LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR AND PRACTICES OF A HEAD TEACHER IN AN EXCELLENT SCHOOL

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DECLARATION

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I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own work, except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the behaviours and practices of a head teacher in an excellent school. This study also intends to find out the leadership behaviours and practices of the head teacher that contribute towards the excellent academic and co-curricular achievements and how the excellent results are consistently maintained year after year. Additionally, this study also hopes to explore the head teacher's administrative style in the school. The qualitative research framework was adopted to gain an understanding of the head teacher's leadership behaviour and practices. The research design was a single case study, where data was collected through interviews, observations and document analysis. The school under study scored more than ninety percent passes in the UPSR examination, sports and co-curricular champions at the zone and district level besides being free of any discipline problems. The subject in this study was the head teacher of the school while the key informants comprised five teachers, two support staff and two parents from the school. Transcriptions of the interviews and field notes were made immediately after each interview and observation. The findings of the study revealed that the vision of the head teacher was paramount for school excellence; teaching of the curriculum was top priority; programmes for individual pupils' indifferences were implemented; collaborative leadership practiced in the administration and most major decisions regarding academic or non academic were made in consensus with the staff. The findings of the study also revealed various implications such as the importance of effective managerial skills used in executing instructional tasks as well as implementing effective academic, co-curricular and discipline programmes for school excellence.

TINGKAH LAKU KEPEMIMPINAN DAN AMALAN SEORANG GURU BESAR DI SEBUAH SEKOLAH CEMERLANG

AZIAN BINTI AHMAD SHAHARBI

DISEMBER 2010

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti tingkahlaku kepemimpinan seorang guru besar di sebuah sekolah cemerlang. Ia juga ingin mengkaji tingkahlaku kepemimpinan seorang guru besar yang menyumbang ke arah kecemerlangan pencapaian akademik, kokurikulum dan sahsiah serta bagaimana kecemerlangan ini berjaya dikekalkan tahun demi tahun. Kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk mengkaji dengan lebih lanjut mengenai corak pentadbiran guru besar tersebut. Kajian ini merupakan satu kajian kes yang menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif. Temubual, pemerhatian serta analisis dokumen dijalankan untuk tujuan pengumpulan data. Sekolah yang telah dipilih untuk kajian ini merupakan sebuah sekolah yang telah berjaya mendapat peratus kelulusan melebihi sembilan puluh peratus di dalam peperiksaan UPSR serta menjadi johan dalam berbagai aktiviti sukan dan kokurikulum di peringkat zon dan daerah, dan cemerlang di dalam bidang sahsiah. Subjek kajian ini adalah guru besar manakala informan utama terdiri daripada lima orang guru, dua orang kakitangan bukan guru dan dua orang ibu bapa kepada murid di sekolah ini. Untuk tujuan menganalisis data, transkripsi temubual dan nota-nota lapangan dibuat sebaik sahaja selesai setiap satu temubual dan pemerhatian. Dapatan kajian menunujukkan bahawa visi seorang guru besar adalah elemen penting dalam menentukan kecemerlangan sesebuah sekolah; pengajaran dan pembelajaran adalah fokus paling utama, melaksanakan pelbagai program bagi keperluan murid yang berbeza telah dilaksanakan dan segala keputusan penting dalam bidang akademik atau bukan akademik dibuat secara konsensus bersama guru. Antara implikasi kajian termasuk kemahiran mengurus bersifat efektif pada guru besar selaku pemimpin instruksional di sekolah dalam menjalankan program akademik, kokurikulum dan sahsiah yang berkesan bagi mencapai serta mengekalkan kejayaan.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide an introduction to the study beginning with the background of the study followed by the researcher's personal interest, objectives of the study and the research questions. The chapter concludes with the definition of the key terms, significance of the study and its limitations.

