



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***SCHOOL CULTURE AND TEACHER EFFICACY AS MEDIATORS IN
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRINCIPALS' INSTRUCTIONAL
LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN
MALAYSIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS***

MURNI MOHAMAD YASIN

FPP 2018 6



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By

MURNI BINTI MOHAMAD YASIN

**Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, University Putra Malaysia
in fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

November 2017

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment
of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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November 2017

Chairman : Zaidatul Akmaliah binti Lope Pihie, PhD
Faculty : Educational Studies

The need for Malaysian student to register a high rating in the international assessment standards have created pressure on the nation and therefore demand schools and their principals to improve their schools' outcomes. Many researchers have identified demographic, socio-economic status, family and school factors as variables contributing to school academic achievement. However, researchers also suggest that the principals who show leadership practices associated with the effective school models will have success in school academic achievement regardless of socio-economic background. Schools can improve their learning outcomes regardless of initial achievement levels by changing key organizational aspects such as instructional leadership and teacher capacity. The purpose of this study was to examine the utility of three independent constructs which is instructional leadership, school culture, and teacher efficacy that is hypothesized to have significant effects on school academic achievement in secondary school of southern zone of Peninsular Malaysia, whether directly or indirectly. An extension of the research is to explore school culture and teacher efficacy as a potential mediator of the relationship between instructional leadership practices and school academic achievement.

For the purpose of this study, a theoretical path mode to explain school academic achievement was developed with instructional leadership, school culture, and teacher efficacy as the key variables. Using structural equation modeling the hypothesized relationships were tested with data collected from 255 teachers from 16 secondary schools in southern zone of Peninsular Malaysia, as well as pre-existing school academic achievement data obtained from each school that participated. The findings provided substantial support for the model. Although the instructional leadership of

the principal was not directly related to school academic achievement, it did have an indirect positive effect on school academic achievement through the school culture and teacher efficacy.

In sum, this study adds to the understanding of the social system within the school that influences school academic achievement. Principal leadership can affect school academic achievement indirectly using their instructional leadership practices to build a healthy school culture and increase teacher efficacy with academic innovation and intellectual pursuits being the central focus of the school. Therefore, it is essential for instructional leadership components to be used in the curricular that effectively train new principals by Institute Aminuddin Baki.



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

**BUDAYA SEKOLAH DAN EFIKASI GURU SEBAGAI MEDIATOR DALAM
HUBUNGAN ANTARA KEPIMPINAN INSTRUKSIONAL PENGETUA DAN
PENCAPAIAN AKADEMIK SEKOLAH DI SEKOLAH-SEKOLAH
MENENGAH SELATAN MALAYSIA**

Oleh

MURNI BINTI MOHAMAD YASIN

November 2017

Pengerusi : Zaidatul Akmaliah binti Lope Pihie, PhD
Fakulti : Pengajian Pendidikan

Keperluan pelajar Malaysia untuk mendapatkan penarafan tinggi dalam standad penilaian antarabangsa telah mewujudkan tekanan kepada negara yang secara langsung memerlukan pengetua sekolah untuk meningkatkan prestasi akademik sekolah mereka. Secara lazim, para penyelidik telah mengenalpasti pembolehubah yang dicerap sebagai mempengaruhi pencapaian akademik sekolah seperti faktor demografi, status sosio-ekonomi keluarga dan faktor sekolah. Walaubagaimanapun, hasil kajian terkini menunjukkan kemenjadian pencapaian akademik sekolah masih boleh diperolehi tanpa dipengaruhi faktor sosio-ekonomi jika pengetua sekolah tersebut mengamalkan kepemimpinan yang berdasarkan model sekolah efektif. Sekolah secara lazimnya boleh memperbaiki hasil pembelajaran tanpa mengambil kira titik permulaan pencapaian jika aspek organisasi yang utama seperti kepemimpinan instruksional dan kapasiti guru dapat dimaksimakan. Tujuan utama kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji penggunaan tiga konstruk bebas iaitu kepemimpinan instruksional, budaya sekolah dan keberkesanan guru yang dianggap sebagai faktor-faktor pembolehubah yang secara langsung atau tidak banyak mempengaruhi pencapaian akademik sekolah di zon selatan Semenanjung Malaysia. Kesenambungan kajian ini meneroka faktor-faktor budaya sekolah dan keberkesanan guru sebagai pengantara hubungan di antara amalan kepemimpinan instruksional dan pencapaian akademik sekolah.

