The Mediating Effect of School Climate on Transformational Leadership and School Effectiveness

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Abstract: *The purpose of this paper is to develop a conceptual model in exploring the mediating effect of school climate on transformational leadership and school effectiveness in Malaysian primary schools. As such, this conceptual paper was developed based on three theories: School Effectiveeess Theory (Lezzote and Kynder, 2011), Transformational Leadership Theory (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2000) and School Climate Theory (Wayne K. Hoy, 2003). Upon extensive review on the past studies, four dimension of Transformational Leadership, four dimensions of School Climate and seven dimensions of School Effectiveness were identified to contrast this model.*

Keywords: *School Climate, Transformational Leadership, School Effectiveness*

1. INTRODUCTION

The 21st century has witnesses a rapid change in the Malaysian education system. The Malaysian Education Development Plan (2013-2025) has been design to enrich the quality of human capital by putting the education system at higher level and more effective and efficient (MuhyiddinYassin, 2013). Therefore, continuous effort should be taken to ensure the effectiveness of schools as it is believed that an effective school will cater more efficient future human capital (Habib Ismail and ZaimahRamli, 2012). In order for the school to achieve its effectiveness, the management of the head teacher as a leader should be excellent because successfulness of a human capital begins at the school level (NajibRazak, 2010; Muhyiddin, 2013; Fullan, 2011; Jamilah Man et al., 2016). As such, in line with the current transformation and reformation in the Malaysian education context, the transformational leadership received the most attention as an ideal leadership in bring about the changes into school (Khalip Musa, 2013). Nevertheless, one must understand that the effectiveness of a school not solely depends on the transformational leader because the schools itself are facing the transformation process whereby the schools had to facilitate the current new educational policies brought by the Ministry of Education. As such, the school climate had to be favourable in bringing about the success of the new implementation. Moreover, researchers on school climate noted that a positive school climate affects the overall effectiveness of the school (Hoy &Miskel, 2001: DorinaRapti, 2013). The school climate also has become an attractive factor to study in a search for components that promote school effectiveness (Nancy Allen et al., 2015).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. School Effectiveness

There is no universally accepted definition on the term of 'effectiveness'. The cause of the disagreement of the definitions was due to the differences between the researchers in term of cultural background, their belief and environment (Al-Amri, 1992) cited in AlammarLaila (2015). There is also no accepted definition on the school effectiveness. However, if there are elements of both what the student learning and teachers do then it can be considered as acceptable definition. Based on the earlier studies on school effectiveness, many scholars defined school effectiveness based on student academic achievement in socio-economic status, respect to gender and ethnic inclination (Dobbie & Fryer Jr, 2011). Mortimore (1995:7) defines effective school as "One in which the pupils progress further than might be predicted from consideration of their attainment when they enter the school".

Meanwhile, Hussein Mahmood (1993) viewed effective school as not only an establised primary school but school that can produce high academic achievement with fewer discipline problems and had gained public's confidence and mantaned high working satisfaction among the teachers. Whereas according to Brookover and Lezotte (1979) and Teddlie et al. (1985, 1989), the effective schools are schools that improve student academic achievement among student of low Socio-Economic (SES) families.

For the purpose of this paper the school effectiveness is defined based on Lezotte and McKee Snyder (2011). According to these both researchers, school effectiveness is a school with strong leadership, an engaging curriculum, challenging academic standards, effective instruction and positive school climate. In order to measure the school effectiveness, the Seven Correlates of School Effectiveness by Lezzote and Snyder (2011) capturing the following dimensions: high expectation for success, strong instructional leadership, clear and focused mission, opportunity to learn/time on task, frequent monitoring of student progress, safe and orderly environment, and positive school climate will be used. The instrument was developed based on re-envisioning the correlates of earlier studies and it is durable as have been proven over time.

2.2. Transformational Leadership

Burns (1978) was the first researcher who introduced the Transformational Leadership. The basic foundation of transformational leadership theory resolves around the importance of transforming others into leaders. However, this theory was improvised over the periods revising all the inadequacies by the earlier researchers. Earlier, Burns theory was based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs whereby he believed that transformational leadership could raise followers from a lower level to a higher level of morality and motivation. Bass (1985) refined and expended Burns' leadership theory by saying that leader encourages the followers to go beyond self-interest for the good of the team or the organization. Bass theory more concentrated on the exchanges between the leader and followers inside the organizations. Then, Bass and Avolio (1998) came with the theory of Full Range of Leadership. Through this Full Range of Leadership, identification and training of potential leader were investigated more systematically. Leithwood and his colleagues have been instrumental in bridging the work of Burns and Bass into fields of educational administration. Leithwood and Jantzi (2000 p.114) used the following seven dimensions to describe transformational leadership: building school vision and establishing schools goals; providing intellectual stimulation; offering individualized support; modelling best practices and important organizational values; demonstrating high performance expectations; creating a productive school culture; and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions. Leithwood also added the following management dimensions to the models of transformational leadership: staffing, instructional support, monitoring school activities and community focus. Then, Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) organized the following dimensions into the following categories: setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization and managing the instructional program.

