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Middle Managers' Leadership and Students' Learning Behaviour: The Role of Teacher Collective Efficacy as Mediator

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Abstract

This research aims to identify the influence of school middle managers' leadership towards the teachers' collective efficacy and students' learning behaviour. The objectives of this research focus specifically in determining whether teachers' collective efficacy is the mediator between school middle managers' transformational and instructional leadership with students' learning behaviour. 320 teachers are selected randomly from public secondary schools of three states from Northern Part of Peninsular Malaysia. The data for this research were obtained via adapted questionnaires from the instruments by Leithwood and Jantzi (1999); Ross and Gray (2006); Kursunoglu and Tanriogen (2009); Leithwood, Patten and Jantzi (2010). These data were analysed using the AMOS 18. The results from SEM analysis (structural equation modelling) showed that transformational leadership (β=0.23, $p<0.01$) and instructional leadership (β=0.19, $p<0.01$) have positive effect towards the teachers' collective efficacy with variance of 47%. Meanwhile, transformational leadership (β=0.19, $p<0.01$), instructional leadership (β=0.28, $p<0.01$) and teachers' collective efficacy (β=0.30, $p<0.01$) posed a direct and positive influence towards students' learning behaviour with a variance of 44%. Results also revealed that teachers' collective efficacy act as a partial mediator between middle managers' transformational leadership and students' learning behaviour. On the other hand, teachers' collective efficacy act as a full mediator between instructional leadership and students' learning. In terms of its implications, this research implies that the school management should place emphasis on the transformational and instructional leadership practices in enhancing students' learning behaviour. While teachers should also strive in building confidence in teaching that is to be shared with students which propels their learning behaviour.

***Key Word**: Middle Manager, Transformational Leadership, Instructional Leadership, Collective Efficacy, Students Learning Behaviour.*

Introduction

The school is an important agent in building the future generation (Rahimah, 2005). The success of a school depends on the leadership patterns practiced in a particular school (Hussein, 2005; Mortimore, 1997).

Effective leadership is fundamental in ensuring continuity in a school's progression (Muijs & Harris, 2007; Simkins, Sisum & Muhammad, 2003). Many believed that the school management is led only by the principal (Abdul, 2004) without realizing that the leadership from the school body contributes to the success of a school (Hussein, 2005). Generally, leadership in a school is led by the Principal, Senior Assistant (Management), Senior Assistant (Students' Affair), Afternoon Supervisor, Senior Assistant (Co curriculum) and Subjects' Head of Department.

According Leithwood and Jantzi (1994), there are 6 categories of leadership practiced in schools, namely, teaching leadership, transformational leadership, morality leadership, participation leadership, management leadership and contingency leadership. In fact at the same time, the uncertainties present in the challenge of environment and school restructuring has caused a shift in the school leadership- from teaching leadership to transformational leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). The change is clear by examining researches on transformational leadership by Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) besides extending to other researches conducted by Leithwood and Jantzi (1990; 1999 & 2000) and Leithwood (1994) which are often related to the improvement in the efficacy of school's organization. Nevertheless, there are various researches in the education field stating that teaching leadership (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985) and transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Griffith, 2004; Ross & Gray, 2006[b]) has a strong influence towards the success of a school besides being able to enhance teachers' trust and confidence

The issue of cooperate trust and self confidence among the members of an organization in carrying out a task successfully is referred to as collective efficacy where this aspect are existent in a school's professional community (Muijs & Harris, 2006). According to Bandura (2000), there are organizations that have knowledgable and skilled members yet fail in generating collective efficacy. This is because the members are not working as a unit. Meanwhile, the school which acts as an organization which involves various parties such as the principal, middle managers, teachers and supporting staff need to work as a team to achieve a certain goal. In this case, the individuals who are leaders are able to play a prominent role in developing teachers' collective efficacy (Tschannen-moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998).

