

The Relationship of Principals' Distributive Leadership towards Professional Learning Community Practices in Gombak District (Malaysia) Secondary Schools

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Abstract

Leadership in education state that it is a key factor in the development of a school. Thus, leadership in education is now more focused on distributive leadership which emphasizes on how to form a culture of leadership responsibility among leaders to assist in the implementation of professional learning community practices. The local Professional Learning Community is described as a local community that forms a culture that shows all school children learn and become a learner. The study aims to identify the relationship of principals' distributive leadership towards professional learning community practices in Gombak district secondary schools. The population of the study is 3189 teachers that working in secondary schools across Gombak district. From the said population, 346 teachers are chosen as the research sample. The research instrument used was a questionnaire and the results were analysed through the SPSS. The research finding highlighted that the level of distributive leadership practices of principals in schools were at high level and findings also show that the level of professional learning community practice among teachers in schools also is at high level as well. Research outcome also found that there is a very strong and significant a relationship between head teacher distributive leadership and professional learning community practices among school teachers. Findings can also be used as a basic guide by the district education and state education department as one of the things that can be shared with leaders or other principals during the monthly meeting. Future researcher can expand their finding to primary schools, or focus on specific schools such as cluster schools or high-performing schools and study can also be extended to Universities as well as colleges or should also be extended from one district to state and even to several specific states to the whole of Malaysia.

Keywords: Distributive Leadership, Professionals Learning Community, Secondary School.

Introduction

Leadership in education state that it is a key factor in the development of a school. It is a huge challenge in addressing the dynamic changes of the world of education traditionally will be borne by school leaders for the sake of educational excellence in schools (Harun et al., 2016). Yet nowadays the direction of educational leadership has changed and no longer sees principals or principals bear all the responsibilities as leaders in the pursuit of school performance. Thus, leadership in education is now more focused on distributive leadership which emphasizes on how to form a culture of leadership responsibility among leaders to assist in the implementation of professional learning community practices.

One of the leadership that can be practiced by a leader is distributive leadership. Defining distributive leadership is performing leadership tasks jointly and mutually responsible towards a common goal of improving an organization (Terrell, 2010). It can be said to be the willingness of the leader to share leadership with subordinates voluntarily and develop the capacity of each individual in the organization. Moreover, a distributive leader always practices responsibility and accountability. So principals in schools need to adopt distributive leadership theory. For example, it is more lateral and less hierarchical in the way staff function (Harris, 2003).

There are also several functions in the distributive leadership of principals in schools such as being able to increase leadership capacity when encouraging initiative and innovation spontaneously (Abdul Rahim & Zahari, 2018). Distributive leadership allows them to hold formal and informal leadership positions to lead in an organization. It is also seen that principals provide more opportunities for groups or teams to collectively carry out school responsibilities, resources and specific spaces to implement professional learning community practices. Therefore, principals need to adopt distributive leadership theory in an effort to encourage the formation of a positive environment in school organizations. This is because distributive leadership is a leadership practice that is not surrounded by formal power and power struggles.

In general, this indicates that Principals and Principals use distributive leadership styles more widely and efficiently. Another study also showed that the higher the practice of distributive leadership practiced among school leaders, the higher the level of quality of the school environment can be formed and this proves that distributive leadership practices can directly help in creating a more conducive teaching and learning environment through a positive school environment (Juliansyah2019). There is also research that shows that when experienced teachers have opportunities for shared discovery and linked to learning, it will result in a broader teaching-learning framework for other teachers; and it will affect the improvement of school quality (Sunaengsih et al., 2020). In contrast to followers of cognitive theory who focus on individual cognition and argue that learning is a process mediated between stimuli and responses, the main concern of sociocultural theory is the individual environment. For them, learning is a by-product of collaboration between individuals (Dehdary, 2017).

