ADMINISTRATORS' LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS IN HIGH PERFORMANCE SCHOOLS:
A Change

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ABSTRACT

In facing the challenges of achieving national education excellence; strengthening the leadership in High Performance Schools (HPS) which can be emulated, has become the main agenda of the Ministry of Education (MOE). Educational excellence is the administrator's responsibility; therefor the administrator must prudently manage change. Implementing change requires effective leadership skills as change certainly has its inherent risks. The process of change through best practices is introduced as an alternative approach in building effective leadership of HPS administrators. The two major processes of change are 'reform' and 'norming' which involves the innovation and acculturation for change. The challenge of managing organizational change demands education administrators in HPS to fine tune the best formula to manage change which focuses on administrators, teachers and students' excellence. The impact of these results, a best practice model of leadership effectiveness in HPS is formed to guide the administrators who are striving for a holistic change in school development.

Keywords: *Leadership Effectiveness, High Performance Schools, Management of change.*

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Education is the lifeblood of a country's development, as the rise and fall of a country is highly dependent on it. An advanced education ensures development and vice versa. Thus, in addressing the challenges of rapid globalization, we must ensure that education in our country is able to embrace change in line with the advancements and latest developments in international education. Due to the fact that the Malaysian education administration system is centralized; the policies and direction of our national education is assigned by the Ministry of Education (MOE). Schools across the country are responsible for implementing the policies that have been enacted. Therefore, the success or failure of a government policy is indeed depends on the effective leadership of principals or headmasters of schools, educational institutions across the country and education organizations as a whole.

Bush and Middlewood (2005) state, theory and practice in education has shown that leadership is crucial as it contributes to the success and excellence of a school. This means that a charismatic leader is an important factor in determining the success of an organization. Many measures have been taken by the government and the Ministry of Education to improve the quality of education, which will ensure that the government achieves its intention to make Malaysia as a center for academic excellence at the national level and throughout the Asian region in the 21st century. During the launch of six core National Key Result Areas (NKRA) by our Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak in Putrajaya (Bernama, 27 July 2009), he highlighted the importance of quality education. Four sub-NKRAs are, the widening and strengthening of pre-school education, increasing the rate of literacy and numeracy, creating High Performance Schools (HPS) and recognizing the principals and headmasters who demonstrate outstanding performance. In the selection of HPSs, the contributions and leadership of a principal or headmaster who has managed to boost the school's excellence which leads to being selected as a HPS, will be rewarded and recognized.

Administrator leadership effectiveness is needed to manage and administer the school organization, especially HPSs in particular, to produce a generation with distinguished qualities. School administrators should always be dynamic and innovative to fulfill the expectations of society and the challenges of the future. Similarly, the transformation of education refers to a planned change in education through New Developments in Education 2010-2012; to develop education systematically and provide exceptional infrastructure for education. These issues are very significant to the leadership qualities in HPSs. This is in line with the findings of previous research by Tschannen-Moran (2001) and Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2003) which highlights leadership that emphasizes on the human touch. Studies show that human resource leadership is the most preferred and prevailing style of leadership practiced by principals. Therefore, the findings of this study are consistent with the findings by Ross (2006), Messer (2002) in the United States and Cruz (2003) in Puerto Rico in Lokman et al. (2008).

Management and leadership skills of the principal are the key factors that determine the success of an organization (Abdul Shukor 2004; Atan et al., 1991; Edmond 1979; Noordin and Syarifalludin 2004; Stogdill 1974; Trump 1981 in Bity et al. 2010). Our national educational aspirations will not come to full fruition if the school administrator's leadership is too focused on only administrative tasks. It is an undeniable fact that the field of principalship today is dynamic, complex and has higher demands. Herbert (2006), Chan Yuen Fook (2000) in Lokman et al. (2008). Principals should adopt quality leadership as it is the key determinant for excellence of the school. (Lokman and Robiah, 2008).

