

**THE RELATIONSHIP OF INSTRUCTIONAL
LEADERSHIP, TEACHERS' ORGANIZATIONAL
COMMITMENT AND STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT
IN SMALL SCHOOLS**

by

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*Dedicated to my loving husband, Mr S Palaniappan,
and our children, Puvithira and Suharson.*

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ABSTRAK

Kepimpinan guru besar dikatakan sebagai faktor utama yang menyokong prestasi guru dari segi komitmen organisasi dan pencapaian pelajar. Guru memainkan peranan penting dalam mendidik generasi masa depan terutamanya di sekolah rendah dimana pengajaran dan bimbingan yang efektif mampu meneraju ke arah kecemerlangan pendidikan negara. Pengkaji berpendapat kajian ini telah di kendalikan pada masa yang tepat kerana Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia menitikberatkan kepemimpinan instruksional sekolah rendah terutamanya di sekolah kurang murid untuk menilai kecemerlangan pencapaian akademik mereka. Berdasarkan kepentingan sekolah-sekolah rendah daripada segi sumbangannya kepada Sistem Pendidikan Malaysia, penyelidikan ini bertujuan mengkaji hubungan antara kepemimpinan instruksional, komitmen organisasi guru dan pencapaian akademik pelajar di sekolah rendah terutamanya di sekolah kurang murid. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah kuantitatif untuk mengenalpasti hubungan antara kepemimpinan instruksional guru besar, komitmen organisasi guru, dan pencapaian akademik pelajar. Dua set soalselidik ditadbirkan kepada guru-guru yang mengajar subjek Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR). Salah satu set adalah soal selidik oleh Hallinger (1983) yang bertajuk “The Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) – Teacher Form” yang telah dialih bahasakan kepada Bahasa Melayu dan nilai kebolehppercayaan adalah lebih daripada 0.80. Data komitmen organisasi guru pula telah dikumpul dengan menggunakan “Soal selidik Komitmen Organisasi Guru” yang telah dihasilkan oleh Mowday, Steers dan Porter (1979) dan telah dialih bahasakan kepada Bahasa Melayu oleh Abdul Ghani Ganeson (2002). Instrumen ini mempunyai nilai reliabiliti yang tinggi dan dikatakan sangat sesuai di gunakan dalam bidang penyelidikan pendidikan. Soal selidik ini diedarkan secara personal kepada guru di 14 buah sekolah kurang murid di negeri Pulau Pinang. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan SPSS Versi 16.0 dan hipotesis kemudiannya diuji. Berdasarkan analisis regresi, hipotesis pertama iaitu hubungan antara kepemimpinan instruksional dan komitmen organisasi guru tidak disokong sepenuhnya. Hanya dua daripada tiga dimensi (D2 dan D3) mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan komitmen organisasi dalaman. Terdapat hubungan positif yang signifikan antara komitmen organisasi luaran dengan pencapaian akademik pelajar. Akan tetapi hubungan antara ketiga-tiga dimensi kepemimpinan instruksional dan pencapaian akademik pelajar tidak signifikan. Walaupun sekolah kurang murid merupakan organisasi yang kecil, hasil dapatan kajian ini masih sama dengan kajian lepas yang membuktikan bahawa tidak terdapat hubungan signifikan antara kepemimpinan instruksional dan pencapaian pelajar. Dapatan juga menunjukkan komitmen organisasi luaran sebagai mediator mempengaruhi hubungan antara kepemimpinan instruksional dan pencapaian pelajar. Walaupun sekolah kurang murid menyumbang dengan signifikan kepada keseluruhan pencapaian pendidikan negara, tetapi kajian yang menyelidik tentang keberkesanan sekolah ini masih kurang. Justeru, dapatan kajian ini terutamanya implikasi dan cadangan yang diberikan mampu memberi faedah yang

bermanfaat dan menjadi bahan rujukan pada masa depan. Adalah diharapkan hubungan antara tiga dimensi kepemimpinan instrusional, komitmen organisasi dalaman dan luaran serta pencapaian pelajar di kaji dengan menggunakan saiz sampel yang besar dan merentasi sempadan geografi yang luas. Pengkaji berpendapat kesuntukan masa telah menghadkan penggunaan faktor-faktor kajian dan diharapkan penyelidikan yang bakal dikendalikan pada masa akan datang mengaplikasikan kaedah campuran kualitatif dan kuantitatif untuk mendapat hasil dapatan yang lebih mendalam.

