TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS ON THEIR PRINCIPALS’ TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS IN THE SARIKEI DIVISION, SARAWAK, MALAYSIA

By

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DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in this dissertation has been submitted in support of an application for another degree of qualification of this or any other university or institution of higher learning.
ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study was to assess the extent to which the secondary school principals in Sarikei Division, Sarawak were engaged in the transformational leadership behaviors. The teachers' perceptions on their principals' transformational leadership behaviors (symbols/model behaviors dimension, collaborative structure dimension, individualized support dimension, intellectual stimulation dimension, performance expectations dimension, and vision and goals dimension) were utilized as independent variables while the school principals which were categorized according to school grades (grade A schools and grade B schools), school status (government secondary schools and government-aided secondary schools), and school types (boarding secondary schools and non-boarding secondary schools) were the dependent variables. The findings show: (a) The school principals were engaged in a moderate level of transformational leadership behaviors on the overall mean rating of the scales; (b) The principals of grade A secondary schools were engaged in a higher level of transformational leadership behaviors. There was a significant difference at 0.5 level of significance in the transformational leadership behaviors that were engaged by the principals according to school grades in all the six dimensions of the transformational leadership behaviors of the study; (c) The principals of government-aided secondary schools were engaged in a higher level of transformational leadership behaviors. There was a significant difference at 0.5 level of significance in the transformational leadership behaviors that were engaged by the principals according to school status in four out of six dimensions of the transformational leadership behaviors: symbols/model behaviors, collaborative structure, performance expectations, and in vision and goals; and (d) The principals of non-boarding secondary schools were engaged in a higher level of transformational leadership behaviors. There was a significant difference at 0.5 level of significance in the transformational leadership behaviors that were engaged by the principals according to school types in five out of six dimensions of the transformational leadership behaviors: symbols/model behaviors, collaborative structure, individual support, performance expectations, and in vision and goals.
ABSTRAK

Tujuan utama kajian ini ialah untuk meninjau sejauh mana pengetua-pengetua sekolah menengah Bahagian Sarakei, Sarawak mengamalkan tingkahlaku kepimpinan transformasi. Persepsi guru terhadap enam dimensi tingkahlaku kepimpinan transformasi (simbol/tingkahlaku model, struktur kolaboratif, sokongan individu, stimulasi intelektual, ekspektasi prestasi cemerlang, visi dan matlamat) yang diamalkan oleh pengetua sekolah sebagai pembolehubah tak bersandar dan pengetua-pengetua sekolah yang dikategorikan mengikut gred sekolah (gred A dan gred B), status sekolah (sekolah menengah 'kerajaan dan sekolah menengah bantuan kerajaan) dan jenis sekolah (sekolah berasrama dan sekolah bukan berasrama) sebagai pembolehubah bersandar. Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa: (a) Pengetua sekolah menengah mengamalkan tahap tingkahlaku kepimpinan transformasi yang sederhana secara keseluruhan; (b) Pengetua sekolah menengah gred A mengamalkan tahap tingkahlaku kepimpinan transformasi lebih tinggi daripada pengetua sekolah menengah gred B. Terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan pada aras 0.05 kesignifikan dalam tingkahlaku kepimpinan transformasi yang diamalkan oleh pengetua mengikut gred sekolah dalam kesemua enam dimensi tingkahlaku kepimpinan transformasi; (c) Pengetua sekolah menengah bantuan kerajaan mengamalkan tahap tingkahlaku kepimpinan transformasi lebih tinggi daripada pengetua sekolah menengah kerajaan. Terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan pada aras 0.05 kesignifikan dalam tingkahlaku kepimpinan transformasi yang diamalkan oleh pengetua sekolah mengikut status sekolah dalam empat daripada enam dimensi tingkahlaku kepimpinan transformasi, iaitu, simbol/tingkahlaku model, struktur kolaboratif, ekspektasi prestasi cemerlang, visi dan matlamat; dan (d) Pengetua sekolah menengah bukan berasrama mengamalkan tahap tingkahlaku kepimpinan transformasi lebih tinggi daripada pengetua sekolah berasrama. Terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan pada aras 0.05 kesignifikan dalam tingkahlaku kepimpinan transformasi yang diamalkan oleh pengetua sekolah mengikut jenis sekolah dalam lima daripada enam dimensi tingkahlaku kepimpinan transformasi, iaitu, simbol/tingkahlaku model, struktur kolaboratif, sokongan individu, ekspektasi prestasi cemerlang, dan visi dan matlamat.
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH


DEDICATION

I take pride in dedicating this thesis project to my beloved wife Mary Ranggau, and my children: Stephanie, Michael Ben, Gerald Ken and Beatrice for their love, patience and support. You are the source of my inspiration. All your patience, tolerance and understanding have made me enjoyed this opportunity of learning. And to you my beloved mother Linah Umpang, thanks for your love and courage. Thanks to God for the blessing and guidance throughout my study.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This is a survey research seeking to assess the extent to which secondary school principals are engaged in transformational leadership behaviors. In this survey, teachers' perceptions were utilized to assess the extent to which the secondary school principals were engaged in the transformational leadership behaviors over the six dimensions of transformational leadership behaviors (symbols/model behaviors, collaborative structures, individualized support, intellectual stimulation, high performance expectations, and vision and goals (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1997). This study was carried out in all the thirteen secondary schools of the Sarikei Division, Sarawak, Malaysia.

The study focuses on the school principal because he/she occupies a strategic position in the school system and plays important roles in providing effective leadership to cope with and to bring about the necessary changes demanded by the rapid development in educational institutions of the country toward the realization of Malaysian Vision 2020. Not only has he to procure, organize, administer and manage human and material resources necessary to implement educational programs and instruction, he also has to be a leader of his staff members as well as to gain community support. In order to perform his varied roles effectively and efficiently, it is important that he knows what his roles
and tasks are and that he is equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills. Leadership skills and new approaches to leadership which enable him to cope with the demands, changes and new challenges in educational institution are important assets to his principalship.