Bagi tujuan kajian, satu kerangka teori yang menguraikan pencapaian akademik sekolah telah dibangunkan dengan menggunakan kepemimpinan instruksional, budaya sekolah dan keberkesanan guru sebagai pembolehubah-pembolehubah utama. Menggunakan model pengstruktur persamaan sebagai kerangka, hipotesis

hubungan antara amalan kepimpinan instruksional dan pencapaian akademik sekolah telah diuji dengan memperolehi data daripada 255 orang guru dari 16 buah sekolah menengah di zon selatan Semenanjung Malaysia menggunakan instrumen beserta data sedia ada yang telah didapati berdasarkan prestasi pencapaian akademik sekolah-sekolah yang terlibat. Hasil dapatan menunjukkan sokongan mendalam kepada model yang dicadangkan. Walaupun tiada korelasi penting di antara kepimpinan instruksional dan pencapaian akademik sekolah secara langsung, secara tidak langsung ianya mempengaruhi budaya sekolah dan keberkesanan guru pada kadar yang berkesan.

Secara kesimpulanya, kajian ini memberikan kefahaman baharu kepada sistem sosial sekolah yang mempengaruhi pencapaian akademik sekolah. Kajian menyimpulkan bahawa para pengetua boleh secara tidak langsung meningkatkan pencapaian akademik sekolah dengan mengamalkan kepimpinan instruksional yang akan memupuk budaya sekolah yang sihat dan meningkatkan keberkesanan guru-guru yang membolehkan sekolah tersebut menetapkan fokus kepada penerapan budaya akademik, inovasi dan intelektual. Oleh yang demikian penggunaan komponen kepimpinan instruksional haruslah digunapakai di dalam pelaksanaan kurikulum yang secara khususnya melatih calon pengetua dan pengetua baru seperti yang terdapat di Institut Aminudin Baki.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Allah for granting me the blessing to join the Doctor of Philosophy program in Educational Administration, Faculty of Educational Studies in the Universiti Putra Malaysia. The journey to accomplish this thesis and graduation requirements wasn't easy.

Being a School Improvement Partners officer at Port Dickson District Education Department, a mother and a student is really a hard task, but it was undoubtedly special, it added a lot to me, and gave me the honor to be introduced to a distinctive group of advisors along the years.

First I'd like to thank my distinguished thesis advisor Prof Dr.Zaidatol Akmaliah Bt Lope Pihie, for her patience and continuous encouragement during my study and while accomplishing my thesis.

Also I express my appreciation to my committee members Dr. Ramli B Basri and Prof Dr.Ab Rahim B Bakar. Special thanks to Prof Dr. Bahaman B Abu Samah, Dr.Abbas, and Dr Siti Noormi Alias. I especially wish to thank my friends Ilda Salwani Hamzah, Mohd Adlan Ramli, and Mohd Helmi Ali Bashah and everyone who helped me and my thesis possible. Hopefully they'll get everything good in their lives.

Words cannot express the gratitude and deepest appreciation that I have for my late mother (Zaleha Taib) and late father (Mohamad Yasin). Finally, I'd like to thank my dear husband Ade Chandra Abdullah, always next to me for unconditional love, encouragement and patience on a daily basis and our beloved daughters Syahira Hana, Shameela Dewi Natasha and Dewi Fatin Nurisyiah.

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

Zaidatul Akmaliah binti Lope Pihie, PhD

Professor
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Ab. Rahim bin Bakar, PhD

Professor
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

Ramli bin Basri

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

ROBIAH BINTI YUNUS, PhD

Professor and Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

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Signature: _____
Name of Chairman
of Supervisory
Committee: Zaidatul Akmaliah binti Lope Pihie

Signature: _____
Name of Member
of Supervisory
Committee: Ab Rahim bin Bakar

Signature: _____
Name of Member
of Supervisory
Committee: Ramli bin Basri

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In recent light of events and development, education has been placed as a nominal element in a nation's growth, in which, the emphasis is given to the education as a catalyst to a healthy economic growth, or what is commonly known as *Knowledge-Based Economy*.

