

“New Leadership”, Leader-Member Exchange and Commitment to Change: The Case of Higher Education in Malaysia

May-Chiun Lo, T. Ramayah, Ernest Cyril de Run, and Voon Mung Ling

World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology 53 2009

Abstract—Human resource management faces challenges of

bringing better fitted workers into the organizations and of meeting the workers' needs and expectations. No known researches on leadership have been observed to empirically examine transformational and transactional leadership styles and its impact on the lecturers' commitment to change in Malaysia higher education. Considering the potential cascading effect that leaders' power can have on lecturers' commitment, previous researches may have underestimated the impact of leadership styles on lecturers' performance. Building upon social exchange theory which explains how power is gained and lost in the process of influence between an agent and the target, this paper hypothesized that the leadership styles of supervisors was anchored on 4 types of commitment to change of the subordinates. Transactional and transformational were conceptualized as 4- and 3- dimensional constructs, respectively. The findings suggested that several dimensions of leadership styles were found to have direct impact on organizational commitment to change. In addition, contribution respect dimension of leader-member exchange was found to have moderated the relationship between leadership styles and organizational commitment to change. This research is perhaps the first that contributes to management in general and Malaysian leadership and management in particular as it is the first to test lecturers' commitment to change in this approach to leadership framework. Implications of the findings, potential limitations of the study, and directions for future research were further discussed.

Keywords—Commitment to change, transactional, transformational.

1. INTRODUCTION

LEADERSHIP is a process of interaction between leaders and subordinates where a leader attempts to influence the behavior of his or her subordinates to accomplish organizational goals (Yukl, 2005). In other words, leadership is described as the selection of bases of influence (Krause, 2004). It has been revealed that there is more conceptual

to change. universities are capable of influencing lecturers' commitment

May-Chiun Lo is with the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, 94300 Sarawak (e-mail: mcl@feb.unimas.my). T. Ramayah, is with the School of Management, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11900 Penang (e-mail: ramayah@usm.my). Ernest Cyril de Run is with the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, 94300 Sarawak (e-mail: dremes@feb.unimas.my). Voon Mung Ling is with the Swinburne University of Technology (e-mail: mvoon@swinburne.edu.my). Financial support from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak is greatly appreciated.