



**MEDIATING EFFECT OF SCHOOL CLIMATE AND TEACHERS'
EMPOWERMENT ON TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL
EFFECTIVENESS AT SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN PENINSULAR
MALAYSIA**

By

INDRA DEVI A/P MANIAM

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies,
Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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October 2022

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The purpose of this study is to explore the mediating effect of school climate, teachers' empowerment on transformational leadership and school effectiveness at selected primary schools in Peninsular Malaysia based on teachers' perception. This study also investigates the level of transformational leadership, school climate, teacher' empowerment and school effectiveness based on school types. Additionally, this study also explores the relationship between transformational leadership, school climate, teachers' empowerment, and school effectiveness. Based on literature review, transformational leadership, school climate and teachers' empowerment were proposed as an ideal factor contributes to school effectiveness. Besides, number of studies on transformational leadership, school climate, teachers' empowerment, and school effectiveness in Malaysian context is still limited and more investigation were required on these variables in schools to identify their contribution to school effectiveness. This study utilized stratified random sampling method by choosing 72 primary schools and 504 teachers with the response rate of 432 (n=432) in four states of Peninsular Malaysia (Pahang, Perak, Johor, and Selangor) and from three types of schools namely National, National type Chinese and National type Tamil schools. Data analysis was conducted by using descriptive statistic, Pearson Product-moment correlation analysis, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and PROCESS Macro for SPSS. Additionally, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was done to better fit the model. Moreover, reliability and validity analysis (content, construct, convergent and discriminant) were also done to confirm that the instrument is valid as well as reliable.

The findings of descriptive analysis revealed that the level of transformational leadership, school climate, teachers' empowerment and school effectiveness were at high level in three types of primary schools in Peninsular Malaysia based

on teachers' perception. The result of Pearson Product-moment correlation analysis indicated that, there is a positive, significant, and strong correlation between the transformational leadership and school effectiveness. The result showed a positive, significant, and strong relationship between transformational leadership and school climate. The findings revealed a positive, significant, and strong correlation between transformational leadership and teachers' empowerment. The study also revealed a strong, positive correlation between school climate and school effectiveness. The findings also indicated a strong and positive correlation between teachers' empowerment and school effectiveness.

The result of SEM analysis showed that school climate does not mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and school effectiveness. The mediation analysis also showed that there is a positive and partial mediation effect of teachers' empowerment on the relationship between transformational leadership and school effectiveness. Additionally, the mediation analysis was carried out using PROCESS macro analysis and result of the analysis indicated that transformational leadership could have significant direct effect through school climate and teachers' empowerment on school effectiveness. Overall, the main findings illuminate the influence of transformational leadership practices on school effectiveness, directly and through school climate and teachers' empowerment. Finally, this study proposed several recommendations to Ministry of Education, policy makers, headmaster and teachers, to improve the level of school effectiveness by practising transformational leadership practices, school climate and teachers' empowerment as to fulfil the current changes and reformation in education system in Malaysia.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**KESAN PENGANTARA IKLIM SEKOLAH, PEMERKASAAN GURU KE
ATAS KEPIMPINAN TRANSFORMASIONAL DAN KEBERKESANAN
SEKOLAH DI SEKOLAH-SEKOLAH RENDAH TERPILIH DI
SEMENANJUNG MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi kesan pengantara iklim sekolah, pemerksaan guru ke atas kepimpinan transformasional dan keberkesanan sekolah di sekolah-sekolah rendah di Semenanjung Malaysia berdasarkan persepsi guru. Kajian ini turut mengkaji tahap kepimpinan transformasional, iklim sekolah, pemerksaan guru dan keberkesanan sekolah berdasarkan pada jenis-jenis sekolah. Tambahan pula, kajian ini juga turut mengeksplorasi hubungan antara kepimpinan transformasional, iklim sekolah, pemerksaan guru dan keberkesanan sekolah. Menurut kajian literatur, kepimpinan transformasional, iklim sekolah dan pemerksaan guru merupakan antara faktor-faktor ideal yang menyumbang kepada keberkesanan sekolah. Selain itu, dalam konteks Malaysia, bilangan kajian terhadap kepimpinan transformasional, iklim sekolah, pemerksaan guru dan keberkesanan sekolah masih terhad dan lebih banyak kajian diperlukan ke atas pembolehubah-pembolehubah ini dalam konteks sekolah untuk mengenalpasti sumbangannya terhadap keberkesanan sekolah. Kajian ini telah menggunakan kaedah persampelan rawak berstrata dengan memilih 72 buah sekolah rendah dan 504 orang guru dengan kadar pulangan soal selidik sebanyak 432 ($n=432$) dari empat buah negeri dari Semenanjung Malaysia (Pahang, Perak, Johor, Selangor) dan dari tiga jenis sekolah iaitu Sekolah Kebangsaan, Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina dan Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Tamil. Data telah dianalisis dengan menggunakan statistik diskriptif, analisis korelasi Pearson, Model Persamaan Struktural (SEM) dan PROCESS Macro bagi SPSS. Sebagai tambahan, analisis faktor konfirmatori (CFA) telah dibuat bagi penentuan model dengan sebaiknya. Selain itu, analisis keesahan dan kebolehpercayaan (keesahan kandungan, konstruk, konvergen dan diskriminan) telah turut dilaksanakan untuk mengesahkan instrument kajian adalah sah serta boleh dipercayai.