1.1   Background of the study

Malaysia is a fast developing country with a mission to become a regional hub for educational excellence in South East Asia. In fulfilling such a noble quest, all learning organizations in Malaysia face increasingly critical demands for greater equity and accountability. Henceforth, school heads who are seen as 'sense makers' and 'agents of change' are challenged to turn around ailing schools and improve everyday teaching and learning that meet international global standards (Chan Yuen Fook, 2004).   Societal demands for greater efficiency and accountability have also seen school heads beginning to display excellence in both management and daily administration of schools. In a move to produce excellent schools, the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) gives both state and national level awards to schools in a number of categories. These include awards

such as The Potential School Award, The 3K / Three Excellent Aspects Award (given to schools which display clean, safe and conducive learning environment) and the Minister of Education Quality Award. Alongside with these awards, the MOE realizes that award-winning schools are a result of performing and excellent school heads.

Effective leadership is widely accepted as being a key constituent in achieving school improvement. A highly effective school head is not called to the job per se, but more importantly to the opportunity to make a difference in the school. This could mean a change in the educational landscape, heal an ailing school, or work for the concepts of greater accountability, equity and excellence. School heads have the responsibility to lead their schools to high achievement for all students. In the eyes of society, a successful and excellent school is most likely to be associated with an equally successful head teacher. We often hear talk about just how poorly the school performs if the head teacher is ineffective in his leadership. There have also been cases where a school excels under the administration of a particular head teacher but deteriorates under the administration of another; thus leaving one to believe that the two: the leadership behaviour of the head teacher, and the performance of the school are seemingly related to one another.

On that note, Whitaker (1997) argues that a key element of an effective school is an effective head teacher. Although school success is influenced by many people, the head teacher plays a pertinent role. Research into the leadership of excellent and successful schools has produced a number of pointers concerning leadership style and effective strategies. However, what is less clear is the extent to which these are different from, or the same as those adopted by leaders in other successful and excellent schools. Perhaps it is not so much the nature of their style or strategies that distinguishes effective leadership in these circumstances, but the leader's ability to prioritize, establish a direction for the school, motivate staff and build capacity by developing staff and harnessing resources (Whitaker,1997).

School effectiveness research in the 1980's and 1990's pointed to the importance of the head teacher and teachers as the main determinants of school success. The key to all improvements is the vision and energy of the head teacher. However, Heck, Larsen and Marcoulides (1990) opine that the behaviours and practices of the head teacher have an indirect impact on students' achievement as evidenced below :

> *"In managing the work structure of the school, principals do not affect the achievement of individual students in the same manner that teachers do, that is, through direct classroom instruction. Principals, may, however impact teaching and classroom practices through school decisions such as formulating school goals, setting and communicating high achievement expectations, organizing classrooms for instruction, allocating necessary resources, supervising teacher's performance, monitoring student progress and promoting a positive, orderly environment for learning"* (1990 : 95).

This implies that even though head teachers or principals do not go into the classrooms to teach, nevertheless, they have an impact over teaching and classroom practices by making vital decisions; ensuring that teachers have the necessary tools to facilitate instruction; getting feedback on student progress and so on. All these have an indirect impact on the students' achievement in the school. There seems to be a direct relationship between school climate and student achievement in school, and similarly there is consensus that the leadership style by the head teacher is the significant factor in shaping the learning environment to facilitate student learning. The head teacher who articulates clear goals, holds high expectations of pupils and teachers, and exercises strong educational leadership is instrumental to the school in achieving their goals (Miller,1995).

To summarize, school excellence begins with the presence of a leader who is the head teacher or principal with high values and commitments and who does not give up easily in times of adversity. Therefore, this study hopes to explore the ways in which the leadership

behaviours and practices of a head teacher contribute towards the academic achievement as well as the potential of the pupils in the school.