ABSTRACT

The leadership of the headmasters is known to be a key factor in supporting teachers' performance in terms of their organizational commitment and students' achievement. Teachers play an important role in educating the future members of the society especially in primary schools where effective teaching and guidance leads to the country's academic advancement. The researcher feels that this study is very timely as the Ministry of Education focuses more on small schools' instructional leadership in order to evaluate their effectiveness. Based on the importance of the contribution of primary schools to the Malaysian Education System, this study was aimed at investigating the relationship between instructional leadership, teachers' organizational commitment and students' achievement in primary schools especially in small schools. This study used quantitative methods in order to obtain the relationship between the instructional leadership, teachers' organizational commitment and students' achievement. Data were collected using two questionnaires, Hallinger's (1983) The Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) – Teacher Form and Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Malay version) by Abdul Ghani Ganeson (2002) adapted from Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979). These questionnaires were distributed to the teachers in 14 small primary schools and the data was analysed with SPSS Version 16.0 using correlational research design and the hypotheses were tested. The regression analysis showed that instructional leadership practice was partially related to the internal orientation dimension of organizational commitment. Out of three dimensions of instructional leadership, only two dimensions (D1 & D3) had a significant and a positive influence on the internal orientation of organizational commitment. There was also a positive relationship between the external orientation dimension of teachers' organizational commitment and students' academic achievement. However, there was an insignificant relationship between instructional leadership and students' achievement. Although the under-enrolled schools are small organizations, the results of this study are still similar to the earlier findings. Nevertheless, there was a mediating effect of external orientation dimension of teachers' organizational commitment on the relationship between instructional leadership and students' academic achievement. Even though small schools undoubtedly contribute towards the country's overall academic performance, research on the effectiveness of these schools is rarely conducted. Therefore, the findings of this study, especially the implications and recommendations would be beneficial and could be added to future literature. It would also be interesting to evaluate the link between the three dimensions of the instructional leadership, internal orientation of organizational commitment, external orientation of organizational commitment and students' academic achievement in larger samples, and across different states. The researcher feels that time constraints was a limiting factor in this study and recommends that future research should use mixed methods, both qualitative and quantitative, in order to obtain a detailed outcome.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In 2010, RM 30 billion has been allocated in the National Budget to enhance the effectiveness of primary and secondary school education nationwide which shows that school effectiveness is considered as an integral part of the Malaysian Education System (Budget 2010, BERNAMA). Our Education Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, in his closing speech at the First Regional Conference on Education Leadership and Management, held at Institut Aminudin Baki from the 12th until the 15th of November 2009, said that it is our government's hope that more schools would strive to improve quality and become the first choice for the public. According to him, without highly performing leadership, students would under-perform, management would struggle and the schools' quality of education would decline. He also added that it is crucial to cultivate high performance leadership among school leaders in order to improve the schools' performance. Our nation's aspiration is to create high quality education by improving school performance and to be a hallmark of quality leadership and management at the grass root level. Considering how important the schools' effectiveness in our education system is, this study intended to explore the schools' leadership in depth.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Business issue for this study would concentrate on the schools' effectiveness in terms of the schools' academic achievement. The foundation for this educational progression lies within the primary schools. According to the Ministry of Education (MOE) portal (2006), there are a

total of 9,658 secondary and primary schools in Malaysia. Of this, there are 7,613 primary schools consisting of 5,774 national schools, 1,811 national type and 28 special education schools. There are total of 3,036,678 school children with 62,439 male teachers and 128,955 female teachers in primary schools (MOE, 2006). Since primary schools have a major share in the Malaysian Education System, their effectiveness plays a crucial role in our nation's academic advancement.

According to the School Division Ministry of Education (2006), academic achievement in small schools is often inconsistent due to the small number of students; even the failure of one student would leave a high impact on the percentage of pass and fail in an examination. Furthermore, school management is less effective and teachers are less prepared to work in small schools. All these factors have caused a long term implication on the teaching and learning processes in small schools (MOE, 2006).

Therefore, performance of under enrolled schools became the primary focus of the Ministry of Education since nearly 30% of primary schools in Malaysia have student population of less than 150 (Bahagian Sekolah Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2006). Due to the important role that primary schools play in our Malaysian Education System, this research was carried out to analyse the effectiveness of primary schools especially the small schools.

The next focus would be the management issue that surrounds the effectiveness of small primary schools in terms of leadership and teachers' performance especially teachers' organizational commitment. According to Mahmood (1989), school headmasters play an essential role in schools and their leadership is an important variable in determining students'

achievement. This study identified that leadership content knowledge and leadership competency are essential for a leader in order to make an improvement to the schools' structure. This includes knowledge of the subject matter, knowledge of how students learn the subject matter and how teachers can facilitate the learning process (Stein & Nelson, 2005).

