

LEADERSHIP STYLES OF SCHOOL MIDDLE MANAGERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL: IMPLICATION ON EDUCATION PERFORMANCE

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Abstract- A leadership style in educational context has been debated issue in this decade recently. Eventhough, it is a few studies on leadership styles of middle managers in secondary school with its effects on educational outcomes. Henceforth, this study was conducted with the aim to identify the leadership styles of school middle managers in secondary school in the district of Sabak Bernam. The descriptive study comprised 125 teachers (here after refers as middle managers) from five secondary schools in Sabak Bernam district were randomly selected. The study employed mixed method research design where data were collected via questionnaire survey and in- depth semi- structured interviews. A questionnaire were used is Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) were adapted from Bass & Avolio (1992). The quantitative data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 17.00 version while the qualitative data were analysed deductively and inductively regarding to the research questions in order to trace emerging patterns. In order to see the types of leadership styles by middle managers in secondary schools, a frequency, percent, mean, standard deviation and T- test were used to test the data. The main findings of the study show that Transactional leadership style was the most preferred leadership style among school middle managers. Then it is followed by Transformational leadership style and Laissez- faire leadership style. Findings also indicated that there were no significant differences in leadership styles between males and females school middle managers in secondary schools. The analysis also depicted that there was no significant difference in leadership styles between novice and experienced school middle managers. Nevertheless, the findings revealed that there was a significant difference in the mean score for Laissez- faire leadership style between novice and experienced school middle managers. The findings imply that educational leaders need to be aware on their leadership styles as it is help to leader to build a good relation with the followers and retain a productive workforce. The overview of the evidence and findings of the study are used for some suggestions and recommendations for the future research.

Keywords: Leadership styles, middle manager, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, laissez- faire leadership

1. Introduction

In Malaysian educational context, leaders have often produced from our teaching profession and this contributes to intellectual leadership in our society. Therefore, the success of schools fundamentally depends on school leaders. In this context, we can realize that leaders are seen as

the person who exercises discretion and influence over the direction and administration of the school. In school organization, leaders do not only come from the top but, anybody at any level who can persuade, lead or drive others to create substantial change for the betterment and achievement of others or organizations have the potential for leader.

1.1 Background of the Study

Nowadays, the changes within schools administrative structure have been seeing the creation of a two-tiered management structure (Caldwell & Spinks, 1998). At the first level, a senior management team, including the Principal, Deputy Principal and Assistant Principal has been established. Based on the model, the school principal is appointed as educational leader in school. A second level refers to the responsibility of direct professional for curriculum and non-curriculum leadership was delegated by middle managers (Cardno, 1995). But, the literatures on school leadership have a large extent to ignore the role and responsibilities of these middle managers have (McLendon & Crowther, 1998). Middle management level in schools has a great deal of the work in managing the teaching and learning process. According to Fleming (2000), he stated that school middle managers constitute at a second layer of management between the senior management team and the person those at the chalk face. In simple words, in traditional bureaucratic structures, the school middle managers are in the middle of the hierarchy. In schools context, the role and professional development needs of school middle managers perform at the interface between teaching and managing tasks. Nowadays, the role of school middle managers is variety, more challenging and many school middle managers lack on the clarity of their expectations.

1.2 Problem Statement

The critical role of school middle managers often overlooks in the literature of school leadership. These critical role plays in leading teachers' team to ensure that the curricula are developed, delivered and assessed, school programmes are evaluated and teachers are performed and appraised. Importantly, the development of school management mostly occur at the senior management level rather than middle managers level where is this level forgotten tier in schools. However, school middle managers always not receiving fully support and relevant training that they are required to fulfil their roles (Adey, 2000). In this situation, the school senior managers and school middle managers have to work together in order to achieve a common purpose and a shared a school vision. Hence, a significant issue is the alignment of school middle managers themselves and school senior management expectations to whom they report. Gunter (2001) argues that the middle manager's label is inappropriate because of the diversity of their work. Essentially, there are two substantial roles of school middle managers; teaching and managing a team (Cardno, 1995). In this situation, a function middle management is for teaching and leading.