As a conclusion, it can be said that the excellence of a school depends on effective leadership. Besides, school's excellence can be measured according to students' academic achievement while these achievements are measured based on the teachers' teaching quality in schools. The teachers' teaching quality on the other hand is reliant on the teachers' collective and individual trust towards their capability of influencing students' learning. According to the above premises, in order to enhance students' learning behaviour in school, the factor of school middle managers' leadership is an important determinant. Therefore, the research focuses on investigating the direct and indirect influences of school middle managers' leadership towards students learning behaviour through teachers' collective efficacy. Such studies have not been conducted in educational settings, particularly in Malaysian context. The theoretical framework that guides the present study is present study is presented in Figure 1 below

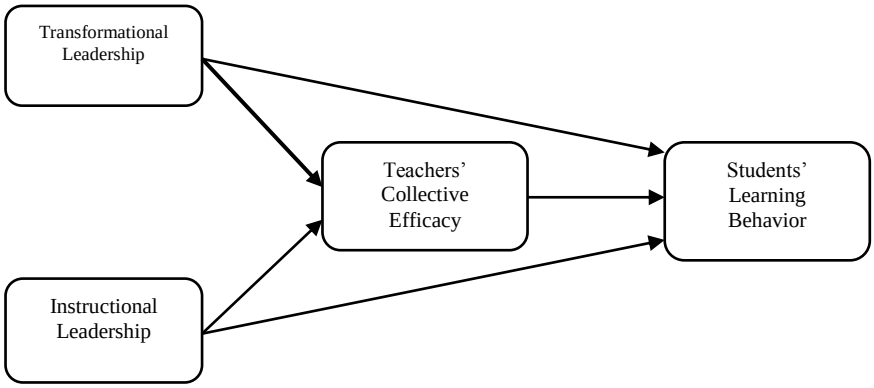

Figure 1: Research Framework

Objective of the Study

This research aims to identify the following:

i . The influence of middle managers' transformational leadership towards teachers' collective efficacy and students' learning behaviour.
ii . The influence of middle managers' instructional leadership towards teachers' collective efficacy and students' learning behaviour.
iii . The influence of teachers' collective efficacy towards students' learning behaviour.
iv . The influence of teachers' collective efficacy as mediator between middle managers' transformational leadership and students' learning behaviour.
v . The influence of teachers' collective efficacy as mediator between middle managers' instructional leadership and students' learning behaviour.

Literature Review

Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory is one of the frameworks in understanding and predicting human behaviour. This theory explains human behaviour as a response to personal, behaviour and environmental factors (Bandura, 1986, 1997). In this model, the first relationship that exists is the one between personal determinant and the influenced behaviour from the perspectives and actions of a particular individual. Next, it is concerning the relationship between personal determinant and environmental determinant that involves human trust and cognitive competency. This includes the modification by social and structure influences according to the environment. Thirdly, it is concerning the environmental determinant with the behaviour determinant where an individual's conduct will determine the environment, and the environment will therefore determine the change in behaviour.

The social cognitive theory explains the role of social psychology in the form of *triadic reciprocal causation* (Bandura, 1986). The individual will choose the desired environment to dwell while the environment will influence the individual in return. The behaviour in a situation is influenced by the features of the environment and situation, where at the same time, behaviour will also pose an influence in the environment or the situation itself. Besides, behaviour is also influenced by cognitive and personal factors. In fact, behaviour influences these factors in return. Generally, individuals believe that their efforts will be appreciated and credited. Meanwhile, individuals will not display similar behaviour if their efforts are not acknowledged or do not bring benefit (Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2004). In this research, teachers' collective efficacy represents the personal determinant; the school middle managers' leadership representing the environment determinant while students' learning behaviour represents the behaviour determinant.