Furthermore, schools' firm leadership and teachers' quality have significant effects on the students' achievements (Montimore, 1995; Hoy & Miskel, 2001). Teachers are influenced by their schools' leadership and they then have a direct influence on students' achievement. The quality of teachers' performance varies depending on several factors, the central one being the work environment (Balasandran, 2007). The leaders, who provide the necessary leadership in managing the teachers' performance, have a large impact on the work environment in their organization. A positive impact would possibly make the teachers reinforce a desired behaviour in their work places especially their commitment towards the school organizations. This is proven in a study by Weber (1996) who explained that leaders establish a high expectation for performance in order to increase teachers' commitment towards the school. Uncertainty in the teachers' performance will result in negative consequences such as decrease in the level of commitment among the teachers (Balasandran, 2007). Therefore, teachers' commitment is strengthened if the school leaders practice leadership behaviour effectively.

Scholars and practitioners began to popularize instructional leadership models in the early 1980s (Hallinger, 2003). However, Leithwood (1988) and Gates, Ross and Brewer (2001)

explained that the importance of effective leadership on the schools' achievement was only realized and added to the literature in the recent decades.

According to Hallinger and Murphy (1986), there are a few types of leadership behaviours that became popular namely, transformational leadership, shared leadership, teacher leadership, instructional leadership and distributed leadership. Among these, instructional leadership is the strongest, direct and is focused on the curriculum and instruction; it is the theory behind the principal leadership. Instructional leadership has dominated the field of education since school leaders are directly attributed to the schools' effectiveness (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). Therefore, the management issue in this study would be to identify the instructional leadership in small primary schools.

The instructional leadership variable is then related to the organizational commitment of the teachers to identify the relationship between them. Thus, the research issue of this study would be on instructional leadership, teacher's organizational commitment and students achievement. In schools, teachers' organizational commitment is very much related to both the instructional leadership and the students' academic achievement. We cannot deny the fact that school leaders influence the teachers' performance which then influences the students' achievement. Even if the instructional leaders are competent enough and are able to guide the teachers well, the effectiveness in small schools is also influenced by the teachers' performance especially in carrying out their instructional tasks. The school leaders carry out their tasks by instructing the teachers who then involve directly with the students during the learning process in classrooms. Therefore, the teachers have a direct effect on students'

achievement. As a result, teachers should also be able to perform excellently and work towards their schools' advancement.

As discussed in the earlier paragraphs, teachers who are committed to their job would associate themselves with their school organizations. This in turn would make them work towards the organizational goal and students' academic progress. In other words teachers who are committed to the organization will strive towards the improvement of the schools.

However, to what extent the teachers are committed to the school organizations especially in small primary schools and do their levels of commitment have any influence in the schools' improvement is a question that will be clarified in this study. In line with this, the study would focus on the teachers' organizational commitment by relating it to the schools' effectiveness in terms of academic achievement.

Students' academic achievement by identifying the consistency of the results for the past three years was taken into consideration to see its relationship between teachers organizational commitment. For this reason, the schools' Primary School Achievement Test (UPSR) results from the year 2007 to 2009 were analyzed to obtain students' academic achievement levels.

1.3 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study is to identify the relationship between instructional leadership, teachers' organizational commitment and students' academic achievement in small primary schools in the state of Penang.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Specifically, this study aims at answering the following questions:

1. Does Instructional Leadership influence Teachers' Organizational Commitment?
2. Does Teachers' Organizational Commitment influence students' academic achievement?
3. Does Instructional Leadership influence students' academic achievement?
4. Does Teacher's Organizational Commitment mediate the relationship between Instructional Leadership and students' academic achievement?

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

For the purpose of this study, the scope of primary schools is narrowed down to small schools either in urban or rural areas. These small schools consist of national primary schools, national type primary Chinese schools and national type primary Tamil schools. The scope of this study is further limited to small primary schools in the state of Penang. This state is appropriate to conduct the research as the sample used reflected the characteristics of primary schools in Malaysia. Penang state is chosen because there are enough number of small schools to represent the small primary schools in Malaysia. Besides, the teachers who are involved in this study are those who have taught UPSR classes from 2007 to 2009.

1.6 DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

a. Instructional Leadership

Instructional Leadership is defined as the actions school headmasters take or delegate to others in order to improve students' learning. Instructional Leadership encourages educational achievement by making the instructional quality in the school

organization as the top priority and brings the stated vision to realization (e-lead, 2010). Instructional leaders align the school's academic mission with strategy and action. They are focused not only on leading, but also on managing.