Additionally, middle manager's expectations and their senior managers do not always match. They need for professional development to fill up the lack of agreement and perceptions among this level of management. Whilst the needs of these will make a senior management felt that the needs were being met and was not the middle managers' view. The difference on middle and

senior managers' expectations make them are not conducive in performing their role effectively. Furthermore, by performing the management development programmes, it can create a positive effect to the way of the role among middle and senior managers in schools. Therefore, it is essential for middle managers in secondary schools to participate in programme at both national and school level to fulfil the current gap. With this regard, the middle managers will address their role play and they are able to be more sensitive about their leadership role and know how to develop their teams.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the leadership styles of school middle managers in secondary schools.
2. To examine the leadership styles adopted by the male and female middle managers in a secondary school.
3. To examine the leadership styles adopted by the middle managers based on their years of experience.

2. School Leadership

Nowadays, school leaders are faced daily with making decisions about accountability and academic achievement, especially when their schools are not making adequate growth. Improving students' performance is a challenge for many educational leaders. Effective leaders ensure that all students receive a quality education (Alberta, 2006). Leithwood and Riehl (2003) concluded that school leadership significantly impacted student learning, and this was second only to the impact of curriculum and instruction. Studies conducted at exceptional schools indicated that school leaders' influence on learning was related to their support for teachers' and students' success (Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Research repeatedly showed that principals played a key role in the instructional change in schools and this level of involvement often dictated the success of instructional change (Riordan, 2003).

The term of school leadership is often used independently between school management and administration. Although the concepts sometimes overlap, we use this concept from the other difference kind of emphasis. An often-quoted phrase refers to manager and leader is "managers always do things right, while leaders do the right thing" (Bennis and Nanus, 1997). While leadership different with management it focused more on steering and leading organisation by shaping people's attitudes, traits, motivations and behaviours. On the other hand, management is often focused on process to maintain current operations in organization (Bush and Glover, 2003). According to Dimmock (1999), he provides certain explanation to differentiate school leadership, management, and administration, while also recognising the roles of school leaders often encompass all three where he stated that how these three terms are defined in respectively, school leaders often experience difficulty in determining the balance between higher order tasks designed to improve and appraise staff, evaluate student and school performance (leadership), maintain routine and present operations (management) and lower order duties (administration). This report agrees that successful schools must have effective leadership, management and also administration.

3. Middle Managers

Definition for middle manager in school is unproblematic but, there is no simple word to define this term. The closest definition of school middle managers refers to those people whose plays the role between the senior management team and the colleagues based on their job description either for normal teaching or management functions. According to study done by Fleming (2000), he defined middle managers in schools is those who are constitute in a second a layer of school structure between the senior management team and those at the chalk face. Besides, in traditional bureaucratic structures, middle managers are placed in the middle of this hierarchy. In schools context, middle manager refer to those who appoint the function as Faculty Leaders, Key Stage Managers, Heads of Departments, Teachers in Charge of Subjects, and Team Leaders (Piggot- Irvine & Locke, 1999). School middle managers typically undertake crucial roles involving whole school- operation such as management work (Heads of Department, Heads of Subject, Director of Student Affair) and such roles as Literacy and Numeracy Co-ordinators (Gunter, 2001). Therefore, some of school activities may not necessarily be organised in departments, because they have to carry out the complexity work of teaching.