Dapatan kajian analisis diskriptif menunjukkan bahawa tahap kepimpinan transformasional, iklim sekolah, pengupayaan guru dan keberkesanan sekolah berada pada tahap yang tinggi di ketiga-tiga jenis sekolah rendah di Semenanjung Malaysia berdasarkan persepsi guru. Keputusan analisis korelasi Pearson Product-moment menunjukkan bahawa terdapat korelasi yang positif, signifikan dan kuat antara kepimpinan transformasional dan keberkesanan sekolah. Keputusan menunjukkan hubungan yang positif, signifikan dan kuat antara kepimpinan transformasional dan iklim sekolah. Dapatan turut menunjukkan korelasi yang positif, signifikan dan kuat antara kepimpinan transformasional dan pemeraksanaan guru. Kajian juga turut mendapati korelasi yang kuat dan positif antara iklim sekolah dan keberkesanan sekolah. Dapatan turut menunjukkan korelasi yang kuat dan positif antara pemeraksanaan guru dan keberkesanan sekolah.

Keputusan analisis SEM menunjukkan bahawa iklim sekolah bukan pengantara dalam hubungan di antara kepimpinan transformasional dan keberkesanan sekolah. Analisis pengantara juga menunjukkan bahawa terdapat kesan positif dan pengantara separa oleh pemeraksanaan guru ke atas hubungan di antara kepimpinan transformasional dan keberkesanan sekolah. Tambahan pula, analisis kesan pengantara telah dilaksanakan menggunakan analisis PROCESS Macro dan keputusan kajian mendapati bahawa kepimpinan transformasional boleh mempunyai kesan terus yang signifikan melalui iklim sekolah dan pemeraksanaan guru terhadap keberkesanan sekolah. Secara keseluruhan, dapatan utama kajian ini menerangkan amalan kepimpinan transformasional dapat mempengaruhi keberkesanan sekolah, secara terus dengan mengambilkira iklim sekolah dan pemeraksanaan guru. Akhir sekali, kajian ini mengesyorkan beberapa cadangan kepada Kementerian Pendidikan, pembuat polisi, guru besar dan guru-guru untuk meningkatkan tahap keberkesanan sekolah dengan mengamalkan kepimpinan transformasional, iklim sekolah dan pemeraksanaan guru bagi memenuhi reformasi dan perubahan semasa dalam sistem pendidikan di Malaysia.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A	Autonomy
AMOS	Analysis of Moment Structures
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
AP	Achievement Press
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
BCS	Building Collaborative Structure
BGC	Building Goal Consensus
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fix Index
CL	Collegial Leadership
CnFM	Clear and Focused Mission
CR	Construct Reliability
DM	Decision Making
DSV	Developing Shared Vision
EDMP	Educational Development Master Plan
FMoSP	Frequent Monitoring on Students Progress
GFI	Goodness of Fit Index
GST	General System Theory
HEfS	High Expectation for Success
HHPE	Holding High Performance Expectation
HOTS	Higher Order Thinking Skills
I	Impact
IAB	Institute Aminuddin Baki
IFI	Incremental Fit Index

IPOE	Index of Perceived Organizational Effectiveness
IV	Institutional Vulnerability
KSSR	Standard Curriculum for Primary School
LINUS	Numeration and Literation Programme
M	Mean
MB	Model Behaviour
MoE	Ministry of Education
MOT	Multilevel Organizational Theory
NFI	Normed Fit Index
OCDQ	Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire
OCI	Organizational Climax Index
OHI	Organizational Health Inventory
OST	Open System Theory
OtLToT	Opportunity to Learn/ Time on Task
PG	Professional Growth
PHSR	Positive Home-School Relation
PIndSp	Providing Individualized Support
PIntSt	Providing Intellectual Stimulation
PISA	International Students Assessment
PLQ	Principal Leadership Questionnaire
PSAT	Primary School Assessment Test
PTB	Professional Teacher Behaviour
S	Status
SBOA	School Based Assessment
SBT	High Performing School
SC	School Climate

SCSE	Seven Correlates of School Effectiveness
SD	Standard Deviation
SE	School Effectiveness
SE	Self-efficacy
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
SEQ	School Effectiveness Questionnaire
SEQ	School Effectiveness Questionnaire
SIL	Strong Instructional Leadership
SJK (C)	National type Chinese School
SJK (T)	National type Tamil School
SK	National School
SKPMg2	Second Wave of Malaysian Education Quality Standard
SMS	School Management System
SnOE	Safe and Orderly Environment
SPES	School Participant Empowerment Scale
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
SSC	Strengthening School Culture
TE	Teachers' Empowerment
TL	Transformational Leadership
TLI	Tucker-Lewis Fix Index
UPSR	Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

School effectiveness has been a major concern for practitioners and policymakers in both developed and developing countries, including Malaysia. A well-functioning school is expected to produce more capable human capital (Habib Ismail et al., 2012). This efficient human capital then will drive the country towards high income and development (Muhyiddin Yasin, 2013; Najib, 2011). The effective school research was initiated by Coleman (1960s) who found that socio economic and family upbringing factors was the decisive factors of student success, however the evolution took place in the effective school research integrated the outcome variables, science organization and concept of management (Lezotte and McKee Snyder, 2011).