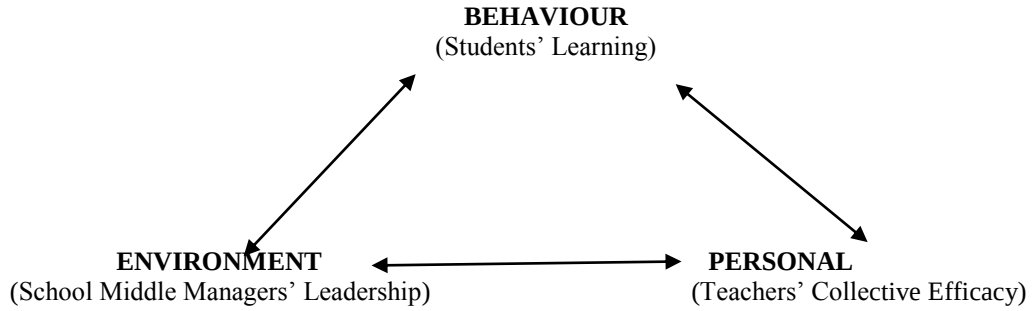

Figure 2: Bandura Model (Bandura, 1997)

School Middle Managers' Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership theory is introduced by Bass (1985) according to the House's theory of charismatic leadership (1977) and theory of transformational leadership by Burns (1978). Bass (1985) identifies 3 dimensions of transformational leadership- the charismatic dimension, individuals' concern and intellectual stimulation. Besides, two other factors that represent styles of behaviour transaction are management by exception and contingent reward. Meanwhile, Burns (1978) stated that there are two types of basic leadership- transformational leadership and transaction. All the researchers above explained transformational leadership with reference to the ability of an individual to perceive, acknowledge and exploit the needs and wants of the followers. Meanwhile, transaction leadership refers to the relationship of reward exchange between the leader and the followers. According to Burns (1978), transformational leaders are those who involve themselves with other parties via certain methods to the extent where the leader and the followers are able to elevate the degree of motivation and working efforts. Bass (1985) illustrated transformational leadership as leaders who possess exceptional performance and leadership qualities. Avolio and Bass (2004) stated transformational leadership as a process that influences and shifts the awareness of followers in important matters, motivating them to further understand themselves, to recognize opportunities and challenges that are present in the environment, while steering them into a new direction. Meanwhile, transformational leadership is able to generate a thrust among the followers yet this is a difficult process (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

The dimensions of transformational leadership constructed by Avolio and Bass (2004), and Zaidatol and Fooi (2003) are supreme influences (supreme traits and behaviour); inspirational motivation; intellect stimulation and individual contemplation. According to Abdullah, Abdul and Abdul (2007) with reference to researches by Leithwood, Tomlinson and Genge (1996), the dimensions of transformational leadership that are stated are the stimulation of forming insights; role model; high expectation and confidence towards teachers; generation of unity; stimulation of intellect and organization; individual's concern and contingency reward. Hallinger (2003) believes that there are 7 main components in the transformational leadership model, they are, individual support; a share in aim; vision; intellectual stimulation; generation of culture; appreciation; high expectation and symbols.

In the literature of education leadership, there is no specific definition regarding the concept of transformational leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). Leithwood (1994) construct a dimension of school transformational leadership based on two Bass' factors Bass (1985) that represents the transformational leadership and transactional leadership. The model of schools' transformational leadership is built based on a series of research in schools (Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). The practice of schools' transformational leadership model is divided into 3 dimensions, they are, determining of direction, individual development and generation of an organization. Besides, transactional leadership is replaced by the dimension of management. Generally, a school's transformational leadership has 6 sub dimensions of "leadership" and 4 sub dimensions of "management". Among these sub dimensions are the school's vision and mission; display of high expectations; intellectual stimulation; individual support; symbol of practice and professional values; involvement in decision making. Meanwhile, the sub dimensions of management are as the practice of creating effective staff; the preparation of teaching support; supervision of school activities and preparation of community emphasis. Many researches have been conducted to explain how every practice of transformational leadership is implemented by the school s in the school's environment.

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership is a practice of school leadership that emphasizes on the efficacy of the implementation in the teaching and learning process. According to Hallinger and Murphy (1985), the behaviour of instructional leadership consists of 3 main dimensions, (1) determination of school's aims (2)

management of teaching programs (3) generation of a learning environment that enhances effective teaching and learning in schools. These dimensions are further divided into 11 functions of teaching leadership. They are, (1) construction of school's aims by determining the achievements of annual academic goals through the resources in school. (2) clarification of school's aim to teachers, parents and students.(3) supervision and evaluation of teaching process to ensure the goals are translated into teaching practices in the classrooms. (4) curriculum coordination that ensures a good implementation in classrooms according to standards from test results (5) supervision of students' academic achievements by evaluating test results and discussing with teachers. (6) control and maintain teaching hours through regulating lessons and periods via school policy. (7) maintain an outlook in schools by providing guidelines to teachers and students, thus enabling an allocated time in school besides conduct patrols of classrooms. (8) prepare rewards to teachers by creating a suitable environment and clear work structures by providing incentives and other forms of acknowledgment in their achievement. (9) encourage professional development by using various methods to enhance teaching by motivating teachers' professionalism development (10) customize academic standards and propel these standards to meet the high expectations in school's achievements. (11) prepare rewards to students by giving incentives as token of appreciation to academic achievements and encourage students to focus to achieve greater academic excellence.

Weber (1997) and Krug (1992) stated that instructional leadership has 5 main dimensions, (1) analyse and present school's goals; (2) manage curriculum and teaching; (3) instil a positive learning environment; (4) apprehend and provide feedback to teachers and (5) evaluate teaching programs. Instructional leadership is mainly focused on the implementation of teachers' teaching and students' learning. The school should focus on the teaching and learning process placing emphasis on a dimension of behaviour that is task oriented rather than human relationships to achieve academic excellence. Instructional leadership is gaining importance as schools are now seen as an organization of learning where the community has high expectations in achieving academic excellence.

Teachers' Collective Efficacy

Collective efficacy refers to the trust among a group of members in an organization in combining efforts to plan and implement an action required to achieve results (Bandura, 1997). Collective efficacy consists of 4 main resources. They are (1) mastery experiences (2) imitation experiences, (3) social persuasion and (4) affective situations. Mastery experiences refer to experiences of success or failures by the group members. Successful experiences will build a strong collective efficacy of trust among group members while failure weakens it. Besides, imitation experiences are not formed by one's personal experiences to build collective efficacy but is dependent on the experiences presented by their friends. Social persuasion on the other hand refers to the skills obtained when one attends internal and external trainings of an organization. The condition of affective organization refers to how an organization interprets challenges faced and overcoming them. At the organizational stage, collective efficacy is measured by using two methods, individual's aggregate efficacy and members' overall efficacy. The first method focuses in the confidence of knowledge, ability, and skills possessed by individuals and being aggregated to achieve a goal. Meanwhile, the second method focuses on the confidence and trust shared by members in achieving an organizational goal. Bandura (2000) believed that collective efficacy is not the summation of efficacy of every individual but is a trait which exists in a group level. Occasionally, groups that possess knowledgeable and skilled members do not achieve success as members failed to work as a unit (Bandura, 2000). Besides, group results are not solely dependent on each member's individual knowledge and skills but also on the interaction and communication with each other.

Leadership and Students' Learning Behaviour

Learning leadership refers to the approaches used by school leaders to achieve school's aim especially in students' learning behaviour (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood et al. 2006, 2010). Instructional leadership initially focuses on the role of principal as a leader in learning. (Hallinger, 2011). A few decades ago,

researchers of leadership (e.g.: Bass, 1990; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Leithwood et al. 2006, 2010) have identified a few important assumptions concerning leadership in learning. Instructional leadership exists in a context of environment and organization. According to Hallinger (2011), school leaders operate in an open system consisting not only the community, but also the institutional system and social cultures. The effectiveness of leadership is formed according to the restrictions and the opportunities that exist in a school's organization and its environment. Leadership practice on the other hand depends on the personal characteristics of leaders, specifically on a leader's personal values, beliefs, trust, knowledge and experience. These are the resources to leadership practice. Besides, leadership does not pose a direct influence to students' learning behaviour; in fact, the effects are shown through mediators, such as school standards and conditions (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood et al. 2010). Besides, school leadership is also a process of influencing and being influenced by school standards and conditions (Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 2010).