An excellent primary school located in the suburbs of the city was chosen for the study. Established in 1957, this particular school was selected due to its proven record of high academic achievement over 11 consecutive years. From years 1997 to 2007, the school had been obtaining an overall percentage of more than ninety percent passes in the Primary School Assessment Examination (UPSR). In fact in the year 2006, the overall percentage passes in the UPSR was 99.3% with 44.6% scoring straight A's. On top of that, for more than six years, more than forty percent of her pupils have been scoring straight A's. Furthermore, the chosen school also has a proud share of potential athletes who made it to the state and even national level, making it the proud recipient of the 2006 MSSPK Excellent Certificate for Incentive Schools.

What is more interesting is that the head teacher in the school under study has been administering the school for more than 12 years. With a Bachelor of Education degree and specializing in Mathematics, she was first appointed head teacher in a school in a different district in 1994, but was posted to this established primary school in 1996 and has been there ever since. She has led the school to high achievements not only in academics, but also in co-curriculum and character building. Her pupils are not only academically excellent but have proven themselves in sports and co-curricular activities. Thus this study hopes to explore her leadership behaviours and practices in leading the school towards excellence.

This study used a qualitative case study method to collect and analyze the research data. The qualitative research framework was adopted to gain an understanding of the

leadership behavior and practices of the head teacher in relation to the pupils' excellent academic and co-curricular achievement and character building. Three data collection techniques were used, namely, interviews, observations and document analysis. The head teacher, five teachers, two support staff and two parents were selected for the interview thus making a total of 10 key informants for this study.

1.2   Personal interest in the research

Having been a teacher for twenty five years and now involved in educational administration, I am very much interested in finding out the effects of leadership behaviour and practices of a head teacher on the overall achievement of the pupils in the school. As a leader in the school, I feel it is my responsibility to mould the pupils in a holistic and integrated manner in order to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonic, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God, in line with the goals of the Malaysian National Philosophy of Education. Input from this study will shed some light on various ways to develop the pupils' potentials holistically in accordance with the Education Philosophy.

As the head teacher is indirectly responsible for the pupils' excellent achievement, I am therefore very interested to find out how the leadership behaviours and practices of a head teacher in a selected excellent school indirectly influences the pupils' excellent achievement. Since the head teacher does not go to class to teach to produce excellent results, there must be ways in which she indirectly influences the pupils' excellent achievement. In that, setting the school culture and expectations have more effect on pupil achievement than any one direct action. Head teachers are able to use their leadership to drive the culture of the school towards increased pupil performance. They may impact teaching and classroom practices through such school decisions as formulating school goals, setting and communicating high achievement

expectations, organizing classrooms for instruction, allocating necessary resources, supervising teachers' performance, monitoring student progress, and promoting a positive and orderly environment for learning. I am very much interested in tracing the path followed by research which provides evidence of successful leadership practices as they act indirectly to improve pupils' achievement.

As a school administrator, I strongly believe it is the job and the responsibility of the head teacher to see that the pupils achieve success besides possessing the following qualities :

> *"knowledgeable, competent, possess high moral standards and are responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large".*
>
> (Malaysian National Philosophy of Education,1996).

Therefore, I would very much like to gain an insight into the ways in which the head teacher's leadership behaviour and practices affect the pupils' overall achievement.

1.3   Problem statement

Excellent school heads are sense makers of schools that help create a sustainable school climate that will enhance pupils' and teachers' productivity. Thus they are not only the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), but also the instructional leaders and motivators for their teams (Chan Yuen Fook, 2004). The head teacher plays a pertinent role in developing quality education as he is responsible for excellent school management and effective school leadership. This means that as department head, the head teacher has been entrusted with the responsibility of realizing the country's aspirations and education development (Abas Awang & Balasundran A. Ramaiah, 2002) and hence is responsible for the success and excellence of the school. However McNulty, Waters and Marzano (2005) emphasizes that a head teacher's

duties in school is not only limited to routine administrative work but he / she is also required to utilise all the sources and human capital under his administration, especially teachers so that they are able to contribute effectively and are committed in their work. Ubben, Hughes, and Norris (2001) and Drake and Ross (1999) opine that each single activity that happens in school is the responsibility of the head teacher; in fact a school which is effective, harmony and excellent has its roots in the leadership of an effective head teacher.

