure the student's outcome will be better. She also believes, an effective leader plays a main role on the teacher's development and also student's improvement. She explained and elaborated on the topic when she was asked what is her understanding on the educational leadership was. She responded;

“For me, the educational leadership is a leadership style that can be practice or implemented by the leader for their management of the school. Educational leadership is a tool that can be practice by the leader to promote effective management and influence others to achieve the mission and vision of the school. Educational leader or principal needs a wide range of skill, knowledge in the management or leadership in order to ensure the outcomes of the students and also overall school improvement.”

From the statement of the interviewee, it is proven and supported by a research by Alma Harris (2011), on implications for the role of principal. It is suggested that principal need to relinquish power and authority that there is an inevitable shift away from leadership as position to leadership as interaction and that principals will need to build high degree of reciprocal trust to negotiate successfully the fault lines of formal and informal leadership. The interviewee also supported the same research that mentioned on the school leaders' role in determination of the students' outcome and school effectiveness. Therefore, the school leaders also need to play their role in educational leadership endure and how to influence and guide others on better performance and achievement.

According to the interviewee, there is no specific effective educational leadership that contribute to the school improvement but based on her experience, she mentioned that 'distributed leadership' or 'shared leadership' is one of the effective models of leadership. She believed that, a good leadership is not about only how to be a good manager but also how the leadership can create more leader. She explained on that when she was asked about what types of educational leadership that is the most effective that can be implemented:

“Actually, I do not have any specific effective educational leadership that have been implemented in my school, but maybe one of it is Shared leadership. I believed that, a good leader will create more leader in their leadership or management skills. As a leader or principal, I think they should delegate and shared some of the task or responsibility to others to ensure the effectiveness of the task. As a good leader also, is very important to build the trust for the staff. Example, when they trust their staff, they can delegate some task to the staff or allow the staff to make any decision. For me, this will encourage the staff to perform well and at the same time, the leader also can guide the staff to do the work efficiently.”

From this statement, we found that the process of delegation of work, decision making and shared responsibility is the best way to create more leaders in the organization. The success of the school can be determined if more leaders and more quality teachers would be trained for the school organization to play their role in achieving the mission and the vision. The students’ outcomes and performance will be prioritized and they will be able to bring academic development as the best of the new generation.

During the interview, the participant mentioned that she, have an experienced when she has been given with one task that she need to do her decision making. On that time, she felt crucial and she was not confident because she felt that, she still lack of experience in doing the task, however with the guidance from the leader, she able to complete the task well. Therefore, she believes the opportunities to do decision making in the management of the school and it is very important as a process to learn how to be a good leader.

To answer the first research question, the participant has mentioned that one of the impacts of effective educational leadership towards the students’ performance is to develop and train motivated, passionate and quality teachers. This is indirectly mentioned during the interview when asked about the impact of effective educational leadership on student’s performance. The participant’s view in the interview has been stated as follows:

“...for me, the impact of the effective educational leadership is directly to teachers first. I believed that a good leader will inspire and motivate their staff to work more efficient. From the good and quality teacher, then we can see the impact towards the teacher’s performance in their teaching. From my experienced, the motivated and passionate teachers will definitely give their best in their teaching. They will be more consistent, ready for the improvement and always ensure they able to meet their target in teaching and students understanding. So I always believed, students outcome, or students improvement will only can take place if we a have a quality and a good teacher.”

This statement supported by the Malaysian Blueprint which stated that, educational leadership and teacher development in Malaysia have been highlighted on how to develop effective and quality teacher. Many researches prove that the terms of quality of teaching from quality teachers are the main factor that related to student achievement.

Now, Moving on to the factors that contribute towards students’ performance. The interviewee defined that, collaboration from the leaders, teacher, parents and society play the important role to ensure the achievement. Even though the school can provide the quality teacher, but without a good leader and support from the parents and the society, the school organization still will be failed to improve the student’s outcomes and performance.

“Yes, I do agree that effective educational leadership is one of the factors that can contributed towards the successful of students’ outcomes however for the school organization, we still need some of input or collaboration from the teachers, parents and the society or communities. Each individual needs to know their role and play their role to ensure we can improve the students’ performance. I believed the success of the students or the school is everybody’s job. All of us need to play our role to ensure this result and achievement.”

We ended the interview session by asking the interviewee the impact of un-efficient educational leadership towards the students’ performance. She highlighted that, inefficient leadership and management can lead to demotivate

teachers and students. She believes, supporting and effective leaders can create happiness and motivation among the staff then lead to drive the staff to work better.

“...from my experience for almost 5 years, the thing that can give me impact from inefficient leadership or management can lead to frustration and demotivation of the teachers, staff and students. It is because, we expect more from the leader”.

“As a staff or teacher, we actually need a guidance from the leader to lead us to achieve the mission and vision of the organization. So if the leaders are not effective enough, how the staff can rely on them? For me, the leader does not need to be perfect, but enough if they can play their role as a leader and they can be leader that we can respect. This trust and respect for me, is very important for the staff to follow the leader.”

Based on the above data received from the interviewee, the results show that an effective leadership, clearly has an impact on the students' performance. This finding is supported by a literature review by Alma Haris (2004), that mentioned, the institution needed for school improvement which involved teachers, government and educational leaders. Therefore, to ensure the improvement of educational system all teachers, school leaders need to play their role in effective educational school leadership.

5. Conclusion

This study was undertaken to find out the impact of effective educational leadership on school students' performance as well as overall improvement in Malaysia. The findings were finalized by conducting an interview with one of the International School's staff in Subang Jaya, Malaysia. It is suggested that an effective educational leadership is related to student's performance and achievement of the school. The study has also explored the factors that contribute to the students' performance. Based on the findings of the interview, it is concluded that educational leadership plays a huge role at students' performance in the school. All the schools' principals and leaders of higher education institutions need to ensure the implementation of leadership style and the best model that enables to contribute on the students' performance. This is to make sure that the schools are more effective to serve their students² and the community in a better way.

An effective educational leadership and development of school teacher play an important role to students' improvement and school education system in Malaysia. However, it is highlighted that educational leadership is a core to develop a quality teacher for the effective school and improvement. Moreover, for the educational leadership model, distributed and moral leadership is more approachable and need to be implemented in schools in Malaysia for progressive transformation towards better school outcomes.

Overall, the school students' performance in Malaysia may only be achieved by effective educational leadership. However, there is a lot of intervention need to be implemented and in place to ensure the goals and mission for the school improvement can be achieved through educating a better generation and nation for Malaysia. Justin (2016) stated that an effective and stronger leadership and management of the schools are necessary for the strategies that advocate more curriculum and to create direction while reacting to the available policy related. He also explained on the theory of how leadership practices have an impact on teacher performance, and subsequently better student achievement for school improvement.

In conclusion, the leadership among the school leaders in Malaysia should also transform to new models for better improvement. The leaders should be changed from the traditional leadership to more effective leadership style to meet the challenges of new generation, societal needs, unexpected challenges/ issues which each society may encounter (including natural disasters and disease outbreaks), and globalization need. Therefore, this leadership also will contribute to create more leaders by their involvement in decision making. An effective educational leadership plays an important role at educational settings and can meet the societal needs and find solutions to unexpected issues and challenges in each society; the effective educational leadership is the main contributing

factor on students' performance. It is because of a good leader who can create and train more leaders and quality teachers to achieve the mission and vision of the educational organizations.

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