As a result, the Malaysian government has made significant efforts to support the education sector in order to produce first-rate mind human capital. Datuk Seri Mohd Najib Tun Razak allocated RM50.2 billion for the education sector in his 2012 budget. Aside from that, beginning in 2012, the government provides free primary and secondary education in government schools. Furthermore, RM1.9 billion will be spent on all national schools (SK), Tamil schools (SJKT) and national-type Chinese schools (SJKC) (Malaysian Financial Ministry Portal, 2012).

Moreover, Malaysian government has underlined and implemented various changes and innovation in line with 21st century education system. Among the measures taken were the implementation of Educational Development Master Plan (PIPP, 2006-2010) and most recently the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013-2025). Both the plan was designed to boost the quality of education in Malaysia. Among the transformation brought into the current education system were School Based Assessment (SBOA), Numeration and Literation Programme (LINUS), New Curriculum System (KSSR), MBMMBI, "Satu Murid Satu Sukan" and integration of Higher Oder Thinking Skills (HOTS). Apart from that, the MOE also has taken encouraging afford to school effectiveness by accrediting the school as Smart School, Cluster School, and High Performing School (SBT).

All this current reform that took place in the Malaysian education urged the need of a solid leadership which significantly identified as most essential key to an effective school (Mohammad Sani Ibrahim et al., 2014; Siti Noor & Yahya, 2015; Baharak Talebloo et al., 2017; Diana, 2022). Therefore, Malaysian schools of the 21st century require a headmaster who will embrace a multidimensional approach to leadership to bring about school effectiveness. Indeed, Zakaria et

al. (2021) emphasized the importance of studying leadership styles due to their importance in an institution's success.

The leadership style of the school headmaster can also have a significant impact on various aspects of the school setting, including student learning, studies achievement, teacher and staff perspectives, and school effectiveness (Shatzer et al., 2013). As a result of analyzing leadership theories in the past literary works, transformational leadership received great attention as a desirable leadership in bringing changes in the school (Robinson et al. 2008; Wan Hanum Suraya et al., 2012; Barnett, McCormick & Corners, 2001 cited in Khalip Musa 2013). This style of leadership has acknowledged in the literature and has been suggested as models of leadership for school headmasters (Leithwood et al., 2006; Mokhtar et al., 2021).

The current educational transformation has emphasized the value of transformational leadership in school effectiveness (Bruggencate et al., 2012). Indirectly, when a leader uses transformational leadership in the classroom, it creates a need for mutual understanding between leaders and followers in managing day-to-day school functions. As a result, teacher empowerment is critical to ensuring school transformation (Short, 1994). According to Short and Greer (2002), in order to be empowered, teachers must go through a change process on both a personal and institutional level, which will result in changes to the structure of their schools and their relationships with their colleagues.

The schools themselves are undergoing a transformation process in which they must accommodate the current new curriculum as well as other Ministry of Education's educational policies. As a result, for the new implementation to be successful, the school climate must be positive. Meanwhile, according to Dorina Rapti (2013) a positive school climate influences overall school effectiveness. Furthermore, the school climate was one of the appealing factors to investigate with in search for elements that boost school effectiveness (Allen et al., 2015).

1.2 Background of the Study

A great deal of attention has been paid to the study of the characteristic of school effectiveness. Since the 1970s, an increasing number of researchers have expressed concern in school effectiveness studies (Edmons, 1979), and much has been written about specific correlates, such as the need for strong leadership. Aside from the fact that socioeconomic status, parental education level, and demographic factors can all have a notable effect on student performance and present extreme obstacles for school reform. The research on school effectiveness, school climate, and student achievement all show that effective schools are heavily reliant on the quality of school leadership (Talebloo et al., 2017; Zakaria et al., 2021).

In Malaysia, the revolution in public education began after Malaysia's Independence Day in 1957. The earlier education national integrity and national unity become the major focus. Therefore, in the 1980s, The Ministry of Education announced the new curriculum, which will take the place of the old one. Nationally, a new Primary School Curriculum and an Integrated Curriculum for secondary schools were implemented, necessitating the need for instructional leadership among headmasters and principals (Ramaiah, 1995 cited in Hwa, 2008). According to Hallinger & Murphy (1985) the school principals were expected to define the school mission, manage the instructional program, and promote the school climate. However, the instructional leadership that focuses on teaching and learning was "fading by itself" as a result of the bureaucratic setting of our educational system, as well as the formal school structure and a lack of professional teaching staff Hwa (2008).

The Malaysian Ministry of Education also identified several issues in the public education system. Among the challenges were low student participation and achievement, untrained teachers in subjects such as mathematics and science, ineffective school leaders, a lack of empowerment in schools and teachers, ineffective teaching approaches, a disintegrated information system that resulted in redundancy in task management, academic achievements that fell short of international standards, poor infrastructures and facilities in rural schools, overcrowded classrooms, and an ineffective teaching approach (Educational Ministry of Malaysia, 2006).

