

Challenges and Strategies Instructional Principals towards Promoting Positive School Culture

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Abstract

This concept paper discusses challenges and strategies in creating a positive school culture among instructional leaders. Instructional leadership by Hallinger Instructional Leadership Model (2000) outlines three dimensions of leadership namely Define the school's mission, Management of the instructional program and forming a school climate. The focus in this concept paper is on forming a school climate where a positive school climate is a challenge in today's education transformation. The design of this concept paper focuses on Hallinger's Leadership Model (2000) as well as the focus of keywords through this model in previous studies. There are three focus challenges that are stressed in this concept paper, namely Technology, Knowledge or Skills in developing professionalism and the third is integrity. At the end of the discussion of this concept paper, nine strategies are outlined to help face the challenges of today's education transformation.

Keywords: Instructional Leadership, School Culture, Education Transformation.

Introduction

Instructional leadership is a stage of leadership that is a key indicator for the improvement of principals' professionalism. There are five elements in the third dimension of Instructional Leadership Theory by Hallinger (2000) as a reference and guidance by the principal in leading the organization. The five elements approaches are increasingly challenging with the world's world-hit Covid 19 pandemic including Malaysia in particular. These elements are to maintain instructional time among teachers, cultivate professionalism, maintain learning support, provide rewards to teachers and the fifth element is to provide incentives to students. Among the challenges in adapting these five elements are technological factors, knowledge and skills, and integrity. Therefore, this chapter will discuss the factors of this challenge in creating a positive teaching and learning climate. This can also translate the instructional leadership of the principal into the administration and management of the organization.

Literature Review

Theory of Instructional Leadership

Leadership is the ability of an individual to influence the behavior of another individual to make them willing to provide good cooperation in order to achieve the goals of the organization (Ismail et al., 2023). A leader is also able to move the spirit of their followers through their vision and their idealistic picture (Ismail, 2015). Instructional Leadership by Hallinger (2000) provides three dimensions of defining school missions, managing instructional programs and creating a positive learning climate. These three dimensions are translated into 10 more specific elements to each dimension as shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1

Hallinger Instructional Leadership Model (2000)

Define the school's mission		Management of the instructional program		Forming a school climate	
i.	Formulate school goals	i.	Supervise and evaluate instructional	i.	Maintaining instructional time
ii.	Delivering school goals	ii.	Coordinate curriculum	ii.	Promoting professional development
		iii.	Monitor student development	iii.	Maintaining learning support
				iv.	Providing incentives to teachers
				v.	Providing incentives to students

Saource : A Review Of Two Decades Of Research On The Principalship Using The Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (2000)

In the face of the current Covid-19 edit challenges, this instructional leadership is the backbone of the organization to translate every government policy into the education system. Implementation of online learning has had a huge impact on the education system especially when a comprehensive aspect of digitalization needs to be faced not only by students and teachers but also to the leaders (Pamularsih, 2022). In creating teaching and learning remains positive among these teachers and students, these instructional leaders need to play a major role in solving every element of instructional leadership theory (Garcia et al., 2023; Ismail et al., 2023).

The Ministry of Education Malaysia (2013) has emphasized that the instructional leadership of the principal needs to be practiced in achieving changes in the national education system. The KPM also believes that the principal as a leader can be held accountable through this instructional leadership in producing students who are always competitive and have the next quality of excellence and success. This also shows that the field of pedagogy that is constantly through changes can be influenced by instructional leadership. In addition to the leadership of the principal, various issues related to teachers are also closely linked to the school climate (Ramasamy & Moulod, 2018).

Therefore, in an effort to create effective instructional leadership, the principal should succeed in creating a conducive school climate for teachers. In addition, teacher work performance is influenced by the leadership of the principal in creating a good school environment (Brewer & Devnew, 2022; Choi et al., 2022). Honest and trustworthy leadership always has a positive impact (Aziz et al., 2020; Ismail et al., 2023; Nguyen, 2021) on teachers while unmanaged leadership creates negative feelings among teachers in schools (Avelar et al., 2022; Rechsteiner et al., 2022; Rumeli et al., 2021). This eventually created conflicts between prolonged leaders and teachers and eventually caused the harmony and stability of the school.

The third dimension in Hallinger's Instructional Leadership Theory (2000) lists five elements that can serve as a reference and guidance in translating instructional leadership in the organization. These five elements are, i) Protecting PdPc time, ii) Cultivating professional development, iii) Maintaining learning support, iv) Providing incentives to teachers and v) Providing incentives to students. These five elements are the catalyst for the success or effectiveness of a school as a result of the administration of a leader through instructional leadership. Various studies and research on instructional leadership conducted have shown a change in student learning.

