
Effective School Leadership Behaviours for improving Students' Achievements in Rural Secondary School: A Qualitative Perspective

*Jude James¹, Rosy Talin¹ and Soon Singh Bikar¹

¹Faculty of Psychology and Education
University Malaysia Sabah,
88400 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia

Corresponding Author Email: *jude6119@gmail.com

Abstract

This study is to explore the behaviours of leadership in a rural secondary school in Keningau. The lack of research and necessity to find successful behaviour to improve student achievement highlights this study's need. This study used a qualitative single case approach to examine the effects of school leadership behaviours on student achievement. The data will be gathered through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with principal, teachers and ex-student in Keningau secondary school was collected to gain a better understanding of how leadership is enacted and experienced in daily school routines. The data were analysed using NVIVO Version 2020. Common themes of behaviour enabling the principals to serve effectively in their schools emerged from the interviews and were grouped in the following categories: Providing appropriate model by demonstrating persistence and a positive outlook to reach sustained effective change in their school; providing individualised support; intellectual stimulation; quality and distribution of leadership function; social interaction, cooperation of the leadership team, and shared decision; and maintaining visibilities and building collaborative school culture.

Keywords : *Leadership theories, Rural Secondary School, School leadership, empirical data.*

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most critical leadership characteristics that can impact a school's performance is the leader's ability to model appropriate behaviours to achieve sustained effective change in their school. The study found that teachers value principals' behaviour and regard them as role models who inspire trust among their peers. When their leader exhibits appropriate behaviour, teachers develop a more positive attitude toward their school environment, thus affecting students' achievements. Leadership Behaviours defined as the ability of the principals that significantly and positively influencing these direct experiences include offering intellectual stimulation, providing individualized support, providing an appropriate model by demonstrate persistence and a positive outlook to reach sustained effective change in their way dealing with people around them [5],[11],[15],[25]. The study will look whether any of these elements are likely to contribute to a successful academic achievement present in the informant's set of behaviours.

This study explores the behaviours of leadership in one of the rural secondary school in the interior of Sabah. Given the demands, one of the gold standards for education reform, is the leadership behaviour itself [5],[11],[12],[26]. This research will focus on the excavating behavior of leadership that might contribute positively toward

school. Considering these statements, the problems this study will examine the following question: *What are the behaviours of leadership of the principal?*

The findings of a study designed to determine the behaviours of leadership of the school principals that positively influence students' achievements. In this schools, the principal succeeds in promoting the value of classroom-based assessment, utilising instruments such as the SKPMG2, Headcount, and GROW. These practices will assist a principal in successfully sustaining effective change within their organisation [1],[16],[17]. Additionally, principals have the fortitude to ensure that all daily conversations between teachers and students revolve around the curriculum most of time.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

What is effective leadership in school? According to Bryman [4], leadership is a process of influence while maintaining consensus management and participating in decision-making [15]. School leaders are expected to develop positive relationships with teachers, staff, and students to establish mutually attainable goals for all stakeholders [10],[26]. It is a process that can influence teachers, staff, and students to optimize teaching-learning opportunities to foster open communication that ensures followers are working

to capacity by primarily influencing teaching and learning [16],[18]. A leader must be consistent, have high expectations, and be very ambitious for their pupils' success [14],[26],[27]. They also must be able to maintain a clear vision for their school [21]. Some other researchers have reported in their study that effective leadership will increase teacher commitments to school [13], has inherent values, a visionary leader [6] and can develop people [24],[28].

What leadership behaviour probably has the most impact on students' outcomes? Leadership impact on students' social and personal well-being included measures of students' attitudes to school, academic self-concept, engagement with, and schooling participation. The closer educational leaders get to the core business of teaching and learning, the more likely they will positively impact students' outcomes. Leadership will impact pedagogical quality, which improves students' outcomes [22]. Good leadership encourages positive health attitudes, intentions to behave in healthy ways, increased staff retention, and improved academic performance. Teachers and staff are motivated to "do something, anything" made them "feel good" about making immediate, short-term, obvious efforts associated with causing some sort of positive change for students and staff [8].

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Interviews are used as the primary instrumentation in this research first, with the principal, second with teachers, and finally with students if the data is not yet saturated. In this study, data is collected on three levels: first from the principal's own perspectives, second from the teacher's perspectives, and thirdly from the student's viewpoints. This is to see whether the data agree with each other and, hence, improve triangulation [19],[20]. These three tiers of data collection level are well supported in numerous studies before [7],[13],[16],[18]. Prior to data mining, the semi-structured question was checked by an expert in the field to ensure its trustworthiness. The results will be dynamically compared to those of others, such as previous research, as well as looking at current academic trends. The content analysis was meant to happen at the end of the interview, however it cannot be done due to the government's Movement Control Order during the data collection phase.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the study, when a leader demonstrates

appropriate behaviour, teachers feel more positive about their school surroundings. By successfully instilling the teacher about the importance of classroom-based assessment (PBD), making full use of instruments such as SKPMG2, Headcount, and GROW, the principal is able to lead his teacher toward improvement in students' achievement. This model of behaviour, will help a principle to be successful in sustaining effective change in their organisation [1],[16],[17]:

"... One thing that is also done in schools is that the students' mastery of each skill should be translatable as in classroom-based assessment (PBD). So, this classroom-based assessment (PBD), when it is done in a planned manner, will ensure that the entire content and the goals of this curriculum fulfilled..."

Based on input from students, principals will meet with the particular teachers in person to discuss any weaknesses that students may notice during their interactions in the classroom. This kind of individualised support will increase teacher influence in schools for significant positive effects on school improvement. Support is also extended to providing sufficient instructional materials and ensuring that the school building is safe for everyone. Everybody doing their role, including cafeteria workers, cleaning staffs, gardener, school bill are paid in time, people are getting along and so that they need to be "focused and ready to do their job and fulfil their responsibilities" [23],[25]:

"... If there is, I will next meet with the teacher in person, in a situation he or she is unaware of, to discuss about weaknesses the student sees or what the student wants the relevant teacher to improve in his or her PdPC..."

As action research become a school culture, it become a source of intellectual stimulation for the teachers. Intellectual stimulation means the leader of the organisation has the effort to stimulate followers to be innovative and creative and encourage them to question assumptions and reframe problems and approach them in new ways. Leader with intellectual stimulation promote critical thinking and problem solving to make the organisation better. In this context, a teacher claimed that the action research they conducted in the school was different from the normal practise. By continuing doing this, it will lead to better job satisfaction [2],[3]:

"... we have actually cultivated the culture of action research amongst teacher in the school. The type of action research I conducted at this school was quite a bit different from the existing action research..."

Leadership practises include the quality and allocation of leadership functions, social contact, leadership team collaboration, and shared decision-making [9],[13],[26]. A leader must first understand their teachers' mindsets and how they work to effectively support teachers. This might be accomplished by first attempting to understand them. This suggests that observations of his teacher are a necessary thing to do. Only a leader who can understand his teachers are capable of communicating with them and suggesting improvements:

“... I will not ask the teacher what he did but I will study what he did. It's a way of understanding what the teachers is doing. So after we learned what he was doing, it only then I talked to the teacher about what he was doing and what improvements can be made that how interaction occurred...”

After understanding his teacher's predicament, the principal then will try to encourage positive behaviour among the teachers:

“... To encourage positive thinking, first of all I will translate or I will first learn and try to understand what those teachers are doing...”

The first noticeable about the school's culture is how the school building is arranged. According to the principal, he was directly consulted with the setup of all the buildings in the school during the initial design. The school is located in the hilly part of Keningau, so during the initial setup, the first principal was consult by the contractor about the placement of important building such as mosque, surau, administration building, school's hall, classroom and so on. As a result of this, any visitor who visits this place will have the first impression that this school's culture revolves around a religious establishment. The student agrees this opinion, they say that the placement of building and the school environment had help them tremendously during schooling time:

“... The reason, this is a religious school, so through the building structures, the buildings are built. If you ever go to the school, you will realise that the school has a hilly landscape, the distance from the dormitory to the mosque is quite far, so there are many places other than the mosque provided to facilitate students to pray, to recite, to worship such as surau, close to classrooms, surau close to dormitories, or surau close to administrative buildings and teachers' offices ...”

V. CONCLUSION

Healthy relationships between principals and teachers and students are critical for student achievement. Frequently collaborate, discuss, and agree on teaching methods, curriculum, and student counselling, and students who feel integrated into their classrooms and view their teachers and principal as helpful, patient, friendly, fair, and understanding are more motivated to learn and perform better. Fostering these types of school ecosystem will increase the effectiveness of the school and foster an environment where teachers and students enjoy coming to work. The theme that can be conclude from this is: Leader at all time to providing appropriate model by demonstrating persistence and a positive outlook to reach sustained effective change in their school, providing individualized support, sufficient intellectual stimulation activities, very clear about the quality and distribution of leadership function, social interaction, cooperation of the leadership team, and shared decision and able to maintaining visibilities and building collaborative school culture.

This study provides a future framework on which leaders should model their own behavior when trying to effectively leading their school, as well as providing on alternative perspective around which focus areas on leadership preparation programs.

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AUTHOR'S INFORMATION

<p>First Author: Jude James</p> 	<p>Faculty of Psychology and Education University Malaysia Sabah, 88400 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia E-mail: jude6119@gmail.com</p>
<p>Second Author: Rosy Talin</p> 	<p>Faculty of Psychology and Education University Malaysia Sabah, 88400 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia E-mail: rostalin@gmail.com</p>
<p>Third Author: Soon Singh Bikar</p> 	<p>Faculty of Psychology and Education University Malaysia Sabah, 88400 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia E-mail: sohan4025@gmail.com</p>