Sheilds (2005) and Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley and Beresford (2000) agree that the duties of a head teacher are not only limited to carrying out functional duties like organizing, coordinating and evaluating but they also need to be a role model and source of inspiration to all the teachers. Apart from that, the school leadership is also recommended to practice leadership styles which emphasizes on humanistic values such as building a harmonious relationship with the teachers, being transparent, approachable, motivating and guiding the teachers (Bush, 2003; Hussein Hj. Ahmad, 2001). On the other hand, Chan Yuen Fook (2000), opines that the nation's educational aspirations will not reach its objectives if the school leadership focuses only on administrative chores when the school leadership field today is much more dynamic, complex and demanding (Speck, 1999; Herbert, 2006) in creating head teachers who are capable of producing committed teachers.

In relation to that, Fullan (2001) and Mortimore (1995) assert that in this globalized era, a head teacher needs to practice professional leadership which include firmness in making decisions, having realistic objectives and emphasizing on uniqueness as a leader in school. Besides that, a head teacher should also be concerned with the human development aspect. In short, a head teacher needs to balance between excellence in management and effective

leadership as an opening to producing teachers who are committed towards school and the teaching profession.

Society places high expectation on schools to produce knowledgeable, morally outstanding and highly-skilled citizens (Donaldson, 2006). In order to do so, head teachers are expected to lead the school effectively. In the realization of the nation's aspirations, the head teachers are the public officers entrusted to lead the schools to enable them to function smoothly and more effectively. However, there are discrepancies in our school leadership. School leadership weakness is not a new issue in school leadership research. Fullan (2001), Deal and Peterson (2000) and Abdul Shukor Abdullah (2004) exposed that there are weaknesses in the school leadership. There are head teachers who are not able to administer the school well resulting in the school not being able to function effectively. One of the major weaknesses is the bureaucratic leadership style of the head teacher which makes them vague about the role they have to play as leaders who have to generate the teacher's commitment towards school. Similarly, Azlin Norhaini Mansor (2006), Foo Say Fooi (2003) and Daresh (2001) express concern as there are still many school heads who administer their schools based on the classic management model. They practice the autocratic leadership style with formal procedures, neglecting the teachers' psychological needs, suppressing the teachers' creativity, overly emphasing on academic achievement and putting aside their roles as leaders who have to generate quality human capital for the purpose of education development (Chan Yuen Fook, 2004; Herbert, 2006).

In discussing the weaknesses of school leadership, Ariffin Ba'ada and Vishalache Balakrishnan (2005) report that head teachers in Malaysia still practice one-way communication, seldom interact with teachers, do not implement teacher autonomy, resulting

in the decline of the commitment of teachers towards school. According to Mansor Abd. Aziz (2001) and Hasrat Abdul Rahman (2001), their research findings show that the role of a head teacher in a school is just as an administrator and not as a professional educational leader as hoped by the MOE which includes the role as an educator, act as mentor towards the teachers as well as a leader who is able to generate the teachers' loyalty so as to be more committed and productive (Abdul Shukor Abdullah, 2004).

In relation to this, head teachers are expected to practice various leadership styles in administering schools as each leadership model has its own weakness. One obvious weakness is that not all the leadership models can be applied in any one situation or context (Rahimah 2003; Ross 2006). Therefore, a head teacher has to be wise to adapt the various leadership styles in his administration to suit a particular school, situation and the different needs. A wise head is able to practice suitable leadership styles based on situations without relying on one particular style of leadership (Dunford, Fawcett and Bennett, 2000). In this context, Bolman, Bloch and Granell (1999), Abdul Shukor Abdullah (2004) and Abdul Rafie Mahat (2002) opine that a variety of leadership practices results in more effective leadership instead of merely relying on one particular style.