Instructional leadership has a significant impact on the schools' achievement. The researcher sometimes refers to the concept instructional leadership as instructional leadership behaviour (Hallinger, 1983; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985) or instructional leadership competency throughout this study. This is because school leaders need specific competencies in order to ensure that their schools are achieving (Rusmini, Sazali, Amin, Razak & Rosnarizah, 2007). In order to achieve and continue to achieve, and lead an education institution excellently, school leaders have to acquire competencies in instructional leadership behaviour from the three domains that are discussed in the next section. These competencies possessed by the leaders would generate the knowledge and skills to make them creative and learning leaders who have the desired personalities. When the leaders are knowledgeable, skilful and have the desired personality in carrying out their task as leaders, they are said to be competent in leading their organization. The leadership competency is actually educational leadership excellence or effectiveness. Based on this reason, the researcher refers to the instructional leadership as instructional leadership competency in this study.

b. Instructional Leadership Dimensions

The instructional leadership theory by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) is used in this study and the researcher refers to the three dimensions in the instructional leadership

theory. The stated three domains are: defining the schools' mission, managing the instructional program and promoting a positive school-learning climate. However there was a modification done to the name of the first dimension. The researcher names it as *defining and communicating goals* (the rationale for this is explained in section 4.6.1). These three dimensions of principals' activity consist of ten types of specific instructional leadership job functions with its related behaviours (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985). They are explained in detail as follows:

i. Instructional Leadership Dimension 1- Defines and Communicates Goals

(**Defines the mission** in Hallinger and Murphy, 1985). Defining and Communicating Goals (or Defining the school mission) consists of two specific job functions: frame goals and communicates goals.

ii. Instructional Leadership Dimension 2- Manages curriculum and instruction

Managing the curriculum and instructional behaviour has four specific job functions: knows curriculum and instruction, coordinates curriculum, supervises and evaluates, and monitor progress.

iii. Instructional Leadership Dimension 3 – Promotes school climate

Promoting the school learning climate also has four specific job functions: sets standards, sets expectations, protects time, and promotes improvement.

According Hallinger and Murphy (1985) each of the stated functions includes a variety of principal practices called as behaviours (See Figure 2.2) and these behaviours are related to the core tasks carried out in daily duties of leaders in schools.

c. Teacher Organizational Commitment

Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979, p. 225) defines organizational commitment as “attitudinal commitment representing a state in which an individual identifies himself or herself with a particular organization and its goals and wishes to maintain membership in order to facilitate these goals”. The study explores teachers’ organizational commitment in schools and it is factorized into two after factor analysis is carried out. The two factors mentioned in this study are ‘internal orientation dimension of teachers’ organizational commitment’ (Factor 1) and ‘external orientation dimension of teachers’ organizational commitment’ (Factor 2).

d. Primary Schools

There are two main types of public primary schools in Malaysia: national (*Sekolah Kebangsaan* in Malay, abbreviated as SK) and national-type (*Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan*, abbreviated as SJK). National-type schools are further divided into Chinese national-type schools [*Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina*, SJK(C)] and Tamil national-type schools [*Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Tamil*, SJK(T)]. By degree of government funding, national schools are government-operated, while national-type schools are mostly government-assisted, though some are government-operated (MOE, 2006).

e. Small Schools or Under-enrolment Schools

According to administrative circular 3/1967, Ministry of Education, small schools are defined as schools with student enrolment of 149 or less students. These schools are also called as ‘Under-enrolment Schools’ (Sekolah Kurang Murid or usually termed

as SKM). The words under small schools and under-enrolment schools are used interchangeably in this study. Most of the small schools in Malaysia are located in rural areas, small villages, estates and remote areas (Khuan, Chua & Abdul Razak Manaf, 2004). According to Hussein Ahmad and Yusoff (2003) the existence of small schools in many districts and locations throughout Malaysia especially in rural areas is related to the historical factors and the background of the multi racial community who are staying in different locations in the country.

f. School Achievement

School students' achievement in Year 6 which is known as Primary School Achievement Test (UPSR) for the past three years (2007-2009) was taken into consideration. The schools' UPSR results were obtained from the Penang Educational Department in the month of January 2010. These results were in two different forms; one was in percentage form and the other was the schools' average grades. In the regression analysis of this study, only the schools' average grades (ASG) were used. This is because, according to Federal Inspectorate of Schools, Ministry of Education ASG is considered to give a clearer picture about the quality of the UPSR results (Jemaah Nazir Sekolah, Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2007).

g. UPSR schools' average grades (ASG)

According to the guidelines in the Malaysian Education Standard Quality 2 (Jemaah Nazir Sekolah, Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2007) schools' average grades (ASG) in UPSR are graded from 1.00 to 5.00. The lower the grade the better the quality of achievement of the particular school. MESQ 2 has also given the guide to

convert the ASG interval –scale values into scores. The value of the scores ranged from 1.01-2.00 = Score 4; 2.01-3.00 = Score 3; 3.01-4.00 = Score 2 and 4.01-5.00 = Score 1. Furthermore, based on these ASG values, MESQ 2 has categorized schools into four groups, namely excellent for score 4, good for score 3, moderate for score 2 and less satisfactory for score 1.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study are significant to those who are in the field of education such as the Institut Aminuddin Baki (IAB) since this study provides relevant information about instructional leadership and teachers' organizational commitment related to students' achievement in under-enrolled small primary schools in Malaysia.