School middle managers also work at the interface between teaching and managing in school which implies on another perceived tasks view that these middle managers work the resources for teaching and involved in school managerial tasks (Cardno, 1995). In Malaysian schools, it is easier to identify the middle management group either in secondary or primary school where senior teachers such as Academic Assistant Teacher, Co-curriculum Assistant Teacher, Heads of Department, Teachers in Charge of Subjects, and Team Leaders often perform middle managerial tasks. Therefore, we can see that the roles and responsibilities of school middle managers are varied and not consistent. It could therefore be argued that the label of middle manager is inappropriate for them because it seeks to represent diversity of managerial tasks according to a unified school structural dimension. Furthermore, teaching process can be modernise through the adoption of non-educational ways of working such as line management, nature challenges and professional cultures (Gunter, 2001).

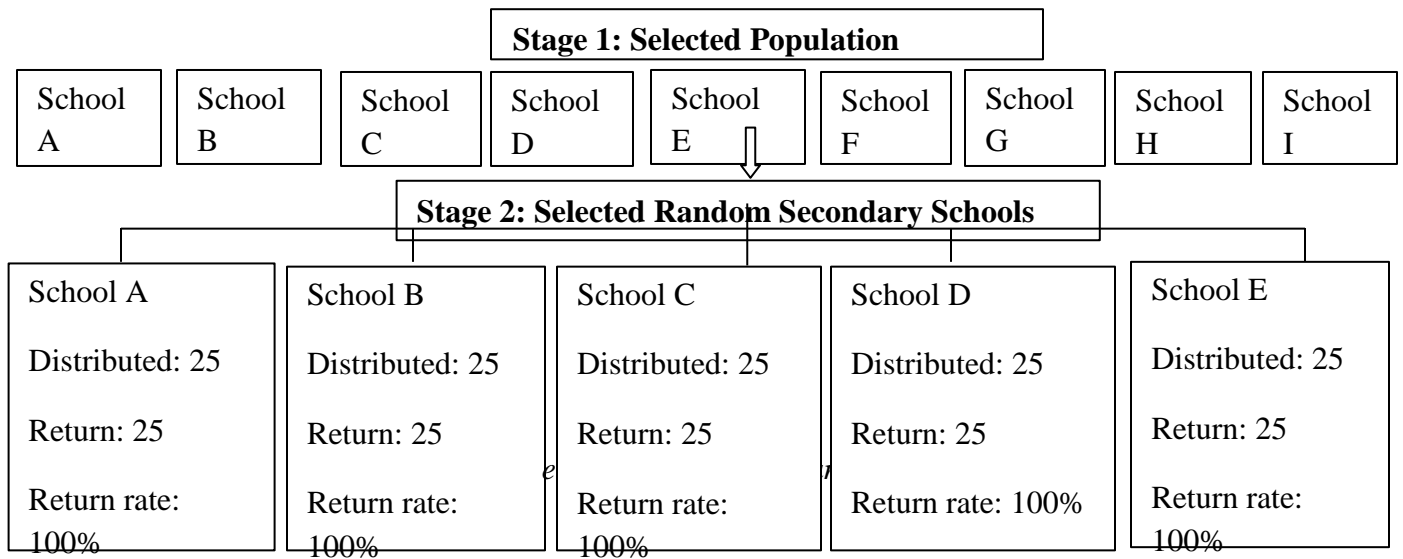
4. Method

The study was set in Sabak Bernam district and it involved the states of Selangor.

Table : List of daily secondary school in Sabak Bernam district.

Location	Secondary School
Sabak Bernam District	Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama Simpang Lima Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Sungai Besar Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Bagan Terap Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Dato' Mustaffa Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Munshi Abdullah Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Seri Bedena Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Ungku Aziz Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Yoke Kuan

The questionnaire was distributed to all 125 teachers in the five selected secondary schools in Sabak Bernam district. A total of 125 questionnaires were distributed to each selected secondary school. Figure 3.1 shows an overall view of the sampling process. A total of 125 questionnaires were returned to the researcher and the return rate was 100.0%. On the other hand, interviews session were administered and conducted with 10 respondents from each school. The interview session involved a total of 2 teachers (one novice and one experienced teacher) from each of the five selected secondary schools.