The government of Malaysia and the Ministry of Education have taken various steps to further improve the quality of education in the country in its move to promote Malaysia as a center for academic excellence in the region. There is no denying that only through education are we able to realize the dream of transforming Malaysia into a developed nation in the year 2020. The launch of the Educational Development Master Plan 2006 – 2010 (PIPP) by Datuk

Seri Abdullah bin Hj. Badawi in 2007 is aimed at promoting access and equity and to ensure that quality education is experienced by all Malaysians.

Realising the need to address the issue of keeping up with other developing countries around the world, the Ministry of Education has set its focus on several areas inline with the National Key Results Area (NKRA'S) as announced by the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and the Minister of Education (Bernama, 27 July 2009). When implemented, the NKRA's, will help improve the elementary school education and enhance the capacity of school leaders as well as reward schools for sustainable improvement, and in due time, improve the quality of education in Malaysia. The four focuses in the NKRA which aims to widen access to quality and affordable education include preschools, literacy and numeracy (LINUS), high performing school and new deals for principals and head teachers.

Hence, to materially upgrade the school system, head teachers and principals are the key figures as they are the primary drivers of change. Quality leadership is essential in managing and administering a school in order to produce a generation of quality. Research has found that an improvement in head teachers' performance has significant impact on pupil outcomes. Head teachers play an active role in developing their teachers, planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching activities in their schools. They also ensure that the school environment is conducive for learning by reducing external pressures and interruptions and establishing an orderly and supportive environment both inside and outside classrooms (Noor Rezan, 2009).

1.4   Objectives of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore the leadership behaviours and practices of a head teacher that contribute towards the academic and co-curricular achievements of the school. As there seems to be limited literature on this subject matter, this study is carried out with the hope of gaining an insight into the everyday behaviours and practices of the head teacher that contributes towards pupils' achievement and school excellence.

"I have never seen a good school with a poor principal or a poor school with a good principal. I have seen unsuccessful schools turn around into successful ones and regrettably, outstanding schools slide rapidly into decline. In each case the rise or fall could readily be traced to the quality of the principal or head teacher……."

Fred M. Hetchinger (President New York Times).

The principal is ultimately responsible for everything that happens in a school (Sergiovanni, 1995). Since head teachers do not directly influence pupils' achievements as teachers do, this study hopes to find out what are the leadership behaviours and practices of the head teacher that indirectly influences pupils' learning outcomes.

Research shows that there have been weaknesses in the leadership styles of head teachers in excellent schools. In moving forward to giving their best and in getting the team of teachers and pupils to work alongside them, head teachers have been known to be too result-oriented resulting in little time or no time at all to even stop and talk to the teachers. Therefore the head teacher has little time to interact with both teachers and pupils (Chan Yuen Fook, 2009). There have also been grouses by teachers that the head teacher is overly ambitious. In pushing towards school excellence, there has been no end to their ever increasing workload. The teachers admit that they could only do so much, but the head teacher wants them to do much more in a short time.

There are also head teachers who only focus on examination results and fail to look into their teachers' welfare. Over and above the heavy workload, the teachers are required to give extra classes every afternoon, weekends and even during the school holidays. There are still many head teachers who practice this autocratic style in their administration, running the school like a 'one-man' show (Azlin Norhaini Mansor, 2006). They seldom ask for their assistants' opinions, let alone the teachers and run the school as they think fit. Vishalache Balakrishnan (2005) report that there are head teachers who do not communicate or interact with their teachers. Apart from going on her rounds in the school, the head teacher spends most of her time in her office, without much knowledge of what goes on in the school.

Thus, this study hopes to gain an insight into the role a head teacher plays in getting the teachers to commit themselves in carrying out the programmes that have been planned towards achieving the school's objectives. It would also be of interest to explore how she collaborates with the senior assistants and the teachers in carrying out the school activities, as well as how she develops and maintains her relationship with the school Parent Teacher Association, government and non-government agencies and the community around the school in order to bring her school to great heights.

1.5   Research questions

The primary research questions which guided this study are as follows :

1. What are the leadership behaviours and practices of a head teacher with regards to vision, mission and culture?

2. What are the leadership behaviours and practices of a head teacher with regards to curriculum and classroom instruction?

