REALITY ON INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND COMMITMENT OF TEACHERS: A PRELIMINARY STUDY

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ABSTRACT

School organization consist of principal leadership, management staff and teachers commitment that works together to produce basic human capital to a country. To succeed in this mission a leader join hand with teacher to carry the task of implementation process offer its best to the customer. Cooperation with these elements was crucial for improvement and leadership success especially the instructional process that takes place either in classroom or outdoor activities. Research indicated that leadership and commitment has interdependent relationship. This is a preliminary study carried two purposes, to examine the dominant instructional practices in school and explores correlation between these practices and teachers' organizational commitment (OC). Specifically, relation for dimension of instructional leadership and teachers' organizational commitment has given full consideration. The connection in the way teacher committed to their school and principal instructional leadership is still debatable issue. Findings reveals teachers perceived as principal emphasis more on defining school mission, followed by managing instructional program and then developing school learning climate. All three dimension of instructional leadership practices and 10 job functions of principal framing school goal, communicating effectively the school goal, supervise and evaluate instruction, coordinate the curriculum, monitor student progress, protect instructional time, maintain high visibility, provides incentives for teaching, promote professional development and provides incentives for learning have average relationship with teacher organizational commitment. This study implies existence of other factors than instructional practices influencing teacher commitment in school either willingness to work the common goal or unwilling to support in developing learning climate due to unseen circumstances.

Keywords: Instructional leadership, organizational commitment, principal, goal

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Introduction

Principal as the head of the school lead by example, role model and carry important task of defining school mission and goal (DSM), managing instructional program (MIP), and develop school learning climate (DSLC). Task forces that work out this in practical are the teachers of the school. The connection between teacher and principal is always known as common issue when comes to educational institution. Research on contribution of principal transformational leadership to school achievement is popular among scholar, even some scholars argue instructional leadership is outdated as it does not getting as much attention as in 90's. Recent studies (Higgins & Bonne, 2011; Arlestig, Helene & Johansson, Olof in Rapportserie, 2011; Robinson, 2010; Meier, 2010) bring again the fame of instructional leadership into spotlight. As long as educational institution deals with academic performance and student achievement used to measure school success, instructional leadership kept awaken and alive. Implementation of instructional activities is never a solo performance instead it delivered through teacher's participants and commitment. Getting teachers committed is not issue of discussion but matter that contributes to teacher commitment is. Due to that teacher's commitment in school organization becoming more and more important with accountability rest on principals shoulder. Principal leadership should display promising skill in handling teacher's affair at the same time move forward the organization achieve national curriculum. School organization involves not only principal but also teachers and student. To run school organization, the cooperation between these parties is crucial. Especially teacher's commitment in the organization becomes the measuring elements for school performance and student achievements. Hence this study is an attempt to explore the importance and relation of these two variables further.

Background of the study

School organization provides the platform for principal to display his/her leadership credibility. As school system revolve by time the challenges comes along continuously. The need to cater changes occur without compromising improvement in training, work relation, goal setting, supervision, monitoring student performance, provide professional development for teachers (Hallinger & Lee, 2013; Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010). These changes undeniably influence teachers' instruction, performance

and commitment towards school (Kowalski, 2010). There are claims saying principal does not portraying good leadership and apologizing for lack of knowledge (Hassenpflug, 2013; Kowalski, 2010) and hardly find time to lead (Hallinger & Murphy, 2012). Management time occupied attending too many meeting, handling clerical staff, dealing with parents, and student issues. Nevertheless principal training focused more on managerial process, managerial and organizational issues rather than instructional program or curriculum development (Hassenpflug, 2013; Lambert & Hogan, 2010).

Keeping school performance and student improvement in mind, principal cannot act solo, thus, collaboration and cooperation from teachers is a must. In contrast, teachers as follower expecting to see leader who able to lead, poses skill, competent and expert in their area and accountable (Bloch & Whiteley, 2003) and capable in managing instructional program. Furthermore, instructional leadership skill, developing school goal, managing instructional program, evaluating staff, and develop school learning climate is vital in success of a school yet it is not the only task to be performed (Hulpia, Devos, & Keer, 2011) even tough undeniably it is the core school performance indicator. Consistency in leadership efficiency is the foundation for effective principal (Valentine & Prater, 2011). Earlier study shows principal can highly motivate their subordinates to be committed to the organization (Hoy & Miskel, 2005), which initiates the interest to study the relationship between instructional leadership and teachers organizational commitment.

Teacher are important manpower to carry the implementation task of school goal and mission and carry out instruction process where involves with teaching and learning. Employee commitment is crucial in determining any organizational or institutional success and school has no exceptional. Instructional task falls in important category but not urgent attention from the school head leads principal focused on urgent issues of meeting parents, dealing discipline action, clerical attention (Hallinger & Murphy, 2012) rather than instructional activities. Scholars also argues on lesser quantitative evidence related principal leadership issues (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). There are study indicates that employee commitment is vital to keep up top performance (Khasawneh, Omari, & Abu-tineh, 2012) and committed employee create effective organization (Caillier, 2012). Yet, little is known about how much instructional leadership associated with teachers' organizational commitment.