As for this paper, the four dimensions of Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) will be used to measure the transformational leadership. Based on scholars' studies, transformational leadership was proposed an ideal leadership to bring about the changes in schools. In Malaysian context, to be inline with the current National Educational Blueprint (2013-2025), a leader should practices all the dimensions of transformational leadership at its best (Jamilah Man et al., 2016).

2.3. School Climate

Cohen et al., (2009) stated that there is no one universally agreed definition on the school climate. Generally school climate was viewed as encompasses teachers' shared perceptions of their overall work environment to include the internal features that distinguish one school from another and its impact on the behaviour of its staff members (Hoy, 1990; Hoy & Tarter, 1992; Owens, 2004; Stolp& Smith, 1995).According to Hoy &Miskel (2013) school climate is a relatively enduring quality of the school environment that is experienced by participants, affects their behaviour, and is based on their collective perceptions of behaviour in school. There are two perspectives on school climate: openness of school climate and the health of school climate. Meanwhile, according to Okorji et al., (2016) open and closed climates are among the prominent types of school climate. The open school climate viewed as healthy (positive) climate; consists of combined interaction between members of the school

community, friendly and favourable. On the other hand, the closed school climate seen as unhealthy and contradictory to the qualities of open school climates.

As for this study, the school climate will be measured using the Organizational Climate Index (OCI) by Hoy (2003). The OCI comprises four dimensions and it is the single instruments derived from factor analytic study of Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ) and Organizational Health Index (OHI). The OCI enable to capture the openness and the healthiness of the school in the single instrument.

2.4. Transformational Leadership and School Effectiveness

Analysing the theories in the literature, the transformational leadership received the most attention as an ideal leadership and current leadership in bring about the changes into school (Wan HanumSuraya and Jamal NordinYunus, 2012; Khalip Musa, 2013). Moreover, current education transformation and school reform brought under the National Blueprint (2013-2025) have called for a leader with transformational abilities (Ryan H Shatzer et al., 2013).Based on previous researcher, transformational leader have three global transformative skills: the headmaster able to identify and sustain a vision of the school which is interpreted as conceptual skills by other researchers; able to stimulate the intellectual of other members of the school and this can only be done by a person who knows the educational process of a school, using a combination of interpersonal and technical skills; and individual consideration for others; the human or interpersonal skills (AydinBalyer, 2012). The use of these skills was discovered to enhance school effectiveness by transform the teachers to achieve school goals. A study conducted by Jamilah Man, Yahya Don &Siti Noor Ismail (2016) indicates that's there is positive relationship between the transformational leadership and school leaders with the quality of the teachers. A quality teacher will be able to deliver a quality teaching and learning in the classroom which leads to achieve the school goals. As such, current restructuring in education in Malaysia urged the need of transformational leadership for the school to be effective.

2.5. Transformational Leadership and School Climate

Studying the past research indicates that currently in Malaysia transformational leadership has given the priority in managing the schools (Khalip Musa, 2013; SiminGhavifekr et al., 2014; Wan Marfazila Wan Mahmud et al., 2014).Here transformational leadership is seen at the input stage in the open system. As such, stressing on leadership alone is not sufficient for the school to be effective. Another important factor to be focus is the favourable school climate which also an important element in the open system[1]. Past findings on the relationship between the transformational leadership and school climate also revealed that transformational leadership has an effect on four aspect of school climate (affiliation, innovation, professional interest and resource edequacy) (Adel Tajasom & ZainalArrifin Ahmad, 2011). Another study by Madison (2002) argues that there is a positive school climate under the principal who perceived transformational leadership. Hence, transformational leadership affects school climate.

2.6. School Climate and School Effectiveness

According to Iyer (2011, p.4) an effective school is a school processes result in observable positive outcomes among its students, consistently over a period of time. On the other hand, scholars also indicates some parameters in measuring the effectiveness of schools based on level of discipline tone of the school, school climate, teachers' performance and the number of students who successfully pass their school leaving certificate examinations (Bolanle, 2013). Eventually, the school climate factor plays an important role in an effective school and the school has to create an environment which might be favourable or unfavourable for effectiveness (Jack, 2010). Past findings indicates that by maintaining positive school climate will be favourable for the headmaster to improve school, staff and the student performance (Tubbs & Garner, 2008; Adel Tajasom & ZainalArrifin Ahmad, 2011; Vos et al., 2012). Hence, school climate affects school effectiveness.