The Education Ministry of Malaysia (2006) introduced the Education Development Master Plan (EDMP) 2006-2010 in order to overcome the above challenges. This EDMP had two major goals: to improve the effectiveness of educational programs and to strengthen human capital development in order to prepare competitive human resources for an increasingly competitive global environment. Over the five years of executions, the EDMP had achieved positive achievements for all the six strategies thrust namely: Thrust 1-Nation Building (87.9%), Thrust 2-Developing Human Capital (92.9%), Thrust 3-Strengthening National Schools (86.0%), Thrust 4-Bridging the Education Gap (98.0%), Thrust 5-Enhancing Teaching Profession (90.8%), and Thrust 5-Accelerating Excellence of Educational Institutions (95.2%) (Interim Strategic Plan, MoE, 2012).

Despite these achievements, international assessment indicates that our students' performance in key areas such as literacy, mathematics, and science remain low than that of other similar developing countries. Malaysian students, for example, ranked in the bottom third of 74 countries in Literacy, Mathematics, and Science in the 2009 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA).

Ministry of Education immediately addressed the issue as corrective actions are needed to boost the performance of the national education. As a result, the Ministry of Education launched a comprehensive review of Malaysia's education system in October 2011 in order to develop a new National Education Blueprint.

Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 aims to produce future generations with higher order thinking skills in response to rising international education standards and the challenges of 21st century education (MoE, 2013). The blueprint requires teaching for quality learning (Mohd Majid Konting, 2016) and ensures that all 11 transformation shifts are implemented in order to maintain school effectiveness.

Ministry of Education also have introduced the '*Standard Kualiti Pendidikan Malaysia Gelombang 2*' (SKPMg2) in 2016 to measure the school effectiveness. According to SKPMg2, school effectiveness in Malaysian education is measured by leadership, organizational management, curriculum management, co-curricular management, student's affair management, PdP and students' achievements (SKPMg2, 2017). According to Lezotte and Snyder (2011), the effective school is built on a foundation of high expectations, strong leadership, an unwavering commitment to learning for all, collaboration, differentiated instruction, and frequent monitoring of student progress. As for this study, the seven correlate of school effectiveness was found appropriate and inconsistent with the element been measured under the SKPMg2 for school effectiveness.

Several empirical and theoretical studies on school effectiveness in Malaysia and many other countries have defined the effective school based on academic outcomes and achievement, whereas school effectiveness is not only achieved by academic output (Ghani et al., 2008; Lezotte & Snyder, 2011; Hoy & Miskel, 2013; Talebloo, 2017). Identifying other factors and correlates related to school effectiveness was thus claimed to be required in order to identify, categorize, and solve the challenges that schools face (Lezotte & Snyder, 2011; Lezotte, 2001; Talebloo, 2017). Lezotte and Snyder (2011) provided the seven correlates of effective school model, which characterized school effectiveness and the tasks that educators can do to ensure that their schools practice these correlates.

The progressive implementation of the government's comprehensive transformation program presupposes a new leadership style. Thus, according past studies, transformational leadership has received significant attention as the best leadership style for effecting change in the school (Khalip Musa, 2013; Heng et al., 2020). This is consistent with the current National Educational Blueprint (2013-2025), according to Jamilah Man et al. (2016); at its best, a leader now must practice all dimensions of transformational leadership.

According to Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, the 5th shift was to ensure high-performing school leaders in every school (Blueprint, 2015). The goal of 5th shift in Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 is to produce high-caliber school leaders. In order to achieve this goal, transformational leadership is required whereby the leaders can achieve high-performing standard at their schools (Blueprint, 2015). According to Heng et al., (2020), the 5th shift in educational transformation system seeks accountability and greater support through the New Principal Career, which encourages students to do better work. A good headmaster's leadership can encourage students to perform well in school. As a result, the 5th shift in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, which

strengthens headmaster leadership, can also encourage positive student outcomes.

Burns pioneered the concept of Transformational Leadership (1978). According to him, transformational leadership is a process in which leaders assist their followers in achieving higher levels of behavior and motivation. Then, transformational leadership, according to Bass (1985: 25), is an intentionally influencing process in individuals that produces discrete change and transformation in the current condition and operations of the organization overall. According to this theory, transformational leadership consists of four elements: ideal influence, inspiring motivation, mental persuasion, and personal consideration. Transformational leadership has the effect of empowering teachers (Fatahiah, 2010), and this dimension of empowerment is possible as a result of leaders' trust in teachers' judgement, inspiring them to take accountability, thinking about novel strategies to problem solving, and enjoying strategic thinking (p66).

According to Leithwood (1999), transformational leadership model fits well with effectiveness of the school because it focuses on connecting specific school leadership practices to school improvement indicators. Transformational leadership should be utilized to developed vision planning, developing leadership, higher level of motivation, high performance expectation, and higher level of personal commitment to organizational goals in an effective school (Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Talebloo, 2015).

