

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP, TEACHER EFFICACY AND TEACHER COMMITMENT IN MALAYSIA SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to develop a conceptual model in exploring the relationships among transformational leadership, teacher efficacy and teacher commitment in Malaysia secondary school teachers. System theory, Transformational leadership theory, and Bandura's social cognitive theory serve as a vessel in developing this conceptual paper. From the extensive literature review, six dimensions of transformational leadership (Kenneth Leithwood & Jantzi, 1997), three components of teacher efficacy (Tschannen-moran & William, 2001; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998) and teacher commitment (Meyer & Allen, 2004) are identified to construct the model. Path analysis will be carried out to identify the paths through transformational leadership to teacher efficacy, from teacher efficacy to teacher commitment and also from transformational leadership to teacher commitment. An insightful for the analysis of the relationships among transformational leadership, teacher efficacy and teacher commitment will be viewed. This design stands in contrast to other researchers' study by using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) as the analysis tool.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Teacher efficacy, Teacher commitment, Conceptual paper

Introduction

Malaysia education system often faces changes and reviews in education policies (Ministry of Education, 2011). With these education plans and policies, school teachers are the person on the field to execute the plans (Central, 2008; Park, Henkin, & Egley, 2005). Hence, teacher Commitment research has been widely conducted in various education settings. It is a hot topic because what affects teacher commitment is pertinent and vital in any education arena. Good commitment determines the desire to stay competitively in the career (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Jaros, 2007; Meyer & Allen, 2004) The rise in transformational leadership style as an important determinant of teacher commitment is evidently found in research (Herold, Fedor, Caldwell, & Liu, 2008; Ling & Ling, 2012; Ross & Gray, 2006; Sezgin, 2009). However, evidence to this relationship between transformational leadership and teacher commitment has been inconsistent (Horn-turpin, 2009; Ryan & Harry, 2007). The present study aspired to uncover a possible reason for the inconsistent findings of research into this relationship, identifying teacher efficacy as a mediator for the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher commitment.

Literature Review and Propositions Development

Transformational Leadership

In leadership literature, transformational leadership has been linked to the promotion of change and improvement in schools (Kong, Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2002; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Leithwood, 2007) Transformational leadership gurus, James MacGregor Burns, Bernard M. Bass, Bruce J. Avolio, and Kenneth Leithwood (Stewart, 2006) dedicated their research on the concept and evolution of transformational leadership. The evolution of transformational leadership involves five leadership practices namely: (1) setting directions, (2) developing people, (3) redesigning the organisation, (4) improving the instructional program aggregate and (5) related practices (Leithwood & Sun, 2012)

According to (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Sun & Leithwood, 2012) transformational leadership is seen to be sensitive to school improvement to promote positive school outcomes. Principal who adopts transformational leadership behaviors motivates teachers to rise above their personal expectations and help create common school vision and missions. According to Ross and Gray (2006), the "essence of transformational leadership is dedication to fostering the growth of organizational members and enhancing their commitment by elevating their goals" (p. 180).

Teacher efficacy

Teacher efficacy is the teacher's confidence level in their ability to promote student learning (Hoy, 2000). It is reported that teacher efficacy lies under the theoretical concept of self-efficacy. Bandura (1986, 2006) has defined perceived self-efficacy as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required in managing prospective situations". Similarly, Ross and Gray (2006) also defined teacher efficacy as a set of personal efficacy beliefs that refer to the specific domain of the teacher's professional behavior. Tschannen-moran & Hoy (2001) presented three components of teacher efficacy: (1) Efficacy in student engagement, (2) Efficacy in instructional strategies and (3) Efficacy in classroom management.

Teacher Commitment

Allen and Meyer (1991) coined organizational commitment as a psychological tie that links the relationship between organization and employee with the objective to reduce turnover of employees. They conceptualized organizational commitment into three components: affective commitment (AC), continuance commitment (CC) and normative commitment (NC). AC refers to the employee's emotional attachment to, and identification and involvement with an organization; CC describes the employee's awareness of the costs of the employee leaving the organization; and NC is based on CC and stresses the importance of obligation (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Jaros, 2007; Meyer & Allen, 1991). In this paper, organisational commitment has been referred to teacher commitment. It has the same concept, school as the organisation and teachers being the employees. In Dannetta's (2002) research, he identified 31 factors that influence teacher commitment. It shows that necessity to further identify the factors that influence teacher commitment in Malaysia context.