2.0   EFFECTIVENESS OF LEADERSHIP AND CHANGE
2.1   *Administrator Leadership Effectiveness Towards Change*
John C. Maxwell (2007) has detailed seven key areas to identify leaders; which is you are able to determine who the real leader is and how to become a real leader. There are seven key areas reveal themselves in a leader's life that causes him or her to step forward as a leader, as shown below;

  i.   Character (Who they are)
 ii.   Relationships (Who they know)
iii.   Knowledge (What they know)
 iv.   Intuition (What they Feel)
  v.   Experience (Where They've Been)
 vi.   Past Success (What They've Done)
vii.   Ability (What They Can Do)

For school institutions, change is inevitable as the school institution is a part of our ever changing world. Thus, school administrators must also change to adopt and adapt to the various demands of the changing environment. School administrators should be aware that unplanned environmental changes are now more frequent and rapid due to the impact of globalization and a borderless world, so to speak. This scenario greatly affects the ability of the administrator's leadership in spearheading change in HPSs.

Change can also be defined as a planned change in a conscious and deliberate effort towards a common goal to improve the system (Brinsden, Hilario and Massarella, 2002). Changes in education are intended to help schools achieve their goals more effectively by replacing the structure of the current program or practice to another which is better. Changes in education can be divided into two stages:
  i. National education system (comprehensive)
 ii. Organization of education (Ministry, State, District & Schools)

School issues in regard to problems and school improvement is no longer the sole responsibility of one individual leader but, a shared and mutual responsibility of individuals within the particular organization. Studies by a prominent educator (Harris, B., 2007) on the school and the effectiveness of leadership show that in an increasingly complex school organization, a fundamental shift in standard practices and adaptive leadership is needed. School administrators need to change the image and embrace a paradigm shift by developing the capacity and potential of teacher leadership. These teachers can then form collaborations to solve school problems; which ultimately leads to a more dynamic change. This leadership style has significant potential to contribute to the process of change, improvement and progress of the school.

Leadership is the ability to inspire individuals or groups of people to create an absolute commitment, willingness and readiness to achieve the goals of a particular organization (Goetch & Davis 2000, 241). While Lussier (2002) and Koontz and Wichrich (1991) in Mohamad Najib (2004), are in the opinion that leadership is a process of mutual influence between leader and followers so that they would push forward willingly and enthusiastically to achieve organizational objectives through the changes that they make. While Aizzat, Intan

and Zainal Ariffin (2006), state that leadership is the process of developing a vision, inspiring greater commitment and directing human resource efforts toward achieving organizational goals. Leadership in the organization can exist in two forms, namely formal leadership and informal leadership.

Kouzes Posner (2002) "... Leaders mobilize others to want to get extraordinary things done in organizations. It's about the practices leaders use to transform values into actions, visions into realities, obstacles into innovations, separateness into solidarity, and risks into rewards. Kouzes Posner (2002) also adds; "The domain of the leaders is the future. The leader's unique legacy is the creation of the valued institutions that survive over time. The most significant contribution of leaders is not simply to today's bottom line; it is to the long term development of people and institutions so that that they can adapt, change, prosper and grow".

3.0   BEST PRACTISE LEADERSHIP IN HIGH PERFORMANCE SCHOOLS (HPS)

A study by Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley and Beresford (2002) in the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP); which is a three-phase project involving eight countries namely England, Canada, USA, Australia, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and China; found that specific leadership traits and practices of successful school leaders, influence a school's success. Following the discovery of this new dimension, a case study 'across country' in ISSPP was initiated. Leithwood and Day (2007) had obtained evidence that there are additional practices which are relevant for a successful school leadership. Successful leaders have personal and professional values, positive characteristics and the ability to predict and adapt his leadership according to the needs and context of a particular school.