IAB under the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) being the sole National Institute of Education Management and Leadership focuses on the professional development of educational leaders in Malaysia. IAB has been established 30 years ago and provides training in the field of management and leadership. IAB's clients consist of in-service education officers namely principals and headmasters in schools. The aim of the training is to assist them to lead the schools towards excellence.

Thus, being managers or leaders, the principals and headmasters need to equip themselves with strategic management knowledge. This knowledge would enable them to be proactive, systematic, creative, innovative, effective and efficient in managing as well as leading their organizations (IAB, 2009). In order to be a strategic management knowledgeable type of instructional leader, their requirements are always surveyed. This study would provide

information to the Ministry of Education especially to the IAB on the small primary schools and serve as an indicator of the training and development requirements for their headmasters. In addition, this study will also provide relevant information to the IAB which will also be useful for the training purpose because it can be harnessed to plan the most needed training and development initiatives in the future.

Furthermore, not much research is carried out in small primary schools in Malaysia. Considering their contribution towards the primary educational achievement, it is crucial to know the actual educational process carried out in these small schools.

Khuan and Omar (2007) in their research on Chinese small schools' management in Perak State have suggested that future research need to be extended to include sample groups from all small schools in Malaysia in order to understand small schools' management.

Based on this idea, the researcher was inspired to focus on the small schools' instructional leadership. However, this is only a dissertational study and needed to be carried out in a limited time frame. Thus, the researcher decided to carry out the survey in Penang state as there are more amounts of small schools in this state. It is very much hoped that this study will contribute useful information about the small schools' instructional leadership and will be useful to those who are concerned especially to the officers from the Teacher Education Institutes, District Education Office, State Education Departments and Divisions in the Ministry of Education.

1.8 ORGANIZATION OF REMAINING CHAPTERS

This chapter is organized as the introduction of the current study. This chapter represents the background of the study undertaken, the problem statements, research objectives, and research questions, scope of the study, definition of terms and the significance of the study. The second chapter is the review of literature that outlines previous studies with the research framework of this study; and chapter 3 illustrates the data and variables. Meanwhile, chapter 4 portrays the results and findings of the research in depth and this will be summarized in chapter 5. Apart from the summary, chapter 5 will also state the research limitation and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The educational field consistently evolves and changes as research on teaching and learning as well as school effectiveness emerges. It is paramount that the educators, especially leaders, promote life-long learning activities and keep abreast of innovations and issues in education. Since instructional leadership behaviour has a significant impact on the schools' performance, headmasters as leaders must lead their schools to enhance achievement among their students. Headmasters are seen as the intellectual leaders who make a significant contribution to the future of our nation. Therefore, school headmasters as well as teachers should be well equipped with current skills and creative ideas in parallel with the students' expectations.

With the influx of information technology through the internet and the use of ICT in our daily lives, our future generation has traversed from a mere change of era to a dynamic era of change. Thus, the role of school leaders and teachers is becoming more challenging than ever. They need to make greater strides to ensure that they are able to make adjustments and readjustments in instructional practices to cater for the changing elements in their organization. In brief, the school leaders have to be creative, innovative with entrepreneurial drive in order to steer their subordinates (teachers) towards school excellence. The leaders' ability to cultivate and integrate the enlightening and insightful views would enhance the

teachers' performance and enrich students' level of achievements regardless of the size of the schools.

Considering this rationale, the aim of this study was to identify the relationship between instructional leadership competency and teachers' organizational commitment and students' achievement in small primary schools. It was conducted to study the instructional leadership behaviour in small schools, in order to ascertain whether the size of the schools plays any part in terms of the schools' effectiveness. Accordingly, the following sections in this chapter reveal the relevant literature pertaining to the focus of the study. It starts with current literature on instructional leadership, teachers' commitment, their relationships with students' achievement, and small schools. Then followed by leadership theories related to instructional leadership, types of variables used in the study and finally the hypotheses and theoretical framework of this study.

2.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The development of a knowledgeable society has brought changes in economy and various societal structures. This can be obviously seen in the changes brought in the field of education. Globalization has led the Malaysian Education System to shift its educational focus that gives rise to the need to reflect and revisit our education growth strategies to ensure that they are relevant in today's world. In fact, the growing focus in this field is related to the development of competencies and knowledge among educational leaders. Moreover, as educational practitioners, it is also vital that all of us strive to build co-operation and synergies in education between all the related departments under the MOE to reinforce

education growth in Malaysia. What is lacking now is the commitment to follow-up with action.