Implicitly, schools can create a harmonious environment among school individuals. The presence of this culture will also create an internal capacity which is an effort towards urging the teaching staff to become experts in their different branches of knowledge. The field of professional learning community is cultivated when educators work together in a community-oriented culture to investigate student achievement, share teaching methods, and improve

educational, learning and student achievement (Ismail et al., 2019). A skilled Professional learning community as a structure

The local Professional Learning Community is described as a local community that forms a culture that shows all school children learn and become a learner (Yaakob et al., 2015). In principals 'schools, the second line of administration and instructors have a place as individuals in the professional learning community. They are viewed as staff skilled in the duties of the teaching staff. They are considered people who can carry out consistent learning. They will see and share thinking about how to improve school viability and their students 'learning.

Profesional Learning Community in Malaysia

Through the Continuous Professionalism Development Plan (PPPB, 2014), the Malaysian Ministry of Education clearly suggests that the activities that should be carried out to improve professionalism in schools are through the Professional Learning Community (PLC). Professional learning communities refer to collaborative practices among educators and school leaders who are committed to jointly setting goals and building a collective vision to achieve set goals. This collaboration promotes a sense of 14 shared values, goals, vision and mission, integrity and provides opportunities for teachers and school leaders to get involved in improving their own learning. As a result, the development of professionalism can be continuously improved throughout the career. KPM itself aims to transform the practice of continuous professionalism to increase to 60% by 2025. Referring to the Malaysian Education Development Plan 2013- 2025, the practice of self-initiative based on schools is already at 16%. Now, ahead of the second wave of PPPM 2013-2025, the practice of continuous professionalism implementation should already be at the 40% level, i.e. in 2016. One of the activities in this continuous professionalism practice with independent initiative, which is by giving autonomy and ability to teachers and school leaders (PPPB, 2014). To ensure the success of this effort, the preparation of school leaders and teachers to face change is essential through the act of professional learning communities. The framework of this model is the result of the idea of Senge (1990) who thinks that the development of learning associations decidedly affects the corporate world and the instructive local area. As indicated by him, the learning association framed at the school has had the option to work with the learning of each member and change the individual's self continuously. To ensure the success of this effort, the preparation of school leaders and teachers to face change is essential through the act of professional learning communities. The framework of this model is the result of the idea of Senge (1990) who thinks that the development of learning organizations had a positive effect on the corporate world and the instructive local area. As indicated by him, the learning association shaped at the school has had the option to work with the learning of every part and change the individual's self continuously. Therefore, the individuals from the association have a strong ability to learn. They can adjust to the progressions that happen either outside or 15 inside the association to keep learning while at the same time at work. Peter Senge in his book *The Fifth Discipline* describes learning communities in schools being used to improve school performance and the professionalism of school leaders and teachers. Senge (1990) focuses on the collaboration of learning organizations in schools to improve school performance.

Problem Statement

Schools are seen to play a role as an organization that can manage people and shape as what is seen as a very complex one because it can have an impact on the government's intentions in improving student performance and achievement. According to Harris & Spillane (2008), although distributive leadership has proven to be a successful model for school management, it is still unclear how a principal should develop and implement distributive leadership models in the school environment. Although there are studies arguing that distributive leadership is an important core to improving school success and key skills of principals to shape the school environment, it is still unclear how a principal can influence distributive leadership practices in their school (Crow et al., 2005). According to Puspanathan & Mahaliza (2020), absence of exact proof on training and effect distributive leadership is a research gap in the education system. This matter supported by the results of Hall & Demarco, (2018) who concluded that the concept distributive leadership in Malaysia is still in its infancy because of school administrators still consider this leadership still new and foreign to them. According to Harris et al (2019) the PLC model for schools in Malaysia is still new and foreign. This is on the grounds that the Malaysian Ministry of Education only presented the execution of this 4 Professional Learning Community in 2011. Additionally, there are concentrates on that display that numerous teachers come up short on obvious idea of the implementation of PLC culture in schools (Abdullah, 2020). Studies on the head teacher's leadership towards PLC rehearses among educators are deficient. Most of the studies that have been carried out before have focused on the study of teachers' PLC practices Hamzah & Jamil, (2019); Hassan et al (2018) and PLC practices on student achievement (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2017) and (Abu Hassan & Musa, 2019; Raza, 2018). When studying about distributive leadership practices, there is a significant research gap between domestic and foreign researchers. Distributive leadership has less place among local researchers and more studies still focus on interactional and transformational leadership. Therefore, this study was formed after examining several previous studies on leadership that require changes in the way of leadership in an educational organization (Puspanathan & Mahaliza, 2020). The practice of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) under the support of leaders can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of teachers to continue to excel (Mashira et al., 2019). Thus, an organization needs to have a network of practices as well as good relationships among teachers to be group leaders for organizational excellence (Hudson, 2015; Jamail & Don, 2017). Therefore, this study will look at the relationship between the distributive leadership of principals on the practice of professional learning community in Gombak district secondary schools.