Consequently, Malaysia as part of the global movement seeks to become a high-income earning nation by 2020 and the best approach is to promote investment in the development of people through education, skill, work productivity, and creativity. In order to produce a knowledgeable nation, the better factor to be confrontation is what is currently happening in classroom. Researchers indicated that while classroom instruction remains the most important element in achieving students' learning outcomes, leadership contributes to such favorable outcome better than any other factors after the classroom instructions (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). The novelty here is the realization that on top of quality of teaching as the dominant factor in the effectiveness of students' learning experience, the ever-salient process of transforming the teaching practice and school culture, especially in underachieving schools are very much correlational to the school's leadership qualities (OECD Annual Report, 2008). The quality of management and administration of a school leadership is the indispensable criterion to produce output in the form of excellent students and scholars. Several researchers had echoed to this idea stating the importance of leadership in an educational institution:

"In developing a starting point for this six-year study, we claimed, based on a preliminary review of research, that leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student learning, after six additional years of research, we are even more confident about this claim. To date we have not found a single case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership" (Louis, et al., 2010, p. 9)

The prodigious idea that educational leadership plays a significant role in educational excellence is not only heard within the scope of educational community but is also strongly felt by the public masses and politicians alike who rely on the leaders to ensure the execution of the teaching and learning process is fruitful (Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Leithwood, & Kington, 2008; Hallinger & Heck, *The Principal's Role in School Effectiveness*, 1996; Harris, *Distributed leadership through the looking glass*, 2008; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Southworth, 2002). Such reliance is also

salient to fact that the political and public expectations can only be obtained with proper sustainable learning and improvement of the educational organization, which is best facilitated by the leaders at school level (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008).

A large body of current research trends has shown different findings on the effectiveness of school leadership particularly on how school leadership would have a significant influence on students' academic performance. While some empirical studies in the U.S., U.K, France and the Netherlands have shown strong correlational coefficient between leadership in education and students' academic performances (Bush, 2003; Opdenakker & Van Damme, 2007), other empirical studies conducted in the same countries indicate the inconsistency of these two variables in size and direction (Hallinger & Heck, *The Principal's Role in School Effectiveness*, 1996; Opdenakker & Van Damme, 2007). Thus, it is essential to examine relationship between school principal and school academic achievement as indirect approach. It is the aforementioned indirect effects that the researcher explores in this study. Generally, this chapter will describe the research background, research problem, the purpose of study, objectives, research questions and hypothesis. In addition, this chapter also describes the importance of this study implemented, the constraints and assumptions, as well as the definition of key terms used in this study.

1.2 Background

For over 55 years, the Malaysian government has placed high interest in the education system, investing a large sum of resources to ensure the longevity and expansion of the educational quality but when compared the quality of educational outcome across another countries through international student assessments such as the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), in both Mathematics and Science, Malaysia had considerably lost its standings to other Asian countries due to proportionate declination of academic performance. In light of such disquieting changes in academic performance, further probing had revealed that the mastery of Malaysian students on mathematical and scientific concepts is deridingly limited at the basic and fundamental levels (Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025, 2016).

Over the past four decades educators and researchers have been interested in identifying and understanding the variables that contribute to school academic achievement. Many researchers have identified demographic, socio-economic, family and school factors as variables contributing to school academic achievement (Walberg & Paik, 2000). The Effective Schools Movement got from the examination analyzed if the school factors were associated with understudy scholastic accomplishment in the late 1960s through the famous Coleman Study (Coleman, et al., 1966). The Coleman Report (Coleman, et al., 1966) suggested that students' ability to succeed was not because of a lack of school resources but conditions outside of school referencing the child's home environment. The students who received a nurturing home

environment conducive to learning performed better than those students from a lower economic or challenged setting. The commonalities in many of the early years of effective school studies have resulted in the same traits of strong leadership, high expectations, orderly climate, monitoring pupil progress, and student outcomes (Coleman, et al., 1966; Weber, 1971). Researchers identified similar characteristics of effective practices and behaviors of schools that displayed positive school outcomes despite socio-economic backgrounds of the students. The Effective Schools study was designed in an attempt to confirm the need for effective strategies and behaviors for students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Similarly, Douglas Reeves' (2004) theory on the connection of leader practices and classroom teachers is reflective of the effective schools' character traits. Theoretically, the partnership of school leaders and teachers can improve student achievement (Mazzoni & Gambrell, 2003). The research suggests that the administrators who display the practices associated with the effective school models will have student success and display in school academic achievement regardless of socio-economic background (Coleman et al., 1966; Marzano, 2003).

Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 indicated transformation in the system of education which linkages to the accountability era. The accountability era has stimulated major reinventions and readjustments of the role of the school site principal, causing most of the pressure to produce academic achievement to fall upon them. Students' performance in examinations undoubtedly becomes a measure to assess the quality of instructional leadership (Chan & Kaur, 2009), thus leadership influence was found to be important in determining the success of a school (Mohd Lokman Tahir, M. Al Muzammil, & Mislina Salleh, 2012; Nur Ain Wong Abdullah, DeWitt, & Norlidah Alias, 2013). The accountability era has transformed the role of principal to place greater prominence on the core responsibility of schools the teaching and learning of students with the principals' primary focus placed on their role as an instructional leader.

In recent decades, a vast number of new benchmarks and milestones in the studying of educational leadership has been made, but two of the most prominent with a high frequency of empirical studies focusing on them are instructional leadership and transformational leadership (Heck & Hallinger, The study of educational leadership and management: Where does the field stand today?, 2005). Most of the transformational changes to the role of the principal have been focused toward the technical core responsibility of the school. Hoy and Miskel (2006) stated the technical core is the process of educational leaders working on the learning and teaching process as its main business and focus. This focus on teaching and learning has led to the development of a popular leadership construct called instructional leadership (Peariso, 2011). The key difference between the two lies in their ultimate goals, in which, the transformational leadership emphasizes on the cultivation of passion and inspiration through clear visions, while the instructional counterpart emphasizes on structural and calculated improvements based on outlining easily identified goals, making insightful curriculum plans and assessing the execution of the teaching process as implemented by the teachers.

In Malaysia, instructional leadership is positively related to student achievement and very significant in creating effective schools (Yusoff Sazali, Ku Ahmad Rusmini, Abang Hut Abang Engkeh, & Abu Bakar Zamri, 2007). Based on local empirical research, most Malaysian principals had insufficient time to provide innovation to the school due to their administrative duties. Principals are too busy with a non-work related to curriculum and instruction (Alias Bity Salwana, Ahmad Basri, Md Yusoff, Mustapha Ramlee, & Ibrahim Mohammed Sani, 2008; Shafinaz A. Maulod, Chua, & Hussein Ahmad, 2016). Research in instructional leadership has progressed in discovering its effects on student achievement, but the current body of literature is still ambivalent on instructional leadership's direct or indirect effect of student achievement. The recent research concludes there is little if any significant correlation between principals' direct instructional leadership and student achievement (Bartlett, 2008; Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Leithwood, & Kington, 2008; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Thus, research has focused on indirect instructional leadership practices (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003; Witziers, Bosker, & Krüger, 2003), and such focus is heavily arbitrated by external variables like dynamism of relationship and connections between leaders and the subordinates, situational surroundings and the learning's institution culture and organizational nomenclature (Hallinger & Heck, *The Principal's Role in School Effectiveness*, 1996; Hoy & Miskel, *Educational Leadership and Reform*, 2006; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Indirect models have been shown to induce better academic performance compared to direct models (Gurr, Drysdale, & Mulford, *Instructional Leadership in Three Australian Schools*, 2007; Opdenakker & Van Damme, 2007; Southworth, 2002).

The literature suggests that although principals can have quantifiable effects on student learning performance, these effects are mostly influenced by other aspects of school life which subsequently affect what and how teachers teach in classroom (Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001). Some of such influential aspects that are highly affective are school culture and the efficacy of teachers, factors which have known to be influencing the academic performance of the school, which educational leaders must give attention to (Bulris, 2009; Ross & Gray, *Transformational Leadership*, 2006). These findings point to the important apprehension that student achievement is somewhat influenced by educational leadership be it directly or indirectly. Accordingly, more leadership research has been conducted to examine a range of other leadership activities in schools that influence instructional practices. Research evidence in Australia has also indicated the indirect relationship between school leadership and student achievement (Gurr, Drysdale, & Mulford, *Instructional Leadership in Three Australian Schools*, 2007; Silins & Mulford, 2002). Principals indirectly influence student achievement in reading and mathematics through feedback and evaluation practices that shape teachers' job satisfaction and achievement orientation (Witziers, Bosker, & Krüger, 2003). Amidst the existing arguments on the relationship of school leadership and student learning, research to understand the contribution of leadership to student learning conducted by scholars in many different school contexts has supported the conclusion that school leadership affected learning by creating structural and socio-cultural processes that develop the capacity of schools for academic achievement (Chen, 2008; Cravens & Hallinger,