It is crucial that we are attached to the issues revolving around educational leadership and management especially in the era of internationalization which demands new perspectives and practices in leading and managing the education system. Skilful school leaders play a key role in school improvement or school effectiveness. They are the most responsible personnel in the educational system for school improvement even though they do not have a direct effect. This statement affirms Hallinger's (2003) findings that school leaders indirectly influence school effectiveness. School leaders and teachers are regarded as the highly intellectual work force. Therefore, there is a need to examine or explore the instructional leadership behaviour of headmasters and the teachers' commitment in small school in terms of the relationships between the variables and their contribution to students' achievement.

2.2.1 School Effectiveness

In the field of education, the word effectiveness is very subjective in terms of its meaning and it is considered as an elusive term (Khuan, Chua & Abdul Razak, 2004). Malaysian Education System has been encountering increased pressure to raise standards of learning and academic achievements of students for more than ten years. There are a number of programs and awards such as the National Aspiring School Award (NASA) aimed towards quality improvement that were initiated in search for excellence and assurance of quality in schools (Khuan, Chua & Abdul Razak, 2004).

There are two theoretical guidelines or models used in making the decision on school effectiveness. The models are the goal model of organizational effectiveness and system-resource model of organizational effectiveness. According to the goal model, the effectiveness of schools is based on the outcome of the activities to meet or to exceed its goals (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). The system-resource model delineates effectiveness as the ability of an organization to secure assets. Both the goal and system-resource models share the important assumption where the goal model defines effectiveness in terms of achieving the objectives of the organization that can be exchanged for other resources. The system-resource model is based on the open-systems viewpoint. It stresses more on the harmonious functions of the organization's internal components.

These two theories are similar although their ideas are slightly different. The goal and system-resource effectiveness are integrated as a goal and system-resource model. This model uses specific indicators of the input, throughput or outcome concepts as operative goals. These goals are combined with the time frame and the constituencies applicable to each indicator (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). The model is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Based on the rules given in the model, leaders can work towards schools' effectiveness. Since students' academic achievement is assessed as one of the outcome criteria in dealing with schools' effectiveness, the leaders should focus on the overall improvement of academic performance. There have been numerous researches exploring the relationship between school leadership and learning outcomes. For instance, Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004, p.21) cited quantitative research studies revealing that school leadership

accounts for one-quarter of the variation on student achievement explained by school-level variables (school-level variables are a smaller set of other factors such as family background).