Research Objective

The main objective of this study was conducted to find out the distributive leadership of Principals towards professional learning community practices. To achieve the main objectives of the study and answer the above research questions, this study is dedicated to the following aspects:

1. To identify the level of distributive leadership of head teachers in schools
2. To identify the level of professional learning community practice among teachers in schools
3. To identify the relationship of distributive leadership with professional learning community practices among school teachers.

Methodology

The results of a study are determined by the study design. According to Creswell, (2009), a study design is a plan or proposal for conducting a study that involves the interaction between the study philosophy, research strategy and study design. Study design is also defined as an action plan that reviews in detail how a study is conducted. The study design involved in this study was of quantitative type. Quantitative research was conducted for a large number of study respondents. In general, quantitative research involves statistical analysis where it is more objective and relies on numerical statistical results. The design of this study is based on quantitative research because the total respondents of this study involved teachers from a total of 30 secondary schools under the supervision of Gombak.

Based on the total population of 3189 teachers, with reference to the population and sample size table by Krejcie & Morgan (1970), then the total sample to be selected is 346 teachers. The sampling method used is a simple random sampling method.

Instrument

The selection of research instruments for a study is important in determining the results of the study. It should be in line with the methodology and objectives of the study. This study uses a set of questionnaires as one of the research instruments. This set of questionnaires was adapted from two studies conducted previously, namely a study by Zuraida et al (2016) with the title of study of the influence of distributive leadership on conflict management among school leaders and a study by Abdullah & Ghani (2014) with the study title Professional Learning Community in Secondary schools Community in Malaysia. This questionnaire method was conducted for the purpose of distributive leadership level of leaders and professional learning community practices. In addition, the data from this questionnaire also helped the researcher to know the relationship between distributive leadership style on professional learning community practice.

Result

The respondent demographic that will be discussed in the research will be based on four items. The four listed items of demographics which are gender, race, age and education qualification of the responded that took part in the research. Table 1 illustrates the finding of demographics on the research respondent.

Table 1

Respondent demographic

No	Item	Years	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Age	25 years old and below	12	3.5
		26 to 35 years old	153	44.2
		36 to 49 years old	113	32.7
		50 years old and above	68	19.7
2.	Gender	Male	93	26.9
		Female	253	73.1
3.	Race	Malay	254	73.4
		Chinese	39	11.3
		Indian	30	8.7
		Others	23	6.6
4.	Educational Qualification	Diploma	29	8.4
		Degree	149	43.1
		Masters	161	46.5
		PHD	7	2.0

Looking at table 1.0 shows the finding of respondent age that took part in the study. The highest majority of respondent that took part in the research are those in the age between 26 to 35 years old with 44.2% of them followed by those aged between 36 to 49 years old with 32.7%. Besides that, the younger one of 25 years and below and the eldest one of 50 years and above are 3.5% and 19.7% respectively. In the meantime, frequency of gender respondent participated in the research are analysed. The majority participants are females' respondent with 73.1% while 26.9% of them are male participant. This also explained that 253 of the respondent is female and 93 of them are females. The majority race of respondent took part in the research are the Malay teachers with 73.4% or 254 teachers, followed by the Chinese teachers with 11.3%. Besides, 8.7% 41 of the respondent is Indian teachers and 6.6% of the other race respondent. Finally, the respondent educational qualification is clearly shown in the table 4.0 with two very clear majorities among the respondent. Those respondent holding a masters and degree are highest at 46.5% and 43.1% respectively, meanwhile 2.0% of the respondent has PHD or doctorate while 8.4% holds Diploma.