3. What are the leadership behaviours and practices of a head teacher with regards to effective management ?

4. What are the leadership behaviours and practices of a head teacher with regards to collaboration and shared leadership?

5. What are the leadership behaviours and practices of a head teacher with regards to family and community involvement?

1.6 Definition of key terms

In this section, the conceptual and operational definitions of the key terms used in this study will be determined.

1.6.1 Leadership behaviour

Stodgill (1948) defined leadership as "the process of influencing the activities of an organized group towards goal setting and goal accomplishment". This definition is much broader than previously cited definitions for, in addition to mentioning the importance of goal and group, it takes into account the relevance of goal setting as well as accomplishment.

Operationally, leadership behaviour refers to the behavior of the head teacher under study in matters pertaining to school administration and school programmes. Specifically, it means the manner with which she deals with the teachers and pupils, how she supervises learning in the school, how she handles meetings and how she communicates with the parents and support staff.

1.6.2 Practices

According to Yukl (1998), practices refer to social processes in which a member of a group or organization influences the interpretation of internal and external events, the choice of goals or desired outcomes, organization of work activities, individual motivation and abilities, power relations and shared orientations.

In the context of this study, practices refer to the ways the head teacher goes about carrying out her duties as the head of the organization. It refers to how she administers the school and how she handles her staff to ensure that both curriculum, co-curriculum and discipline programmes are effectively implemented.

1.6.3 Vision

Kouzes and Posner (1995) define vision "as an ideal and unique image of the future" (p.95).

In the context of this study, vision is the underlying idea or ideas of the head teacher for the success of the school. It is the most important factor inter related to the leadership style and school management in creating the school climate.

1.6.4 Mission

According to Janel M. Radtke, mission or purpose is a precise description of what an organization does. It should describe the business the organization is in. It is a definition of 'why' the organization exists.

In the context of this study, the mission is all that the school does to accomplish the vision. It involves teaching and learning and implementing all the school activities in order to realize the vision.

1.6.5 Culture

According to Edgar Schein (1998), culture is the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization, that operate unconsciously and define in a basic 'taken for granted' fashion an organization's view and its environment.

Operationally, the culture is the way the staff behaves to accomplish the vision and mission of the school. It is the shared beliefs and values that closely knit the school community.

1.6.6 Curriculum

Kelly (1983) defines curriculum as all the learning which is planned and guided by the school, whether it is carried out in groups or individually, inside or outside the school. It involves the range of courses from which pupils choose what subject matters to study.

Operationally, a curriculum is the set of courses , course work and content offered at a school. The curriculum in primary schools is entirely determined by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia.

1.6.7 Classroom instruction

Webster's New World College Dictionary defines classroom as a room in a school or college where classes are taught. Instruction is teaching, information, directions or orders.

In the context of this study, classroom instruction is the way teachers deliver the curriculum or the methods they use to teach the pupils.

1.6.8 Effective management

The term "effective" relates to getting the right things done and setting right targets to achieve an overall goal. Koontz (1968) defines management as the art of getting things done through and with people in formally organized groups. Management in organizational activities are the acts of getting people together to accomplish desired goals and objectives efficiently and effectively. It comprises planning, organizing, staffing, leading or directing, and controlling an organization. According to Stephen Covey , effective leadership is putting things first while effective management is discipline, carrying it out.

In the context of this study, effective management is the process used by the head teacher to carry out out her duties to ensure the smooth running of the school. This involves obtaining resources for curricular activities - teaching, manipulate time for learning, ensure pupils get the best from co-curricular activities and create a climate where pupils are well disciplined and safe.

1.6.9 Collaborative leadership

The term "collaborative leadership" describes an emerging body of theory and management practice which is focused on the leadership skills and attributes needed to deliver results across organizational boundaries. According to Rubin (1952), effective collaborative leaders connect their instituitional systems to the people with whom they work, one individual at a time, learning enough about the individual and the group to lead systemic change by influencing people collectively and individually. Effective collaborative leadrs are clear on the goals they aim to achieve and succeed by learning to see through that goal through the eyes of those they lead, and they take responsibility.