The study

This study seeks to explore school principals' instructional leadership towards teachers' organizational commitment. To meet this purpose the study focused on addressing the following research questions:
- Determine the most dominant dimension in principal instructional leadership practices defining school mission, managing instructional program and developing the school learning climate.
- Determine the relationship between dimensions of instructional leadership practices defining school mission, managing instructional program, developing school learning climate and teachers' organizational commitment.

Methodology

To serve the purpose of study, a quantitative survey carried out in three different schools in the same district with all these principals had achieved excellence principal award from the state. For data collection researcher employed the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) (Hallinger, 2012) and Three Dimension Commitment (TDC) of Allen and Meyer (1997). The survey questionnaire incorporated 72 items arrange into four sections using five Likert-scale ranging from 'almost never' to 'almost always' for PIMRS and six point Likert-scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to strongly agree' for TDC. The instrument was pilot test to check on the instrument reliability from 27 randomly selected teacher participants from different school before the real survey. The reliability for the instrument was 0.95. The survey instrument distributed to teachers in person by researcher after attaining permission from school authorities. Total of 111 participant return the survey questionnaire in complete manner and valid to analysis.

Findings and discussion

Reality of instructional leadership

Among the three dimensions of PIMRS, Define the School Mission display the highest mean (4.03), followed by Managing Instructional Program (3.84) and Developing School Learning Climate at the third level with mean (3.20). This analysis indicates that Define the School Mission played the dominant role among all three dimensions of PIMRS. Findings supported by earlier research, principal of Pahang state secondary school practice high level of defining school goal, MIP and promote learning environment (Abdullah & Kassim, 2011).

School mission is crucial for school success. Organization without a proper mission and leaders that fail to communicate the goal effectively walk the organization in the road to fail. Ability utilize student academic achievement data and develop goal that is feasible is equally important as communicate the goal in meetings, assemblies, display in school board to ensure all the school staff including all student to understand and visualize it. Managing instructional program consist elements of supervise and evaluate instruction, curriculum coordination and monitoring student progress. According to list wise, coordinate curriculum received higher mean, followed by monitor student progress and last supervise and evaluate. This perception may due to the reason curriculum is more important and drawn by national standard. The process of monitoring students carried out well by the school authorities, only than supervise and evaluate as perceived by teachers. This findings support the research of (Lee, Hallinger, & Walker, 2012) as their study found that direct supervision of instruction weaken student learning by giving negative effect student perception on school performance.

In developing school learning climate dimension, protect instructional time given the first priority, then provide incentives for learning and promote professional development. School principal gives more emphasis in protecting instructional time align with the government order (Education, 2013) of "Protect Instructional Time" and encourage student by provides incentives for their achievements and performance unlike provide incentives for teaching does not given much attention. Maintain high visibility and provide incentives for teaching perceived as moderate implementation. Possibility being transparent and open to teacher and staff may also involve many meetings and time constrain. The mean distribution is clearly represented in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean and standard deviations for three dimensions Of PIMRS

Dimensions	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Define School Mission	2.10	5.00	4.03	.56
Frame the school goal	2.00	5.00	4.04	.60
Communicate the school goal	2.20	5.00	4.01	.60
Managing Instructional Program	1.73	5.00	3.84	.56
Supervise and Evaluate	2.00	5.00	3.79	.61
Coordinate the Curriculum	1.80	5.00	3.88	.59
Monitor Student Progress	1.40	5.00	3.85	.67
Developing School Learning Climate	2.20	5.00	3.70	.56
Protect Instructional Time	2.00	5.00	3.93	.71
Maintain High Visibility	1.00	5.00	3.57	.73
Provide Incentives For Teaching	1.60	5.00	3.33	.71
Promote Professional Development	2.00	5.00	3.82	.67
Provide Incentives For Learning	2.00	5.00	3.86	.67

N=111

The descriptive analysis findings suggest that principal give more importance to defining school mission. This may due to the need of school direction determine to ensure the goal is set for betterment and as a target is objectively marked. Consequently, the principal can lead the teachers to the set target and framed school goal with clear vision, makes it easier to manage the instructional program step by step to achieve the goal. Principal should also empower senior assistance to be together managed, supervise and promote teaching and learning activities align with the design framework. This can engineer a positive working environment and develop a healthy learning climate.