2.1.1 Maintaining instructional time

Principals can control the situation in which the implementation of teaching time in addressing the Covid-19 challenges by implementing every policies of the Ministry of Education at the school level. Principals who are the leaders of the school policy implementation need to ensure that the disruption during learning is limited to enhance the quality of the learning process and this in turn has the potential to enhance student achievement and excellence (Joo, 2020; Rami, Aziz, Razali, & Ibrahim, 2020; Schott et al., 2020). Each class and subjects have been given the proper amount of teaching time so that the process of delivery of knowledge is well received by each student. Implementation of teaching and learning by teachers by monitoring by these leaders will help teachers always be aware of their timetable and always be with students during teaching process. Indirectly teaching and learning will go as usual without the issue of teacher absence. This teaching approach can also be tailored to the facilities and basics that each student has (Hubers, 2020; Rezaul Islam et al., 2020). This ensures that students obtain input according to teaching and learning time in any way. Therefore, the issue of student dropout can be resolved.

2.1.2 Cultivating professional development

In this element, principals can practice various methods in order to support each step by teachers to improve their teaching process. Principals need to provide information to teachers about their opportunities in their career development and their own principals can lead each of the training programs. In addition, principals also need to ensure that every teacher's career development program should be in line with the organization's goals. Various courses, workshops or webinars provided online by the ministry through certain sectors and sectors so that teacher professionalism is consistent and consistent in addressing the Covid-19 pandemic challenges. This method also enables teachers to translate their skills in participating in the program and thus assist teachers in

2.1.3 Maintaining Learning Support

The third element emphasizes that high levels of student progress can further strengthen their expectations in improving student achievement. Excellent and less excellent school comparisons also indicate that aspects of academic success tend to each student-owned skill before continuing the next level (Rami et al., 2020; Shah et al., 2020). Higher student success criteria are also very helpful to student achievement when they have practiced basic skills. With the support of leaders in these teaching and learning activities it has a profound impact on the motivation of teachers (Zahirah, 2017) and students (Shuhaibun, 2018) in online learning sessions. This also has a positive impact on the school climate.

2.1.4 Provide incentives to teachers

This element explains the reward aspect given to the teacher. This aspect is a form of appreciation for every achievement, ability, skills and innovation that teachers have produced. Each of these awards can be performed in various ways such as the Appreciation Council, the Promotion Award, the grant of consolation or money as well as the certificate of appreciation. Miao et al (2020) emphasizes that recognition to teachers as a result of highlighting developments can increase teachers' motivation in the organization and this will help teachers improve their productivity over time. With a brief appreciation to teachers, it also helps a more harmonious environment in the organization (Choi et al., 2022) This proves that by giving a little appreciation to the followers of the organizational leaders in helping to improve the work and motivation of teachers.

2.1.5 Providing incentives to students

The fifth element describes the reward of each student on specific criteria for the purpose of appreciating student achievement and excellence in terms of academic achievement and co-curricular excellence and excellent student personality. Ariff et al (2021) also states that these external rewards should be implemented fairly and fairly in honor of the various efforts made by the student. This will also help in improving the achievement of the students. This will also help in improving the achievement of the students. Rewards can be implemented in a program or ceremony of excellence, presentation of certificates and pocket money or appreciation given verbally, praise on their work. Therefore, this conducive learning climate can be created in school when the school appreciates every academic achievement and excellence achieved by students. Pupils should also have the opportunity to be recognized for every effort they make in achieving success.

Challenges Establishing A Positive School Culture in Learning and Teaching

Pandemic Covid-19 has a huge impact on principals in translating their leadership into the organization. This challenge is faced at various levels such as students, teachers and leaders. This challenge is faced at various levels such as students, teachers and leaders. The world is now emphasizing that Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous (VUCA) has emphasized the importance and role of leaders who need to be prepared, sensitive to change and always be dynamic in management and leadership. In addition, effective and effective leadership has been influenced by two aspects: leaders and followers (Madanchian et al., 2018; Madanchian & Taherdoost, 2019).

These aspects of leaders and followers are influenced by difficult and complex working relationships that occur in the organization (Abd Hamid, 2017; Rami, et al., 2020). There are

three main indicators that are a major challenge for leaders are technology, knowledge or skills, and the third is integrity as in figure 1.1.