Malaysia practices centralized education system, whereby all transformation in the education and policymaking decisions is designated by Ministry of Education (MoE). School become responsible for implementation of any new policies underlined by MoE. Successfulness of the policy implementation depends on the effectiveness of headmasters at school. As a result, it is necessary to ensure high performing school leaders in every school who can direct the process system to be effective and sustainable, empowering others to take responsibility and transforming school vision and goals towards school effectiveness (Ghavifekr et al., 2014). Therefore, there is a need for headmasters who can implement transformational leadership practices and can motivate the teacher to go above and beyond their personal expectation, and help to achieve common school vision and mission (MoE,2013). Moreover, the earlier researcher in Malaysia have pointed out that there is a positive relationship between school leadership and school effectiveness (Ghani, 2012; Ghavifekr et al., 2014; Talebloo; 2015; Zakaria et al., 2021).

In order to meet the current development in educational transformation as structured by the Ministry of Education, focusing on leadership alone is not sufficient. Researchers such as Abdul Shukor Abdullah (1994) and Omardin Ashaari (1996) are advocating for the devolution of our overregulated educational system. The role of subject leaders and teachers in leading and managing schools is expanding as a result of the emphasis on decentralized

leadership. As a result, questions were raised about the training programs of such workforce. In the 1990s, the term "empowerment" became popular.

As cited in Sayyed Mohsen Allameh et al., 2012, teacher empowerment means that the leader gives teachers autonomy and control of action so that they can improvise student learning (Goudarzi and Gaminian, 2003, p 113). On other words, empowerment is defined as internal motivation, realization and commitment, job structure, transfer of power or authority and resources and knowledge sharing (Robins et al., 2002). Transformational leadership is one of many factors that influence this empowerment construct (Alimo-Metcalfe, 2010). According to Fatahian (2010), one of the outcomes of transformational leadership is empowerment, which occurs when leaders have faith in educators' decision-making, inspire them to take accountability, justify new approaches to problem solving, and enjoy strategic planning.

Previous research has shown a link between teacher empowerment and students' academic performance (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000; Dahiru & Gbolahan, 2022) as well as principal leadership (Azman Ismail et al., 2011; Gulsen & Celik, 2021). According to Sweetland and Hoy (2000), four assumptions about teacher empowerment were made: first, teacher empowerment is most efficient when it seeks to increase teaching quality; second, empowerment has at least two components: organizational and classroom; third, empowering teaching staff seems to have the biggest impact on student outcomes when the main focus is on the key technologies of teaching and learning; and fourth, teacher empowerment must be authentic in order to be effective (pp. 710-711). As a result, teacher empowerment is viewed as a crucial factor affecting school effectiveness by Wall and Rinehart (1998).

Because empowerment is an important component of organizational effectiveness, researchers and practitioners are becoming more interested in it (Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Sagnak et al., 2015). Teachers had to play a significant role in school not only in providing quality teaching and learning but also in creating opportunities for liability, choice, individual freedom, and power in order to realize the Education Transformation Plan's desire via the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025. Head teachers, according to Rahimah Haji Ahmad and Simin Ghavifekr (2014), should emphasize empowerment as a critical component in the twenty-first century.

For a school to be effective, a focus on leadership style and empowered teachers is insufficient. It is important to remember that the effectiveness of a school is not solely dependent on the transformational leader, because schools themselves are undergoing transformation as a result of the Ministry of Education's current new educational policies. As a result, in need for implementation to be successful, the school climate had to be preferable. Hoy and Miskel (2008) define school climate as follows:

"...a relatively enduring quality of the school environment that is experienced by participants, affects their behavior, and is based on their collective perceptions of behavior in schools" (p. 198).

The climate of schools should be assessed and monitored (Tubbs & Garner, 2008). Headmasters can then improve school, staff, and student performance by maintaining a positive school climate. Furthermore, school climate researchers have found that a positive climate influences the school's overall effectiveness (Jack, 2010; Dorina Rapti, 2013). In the seek for elements that boost school effectiveness, this same school climate also became an interesting factor to investigate (Nancy Allen et al., 2015).

Relatively, in Malaysia research on climate has been addressed since 1980s aligned with the effective school movements. Headmasters as the leader of the school (Mohd. Suhaimi, Sharifah & Zaidatol, 2007) holds high responsibilities in bringing the school effectiveness by establishing an open climate which lead to effective leadership (Tshabalala and Ncube, 2014). This is because headmaster plays a role model and the mastermind of the school organization (Abdul Ghani & Aziah Ismail, 2005).

Hence analyzing the overall educational transformation process indicates an urgent need in developing the effectiveness at primary school levels as in Malaysia the number of primary schools is larger as compared to secondary schools. According to the statistic by the School Management System (SMS), MOE as at 31 March 2015, there are about 5, 943 national schools and 1,891 national type schools in Malaysia. Because primary schools account for a significant portion of the Malaysian education system, their effectiveness is critical to our country's academic advancement. Furthermore, the government's new comprehensive transformation program, Malaysian Educational Blueprint 2013-2015 (MoE, 2013), has emphasized the importance of focusing on primary school leaders rather than secondary school leaders. Furthermore, primary schools serve as a pioneering platform for implementing the new curriculum.