In the context of this study, collaborative leadership is how the staff, the head teacher and the senior assistants work together to accomplish the goals of the school. Kouzes and Posner (1995) describe it as the "we" not "I" philosophy.

1.6.10 Family and community involvement

Wikipedia gives the meaning of family as a group of people affliated by consanguinity, affinity or co residence. In most societies it is the principal instituition for the socialization of children. Community is society at large a commonwealth or state ; a body politic or people in general. Family and community involvement is the partnership between the family and community and the school.

In the context of this study, curriculum, instruction, evaluation, and staff development, a program of school, family and community connections is now viewed as one of the components of school organization that may help to promote student learning and success in school.

1.7 Significance of the study

This study explored the leadership behaviours and practices of a head teacher in an excellent school, what she does and does not do in the everyday running of the school to ensure that her pupils not only excel academically and in co-curricular activities but are also of good and sound character. It is hoped that the findings of this study will provide an idea of the leadership behaviour and practices of a head teacher in an excellent school so that other aspiring head teachers can model after her.

It is hoped that the findings of this study will be an eye opener and provide much understanding regarding the head teacher's leadership behaviours and practices in the country. In relation to that, this study is hoped to be able to assist the head teachers in reevaluating the strengths and weaknesses of their leadership behaviours and practices. Aspiring head teachers will be able to learn from the experiences of the head teacher in this selected school; most importantly what she does and does not do in contributing towards the excellent achievement of her pupils and consistently maintaining the excellence. They will be able to gain an insight into how she manages to further develop the potential of her pupils in a holistic and integrated manner resulting in individuals who are knowledgeable, competent and possess high moral standards as well as responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal well - being.

The study also hopes to provide head teachers in schools with similar demographics some concrete data on specific behaviours and practices that contribute to pupil academic success and ultimately to the overall success of schools. Associating and relating these behaviours and practices with pupil achievement will provide a framework for other head teachers all over the country to use as they work in creating success in their own schools. The invaluable knowledge and experience can be shared among the other head teachers in helping them improve pupil achievement in their respective schools. This will be of great assistance to newly appointed head teachers in adopting the most suitable and effective styles in administering their respective schools towards excellence and to produce Malaysian citizens who are well-rounded, skillful and cherish the goal of achieving national unity.

This study is also expected to provide ideas and input and can be of assistance to not only head teachers, but to all regardless at State Education Department or the Ministry of

Education in training, choosing and evaluating the effectiveness of the school administrator's training programme (head teachers and principals). Input from this study can be used as a guideline for establishing a comprehensive principalship model based on the Malaysian context and culture.

Besides, this study can be of some assistance to the Ministry of Education, Malaysia in the selection process for the post of head teachers. Additionally, with knowledge of effective leadership behaviours and practices for students' excellent achievement, the Ministry of Education will be able to come up with "Guidelines of Effective Head Teachers" for school heads. These guidelines will be of help to the head teachers in improving their leadership qualities. It will be useful for head teachers seeking to implement educational strategies designed to increase achievement in low achievement and non - performing schools. Furthermore, the Ministry too would be able to promote future head teachers with the necessary qualities to lead schools throughout the country.