5. Findings

Leadership Styles Preferences of Middle Managers (n= 125)		
Leadership Styles	Mean	SD
Transformational Leadership	3.06	0.54
I make others feel good to be around me	3.69	0.56
Others have complete faith in me	3.02	0.88
Others are proud to be associated with me	3.02	0.79
I express with a few simple words what we could and should do	3.54	0.53
I provide appealing images about what we can do	3.05	1.02
I help others find meaning in their work	2.94	0.86
I enable others to think about old problems in new ways	3.17	0.76
I provide others with new ways of looking at puzzling things	2.63	1.19
I get others to rethink ideas that they had never questioned before	3.02	0.92
I help others develop themselves	3.18	0.81
I let others know how I think they are doing	2.33	1.29

I give personal attention to others who seem rejected	3.15	0.84
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Transactional Leadership	3.23	0.56
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I tell others what to do if they wants to be rewarded for their work	3.01	0.85
I provide recognition/ rewards when others reach their goals	3.24	0.82
I call attention to what others can get for what they accomplish	3.19	0.81
I am satisfied when others meet agreed- upon standards	3.48	0.67
As long as things are working, I do not try to change anything	3.28	0.89
I tell others the standards they have to know to carry out their work	3.21	0.78

Laissez- faire	2.90	0.70
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I am content to let others continue working in the same way as always	3.02	0.98
Whatever others what to do is O.K. with me	2.85	0.92
I ask no more of others than what is absolutely essential	2.83	1.01

Scale: 0= Not at all, 1= Once in a while, 2 =Sometimes, 3= Fairly often, 4=Frequently, if not always

Leadership styles preferences between male and female middle managers (n=125)

Leadership Styles	Male		Female	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Transformational Leadership				
I make others feel good to be around me	3.67	0.57	3.70	0.56
Others have complete faith in me	3.14	0.87	2.96	0.89
Others are proud to be associated with me	3.12	0.74	2.96	0.82
I express with a few simple words what we could and should do	3.52	0.55	3.55	0.52
I provide appealing images about what we can do	3.05	1.04	3.05	1.01
I help others find meaning in their work	3.10	0.79	2.87	0.89
I enable others to think about old problems in new ways	3.14	0.75	3.18	0.77
I provide others with new ways of looking at puzzling things	2.60	1.17	2.65	1.21
I get others to rethink ideas that they had never questioned before	3.17	0.79	2.95	0.97
I help others develop themselves	3.17	0.79	3.18	0.83
I let others know how I think they are doing	2.55	1.31	2.22	1.27
I give personal attention to others who seem rejected	3.26	0.77	3.10	0.88

Transactional Leadership

I tell others what to do if they want to be rewarded for their work	3.02	0.81	3.00	0.87
I provide recognition or rewards when others reach their goals	3.33	0.75	3.19	0.85
I call attention to what others can get for what they accomplish	3.29	0.77	3.14	0.83
I am satisfied when others meet agreed- upon standards	3.43	0.67	3.51	0.67
As long as things are working, I do not try to change anything	3.29	0.77	3.28	0.85
I tell others the standards they have to know to carry out their work	3.21	0.72	3.20	0.81

Laissez- faire

I am content to let others continue working in the same way as always	3.33	0.85	2.86	1.00
Whatever others what to do is O.K. with me	3.05	0.83	2.75	0.95
I ask no more of others than what is absolutely essential	3.02	0.92	2.73	1.05

Scale: 0= Not at all, 1= Once in a while, 2 =Sometimes, 3= Fairly often, 4=Frequently, if not always

Leadership style preferences between novice and experienced middle managers (n=125)