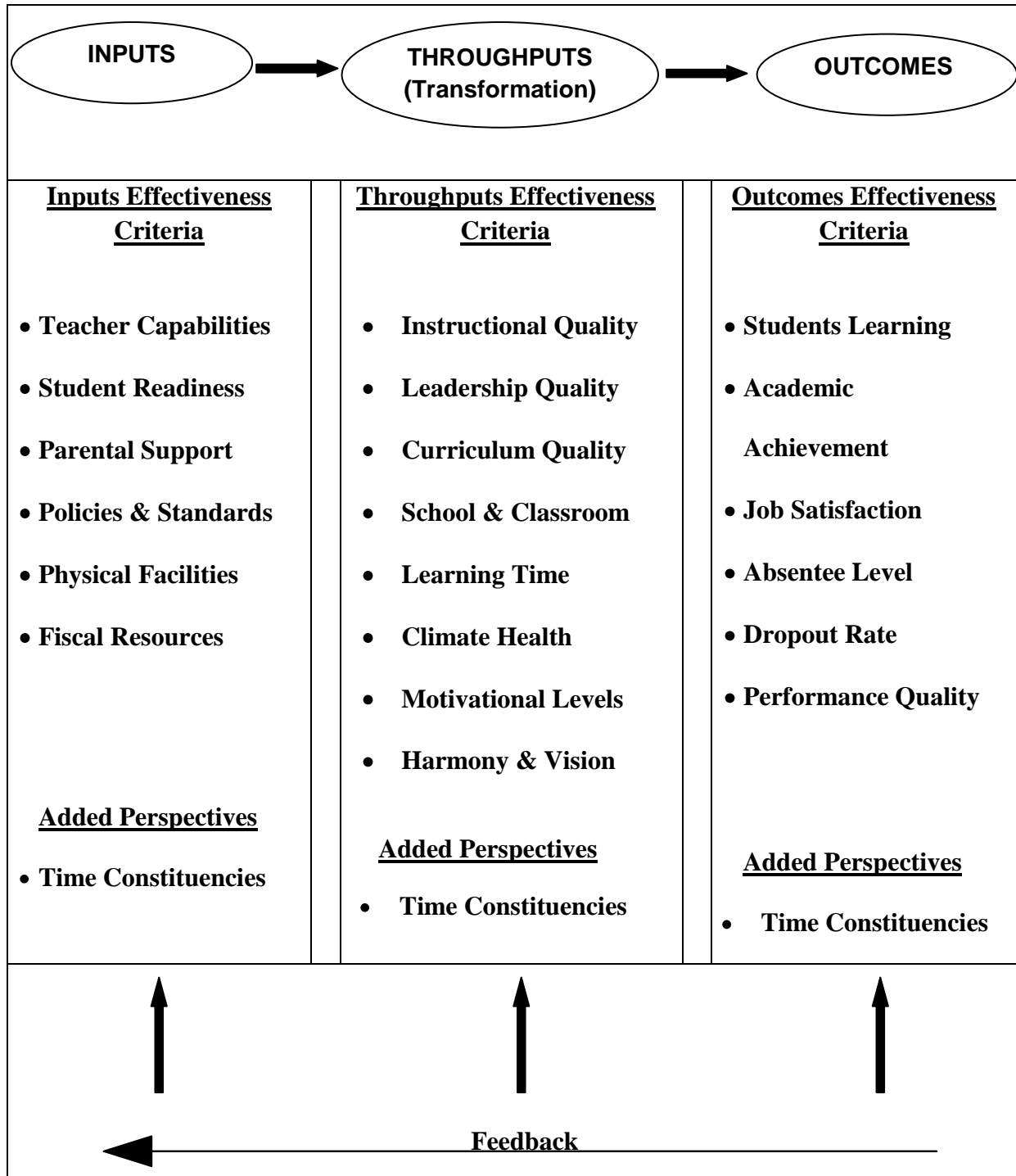


Figure 2.1: Integrated Model of Organizational Effectiveness (Hoy & Miskel, 2001, p. 297)

2.3 CURRENT LITERATURE

Based on the historical background, this section would reveal the reviews on the related terminologies in the study.

2.3.1 School Leadership and Management

Educational institutions, especially schools in Malaysia, operate within a legislative framework set by Malaysian Ministry of Education. Besides this, institutions to date are strongly influenced by globalization. The fast-paced advancements in technology and communications affect the nature of teaching and learning process as well as leadership and management. In other words, the fast growth in Information Technology (IT) increases the students' expectations in their learning process especially in the creativity of the teachers during the teaching process. Students demand more as they become more knowledgeable in IT. Thus, the natural or usual teaching and learning process in a classroom have to employ multiple measures and mixed methods to cater the needed changes in teaching and learning. Teachers have to particularly identify ways to create environment that is supported by unique representations, conceptualizations, and uses of knowledge to work together to affect changes in teaching, learning, and classroom cultures. These changes also will give some impact on the leadership and the leaders need to adjust themselves according to the students' expectations.

School leaders have to be aware of the events around the organization and keep up-to-date in order to cater the demands of students and other stakeholders of the organization. Even though the main role of headmasters is to focus on the teaching and learning processes as their core tasks in school operations, they often allocate more time for managerial and

administrative tasks. Leadership and management have to be considered equally in schools in order to operate effectively and achieve the objectives (Bush & Middlewood, 2005). School leaders should also understand that “Management is doing things right, leadership is to do the right things” (Bennis & Drucker, 1909). According to Hallinger and Murphy (1987), headmasters are encouraged to be strong educational leaders. Hechinger, The New York Times President, commented that,

"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 schools and regrettably outstanding schools slide rapidly into decline. In each case, the rise or fall could be traced to the quality of the principal."

(Source: IAB, 2009)

This sharp observation by Hechinger (IAB, 2009) illustrates that the rise or fall of the schools' performance is in the leaders' hands. Schools can generate the levels and kind of learning that society desires as the leaders become more skilled at organizing teachers in various arrangements to work toward specific goals (Synder, 1983). Principal and headmaster leadership is the most important factor in school effectiveness, progress and excellence (Rusmini, 2006). Leadership is a process that influences an individual and brings all the members in the schools organization towards the organizational strategy. Effective leaders are able to adjust the leadership style with the environment within the organization (Rusmini, 2006).

According to leadership theories and research findings, the characteristics of effective educational leaders are divided into leadership quality and curriculum leadership. For instance, findings by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) and Mortimore (1995) show that leadership quality comprises of the vision that is clearly shared among the organization's

members. Quality leaders also work with high communication skills with many people (Mortimore, 1995); and be proactive and fully responsible towards their job (Bennis & Naus, 1985).

Whereas, findings on curriculum leadership show that leaders play an important role as instructional leaders by creating the conducive environment suitable for learning (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985; Mortimore, 1995). These leaders also support the various instructional methods practiced by teachers in the classrooms (Sergiovanni, 2001) and observe every actions carried out in school (Levine & Lezotte, 1990). The previous studies on leadership also expose that factors like leaders' characteristics, leadership styles, behaviour, and practices that reveal effective leadership quality, can be used as guidelines to create an indicator for effective leaders (Rosmini, 2006). However, the indicators have to suit or adapt to the situation, environment and uniqueness of the education system in Malaysia.