As per Iyer (2011, p.4), a school is considered efficacious if its processes outcome in observable positive outcomes for its students over period. In Malaysia, the highest achievement in primary school is evaluated at the end of the standard six schooling duration, and students are assessed for the Primary School Assessment Test (PSAT), also known as 'Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah' (UPSR). Overall, student performance in the UPSR Examination in 2016 with the new KSSR (Primary School Standard Curriculum) and when using the PBS (School-based Assessment) shows a declining trend in students receiving straight A's. According to the UPSR announcement made by Tan Sri Dr Khair Mohamad Yusof (2016), a total of 4, 896 students scored straight A's, or 1.1 percent of the 440, 782 candidates who sat for the examinations, compared to 38, 344 or 17.7 percent of 337, 384 students in 2015. The UPSR 2016 National Average Grade (GNP) was only 2.96 points.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The government has spent a lot of money on education in the last few years. Under the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, the Ministry of Education has been given a total of RM 38.7 billion ringgit to maximize student potential. The government also added another RM 500 million ringgit to ensure that teachers' skills improve (Ministry of Education, 2012). However, the outcome of this high education investment still did not justify the allocation (Kok, 2020). This was demonstrated in 2018 during the International Student Assessment (PISA), when Malaysia scored 415 in reading, 438 in science, 440 in mathematics and overall, Malaysia was at 56th ranking out of 78 countries listed (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019). This result indicate that Malaysia is barely in the race and our education system is not performing well enough, despite improvements after two cycles from 2015 to 2018. The poor performance indicates the need for further research into school effectiveness, transformational leadership, teachers' empowerment, and school climate. This is due to the importance of schools as educational institutions that provide high-quality education (Rahimah Haji Ahmad & Simin Ghavifekr, 2014; Talebloo et al., 2017; Kok, 2020).

In recent years, one of the major educational reform initiatives underway in many countries to identify the influential factors of effective schools has been the study of effective schools (Oges Fadael, 2011; Ghani et al., 2011; Prasetia et al., 2020). Several empirical and theoretical studies on school effectiveness in Malaysia and many other countries have identified effective schools based on academic outcomes and achievement, but school effectiveness is not only achieved by academic output (Lezotte & Snyder, 2011; Hoy & Miskel, 2013; Ghani et al., 2008). As a result, identifying other factors and correlates related to school effectiveness is required to categorize and solve the challenges that schools face (Lezotte & Snyder, 2011; Talebloo et al., 2017). Accordingly, the seven correlates of school effectiveness listed by Lezotte and Synder (2011) described an effective school and the actions that educators can take to ensure that their schools are putting these correlates into practice.

Based on the review of previous research, in order to implement the correlates of effective school, the leader of the school must be capable to steer the process system in a way that is both effective and sustainable, empower others to take responsibility, transform school visions (Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Talebloo et al., 2017; Saravanan Munian & Shahizan Hasan, 2020). However, the number of studies on school effectiveness and transformational leadership is still low and there is a need to refine and elaborate the practices and theoretical models of school effectiveness based on its effective factors and correlates (Ghani, 2012; Zamir, 2020) and more investigation need to be carried out on the dimensions of transformational leadership in order to determine the role of each dimensions of transformational leadership in school effectiveness (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Talebloo, 2015). In the context of Malaysia, Ghani et al., (2011) and Ghavifekr et al., (2014) also suggested more researches need to be conducted on the relationship between transformational leadership and school effectiveness.

Moreover, Salleh and Saidova (2013) stated there is less evidence on practicing transformational leadership in Malaysia.

Aside from that, many changes and transformations have been planned in order to realize the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025, including KSSR, SBOA, MBMMBI, NILAM, and HOTS. All these changes have put a lot of pressure on the school's leader. This is due to the leader's critical role as a change agent at the school level. According to previous research, transformational leadership is now the priority in school management in Malaysia (Khalip Musa, 2013; Wan Marfazila Wan Muhmud et al., 2014; Ghavifekr et al., 2014; Talebloo et al., 2017; Yusoff et al., 2020; Sukuna, 2022). Furthermore, when dealing with challenges in school restructuring, transformational leadership is an appropriate leadership style to use (Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbench, 1999).

However, as an open system, the school looked beyond the need for transformational leadership alone. This is because, in attempt for the school to be effective, the teachers and school climate must be favorable. Earlier research indicated that the effectiveness of variable inputs such as school leadership, teachers, and students is the primary factor of an effective school (Sharifah Maimunah Syed Zin and Lewin, 1993; Muhammad Faizal A. Ghani et al., 2011). Furthermore, previous research indicates that teachers are one of the most important components for school restructuring processes. When teachers were empowered, the authority structure shifted. When this type of change occurs, empowerment becomes easier to perform, which leads to school restructuring accomplishments. Teachers also tend to contribute more when they are empowered, and by seeing the changes that their contributions produce, they can contribute to and sustain the momentum (Fatemeh Azimi Amoli & Maryam Youran, 2014; Dahiru & Gbolahan, 2022).

Teachers and school climates have an indirect impact on student achievement. In Simin Ghavifekr et al. (2014)'s study on the issues and challenges that department heads face in their daily responsibilities as transformational leaders in Chinese primary schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, poor interpersonal relationships between teachers and department heads were highlighted as challenges. As a result, issues such as teachers constantly taking leave, arriving late to school, or attempting to avoid responsibility arose. These negative attitudes contribute to an unhealthy working environment and have an impact on students' learning.