Leadership Styles	Novice		Experienced	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Transformational Leadership				
I make others feel good to be around me	3.71	0.69	3.68	0.53
Others have complete faith in me	2.88	0.99	3.06	0.86
Others are proud to be associated with me	2.67	0.64	3.10	0.81
I express with a few simple words what we could and should do	3.67	0.48	3.51	0.54
I provide appealing images about what we can do	3.08	0.83	3.04	1.06
I help others find meaning in their work	2.58	0.97	3.03	0.82
I enable others to think about old problems in new ways	3.08	0.72	3.19	0.77
I provide others with new ways of looking at puzzling things	2.75	0.89	2.60	1.26
I get others to rethink ideas that they had never questioned before	2.96	1.16	3.04	0.86
I help others develop themselves	3.00	0.98	3.22	0.77
I let others know how I think they are doing	2.38	1.06	2.32	1.34
I give personal attention to others who seem rejected	3.00	1.10	3.19	0.77

Transactional Leadership

I tell others what to do if they want to be rewarded for their work	2.92	0.83	3.03	0.85
I provide recognition/ rewards when others reach their goals	3.08	1.02	3.28	0.76
I call attention to what others can get for what they accomplish	3.38	0.58	3.15	0.85
I am satisfied when others meet agreed- upon standards	3.50	0.83	3.48	0.63
As long as things are working, I do not try to change anything	3.33	0.76	3.27	0.84
I tell others the standards they have to know to carry out their work	3.04	0.91	3.25	0.74

Laissez- faire

I am content to let others continue working in the same way as always	2.79	1.22	3.07	0.91
Whatever others what to do is O.K. with me	2.58	0.97	2.91	0.89
I ask no more of others than what is absolutely essential	2.54	0.98	2.90	1.02

Scale: 1= Not at all, 2= Once in a while, 3 =Sometimes, 4= Fairly often, 5= Frequently, if not always

The main data was obtained from quantitative method by using questionnaire survey reported that Transactional leadership style is the most preferred leadership style by school middle managers with a mean of 3.23 (SD=.56) then followed by Transformational leadership style (mean=3.06, SD=.54) as moderate preferred leadership style employed by school middle managers. The data also reported that Laissez- faire leadership style is the least preferred leadership style employed by school middle managers with mean 2.90 (SD=.70). On the other hand, Transactional leadership style also rated as preferred leadership style employed by male middle managers (mean=3.26, SD=.56) and female middle managers (mean=3.22, SD=.57).

Transactional leadership style also employed by novice (mean=3.21, SD=.46) and experienced (mean=3.24, SD=.59) middle managers as the most leadership style preferred by both group. The findings of this study also reported on the t- test analysis which shows that there was no significant difference in the mean score of leadership styles preferred between male and female middle managers. Similarly, the t- test result also reported that there was no significant difference in the main score for Transactional leadership style and Transformational leadership style between novice and experienced school middle managers. Nevertheless, the finding reported that there was a significant difference in the mean score for Laissez- faire leadership style between novice and experienced middle managers referring to t- test analysis.

6. Discussion and conclusion

By knowing the leadership styles among middle managers in our school context it give us more precious knowledge and understanding on this field. Middle managers in schools can enhance and improve their lead skills, knowledge and motivate them to be more responsible on their tasks. Moreover, the finding of the study provides useful information for the school management and leader to identify their leadership styles. By knowing their leadership styles it will help leader in having positive relationship with the followers and retain a productive workforce. The study also recommends that the role of the middle managers in school context essentially to promote effective leadership and necessary to move beyond the polarization with associated the transactional and transformational leadership concepts. Exploration links between transformational leadership and other forms of leadership is one of direction for future research. The more studies on leadership area also can be conduct and focus on instructional leadership and its effect student learning outcomes.

Certainly, a leadership style for each organizational leader would be different depends on upon the answer. In- depth interviews technique is recommends for the future studies in order to identify and answer some of the hidden leadership styles that cannot reveal by questionnaires method. Continuous measures and research in leadership styles among Malaysian school middle managers should be increased to provide greater information related to field of works. Hopefully the findings in this study will help Malaysian school leaders in identifying and enhancing their leadership styles in order to achieve national and school educational vision.

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