Level of Distributive Leadership Practices of Principals in Schools

Looking at table 2 with analysed data of the level of distributive leadership practices of principals in school. Overall findings show that the level of distributive leadership of principals in schools are at high level with findings at (mean = 3.91, SD = 0.45). Besides that, there is four dimension under the distributive leadership with the first dimension of the Vision, Mission and goals of the school resulted at high level (mean = 4.13, SD = 0.65) followed by the second dimension of School Culture which also at high level (mean = 3.74, SD = 0.52). Meanwhile, the other two dimension of Responsibility Sharing and Dimensions of Leadership Practice had finding of (mean = 3.91, SD = 0.59) and (mean = 3.85, SD = 0.49) respectively which also indicates at high level as well.

Table 2

Level of Distributive Leadership Practices of Principals in Schools

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Dimensions of the Vision Mission and Goals of the School	4.12	0.65
Dimensions of School Culture	3.73	0.52
Dimensions of Responsibility Sharing	3.91	0.59
Dimensions of Leadership Practices	3.85	0.48
Total	3.90	0.45

Level of Professional Learning Community Practice Among Teachers in Schools

The second research question is focusing on the level of professional learning community practices among teachers in schools. Looking at the findings in table 2 shows overall the level of professional learning community practices among teachers in school are at high level (mean = 3.84, SD = 0.41). The first two dimension of the professional learning community which is the dimension of supporting and sharing leadership and dimension of value sharing, objectives, mission and vision also had findings at high level (mean = 3.86, SD = 0.55) and (mean = 3.85, SD = 0.63) respectively. Apart from that, the dimension of collective learning and application and dimension of personal learning sharing practices also had high level findings with (mean = 3.88, SD = 0.67) and (mean = 3.98, SD = 0.69) respectively as well. Finally, the last two dimension also recorded high level with data (mean = 3.82, SD = 0.45) and (mean = 3.68, SD = 0.55) for the dimension of conditional support relationship and dimension of conditional support structure.

Table 3

Level of Professional Learning Community Practice Among Teachers in Schools

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Dimension of Supporting and Sharing Leadership	3.86	0.55
Dimension of Value Sharing Objectives Mission and Vision	3.85	0.63
Dimension of Collective Learning and Application	3.88	0.67
Dimension of Personal Learning Sharing Practices	3.98	0.69
Dimension of Conditional Support Relationship	3.82	0.45
Dimension of Conditional Support Structure	3.68	0.55
Total	3.84	0.41

Relationship Between Head Teacher Distributive Leadership and Professional Learning Community Practices Among School Teachers

The third research question of the study is the relationship between head teacher distributive leadership and professional learning community practices among school teachers. The result in table 3 shows that $r(346) = .905$, $p < .005$, whereby there is a very strong positive relationship between headmaster distributive leadership and professional learning community practices among school teachers. In conclusion, there is significant relationship between head teacher distributive leadership and professional learning community practices among school teachers as p value at .000 is less than 0.05.

Table 4

Relationship Between Head Teacher Distributive Leadership and Professional Learning Community Practices Among School Teachers

			Headmaster Distributive Leadership Style	Professional Learning Community Practices
Headmaster Distributive Leadership Style	Pearson Correlation		1	.905**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000
	N		346	346
Professional Learning Community Practices	Pearson Correlation		.905**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
	N		346	346

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

In the meantime, looking at the first research question that focuses on the level of distributive leadership practices of principals in schools. Overall, the discussion will be directed to the four dimensions found in distributive leadership, namely the dimension of vision, mission and goals of the school, the dimension of school culture, the dimension of responsibility sharing and the dimension of leadership practice. The overall findings for distributive leadership are at a high level which is in line with the findings of (Hall & Demarco, 2018) which also found that the level of distributive leadership among principals is at a high level. Besides that, Puspanathan & Mahaliza (2020) had a similar findings shows that the all the dimensions are at high level. Referring to the first dimension in distributive leadership of principals, the researcher obtained that the level on the dimensions of Vision, mission and goals of the school is at a high level. The outcome of this research are in line with the findings of the study by (Balakrishnan & Abdul Wahab, 2018) which likewise viewed that as the dimensions of Vision, mission and goals of the school are at high level. The finding also explain that educators well agreed that the school has a clear vision and an accurate mission statement as well as teachers what's more, overseers get it and backing the shared mission for the school and are able to articulate it clearly. The result was well supported by Abdullah, (2020) with the finding that shows a great understanding and support sharing among the school management and the teachers in order to accomplishing the vision and mission of the school. Besides that, finding also saw that teachers agreed that they furthermore, directors altogether set school achievement and review goals annually and this finding are in line with the finding of (Mansor, 2020). Relating with the research theory whereby organizational development no longer depends on the absolute power of a leader but also depends on the expertise and skills of other followers in his organization (Amzat & Yanti, 2022). Thus, it can be related with the finding whereby school administrator and teachers works hand to hand in setting school goals and achieve it together.