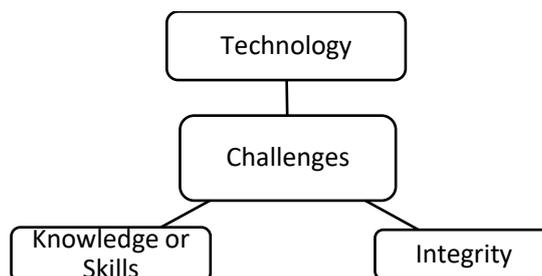


Figure 1.1 : Three main indicators as Challenges Establishing A Positive School Culture

The first challenge is technology. Digitization in the education system has been around since the implementation of the Education Development Plan 2013-2015 (KPM, 2013). This digitization is in line with current technological developments and has been widely practiced since the implementation of online learning following the implementation of the Movement Control Order (MCO) on March 2020. After face-to-face meetings are no longer a priority, each planning process, work instruction, discussion, decision making, and monitoring of teacher work compensation at each administrative level to the extent that the principal's leadership practice.

In the early stages of the implementation of the MCO, aspects of communications with the use of various mediums such as smartphones, the use of social media channels and digital platforms such as Google Meet, Zoom and WebEX have become a very important media in connecting organizational administration with the implementation level (Alshurman, 2018). The use of this digital platform is very different from the usual as before that is more face-to-face. As a principal, additional knowledge and skills are essential for the new management and administration norms especially in the use of various platforms online.

The second challenge is knowledge or skills, in the development of ongoing teacher professionalism by integrating the method of using digital platforms for various educational purposes. This coalition is very active to be applied to the principals and teachers in the school. The implementation of the MCO has caused all schools to stop operations face-to-face. This causes principals and teachers to need to restructure for the teaching and learning process face-to-face or digital learning. Therefore, a more creative and innovative approach is essential in the face of such a crisis in order to form a more sustainable and holistic solution (Miao et al., 2020). Each teacher is required to provide learning materials and enhance online using a variety of existing learning applications such as the use of Google Classroom as one of the online learning mediums (Zynuddin et al., 2023). This has been a challenge for all teachers, especially for teachers who are less skilled in digital approaches and thus leads leaders in ensuring that each teacher acquires and mastered these skills over time.

The third challenge is the integrity of which is the responsibility of the leaders in incorporating the values of the teachers so that they will continue to adhere to the key values that are fundamental to the organization. Various programs can be implemented by focusing on basic values in organizations such as career excellence, sustainability development, and increased integrity, including spiritual values that can strengthen pure values in service (Hamilah et al.,

2019; Miao et al., 2020). By emphasizing the value of integrity in line with the requirements of the Ministry of Education Malaysia, organizational administration can be harmonious and more effective (Abdul Rahim et al., 2019). These programs help principals improve school effectiveness and help teachers stay aware of current policy needs and needs. Teacher compliance with the value and integrity of the organization helps the positive school climate.

The strategies for positive school climate

Creating a positive school climate from the aspect of human resources and students is crucial for a thriving educational environment. There some strategies a principal can employ to foster a positive school climate in Figure 1.2.1 below.