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[1]According to Lee Mei Thien and Nordin Abdul Razak (2012), an open system is an organization which conceives combination of parts with interdependent relationship and open to interaction with the external environment (government regulation, social-cultural, economic and political forces).
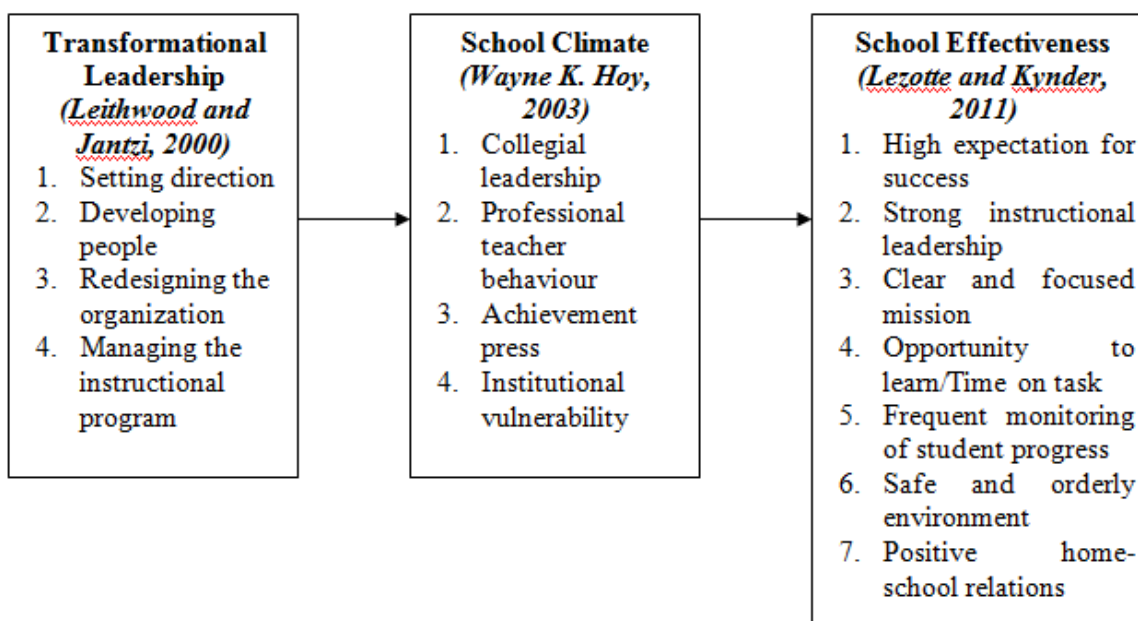
2.7. Mediating role of School Climate in Relationship between Transformational Leadership and School Effectiveness

The findings from the previous studies suggested that transformational leadership have an important role in moulding an effective school. However, as a leader of the school the headmaster also plays crucial role in creating favourable environment (positive school climate). This is due to the facts that unfavourable environment leads to ineffectiveness (Vos et al., 2012). According to Muhammad Faizal A. Ghani et al., (2011), the primary factor of school to be effective not only depends on the effectiveness of variable input such as school leader but the teacher and the students too. The teacher has to be a role model for the students and create healthy working condition. Indirectly, healthy condition improves students learning process and leads to higher achievements. Although theschool climate associated with transformational leadership and school effectiveness in several studies, the current study is one of only a few that examining the mediating role of school climate in relationship between transformational leadership and school effectiveness especially in Malaysian context. As such, this study is proposed to examine the role of school climate in relationship between transformational leadership and school effectiveness.

3. CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH FRAMEWOK

After reviewing the literature review, this research framework is developed in order to explore the mediating role of school climate on transformational leadership and school effectiveness in Malaysian primary schools. The independent variable in this study is the transformational leadership, while school climate as the mediating variable and the school effectiveness is the dependent variable. The framework highlights the need for school climate in the school management as specific dimensions that will enhance the school effectiveness.

Hypothesized model 1: linking transformational leadership, school climate and school effectiveness

Transformational Leadership (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2000)	School Climate (Wayne K. Hoy, 2003)	School Effectiveness (Lezotte and Kynder, 2011)
1. Setting direction 2. Developing people 3. Redesigning the organization 4. Managing the instructional program	1. Collegial leadership 2. Professional teacher behaviour 3. Achievement press 4. Institutional vulnerability	1. High expectation for success 2. Strong instructional leadership 3. Clear and focused mission 4. Opportunity to learn/Time on task 5. Frequent monitoring of student progress 6. Safe and orderly environment 7. Positive home-school relations

4. CONCLUSION

School effectiveness has become a major focus in order to deliver quality human capital. As such, transformational leadership is proposed to fulfil the current changes and reformation in education system. Nevertheless, apart from many alternatives undertaken by the Malaysian government, it is still far beyond the Ministry of Education expectations. As such, this study contributes to school effectiveness literature by incorporating the transformational leadership style and school climate experienced by Malaysian primary school. These findings will directly benefit the headmasters by informing them of which practices seem to most positively impact teachers and students, thus contributes to the school effectiveness. Besides that, it is hoped that this study can also add more in-depth literature review in academia about the relationship of transformational leadership style, school climate and school effectiveness in Malaysia. It can help the new researchers to conduct more comprehensive and complete studies in years to come.

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