The second research question were on the level of professional learning community practice among teachers in school with the level were at also high level. The finding were well supported by Abdullah (2020) which also found the similir high level. Besides that, the finding also shows tha all dimension of professional leraning community are also founded at high

level. This six dimension are the dimension of supporting and sharing leadership, dimension of value sharing objectives mission and vision, dimension of collective learning and application, dimension of personal learning sharing practices, dimension of conditional support relationship and finally dimension of conditional support structure with each were also at high level as the research of (Teng & Izham, 2017). The fourth dimension are the dimension of personal learning sharing practices that resulted at high level and this result is also supported by the research of (Hamzah & Jamil, 2019). The result shows that teacher strongly agrees that Teachers always provide relevant responses related to teaching practices by colleagues and always provide relevant responses related to teaching practices by colleagues. This outcome goes in accordance with another research of Hassan & Ismail (2020) which also found that the dimension of personal learning sharing practices are at high level. Besides that, the finding also said that teacher agree they continuously get criticism on their presentation to continuously improve their practice and this is well supported by the research by (Hassan et al., 2018). Meanwhile, another finding of the research explain that teacher is moderate and undecided to statement that they always provide feedback to their colleagues related to teaching practice. This finding were so contradicting and this shows that there is a mix feeling of giving and receiving feedbacks among teachers and the result are well aligned with the research of (Amzat & Yanti, 2022). Besides that, Mansor (2020) found that the dimension of personal learning sharing practices are at moderate level with teacher undecided that they are willing to will try out ideas that they should share in the classroom and the result is also align with the current research. The Hord module also insists the importance of four main components, namely information sharing among teachers, teamwork to plan, solve problems and improve student learning, constantly acquire new knowledge and apply strategies in assignments. In conclusion, the findings can be connected with the module although there is findings that is not align to the Hord module directly due to teachers conflict.

Relationship Between Principal Distributive Leadership and Professional Learning Community Practices Among School Teachers Looking at the findings, researcher had concluded that there is a significant relationship principal distributive leadership and professional learning community practices among school teachers. This result had clearly confirmed that the a well performing distributive leadership can clearly enhance the activities and performance of professional learning community among the teachers. This result were supported by finding of Abdullah, (2020) which also resulted that there is a significant relationship between the principal distributive leadership and professional community learning among the teachers. Besides that, another finding shows there was no significant relationship between the principal distributive leadership and professional learning community among the teachers with the research by (Hamzah & Jamil, 2019). It was discovered that principal lately had adopted well on the distributive leadership line and this also had impacted their focus to improve the professional learning community among the teachers. The belief had increase stronger due to the impact that will give when teachers collaborate among each other and also with the management in order to improve the student's achievement. Besides that, the result was also accepted by another research by (Puspanathan & Mahaliza, 2020). Hereby, the conclusion here is that the distributive leadership among principals can clearly give positive impact and has a significant relationship with the professional learning community among the school teachers.

Conclusion

Lately, much has been said about the diversity levels of leadership and ways of leadership shown by principals and how it impacts the teachers in performing their duties. Although the study only focuses on one district and refers to secondary schools but the findings show that the level of Distributive leadership is at a high level among principals while the practice of professional learning community among teachers is also at a high level. Thus, the high level of distributive leadership, have a great impact on the practice of professional learning communities among teachers. In conclusion, it can be stated that the level of distributive leadership of principals does impact the practice of professional learning community of secondary school teachers in Gombak district.

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