Based on the argument on effective leadership guidelines, the MOE has outlined ten focussed roles and functions of school management for the school leaders to enhance the achievement of their organizations (Abdul Shukor, 2001). The stated ten educational management roles and functions are effective school leaders, effective school organization, professional teachers, relevant curriculum, examination and evaluation system, development of infrastructure to support instructional activities in school, development of planning and research institute, development of an effective implementation and monitoring institute, educational administrative system, comprehensive development of staff and relationships with society around the school organization and external environment (Abdul Shukor, 2001). These ten roles and functions of instructional leaders are crucial for the present situation in

our education system. Since the era of 21st century filled with hurdles and obstacles, it is indisputably an age characterized by nothing else but unprecedented changes. Thus, every party concerned should recognize the importance of the role of headmasters as leaders in school management.

2.3.2 Instructional Leadership

Malaysia is advancing towards globalization in this 21st century. This has a vital impact on our country's socio-economic growth especially in the area of education. As the government aspires to make Malaysia a 'Centre for Educational Excellence', educational improvement is therefore crucial. In order to bring the nations aspiration into a reality, the achievement of advancement in national educational development can be enhanced effectively through knowledgeable, skilled and capable personnel in the field of leadership and management (Institut Aminuddin Baki, 2009).

Hallinger and Murphy (1987) reported in their study that one of the main obstacles that hinder headmasters from exercising strong instructional leadership is the lack of knowledge about the curriculum and instruction. Thus, they need to have the best leadership and management practices and equip themselves with essential professional skills so as to face the challenges in their organization. This is because, school leaders have long believed that instructional leadership which consists of supervision, staff development and curriculum development facilitates schools' improvement (Blase & Blase, 2004).

Furthermore, school leaders are viewed as key agents or key players in the reform of schools. Leaders play a very important role in initiating and sustaining schools' improvement

(Spillane, 2006; Goldring & Rallis, 2000). In fact, according to Hoerr (2007), the title ‘principal’ originated from the term principal teacher and the supposition behind the title was that the principal or headmaster as a leader has more skill and knowledge than anyone in an organization (school) and able to guide others in pedagogy. It was stressed that leaders of schools should be instructional experts and need to be educational visionaries, to be able to give direction and expertise to the subordinates and move towards schools’ success.

According to Joesoef (2009), President of the South East Asian School Principals Forum (SEASPF), there are four important issues that should be taken into account by school headmasters, namely leadership is for learning, leadership is for collaborative cultures, leadership is for continuous change, and leadership should be driven by vision.

Leadership is for learning means leaders should know and understand about teaching and learning. They need to engage teachers in collaborative study sessions and support the classroom practices. They must be able to understand the associations between curriculum, instruction and assessment and support teachers in designing the learning part. Joesoef (2009) also added that leaders should constantly remind the teachers that the school is preparing them to think analytically and creatively for the future.

However, in order to carry out their duties, the leaders of schools face many challenges especially on how to share and sustain ideas about change especially transform what was essentially a conservative system. The leaders need to practice instructional leadership behaviour as suggested by Hallinger and Murphy (1987) in their instructional leadership research model, which the researcher has used in this study. The implementation of the stated

behaviour by leaders will enhance their leadership competencies. For instance, Hallinger and Murphy (1987) had put forward ideas stating that leaders need to have understanding of the curriculum and instruction. Thus, it is very lucid that headmasters being school leaders should be equipped with knowledge and expertise in order to carry out practices in ways to contribute to the schools' improvement. They must be competent enough to practice the activities that enable instructional improvement. In fact, the leaders of schools are the key players to develop the instructional improvement of each school.

2.3.3 Leadership Theories and Models

The earlier models amongst the many leadership models practised in school management are situational leadership, trait theories and contingency theory. Studies on instructional leadership argue that these models focus clearly on the educational leadership that directly bring the improvement in the educational outcome (Southworth, 2002). In addition, according to Hallinger (2003), there were new conceptual models developed over the past 30 years. Instructional leadership model is the most widely known and used in the educational studies. Instructional leadership and leadership competency models are discussed in detail in this study to give better idea about instructional leadership.

a. Hallinger and Murphy's Instructional Leadership Model

The past studies show that instructional leadership conceptual models exist in multitude form and researchers define instructional leadership through the traits, behaviour and processes a person needs to lead a school effectively (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003). In the early 1980's, instructional leadership models appeared when researches were carried out on effective schools (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). It was considered as a strong, directive leadership and