Reality of teacher commitment

Pearson r correlation indicates that TOC only have average relationship with defining school mission (r =.387) and average level of relationship with managing instructional program and developing school learning climate (r = .423 and .457) respectively. Correlation is significant at p<.01. Yulk, (2006) define commitment as the level of involvement in any organization, the outcome result from an agreement on made decision. Further correlational analysis also reveals all the 10 job functions of instructional leadership; *framing school goal, communicate school goal, supervise and evaluate instruction, coordinate the curriculum, monitor student progress, protect instructional time, maintain high visibility, provides incentives for teaching, promote professional development and provides incentives for learning,* have average level of correlation with teacher organizational commitment r ranged from .311 to .444. Details displayed in Table 2.

Teachers' commitment argued as bring positive effect in school performance and student learning. This result indicates that school teachers' involvement is more on doing their duty rather than accepting the school goal or managing the instructional program. This result challenges the involvement of teachers in decision making of school mission, goal or managing instruction. Teachers accept assuring the instructional activity take place with limited interruption. Furthermore student discipline seems interest teachers' more compared to student result or progress report or measure the progress towards school goal. Commitment is more in favorable mode when principal carries the task of providing incentives for teachers and give compliment for their effort. Professional development is another criterion involve in DSLC significant to teachers commitment level. MIP and DSLC found to have strong correlation with attitude towards change (Abdullah & Kassim, 2011). Principals attitude in attending school activities when it concern about instruction and give teachers opportunity to share ideas as well as support them also emphasize teachers involvement.

Table 2: Summary of correlation analysis

TEACHER ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT (TOC)	
Instructional Leadership Variables	r value
***DEFINE SCHOOL MISSION* (DSM)**	**.387****
Frame the school goal	.340**
Communicate the school goal	.405**
***MANAGING INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM* (MIP)**	**.423****
Supervise and evaluate instruction	.444**
Coordinate the curriculum	.424**
Monitor student progress	.311**
***DEVELOPING SCHOOL LEARNING CLIMATE* (DSLC)**	**.457****

Protect instructional time	.352**
Maintain high visibility	.362**
Provide incentives for teaching	.318**
Promote professional development	.387**
Provide incentives for learning	.394**

**Correlation is significant at $p<.01$(2-tailled)

The correlation analysis suggests that instructional practices and commitment of teachers have inverse relationship. A healthy and positive learning climate promotes teachers to be committed. Finding also suggest that principal who is concern about quality instructional time, more open, flexible and transparent in all actions, encourages and appreciate teachers effort and their hard work, give more attention to student learning able to promote positive attitude of teachers rather than give more priority of defining school mission and vision every semester or in frequent manner. Especially in Malaysia education system applying standardized curriculum vision and mission ultimately design by Ministry of education and state education department. Hence school principal need to draw a strategy to walk and implement the vision and mission. In school level it is implementation method and strategy that matters the most. In addition, this preliminary study suggest teachers seems to be more concern on principal carried out the task of observation and managing curriculum implementation, which is also give priority on monitoring student performances, progress in academic achievements.

Conclusion and recommendations

Truth of teacher commitment does not influence by school mission is surprisingly unexpected result. This is also serious matters need proper attention and investigation finding reasons and ways to overcome this state. School vision and mission is ultimate for school direction, hence teachers should together understand and accept the importance of school goal for the school success. It is recommended principal emphasis the importance of school vision and mission for teachers interest and encourage teachers to participate in designing the school short term and long term vision and mission. Furthermore reward and acknowledge teachers for achieved vision and the status by doing postmortem, analysis, strategic planning from time to time or at least twice a year. When involving school organization student, teachers and principal are the dwellers occupying the organization. Among these three people student fall in different category whereas teachers and principal fall in implementers and managing category. It is not easy task for a principal to manage the student and teachers. Capabilities and the underlying need of commitment and what contribute to the commitment is essential knowledge for a manager to manage successfully and stand tall.

The study indicates that DSM as the most dominant element in principal instructional leadership followed by MIP and DSLC yet DSLC carries the most significant elements in getting teachers committed. This is not something that can be taken for granted, without teachers commitment the principal definitely cannot run the school alone. The school principal may implement practical workload encourage teacher to prepare for instruction and evaluate student progress. In secondary schools, teachers workload should be consider as serious issues as it functions on class size, number of teaching periods and number of non-instructional activities may cause teachers to perceive managing instructional program in average level. Thus, recommendation suggested a wider study with mediation variables to investigate variables that mediates teacher's commitment for more resolution and improvement in near future, school of 21st century. This preliminary test result urge for deeper investigation to includes mediator variables and investigate teacher commitment level. School institution is the combined effort and expertise of manpower, and principal that considerate and practice leadership knowledge should well verse on the importance of commitment and its pragmatics. Leaders who are pragmatics and understand the link between commitment and contribution factors to commitment face less challenges and experience more successful and achievement in getting teacher involvement and commitment. This study is also having limitation by its objectives to determine the dominant instructional practices and the relation to teacher's commitment. Furthermore, this study serves as preliminary study to encourage a wider and extensive research to explore the relation of instructional leadership variables and teachers commitment in real research.

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