2012). According to Leithwood (Leithwood, *Leadership for School Restructuring*, 1994), the principals of the schools should be viewed as "change agents" whose positive influence on the school stems from the innovation reinvention of the preexisting school culture. Another researcher who is interested in the relation between educational leadership, behavior and school culture is Maslowski (2001) who rationalized that the identification of school cultures that is amplified by the leadership values and behaviors can lead to different results and outcomes in terms of students' academic achievement.

Research has shown a link between teacher sense of efficacy and student achievement (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2002; Ross, *Teacher Efficacy and Student Achievement*, 1992; Ross, *Beliefs That Make a Difference*, 1994). Moreover, evidence from several studies suggests that prior student achievement has a significant, positive relation with teacher self-efficacy (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, & Malone, 2006; Mujis & Reynolds, 2002). It is widely assumed that principals have both direct and indirect effects on teaching and student achievement, particularly with their structuring of teachers' working conditions (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

Increasing the visibility of classroom practice through frequent teacher observations of peers has been clearly linked to such benefits as improved instruction, improves teacher self- efficacy, and improved teacher attitudes toward culture of professional development, among others (Frase, 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2002). Other researchers have found similar outcomes for principals who are present in classrooms and who build instructional capacity through detailed feedback (Freedman & LaFleur, 2003; Glickman, 2002). But this direct method requires the principal to be in many classrooms most days, which quickly becomes an unmanageable task in anything but rather small schools. Thus, a key issue for instructional leadership is enacting of powerful instructional leadership mediators that provide modest guidance to practicing leaders, so they would be more focused on their efforts that will affect classroom practices and, thus, student learning to foster school academic achievement.

1.3 Problem Statement

School academic achievement is crucial because it has excessive influence on a students' self-esteem, motivation, and perseverance in higher education. Due to this, it is important for the school to produce good academic results because poor academic achievement may result in unacceptable levels of attrition, reduced graduate output and increased cost of education. Many researchers have identified demographic, socio-economic status, family and school factors as variables contributing to school academic achievement (Walberg & Paik, 2000). However, researchers also suggest that the principals who show the practices associated with the effective school model will obtain student success and good school academic achievement regardless of socio-economic background (Coleman, et al., 1966; Marzano, 2003). Consequently, there are also concordance between high level of instructional leadership and the high level of school academic achievement. When we link to Malaysian student

performance in TIMSS and PISA 2009 an assumption could be made that the lower level in TIMSS and PISA indicated the low level of instructional leadership among Malaysia's principals. These international standard assessments have created pressure on the nation and therefore create an insatiable demand for schools and their principals to improve outcomes (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2008). A review of the empirical research of the past thirty years indicates that principal leadership can make a difference in student learning and principals are always urged to adopt instructional leadership approaches in school because it is believed to contribute to the academic achievement of students (Hallinger, 2011). Principals, however, don't typically work directly with students; hence the question on how does the instructional leadership of the principal in Malaysia contribute to school academic achievement arises. Schools can improve their learning outcomes regardless of initial achievement levels by changing key organizational aspects such as instructional leadership and teacher capacity (Hallinger, 2011). Past research also revealed that school culture and the health of the organization play a significant role in school academic achievement (Wagner & Masden-Copas, School culture triage survey., 2002; Vislocky K. , 2005), and significant relationship between teacher's efficacy and school academic achievement (Eells, 2011; White, 2009). Indeed, sufficient evidence for many researchers to justify claims about significant leadership effects on school academic achievement has moved on to include questions about how those effects occur. Most of the principal instructional leadership studies in Malaysia focuses on the direct relationship between the principals and the school academic achievement while researches on identifying significant leadership mediators had been scarce (Hoy, Tarter, & Hoy, 2006). For that reason, researches that aid the investigation on whether instructional leadership practices are direct or are mediated by other factors had become increasingly important. Most individual empirical studies have examined only a single number of mediators (Hoy, Tarter, & Hoy, 2006) and the method the mediators are selected for attention by researchers and which one of these mediators hold greatest potential remains. