

# The Relationship between Headteachers' Distributed Leadership Practices and Teachers' Motivation in National Primary Schools

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## Abstract

The distributed leadership approach have been practiced in most developing countries approximately more than centuries ago as an alternative to school leadership in effort to increase the student outcomes. This article aims to report and discusses findings of a study on identifying the level of distributed leadership practices among headteachers and the level of teachers' motivation in primary schools in Malaysia and the relationship between these variables. The respondents were 243 teachers from 12 national primary schools in Port Klang, Klang, Selangor. Random sampling technique was used to ensure that each element in the population stood a fair chance to be selected as samplings. This is a quantitative study using questionnaires as research instrument. A descriptive analysis (mean and percentage) was used to identify the level of distributed leadership among headteachers. A Pearson Linear Correlation Test was used to determine the relationships between four dimensions in the independent variable components (distributed leadership practices) and dependent variable (motivation). The research findings showed that the overall mean score for the level of distributed leadership among headteachers was high (mean = 3.94; SD = 0.484). While the overall mean score for the motivation level of teachers was moderate (mean = 3.11; SD= 0.562). The research findings also showed that there was no significant relationship between headteachers leadership (correlation coefficient value  $r = 0.279$ ) and teachers motivation. The implications of the research findings on leadership and teachers motivation were further discussed.

**Keywords:** distributed leadership, headteacher, motivation, teacher, national primary school (SRK)

## 1. Introduction

Distributed leadership is a leadership practice which involves leadership sharing throughout the organisation in which the leadership responsibilities are shared within those with related skills and expertise. (Spillane et al., 2004). In schools namely, distributed leadership is meant for headteachers so that they are no longer carrying full responsibilities as school leaders (*one-man-show*) but rather giving focus on how to produce one work mechanism with shared accountabilities and shared learning culture. Distributed leadership refers to a system on collection of interactions between components which includes the leader, followers and situation which needs to be understood together (Spillane, 2005).

Study by Silins and Mulford (2002) on the impacts of leadership on student learning outcomes showed that students' achievement was progressing when the source of leadership was distributed throughout the school community and when teachers were given power related to issues which they perceived as important. Distributed leadership is based on the concept of school as one community of students and recognition towards headteacher or principal who are not able to lead alone (Hallinger, 2007). A strong learning community is developed when a headteacher learns to let go the controlling steps and assists the teachers to take part in developing the leadership throughout the school (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). According to Harris, (2008), the distributed leadership theory has identified many capable and potential leaders in an organisation. When leadership is distributed widely and closed to learning site, it has huge influence on schools and students (Day et al., 2007). Eilis Humphreys (2010) has explored on the distributed leadership concept and the impact of distributed leadership on teachers teaching and learning. She found that distributed leadership has positive influence on teachers teaching and learning.

Excellent leadership practices among headteachers are needed in national schools administration. In leading the national primary schools, headteachers are not only responsible towards school management but also teachers and students. The effectiveness of schools depends on the level of leadership approach practised by headteachers (Mohammed Sani & Jamalullail, 2012). The leadership approach discussed in this article is distributed leadership. The policy of Malaysia Education Quality Standard (KPM, 2010) stated that parents were frequently questioning the quality of education received by their children in schools which giving the message that they no longer have the confidence on the ability of the schools to educate their children especially on the attitude of students after schools which are not up to the expectation of society and the country (UPE, 2010). According to Humphreys (2010), the practices of leadership among headteachers are able to deliver huge impact on the level of work performance among teachers because good leadership is well-accepted by the subordinates. This scenario is related to the leadership practices of administrators and level of motivation among teachers.

Some teachers do not like to get involved in decision-making process because most teachers are not motivated and they do not prefer to spend time in attending the school meetings. Teachers prefer to teach as compared to getting involved and committed to decision-making. This has to do with the implementation of limited empowerment process at school level (Abd Ghani, 2009). At school level, the involvement of teachers in decision-making process is an important issue. In distributed leadership practice, not everyone makes decision but everyone has the expertise and knowledge which contributes to the decision-making process. The distributed leadership practised by the headteachers could orientate the teachers to change the values and attitudes towards commitment of educational mission and vision (Sadariah, 2001). In addition, teachers have the opportunity to enhance and increase their leadership ability in preparing themselves to become future quality school leaders (KPM, 2013).

## **2. Research Objective**

The objectives of this research are as follows:

- 1) To identify the level of distributed leadership practices among headteachers in national primary schools in Port Klang Zone, Selangor
- 2) To identify the level of motivation among teachers in national primary schools in Port Klang Zone, Selangor
- 3) To determine the relationship between the distributed leadership practices among headteachers and teachers' motivation in national primary schools in Port Klang Zone, Selangor.

## **3. Methodology**

### *3.1 Research Design*

This is a quantitative research and it uses survey approach in which questionnaires is used as research instrument. This study has two variables: independent variable and dependent variable. The dependent variable measured in this study is the level of motivation of teachers in national primary schools. Meanwhile the independent variable is the level of distributed leadership practices among headteachers in national primary schools. The analysis of the conducted pilot test showed that the instrument has high reliability (Cronbach's Alpha of 0.84 to 0.94).

### *3.2 Sampling and Research Site*

Table 1 showed that the research respondents were 243 teachers from 12 national primary schools in Port Klang Zone, Klang, Selangor. The random sampling technique is used to ensure that every element in the population stand a fair chance to be selected as samplings.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents and national primary schools (SRK)

No	School Code	No. of teachers	No. of samplings	Percentage (%)
1	SRK 1	72	25	35
2	SRK 2	51	18	35
3	SRK 3	63	22	35
4	SRK 4	69	24	35
5	SRK 5	96	34	35
6	SRK 6	76	27	35
7	SRK 7	70	25	35
8	SRK 8	41	14	35
9	SRK 9	58	20	35
10	SRK 10	34	12	35
11	SRK 11	31	11	35
12	SRK 12	29	10	35
		<b>690</b>	<b>243</b>	

### 3.3 Research Instrument

The research instrument used in this study is a set of questionnaires which comprises of three parts: A, B and C. Part A is questions on the background of respondents. To identify the level of *distributed leadership*, an instrument developed by Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is adapted in Part B. The instrument is known as *Distributed Leadership Readiness Scale* (DLRS). In part C, 38 questions are used to measure the level of motivation by using the instrument known as *Questionnaire Measure of Individual Differences in Achieving Tendency* (QMAT). Each item is measured by using Likert Scale 1- Totally Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree dan 5-Totally Agree.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis is used to identify the level of distributed leadership among headteachers (mean and standard deviation). The level of distributed leadership among headteachers in the schools of Port Klang Zone comprises of four distributed leadership: set and shared mission, vision and school goals, school culture, shared responsibilities and leadership practices. Meanwhile a linear Pearson correlation test is used to determine the relationship between four dimensions of the independent variable component (distributed leadership practices) and dependent variable (motivation). The obtained data is recorded and processed by using *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS) version 18.0.

## 4. Research Findings and Discussion

### 4.1 Level of Distributed Leadership Practices among Headteachers

Table 2. Mean value of level of distributed leadership among headteachers

No	Construct/ Dimension of Distributed Leadership	Mean
1.	Set and shared mission, vision and school goals	3.82
2.	School culture	4.04
3.	Shared responsibilities	3.93
4.	Leadership practices	3.61
	Overall mean average	3.85

Table 2 showed the overall mean average value of the level of distributed leadership among headteachers is 3.85. Based on Table 3, the level of distributed leadership is high. The findings obviously showed that the distributed leadership practices among headteachers in national primary schools in Port Klang Zone are at high level. All

four dimensions of distributed leadership measured showed high level of practices (mean=3.82, 4.04, 3.93), except for dimension of 'Leadership practice' which at moderate level (mean= 3.61). These research findings are supported by Rosnarizah (2008) who stated that the average mean for all four dimensions in her study indicated that 73.59% respondents agreed that distributed leadership was practised in schools and the score of the existence of distributed leadership in national primary schools in Port Klang Zone is high. These results also supported the distributed leadership theory by Alma Harris (2008) who identified that many are capable and potential in becoming leaders in the organisation. Nevertheless, Harris further stressed that the key success of distributed leadership relies on how leadership is made easier and given support in improving the education quality.

Table 3. Interpretation of level of distributed leadership among headteachers

Level of Distributed Leadership among headteachers	Range of Mean Score
<b>Low</b>	1.00-2.33
<b>Moderate</b>	2.36-3.66
<b>High</b>	3.67-5.00

Source: Harris (2008) in Rosnarizah (2008)

#### 4.2 Level of Work Motivation among Teachers in National Primary Schools in Port Klang Zone, Selangor

Level of work motivation among headteachers in national primary schools is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Mean and standard deviation of the level of motivation among teachers in national primary schools in Port Klang Zone

No.	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.	I normally complete my planned work.	3.07	.792
2.	It is difficult for me to work in a new and unfamiliar situation.	3.26	.441
3.	I am optimistic in my work matters.	3.09	.810
4.	I rarely accept work that others find difficult	2.99	.747
5.	I am unsure to make important decision at work.	3.28	.450
6.	The idea that I need to work hard for promotion never crosses my mind.	3.12	.488
7.	I give priority to work which is important, difficult and has 50% possibility of failure as compared to work which is important but easy.	2.88	.795
8.	I am attracted to take more responsibility than actual needed.	2.91	.282
9.	I am disturbed when I think of things related to new work.	3.56	.648
10.	I am satisfied to accomplish important work which needs extra efforts.	2.80	.399
11.	I cannot work properly when I am under pressure.	2.72	.450
12.	I believe that if I work hard, I will achieve my life goals.	3.45	.498
13.	I am proud of my work.	2.89	.916
14.	Learning new skills does not excite me.	3.13	.646
15.	I only work hard as what is expected.	3.45	.498
16.	I am keen to set tough goal for myself.	3.19	.575
17.	I love doing easy task after learning it.	2.67	.649
18.	I have high ambition.	3.20	.399
19.	I give priority to daily small project than long term project.	3.58	.613
20.	I really like task that requires efforts to overcome the obstacles.	3.00	.000