Based on previous research on school climate, many negative school climates have become the major reasons for the increasing numbers of students' disciplinary misconduct. Previous researches have high lightened the factors contributes to these issues and among the many factors, school and teachers has been identified as factors contributes to student disciplinary misconduct (Md. Yusuf, 2010; Azizi et al., 2013).

Additionally, according to some researchers, demographic characteristics like school type and location are crucial for determining how effective a school is (Salleh & Saidova, 2013; Talebloo, 2015; Ghavifekrb et al., 2014). The Malaysian Ministry of Education also intends to reduce the current types of school gaps by half by 2020, as stated in the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013-2025). Therefore, based on school location and type, it is important to investigate the correlation between transformational leadership, school climate, teacher empowerment, and school effectiveness.

Due to the limited research about the tangled relationship between transformational leadership, school climate, teachers' empowerment and school effectiveness, this empirical study contributes to the body of knowledge in several ways. Firstly, studies shown that the school leader behavior often do not provide a direct impact on students' achievement (Hallinger, 2008; Leithwood & Levin, 2010). The school leaders only can affect students' achievement by exploiting other intermediate variables (Hussein, 1993; Leithwood & Levin, 2010). As such, this study test school climate and teachers' empowerment as a mediator in relationship between transformational leadership and school effectiveness as both mediator variables have consistently shown a positive contribution to school effectiveness. Secondly, this study attempt to generalize and apply this Open Multilevel Social System theoretical framework in the context of Malaysian school which has not been sufficiently explored in the past. Third, this study is conducted among primary school teachers in three types of schools which very little study incorporates all three types of primary schools in previous studies. Generally, this allows the stakeholders particularly the policy makers to review on the most recent status of education development plans that have been launched to carry out the goals outlined in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025.

In conclusion, this study was aimed to examine the role of school climate and teacher empowerment in mediating transformational leadership and school effectiveness.

1.4 Research Objectives

1.4.1 General Research Objectives

The study is aimed to determine the mediating effect of school climate and teachers' empowerment on transformational leadership and school effectiveness at selected primary schools in Peninsular Malaysia.

1.4.2 Specific Research Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To determine the level of headmasters' transformational leadership, school climate, teachers' empowerment, and school effectiveness from the teachers' perception at three types of schools.
2. To determine the significant relationship between headmasters' transformational leadership, teachers' empowerment, school climate and school effectiveness at primary schools.
3. To examine the mediating effect of school climate in the relationship between transformational leadership and school effectiveness.
4. To examine the mediating effect of teachers' empowerment in the relationship between transformational leadership and school effectiveness.

1.5 Research Questions

The study specifically seeks answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the level of headmasters' transformational leadership, school climate, teachers' empowerment, and school effectiveness from the teachers' perception at three types of schools?
2. What is the relationship between transformational leadership and school effectiveness at primary schools?
3. What is the relationship between transformational leadership and school climate at primary schools?
4. What is the relationship between transformational leadership and teachers' empowerment at primary schools?
5. What is the relationship between school climate and school effectiveness at primary schools?
6. What is the relationship between teachers' empowerment and school effectiveness at primary schools?
7. What is the mediating effect of school climate in the relationship between transformational leadership and school effectiveness?
8. What is the mediating effect of teachers' empowerment in the relationship between transformational leadership and school effectiveness?

1.6 Hypotheses

The following hypothesis was formulated and developed for this study and will be tested:

- H1: School climate mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and school effectiveness.

H2: Teachers' empowerment mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and school effectiveness.

1.7 Significant of the Study

This study was carried out to improve, broaden, and enrich theories on school effectiveness by utilizing the best practices of transformational leadership. This is due to the importance of ongoing research on leaders' behaviors and practices (Yusoff et al., 2020; Talebloo et al., 2017) considering the changing role of headmasters, particularly in primary schools: National, National type Chinese and National type Tamil schools. The study also served as a guide for the headmasters' and teachers' supervision and evaluation. Aside from that, it can help headmasters find alternative solutions to problems they face when implementing change in schools in order to improve the school's effectiveness.

The findings of this study should be able to assist head teachers, as leaders in the school, in taking the initiative to engage in self-reflection. It is also critical for school leaders to recognize the need for a shift in their leadership style from instructional (Sailesh Sharma, 2012) to transformational leadership, which is becoming increasingly important for school success in the twenty-first century education environment.

Through this study, the headmasters can gain clear focus on giving priority to the teachers in the organization as they also play important role in generating a great outcome for the school. Headmasters at schools may incorporate empowerment into their leadership style. Even a large number of organizational change initiatives include employee empowerment as one of their components under rubrics such as work-life balance, employee involvement, and high-commitment workplaces (Bartunek et al., 1999). Headmasters had to transition from "one man show" to collaborative decision-making through empowerment. In other words, empowerment is a novel approach to job internal motivation because it unleashes the internal forces of teachers, resulting in the development of talents, capabilities, and competencies (Beiginia et al., 2010).

The importance of this study stems from the fact that it will benefit school administrators and teachers by fostering a positive school climate conducive to effective school development. The study also aims to generate new insights into the effects of school climate so that schools and stakeholders can reduce the aspects of their operations that promote unhealthy climates.