In line with the National Key Results Areas, there is a new deal for head teachers commencing in 2010 whereby head teachers whose schools have performed well academically will be eligible for rewards both financial and non-financial. Performance of the schools will be based on a composite score consisting the Grade point Average (70%) based on public examinations and Standard for Quality Examination in Malaysia (SQEM) (30%). The rewards consist of a payment of RM 7,500 attachment programme with reputable institutions locally or abroad (for those who significantly exceed targets for three years consecutive years), accelerated promotion and Certificate of Recognition. On the other hand, head teachers who constantly do not perform will be subject to remedial programme consisting of undergoing a Performance Management Programme in Institut Aminuddin Baki, being transferred to another

school or department, pooling, Voluntary Separation Scheme (VSS) or staying permanently in a pool post (Norezan Bappo). Hence, it is hoped that the findings of this study will shed some light to the other head teachers as to how this head teacher in this particular school leads her school towards excellence. Improved pupil achievements could at least help them get rewards under the New Deal for Head Teachers instead of continuing to underperform resulting in them being subject to remedial programmes or worst still, staying permanently in a pool post.

In addition, the findings of the study can serve as a guideline for the State Education Department and District Education Office in emplacing the right candidate as head teacher for the right school. This will go a long way towards ensuring the success of the school as well as to develop holistic individuals in line with the National Philosophy of Education. Based on the findings of this study, the Education Department is able to list down the behaviours and practices of head teachers in excellent schools. Head teachers known to have the required criteria and whose behaviours and practices have had a positive impact on pupils' achievement in their schools can be posted to schools with below average results with the hope that their expertise could help in improving the pupils' achievement.

Besides, it is hoped that the findings of this study will be able to serve as a guideline to head teachers regarding the best leadership behaviours and practices that is capable of improving teachers' commitment towards school which is associated with improved pupil performance. Head teachers have to play an active role in developing their teachers for them to be able to give their best for the pupils.

It is also hoped that this study adds findings to a growing body of knowledge and qualitative data on school leadership behaviours and practices. With increased literature and

knowledge on school leadership behaviour, prospective head teachers and all those involved in education may find the findings useful for identifying behaviours, beliefs and values that could advance the development of a school.

Lastly, the National Institute of Educational Management and Leadership (IAB) under the flagship of Ministry of Education will be able to provide training and consultation to aspiring head teachers in the area of school leadership and performance management through their short term in-service courses or even their long term diploma courses such as the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH). It is hoped that prospective head teachers may find the results of this study useful for identifying behaviours, practices, beliefs and values that could advance the academic, co curriculum and character building development of their schools.

1.8   Limitations of the study

This study focused on only one primary school in the district of North Kinta. Thus the most apparent limitation is that only one head teacher in one school was studied. The leadership behaviours and practices of the head teacher as perceived by self and others were examined within the confines and settings of the school. Hence the findings of this study cannot be used to generalize for all head teachers in excellent schools in the country.

Besides this, there were only ten key informants in this study thus making the number non-representative of the general population of teachers and parents. Lastly, through the qualitative method, the interview data, observations and document reviews are limited to the views, opinions and behaviours of the head teacher and the other key informants that are

seen, observed and communicated verbally as well as through the reading of selected school documents.

In a qualitative study, it is too easy for the prejudices and attitudes of the researcher to bias the data. The researcher spends a considerable time in the empirical world laboriously collecting and reviewing piles of data. As the data must bear the weight of any interpretation, the researcher must constantly confront his or her own opinions and prejudices with the data. Besides, most opinions and prejudices are rather supercificial. The data collected provide a much more detailed rendering of events that even the most creatively prejudiced mind might have imagined prior to this study. (Bogdan and Bilken, 2003).

In light of this, the researcher has recorded detailed fieldnotes that included reflections on my own subjectivity.. Furthermore, to ensure that the views of the key informants were upheld, the transcribed data of each interview was verified with the key informants. They were given access to the transcribed data so that they could verify its authencity. In this study, peer examination of data was used, where two experienced head teachers reviewed the findings and made comments.

As a qualitative researcher, I had attempted to interact with my subjects in a natural, unobtrusive and unthreatening manner. I also attempted to "blend into the woodwork" so that the activities that occured in my presence do not differ significantly from from those that occurred in my absence. However, researchers can never eliminate all of their own effects on subjects or obtain a perfect correspondence between what they wish to study - the "natural setting" – and what they actually study – " a setting with a researcher present" (Bogdan and Bilken, 2003).

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