Relationships among transformational leadership, teacher efficacy and teacher commitment*Between Transformational Leadership and teacher efficacy*

School teachers work under the leadership of a principal and their level of teaching can depend on past experiences with different leadership styles. Principals can help develop a sense of efficacy for individual teachers and for the entire school by motivating them (Protheroe, 2008). Hence, transformational leadership affects teacher efficacy.

Between Teacher efficacy and teacher commitment

A teacher who thinks highly efficacious will likely to produce successful achievement. Whereas, teachers who project low self-efficacy are likely to give up easily at the task (Ross & Gray, 2006). Greater teacher efficacy will gain in higher teacher commitment among Malaysian secondary school teachers. Hence, teacher efficacy affects teacher commitment.

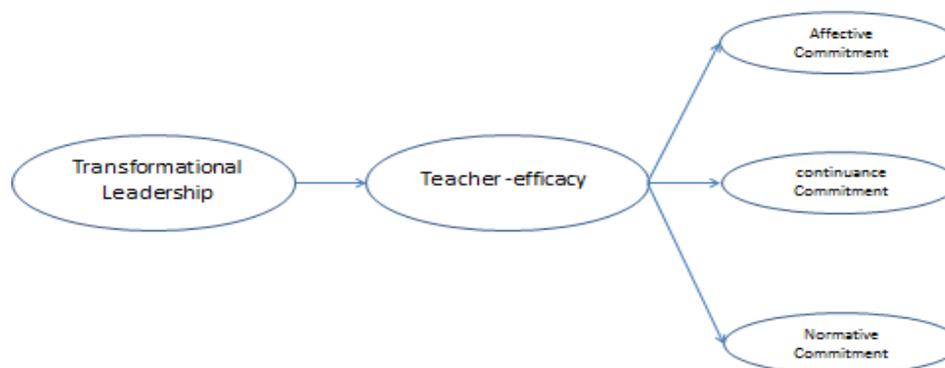
Between Transformational Leadership and Teacher Commitment

Transformational principal influences teacher commitment by encouraging teachers to think critically bounded by school goals. With the internalization and personalization of school goals into a teacher's life, the teacher will have higher commitment in teaching career (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004; Bass & Avolio, 2005). Commitment teachers will then churn out more positive student achievement (Sun & Leithwood, 2012). Thus, transformational leadership affects teacher commitment.

Conceptual Research Framework

Based on literature review, a research framework is developed as a means to explore the relationships among transformational leadership, teacher efficacy and teacher commitment in Malaysia secondary schools. Transformational leadership and teacher efficacy are independent variables and teacher commitment is the dependent variable in this study. The proposed model reinforces the need for school management to recognize specific dimensions that affect teacher commitment ultimately.

Hypothesized model 1: linking transformational leadership, teacher-efficacy and teacher commitment.



16

Theoretical implication

The influences of transformational leadership and teacher efficacy on teacher commitment have been the paradigm of past studies and researchers have suggested non-linear (Horn-turpin, 2009) and interactive relationships (Ross & Gray, 2006). Similarly, the proposed model examines the independent influences of transformational leadership practices on teacher efficacy and treats teacher commitment as dependent variable. This conceptual model particularly provides an insightful theoretical foundation for the analysis of teacher efficacy between transformational leadership and teacher commitment. It clarifies the associations and encourages motivation for future research towards the development of a comprehensive teacher commitment research area. This model further confirms the theories adapted in this study.

Managerial implication

Exploring the relationships among transformational leadership, teacher efficacy and teacher commitment will help to improve school management where by the principal will know what to tap into increasing teacher efficacy thus benefit teacher commitment. However, low levels of teacher efficacy alone will not necessarily affect teacher commitment and performance of a school. Other factors like school conditions, school climate and culture might significantly affect teacher commitment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study contributes to the teacher commitment literature by linking transformational leadership with teacher efficacy experienced by Malaysian secondary school teachers. Transformational Leadership practices indeed have a great impact on personnel attitudes (teacher efficacy) and commitment towards their schools (Horn-turpin, 2009; K. A. Leithwood, 1991; Kenneth Leithwood & Jantzi, 2010; Ross & Gray, 2006). This paper serves as a platform for researchers to examine further on the factors that may influence teacher commitment.

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