The findings of the study are also important for those involved in education, such as the Institut Aminuddin Baki (IAB). The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of school climate and teacher empowerment as a mediator effect on transformational leadership and school effectiveness in schools at primary levels. Institute Aminuddin Baki, which is part of the Malaysian Ministry of

Education (MOE), is the country's only National Institute of Education Management and Leadership devoted to the professional development of educational leaders.

The study will provide theoretical and empirical contribution and understanding about how with considering Open Multilevel Social System theoretical framework in National, National type Chinese and National type Tamil schools will leads to increase the level of school effectiveness based on teachers' perceptions.

The result of this study will identify the level of school effectiveness in selected primary schools in Peninsular Malaysia based on seven correlates of effective school, the level of transformational leadership by Leithwood and Jantzi (1995), level of school climate (Hoy et al., 2002) and level of teachers' empowerment (Short and Rinehart,1992) based on teachers' perception. Therefore, these findings will be helpful for the Ministry of Education (MoE) to be inform on the status-quo of school effectiveness, transformational leadership practices, school climate and teachers' empowerment in primary schools in Pahang, Perak, Johor and Selangor, Peninsular Malaysia. Moreover, this study investigates the levels of the variables at primary schools based on their types (National, National type Chinese and National type Tamil). Hence, the study's findings can also provide an overview of the extent to which the education gap in this type of school has been reduced, as vision in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025.

It is also hoped that this study will contribute to a more in-depth academic literature review on the school climate and teacher empowerment as the mediator between the transformational leadership and school effectiveness relationship. It has the potential to assist new researchers in conducting more comprehensive and complete studies in the coming years.

Finally, the findings of this study are expected to raise awareness among stakeholders such as school administrators, the Education Department, and the Ministry of Education in order to plan, organize, and provide leadership-training programs for school leaders and prospective leaders. Furthermore, the findings of this study can be used as a guide for all stakeholders to be more sensitive and set specific strategies to improve school effectiveness by taking into account the mediator effect of school climate and teachers' empowerment, in addition to transformational leadership practices, to meet the needs of current changes in the education line.

1.8 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study has a few research limitations. To begin, teachers from one-session primary schools (National, National Type Chinese, and National Type Tamil schools) in Pahang, Perak, Johor, and Selangor were recruited for the study. Second, the scope of the research is limited to determining the school's

transformational leadership practices in the presence of school climate and teacher empowerment as mediators, as well as the impact on school effectiveness. The research in this study was conducted using a questionnaire, and it was limited to the questionnaire's validity and reliability. It also limits to the accuracy of the responses provided by those who have answered the questions.

1.9 Definition of Terms (Concept and Operational)

1.9.1 School Effectiveness

Lezotte and McKee Snyder (2011) defined school effectiveness as a school with strong leadership, challenging academic standards, an engaging curriculum, positive school climate and effective instruction. An effective school is a school where there is a greater achievement of students from different socio-economic status and with quality teachers. The School Effective Questionnaire by Lawrence W Lezotte and Kathleen McKee Snyder (2011), which captures the following dimensions, was used to measure school effectiveness in this study: strong instructional leadership, high expectations for success, opportunity to learn/time on task, clear and focused mission, safe and orderly environment, frequent monitoring of student progress, and positive home-school relations.

1.9.2 Transformational Leadership

According to Leithwood (1998), "Transformational Leadership is a form of consensual or facilitative power that is manifested through other people instead of over other people". A transformational leader is one who is able to empower his subordinates to collaborate in order to achieve the school's shared vision or goals. In this study, transformational leadership is assessed using the Principal Leadership Questionnaire (PLQ) developed by Leithwood and Jantzi (1995), which includes the following eight dimensions: building goal consensus, developing shared vision, modeling behavior, holding high performance expectations, providing intellectual stimulation, providing individualized support, productive school culture and building collaborative structure.

1.9.3 School Climate

According to Hoy and Miskel (2008), "school climate is a relatively enduring quality of the school environment that is experienced by participants, affects their behavior, and is based on their collective perceptions of behavior in schools" (p. 198). As such, school climate refers to the overall condition of the formation of some aspects of social relationships that exist in the school, the physical condition of schools, the administrative system, student performance, and school environment. In this study, the school climate is assessed using the Organizational Climate Index (OCI) developed by Hoy, Smith, and Sweetland

(2002), which identifies four dimensions: professional teacher behavior, collegial leadership, achievement press and institutional vulnerability.

1.9.4 Teachers' Empowerment

According to Short, Greer and Melvin (1994), empowerment is defined as “a process whereby school participants develop the competence to take charge of their own growth and resolve their own problems” (p. 38). Meanwhile, teacher empowerment entails increased status, increased knowledge, and decision-making authority (Short, 1994). Teachers' empowerment also means that the teachers were given a trust to manage school activities with the supervision of the head teachers. The School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) developed by Short and Rinehart (1992) will be used to assess teachers' empowerment in this study. This SPES measures six subscales of teachers' empowerment: (a) professional growth, (b) decision making, (c) status, (d) autonomy, (e) self-efficacy and (f) impact.

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