Research Methodology

The research is carried out using the survey method. The research consists of 320 teachers from public secondary schools in Kedah Darul Aman and Pulau Pinang through simple random sampling. The research questionnaires are adapted from instruments by Leithwood and Jantzi (1999), Ross and Gray (2006), Kursunoglu and Tanriogen (2009); Leithwood, Patten and Jantzi (2010). The questionnaire is divided into 4 parts- Section A (4 items) aims to obtain respondents' background information; Section B (12 items) aims to measure the style of school middle managers' transformational leadership; Section C (53 items) aims to measure the style of school middle managers' instructional leadership; Section D (14 items) serves to test teachers' collective efficacy while Section D (11 items) concerns perception in students' learning behaviour.

Findings

Measurement Model

Construct reliability of a research tool refers to the extent a tool produces respond that represents the measured construct. According to Hair et. al., (2010), the composite of validity that is 0.70 and above and an average variance extracted more than 0.50 are acceptable. Table 1 shows that all the validity composite values are more than 0.70. All the variance extracted is over 0.50. Therefore, the measurement tools in this research possess desired construct reliability.

Table 1: Results of CFA in Measurement Model

Construct	*Convergent Reliability*		
	Cronbach Alpha	**CR[a]**	**AVE[b]**
Transformational Leadership	0.940	0.77	0.55
Teaching Leadership	0.912	0.69	0.51
Teachers' Collective Efficacy	0.897	0.73	0.53
Students' Learning	0.853	0.78	0.54

Note: a Composite Reliability (CR) = (square of the summation of the factor loadings)/{(square of the summation of the factor loadings) + (square of the summation of the error variances)}
b Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = (summation of the square of the factor loadings)/{(summation of the square of the factor loadings) + (summation of the error variances)}

Structural Model

Structural model is estimated using the *maximum likelihood estimation* (MLE) method. Table 2 shows the results. Statistics pairing are shown in Table 2. All the pairings measured in this research exceed the suggested values for a good model. This model contributed 47% of variance towards teachers' collective efficacy and a variance of 44% in students' learning. All courses are significant at the level 0.01. Teaching leadership and teachers' collective efficacy has various effects towards students' learning. Transformational leadership on the other hand poses many effects towards teachers' collective efficacy. The results in structural model support the hypothesis formed, e.g.: H1, H2, H3, H4 and H5 (refer to Table 3).

Table 2: Fit Indices

Fit Measurement	Proposed Value	Research Value
df		1
χ^2		2.471
χ^2/df	≤ 3.00	2.471
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.991
AGFI	≥ 0.80	0.947
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.988
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.079
NNFI (TLI)	≥ 0.90	0.967

Figure 3 shows the variables of transformational leadership (β=0.23, p<0.01) and instructional leadership (β=0.19, p<0.01) which pose a direct positive effect towards teachers' collective efficacy. Both variables contribute 47% to the variance of teachers' collective efficacy. Besides, results also show that transformational leadership has a higher influence towards the teachers' collective efficacy compared to instructional leadership.

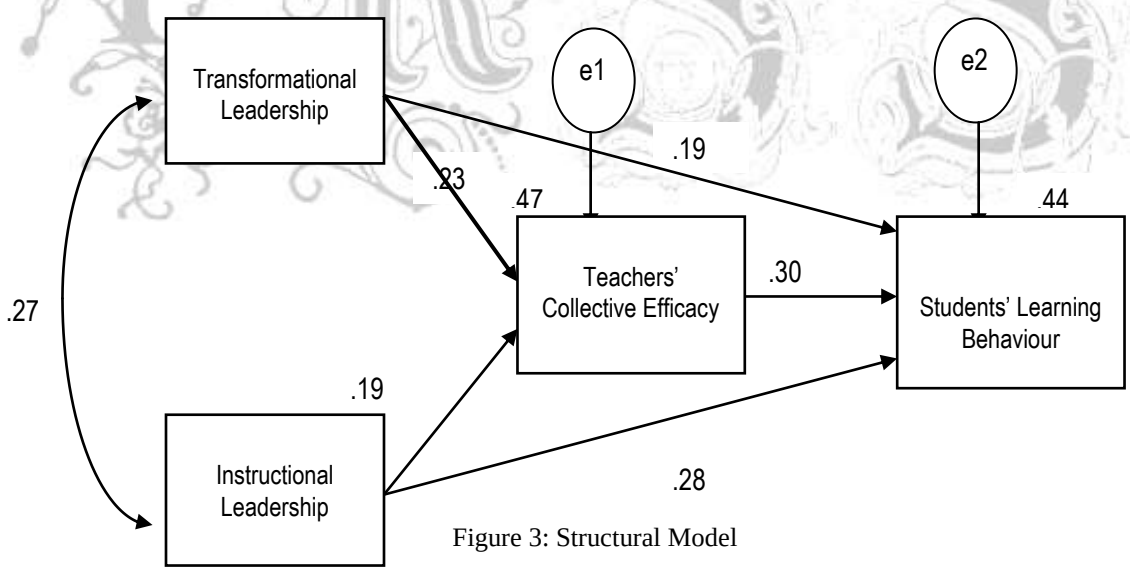

Figure 3: Structural Model

The findings of the research revealed that variables such as transformational leadership (β=0.19, p<0.01), instructional leadership (β=0.28, p<0.01) and teachers' collective efficacy (β=0.30, p<0.01) have a direct positive influence towards students' learning behaviour. All three variables contribute 44% towards the variance of students' learning. Meanwhile, the research results also showed that instructional leadership has more influence towards students' learning behaviour compared to transformational leadership. Table 5 shows the results' summary for research hypotheses

Table 5: Hypotheses Test

Research Hypotheses	Critical Ratio (CR)	*p* Value	Results
H1: Positive transformational leadership affects teachers' collective efficacy.	2.378	0.000	Supported
H2: Positive instructional leadership affects teachers' collective efficacy.	5.690	0.001	Supported
H3: Positive teachers' collective efficacy will influence students' learning behaviour.	2.911	0.000	Supported
H4: Positive transformational leadership will influence students' learning behaviour.	3.869	0.003	Supported
H5: Positive instructional leadership will influence students' learning behaviour.	4.727	0.005	Supported

Guidelines by Baron and Kenny (1986) are used in answering hypothesis **H6** which stated that teachers' collective efficacy act as the *mediator* between transformational leadership and students' learning behaviour. Meanwhile, hypothesis **H7** stated that teachers' collective efficacy act as the mediator in the relationship between instructional leadership and students' learning behaviour.

Table 6: Results on the Effects of Mediator Testing

Free Variable	Mediator Variable	Model 1 (IV & DV)	Model 2 (IV & DV with MV)	Results
Transformational Leadership	Teachers' Collective Efficacy	0.190*	0.138*	Partial Mediator
Transformational Leadership	Teachers' Collective Efficacy	0.281*	0.217	Full Mediator

** $p<.001$*

Table 6 shows transformational leadership has significant effects towards students' learning without the presence of teachers' collective efficacy (β=0.190, p<0.01) and is significant with teachers' collective efficacy (β=0.138, p<0.01) with a decrease in the beta coefficient value (β). Therefore, teachers' collective efficacy acts as a partial mediator in the relationship between transformational leadership and students' learning behaviour. Hypothesis **H6** is supported partially. Meanwhile teaching leadership shows significant effects towards students' learning behaviour without the presence of teachers' collective efficacy mediator variable (β=0.281, p<0.01) and is not significant with teachers' collective efficacy (β=0.217, p>0.01) besides a decrease in the beta coefficient value (β). Therefore, teachers' collective efficacy acts as a full mediator in the relationship between instructional leadership and students' learning behaviour. Hence, hypothesis **H7** is fully supported.

Discussion

The research findings revealed that instructional leadership has a greater influence towards students' learning behaviour compared to transformational leadership. This occurs because school middle managers are usually provided with courses and exposure concerning teaching leadership to carry out a change in the teaching and learning process. Instructional leadership is also practiced in schools because teaching and learning is the core business in schools (Leithwood, 1994). Besides, the policies of the Malaysian Ministry of Education and State Education Department that emphasizes on the supervision of quality curriculum and students' academic achievement has helped school middle managers to stay focus in curriculum management and students' learning in schools. At the same time, school middle managers are given less exposure in transformational leadership compared by the Malaysian Ministry of Education compared to the State Education Department compared to teaching leadership. The school administrators are left no choice but to compete to improve academic performances as students' academic achievements is one of the

recognized criteria of a successful school. The situation has caused instructional leadership practices to be non-dischargeable.

Besides, transformational leadership was also discovered to have greater influence towards teachers' collective efficacy compared to instructional leadership. This shows that transformational leadership is able to change conduct, perception and behaviour in a greater measure than the teachers' expectation (Bass, 1985; Leithwood, 1994). Nevertheless, both types of leaderships are necessary to increase students' learning. This is because according to a theory by Bandura (1997), it was mentioned that leadership can increase teachers' collective efficacy by creating opportunities to master skills and experiences. Besides, research findings also showed that teachers' collective efficacy act as a partial mediator towards the relationship between transformational leadership and students' learning behaviour while acting as a full mediator between instructional leadership and students' learning behaviour. This finding implied that school leaders need to possess the capability to bring about positive and significant influence in students' learning behaviour. Nevertheless, the implications of school's leadership towards students' learning are indirect (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). The study results therefore support the findings by Ross and Gray (2006) that teachers' efficacy influences the relationship towards leadership by bringing changes to students' learning behaviour.

Implications

The research findings are inclined to a few implications towards the leadership in schools. Instructional leadership and transformational leadership should be practiced simultaneously in schools. Instructional leadership ensures that the teaching and learning processes are carried out smoothly while transformational leadership is proven to be able to influence teachers' collective efficacy (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Ross & Gray, 2006). Both types of leaderships are necessary to enhance students' learning behavior. According to Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999), transformational leadership is an effective system in influencing behavioural change. According to Walumbwa and Lawler (2003), transformational leaders are able to motivate their followers to enhance self involvement in the workplace. This is supported by Avolio et al. (2004), Lowe, Kroeck and Sivasubramaniam (1996) where transformational leadership is said to have a positive relationship towards the working attitude and conduct in an individual and organization level. Therefore, school middle managers should practice transformational leadership and instructional leadership to generate and change teachers' habit of working solo to a habit of working as a team to improve students' learning behaviour experience.

The practice of instructional and transformational leadership in schools need to obtain support from all parties to generate a high level of teachers' collective efficacy that influences students' learning. According to Bandura (2000), groups that possess a high level of collective efficacy will persist in solving a matter. A research by Gully, Incalcaterra, Joshi and Beaubien (2002) discovered that collective efficacy has a positive relationship between high achievements and a shared goal. Besides, instructional and transformational leadership are common responsibilities shouldered together to create a positive change in students' learning behaviour. Meanwhile, school middle managers should enhance collective efficacy that will help to improve students' learning behaviour.

Conclusion

The research results showed that the practices of instructional leadership, transformational leadership and teachers' collective efficacy are influential factors towards students learning behaviour. Meanwhile results also proved that transformational leadership and instructional leadership pose a positive effect towards teachers' collective efficacy. Therefore, the school middle managers should practice a combination of styles in transformational and instructional leadership in the efforts of changing teachers' behaviour teaching which can improve students' learning behaviour. Furthermore, teachers also should enhance their confidence and trust collectively according to schools' respective work culture. This will help to improve

students' academic performance. Therefore, researchers desired that further researches will have a more direct contribution in the practices of transformational leadership, instructional leadership, teachers' collective efficacy and students' learning behaviour.

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