21.	I appreciate the opportunity that enables me to know my strengths and weaknesses.	3.53	.500
22.	I only get little satisfaction when I work hard.	3.10	.910
23.	Nowadays, I find that there is less promotion unless one is given the opportunity.	3.06	.785
24.	Solving simple problem does not give me satisfaction as compared to how I have done in tough work.	3.13	.646
25.	I give priority to work that requires my personal thinking.	3.72	.450
26.	I love works that require my personal thinking.	2.93	.249
27.	I work because I have to.	3.12	.641
28.	I frequently succeed to accomplish the important goals that I have set.	3.64	.480
29.	I am relief but I am not satisfied when I complete difficult work.	2.98	.390
30.	I am able to deliver good job when I work in competition environment.	3.73	.446
31.	Continuous work to achieve goals is not rewarding in my life.	2.65	.477
32.	I always try to do difficult job which I am not sure whether I could do it than trying a job that is easy which I believe I could do it.	3.11	.790
33.	I am not satisfied until I have not reached excellence.	2.90	.788
34.	I do not like to be responsible for handling tough situation.	2.85	.360
35.	I give priority to challenging jobs.	3.09	.810
36.	When I do a job, I set a high degree performance without considering how the others do it.	3.35	.478
37.	I always predict and avoid from a situation which failure possibility is moderate.	2.82	.589
38.	I prefer to work which I feel confident and easy than doing work which is tough and challenging.	2.37	.484
	<b>Overall average</b>	<b>3.11</b>	<b>.562</b>

Table 4 shows that the value of overall average mean of the level of motivation among teachers towards work (tasks) in national primary schools in the district of Klang is 3.11 (SD = .562). Based on table 5, the mean value is 3.11 which are at high level.

Table 5. Interpretation of the mean score of the level of teachers' motivations

No.	Level	Mean Score
1.	Very Low	1.00 - 2.00
2.	Low	2.01 - 3.00
3.	High	3.01 - 4.00
4.	Very High	4.01- 5.00

Source: Mehrabian and Bank (1978) in Yaacob (1995)

The research findings shows that the mean score for the level of motivation among teachers towards work is at high level with mean value = 3.11 (DP = .562). The overall mean score is at high level.

#### 4.3 The Relationship between Distributed Leadership among Headteachers and Motivation among Teachers

Table 6 shows that there is a significant relationship between the distributed leadership practices and the level of motivation among teachers in national primary schools in Port Klang Zone. However, the relationship is weak (r

= 0.279,  $p < 0.05$ ).

Table 6. The relationship of distributed leadership among headteachers and the level of motivation among teachers

			Score Percentage of	Percentage Score of
			Motivation	Distributed Leadership
Score Percentage of Motivation	of	Significant Pearson	1	0.279*
		Correlation (2-tailed)		0.000
		N	243	243
Score Percentage of Distributed leadership	of	Significant Pearson	0.279	1
		Correlation (2-tailed)	0.000	
		N	243	243

\* Correlation is significant at level  $\alpha = 0.01$  (2-tailed)

These findings are in line with Mohd Najib (2004) who stated that the leadership styles of principals in eight schools in the District of Kota Star, Kedah Darul Aman has weak relationship with teachers' motivation. Yusuf (2004) in his study on Leadership Styles of Head of Office and its Relationship with Staffs Motivation found that there was significant relationship between leadership styles of directors and motivation of subordinates. Meanwhile, Ori Eyal and Guy Roth (2011), in their study entitled "*Principals' leadership and teachers' motivation: Self-determination theory analysis*", suggested that leadership styles among headteachers play important roles in motivating teachers and their well-beings. Harris (2008) highlighted potential for distributed leadership to make a difference in organisational change and great improvement is through motivation and teachers professional development.

### 5. Research Implications

Although the research findings showed that the overall level of distributed leadership practices among headteachers in national primary schools in Port Klang Zone, Selangor was high, there was one dimension that are at moderate level, which was leadership practices. Hence, the distributed leadership practices among headteachers need to be improved. Similarly, the level of motivation among teachers in national primary schools in Port Klang Zone, Selangor was overall at high level. However, the relationship aspect of this research showed that there was a relationship between the distributed leadership practices among headteachers and motivation among teachers but the relationship was weak. The distributed leadership practices should be implemented effectively as it has impact on the students learning outcomes (Silins & Mulford, 2002).

Further, these research findings provide information to various agents especially to key stakeholders on the aspects of the relationship between distributed leadership and teachers' motivation. For the policymakers and implementers such as Malaysia Ministry Education, Selangor Education Office and Klang District Education Office namely, these research findings could assist them to plan and implement effective professional leadership programs which suit headteachers in Port Klang Zone. This could help on the delivery process and improvement of distributed leadership practices in schools of particular area. In addition, these research findings could inspire the teachers to reflect on their level of work quality and practices for further improvement.

Researches related to distributed leadership in Malaysia are still at initial stage. This scenario is common as distributed leadership among headteachers in Malaysia are still new, hence, further research need to be actively conducted in seeing to what extent this leadership approach could be utilised in optimum.

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