While James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, (2002) in their book 'Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership' put five best practices that should be adhered by school leaders to improve school performance, namely model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act and encourage the heart. While in among some effective leadership practices in HPS according to Kouzes Posner, (2002) are; embracing change (challenge the process), providing inspiration to achieve common goals (Inspiring a shared vision), allowing the organizations to act (enabling others to act), leading implementation (modeling the way) and promoting the organization's efforts (encouraging the heart). It is also significant with the 12 qualities of effective leaders mentioned by Bethel, (2004) where the leader who has the right mission, is a great thinker, have high ethical values, as change agents, is sensitive to the surrounding, takes risks, decision-makers , wise use of power, communicate effectively, build effective working groups, brave and always gives encouragement and is committed.

School success is dependent on the leadership of administrators, mainly school principals. Principals need to be sensitive to change, understand the internal and external context of the school and determine the direction of the school. They also must be insightful in developing human resource and perceptive in structuring the organization of the school. Leithwood et al. (2003) proposes a basic set of effective leadership practices which are very useful to all school organizations that want to achieve success. This basic set of effective leadership practices consists of three dimensions i.e. determining the direction of the organization, development of human resource and structuring of the organization.

The school principal's leadership practices or the best headmaster will have an impact on school improvement and students' academic and non-academic achievement. According to Jo et al. (2010), the leader of the HPS always emphasizes the instructional process and students' achievements in learning. Through a study done on 20 HPS principals in the United States, it was found that the leadership of these principals is not only focused on the leadership of teaching and learning but also includes administrative leadership and instructional leadership. Jo et al. (2010) had developed an HSP model known as the Double Helix Model where the dominant leadership commonly used in HSP is the administrative and instructional leadership. Jo et al. (2010) found that HPS leaders practice instructional leadership where the leaders always focus on the teaching and learning process.

Therefore, a leader must have the characteristics of effective leaders and adopt best leadership practices. Based on the key features that should be present in HPS, the dominant leadership skill that should be possessed and applied by HPS leaders is transformational leadership. Leithwood et al. (2007). For a school to succeed, it is paramount that the principal or headmaster must excel in leadership qualities.

4.0   PRINCIPLES AND CHANGES IN HIGH PERFORMANCE SCHOOLS (HPS)

According to Morrison (2008) and Smith (2009), HPS can be achieved and used as an instrument in the education system in Malaysia. Among the features of the HPS are strict school leadership, accountability, proactive and effective, school-based management and performance driven. In a HPS, high expectations and high standards of achievement in all areas are expected of their students. HPS must also be effective in specific

aspects such as the capacity to produce successful students with towering personalities who will be future leaders of local and international organizations. Other than that, relationships and communication where active networks exists between HPS with other local, foreign and international schools must be in place. Nevertheless, self-identity, self-directed learning, high performance work systems, equality and empowerment are included as well.

Studies on educational leadership have proven that leadership plays an important role in the efforts to make the school successful and achieve high performance (Simone & Uchiyama, 2003). Leadership includes school leadership, administrative reform and leadership qualities in HPS. Among the concepts that need to be nurtured by the educational leadership of the HPS are, the concept of emotional intelligence and leadership, transformational leadership, teachers' commitment, culture of the HPS and the function of culture in establishing HPS. This is supported by the view that the school needs an effective leader or manager to administer; without which problems will exist in the organization (Fiedler and Chemers, 1974; Abd Gratitude, 1988; Alimuddin, 2006). Educational leadership is *sine qua non* for success in schools primarily in HPS.

A study carried out by Baile and Collinwood (2008) found that effective leadership has a significant impact on the effectiveness and success in the improvement of an organization particularly, in schools and universities. With the changes taking place in the current era of globalization, the leadership of a principal or headmaster is not only focused on leadership for teaching and learning alone but on an ideal leadership and is able to change the mindset, values and attitudes or behavior of the people within a school organization so that they are committed to the goals of the organization and strive for excellence. Waters, Marzano, & Mc Nulty (2003) agree that HPS leaders must be sensitive to the current situation, able to stimulate intellectual skills among teachers and support staff, able to become agents of change, involve the school community in designing and implementing a policy and decision, always ensure that there is a healthy culture and constantly monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on pupils' learning. According to Jo, Joseph, & Dana (2010) the leadership of principals and headmasters who are ideal and current are very important and has a strong effect on the formation of HPS.