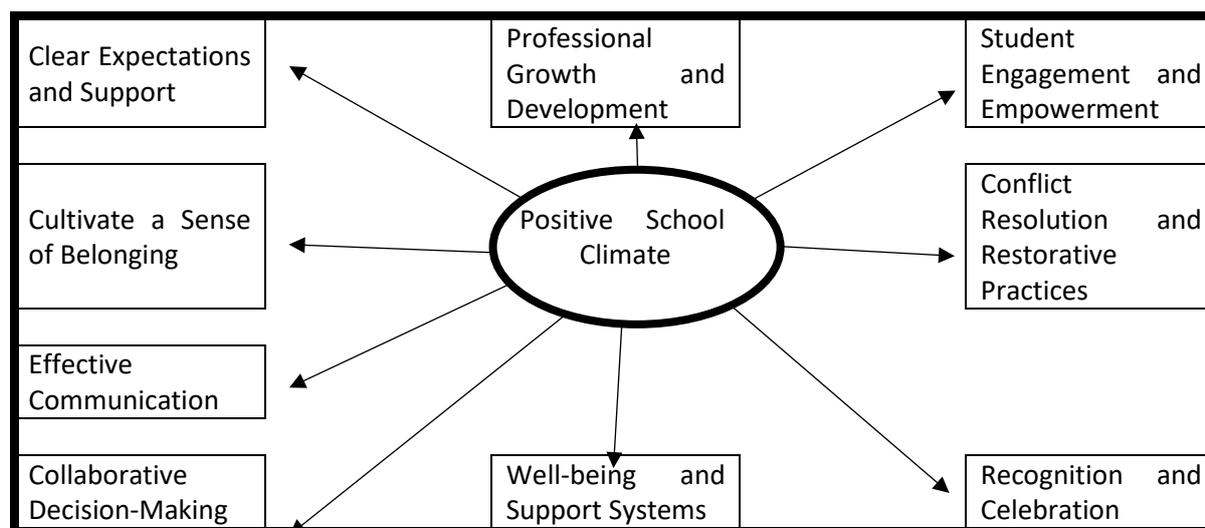


Figure 1.2 : The strategies for positive school climate

The first strategies is clear expectations and support. The principal should clearly communicate expectations for both staff and students regarding behavior, respect, and performance. This includes establishing guidelines for professional conduct, student behavior, and academic standards. Additionally, the principal should provide necessary support and resources to help staff and students meet these expectations. Second is cultivate a sense of belonging. The principal can promote a sense of belonging by creating a welcoming and inclusive environment. This involves encouraging staff and students to respect and appreciate diversity, fostering positive relationships, and addressing issues of bias or discrimination promptly and effectively. Celebrating cultural events, promoting awareness of different perspectives, and organizing inclusive activities can also contribute to a sense of belonging.

The next strategies is an effective communication. Open and transparent communication is essential for building trust and a positive school climate. The principal should establish regular channels of communication with staff, students, and parents, ensuring that information is disseminated effectively and that feedback is actively sought and considered. Encouraging respectful and constructive dialogue between all stakeholders is vital. In othe words the professional growth and development also as a strategies. The principals should provide much opportunities for professional growth and development for staff. This can include offering relevant workshops, conferences, and training programs. By investing in the professional

development of teachers and staff, principals empower them to enhance their skills, stay updated with best practices, and feel valued and supported.

Student engagement and empowerment is the next strategies to support positive school culture. Principals should actively involve students in decision-making processes and provide opportunities for their voices to be heard. This can be done through student councils, leadership programs, and student-led initiatives. Encouraging student participation in clubs, organizations, and extracurricular activities helps foster a sense of ownership and engagement. Next strategies is foccuse to the conflict resolution and restorative Practices. It is crucial for principals to address conflicts and discipline issues promptly and fairly. Promoting restorative practices that focus on repairing harm, promoting empathy, and fostering understanding can help resolve conflicts and build positive relationships within the school community.

Recognition and celebration also is an important strategies to make a positive school culture. By recognizing and celebrating the achievements and efforts of both staff and students is essential for creating a positive school climate. Principals can acknowledge accomplishments through awards, certificates, public recognition, and celebrations. Celebrating diversity, academic achievements, community service, and other milestones helps build a positive and inclusive culture. The second last of the strategies is about well-being and support systems: Prioritizing the well-being of staff and students is crucial for a positive school climate. Principals should establish support systems that promote physical and emotional well-being. This can include providing access to counseling services, creating a safe and inclusive environment, and promoting work-life balance for staff.

Last strategies is collaborative decision making. The principal should involve staff, students, and parents in decision-making processes that would creates a sense of ownership and collaboration. Principals can create committees or task forces that include various stakeholders to gather input, make informed decisions, and promote a shared vision for the school. By implementing these strategies, principals can create a positive school climate that fosters a sense of belonging, engagement, and well-being for both staff and students. A positive school climate not only enhances the overall educational experience but also contributes to academic success, student motivation, and a supportive learning environment.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, this instructional leadership refers to efforts to support and encourage every method of teaching and learning to achieve school goals and further create more effective school leadership. In order to address each of these challenges, the management or administration must be responsible for managing the human capital of teachers to be more creative and competitive in devising the latest formula in the post-Covid-19 pandemic era. The principal's ability as a leader in understanding this situation must always think at a higher level than usual. Responsible and competent instructional leaders always ensure that their organization succeeds in dealing with the post-pandemic.

The discussion of research highlights in this concept paper shows that there are three current challenges in as a challenge by instructional leaders in creating a positive school climate, namely (1) technology, (2) knowledge or skills and (3) integrity. these three challenges are

related to each other in instructional leadership. each of these challenges gives a great impact in the administration of an organization which can have an impact on every implementation in the organization. Therefore, in facing the transformation of education in the post-pandemic era, there are nine strategies that can be practiced by instructional leaders for their school administration, namely (1) Clear expectations and support, (2) Cultivate a Sense of Belonging, (3) Effective Communication, (4) Collaborative Decision-Making, (5) Well-being and Support Systems, (6) Professional Growth and Development, (7) Student Engagement and Empowerment, (8) Conflict Resolution and Restorative Practices and (9) Recognition and Celebration. All of these identified strategies should be able to help every leader, especially instructional leaders, apply in the administration of their organization, especially in schools through every action and decision taken. This can ensure that every educational transformation can be communicated well and transparently at the school level, further guaranteeing stability in creating a positive school climate.

Recommendations for future research, studies related to positive school culture need to be expanded to the behavior of a principal in terms of gender, the experience and role of teachers as implementers in schools in creating a positive school climate as well as teachers' acceptance in every implementation of educational transformation in the context work culture at school.

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