1.1 Background of the Study

Study of school principal effects from the early to late 1980's were dominated by an instructional leadership conceptualization drawn from effective schools literature. The studies conceptualized the principal’s role in school effectiveness in terms of instructional leadership. Since 1990, researchers have begun to shift their attention to leadership models construed as more consistent with evolving trends in educational reform such as empowerment, shared leadership, and organizational learning. This evolution of educational leadership role has been labeled as reflecting “second order” changes (Leithwood, 1994) as it is aimed primarily at changing the organization’s normative structure. The most frequently used model of this variety has been transformational leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; Silins, 1994). Transformational leadership focuses on increasing the organization’s capacity to innovate. Rather than focussing specifically on curriculum and instruction, transformational leadership seeks to build the organization’s capacity to select its purposes and to support the survival of changes to school’s core technology.
The dictionary definition of transform is to change completely or essentially in composition or structure (Webster, 1971). So any leadership with this effect may be labeled transformational, no matter the specific practices it entails or even whether the changes wrought are desired. In this study, the subject of transformational leadership is based on formal definition and systematic inquiry in non-school organizations which is the basis of the inquiry about such leadership in school setting.

The gist of Malaysian Vision 2020 is that Malaysia will become an industrialized, developed nation by the year 2020. Vision 2020 is the main context for change for all sections of the population including the education system. The education system has to be fully involved in this call to change and the goal of creating a new Malaysia. The education system must become better and more efficient. The change that the whole country is expected to undergo must be mirrored in the education system (Wan Mohd. Zahid, 1996). This implies that the school system will undergo substantial restructuring and reformation to accommodate and facilitate the challenges of Malaysian Vision 2020. The researcher strongly believes that the school principals play vital roles in providing leadership that is associated with bringing about changes, transforms and revitalized organization.

The successful implementation of Malaysian Philosophy of Education, the New Curriculum for Secondary School, the implementation of Total Quality Management in schools, and the implementation of Smart Schools in Malaysia require leadership which can provide clear vision and goals, model behavior, individualized support, intellectual
stimulation, distribute leadership broadly among the staff, and holding high expectations for the staff and the students.

In a keynote address at the Eight International Conference of the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration, the Minister of Education Malaysia disclosed that:

We in Malaysia, have a vision to transform Malaysia educational sector into various institutional centres of excellence. Our educational institutions must be of world class. To this end, educational leaders and managers must play vital role. They will be the people who will engage in policy elaboration, operation and implementation policies, and manages resources optimally ((Najib Tun Razak, 1996: 3)

These intended changes can never be met merely by intellect but by leaders who can transform and revitalize organization (Yukl, 1994). These leaders are those who can channel the collective energies of organizational members in pursuit of common vision, developing commitment and trust, and facilitating organizational learning (Bennis & Nanus, 1985) and providing inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation (Bass & Avolio, 1994) which feature transformational leadership behaviors.

1.2 Problem Statement

Out of the varying motives of persons, out of the combat and competition between groups and between persons, out of the making of countless choices and the sharpening and steeling of purpose, arise the elevating forces of leadership and the achievement of intended change (Burns, 1978: 432).
School principals need to be change agents. To lead the staff into new programs and instruction or program improvement demand the principal be a leader of change (Sybouts & Wendel, 1994). Thevar (1994) stated that Paul Hersey (1978) quoted President Bill Clinton, then Chairman of the United States National Governors Association, as saying that the school principal is the key to educational change in school. Being directly involved in bringing about the change, principals should be aware of the characteristics of effective leadership behaviors and to what extent their behaviors can be considered effective to bring about changes. Malaysian secondary school principals must be able to read the changes on matters pertaining the schools and educational policies which involve educational reforms and school restructuring and respond appropriately.

Transformational leadership approaches to school leadership are especially appropriate to the challenges facing schools now and through the remainder of this decade. Leadership only manifests itself in the context of change, and the nature of that change is a crucial determinant of the forms of leadership that will prove to be helpful. The challenges of school restructuring will dominate the change agenda for school leaders for some time to come, for examples, high uncertainty about educational ends and means; attention not only to changes in the core technology of schooling but also to the redesign of school organizations in support of these changes; a focus on the relatively large and pedagogically complex secondary school organization; and a desire to professionalize teaching by allocating to teachers themselves the responsibility by providing instructional leadership to their peers. Transformational forms of leadership are well suited for such challenges because of their potential for building high levels of commitment to the
complex and uncertain nature of the restructuring agenda and for fostering growth in the capacities that school staffs must develop to respond productively to this agenda (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1994).

In Malaysian context, the introduction of smart schools in Malaysia in the year 1999 is set to revolutionize the country’s education system where information technology is introduced into the learning environment. The smart schools together with Malaysian Vision 2020, the New Secondary Curriculum and the Malaysian Philosophy of Education provides the challenges, rationale, justification, direction and focus for educational development programs which enshrine ideals of what the national and educational future should be in terms of such issues as national unity, national identity, equal educational opportunities, life long education, the culture of quality, and international competitiveness.

Are the principals of Malaysian secondary schools having the leadership behaviors that can effectively take these challenges and bring about changes? At this point, no study has been done on transformational leadership behaviors of the school principals in Malaysia although many studies have been conducted on other types of leadership. In order to assess the extent to which Malaysian secondary school principals provide transformational leadership, a survey research design of teachers’ perceptions on their principals’ transformational leadership behaviors was carried out in the secondary schools of Sarikei Division, Sarawak.