In assessing the elements of leadership among school administrators, there are theories and models associated with the effectiveness of the management of change system that leads to effective management towards the excellence of an educational organization in its optimum capacity. One of which is the "State's Regional Effectiveness Model", where this model was inspired by Caldwell (2008) and is also used in research related to educational transformation. The eight elements of the model are professional leadership, a focus on learning and teaching, strategic stakeholder partnerships, shared moral purpose, high expectations for all learners, a focus on continuous improvement and strategic use of resources. The study found that this model was used by the management of educational organizations in Victoria, Australia. Researchers believe that every network under each state, including several schools in the cluster also have the expectation that all principals will share responsibility for all students under their cluster which includes sharing of professional knowledge, issues of public awareness and the collection of appropriate sources .

## 5.0   ADMINISTRATOR LEADERSHIP IN HIGH PERFORMANCE SCHOOLS (HPS) THROUGH STUDENT SUCCESS

The school leadership has an influence on the success of students and school performance (Hammond et al., 2005 in The Wallace Foundation Report) through the influence of the leaders towards those around them, on the elements and processes of the organization (Anderson and Wahlsrom, 2004). According to Silins & Mulford (2001), leadership has an indirect impact on student success; i.e. through instructional leadership that affects the quality of teachers. While Early et al. (2004) stated that 10 schools were "well-led" in the United Kingdom (UK) because the principals are problem solvers, are always seen around the school environment, have strong senior leadership teams, respect the 'middle-managers', act as agents of change who can compromise and are adaptable. The National Professional Standard for Principals (Australia for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011) managed to see the elements of effective leadership being instilled through professional teaching and learning which is believed to be able to produce successful learners, confident, creative individuals and active informed citizens.

In making a change and a paradigm shift, high performance schools prioritize a number of factors related to the school objectives and methods to achieve it. The objective is the emphasis on the success of the school and pupils' excellence, while methods for achieving this objective refer to the process of change experienced by the school namely, having a clear and strategic vision, leadership excellence, positive environment, high quality and effective teaching and learning process, professional development, involvement of all parties in decision making and the existence of a healthy relationship and strong cooperation from all parties both internal and external.

However, Leithwood et al., (2003) also argues that successful and high performing schools are those that emphasize both the process of change in the orientation of the administrative leadership and orientation of students' achievements and accomplishments of the organization. Both types of orientation are important and complementary. The creation of high performance schools do not happen by itself because according to Hussein, (2008); Razik and Swanson, (2001): Day et al., (2006), leadership is the most important factor to form a successful and high performing school. Many studies agree that what distinguishes the success of a school is the leadership of the principal or headmaster.

The National Transformation Plan (2010-2020) reports that students' excellence will increase significantly if outstanding leaders replace less brilliant leader. Results from 70 studies involving 2,194 schools show that when there is an increase of a standard deviation (σ) in the quality of leadership, it will have a positive impact on students' achievement by 10% (Mid Continent Research for Education and Learning McRell). It is thus able to improve the school's ability accurately to changes which are more dynamic and effective.

The process of bringing about administrative leadership sustainability in HPS is a continuum of change based on ongoing diversity model (continuum) as in Figure 1 below, which accounts for three-phases beginning with identifying the diversity, appreciating uniqueness and of difference in abilities and eventually managing a change while taking in to account the element of diversity itself towards organizational excellence. When there is a phase of change which ultimately targets the condition in an ordinary school to transform to a better condition which eventually achieves HPS status, then it is a focal point which has to be seen from the point of the effective leadership of the leader.
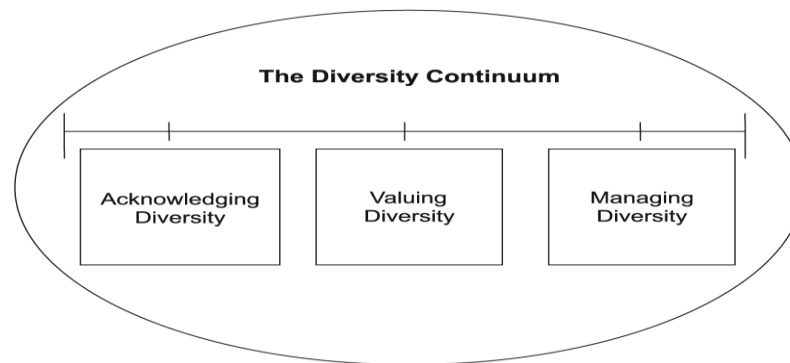
'   **Figure 1:** The Diversity Continuum

6.0   CONCLUSION

To maintain excellence in the HPS, sustainability indicators of excellence; in other words the principal's leadership effectiveness is the 'Key Performance Index' (KPI) based on the Grade Point Average (GPA) of 70% and Standard Quality of Education in Malaysia of 30% = Composite Index Score. In grasping the continuity of change in the development of HPS, the administrator must strategically aspire to achieve the six focused areas of the HPS strategic plan stated by the MOE;

Focus 1: High Performance Leadership

Focus 2: Adoption of School-Based Management

Focus 3: Creating Accountability

Focus 4: Standards and Benchmarking

Focus 5: Malaysia as a Center of Excellence

Focus 6: Embracing Change and Reform

HPS leaders also create a culture which supports the process of teaching, always have discussions on teaching, emphasize on the professional development of teachers and follow a systems development approach based on eleven research-based elements (factors of achievement, planning, instructional components, teaching strategies and student ability , teaching based on content, instruction, the variety of students' needs, technology, models of teaching and classroom management) when they interact with teachers about instructional process. Success in high performance schools may not be achieved without the efforts by all parties in the school organization. The main factor that leads to an HPS's achievement is the effective leadership of the administrator i.e. the principal or headmaster. Duties of a leader are arduous and this is eminently true when the leader leads an average performance school to greater heights of excellence and attains HPS status.

Indeed, the administrator's effective leadership will ensure success of an HPS. Ideally, the school administrators need to adopt best practices as suggested by the examples of leadership effectiveness and need to be efficient in performing their leadership duties. Next, the HPS administrator must be accountable and strive to achieve the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) through the National Key Result Areas (NKRA) in their respective schools.

Therefore, we need leaders who have the sensitivity, the ability to lead the organization, capable of making professional judgments, analyzing problems, have high regards to moral values and exhibit contemporary qualities that can bring substantial change to the school. Leaders such as this will spearhead the development of schools especially HPSs to a level that is more dynamic and prestigious. This is consistent with the view by Heraclitus, the early Greek philosopher who maintained that strife and change are the natural conditions of the universe. "Everything flows and nothing abides; everything gives way and nothing fixed. You cannot step twice into the same river, for other waters are continually flowing on. Cool things become warm, the warm grows cool; the moist dries, the parched become moist. It is changing that things find repose".

Thus the administrator leadership effectiveness is the most important factor to form a successful high performance school (Hussein, 2008; Razik and Swanson, 2001; Day et al., 2006). Studies have indicated that the determinant which distinguishes the success of a school compared to other schools is the leadership of the principal or headmaster. This is because according to Hussein (2008) the dynamic and decisive leadership of the principal has been identified as the variable that leads to the success of a particular school. Baile and Collinwood (2008) described that the leadership of highly effective leaders will have a significant impact on the effectiveness and success in the improvement of schools.

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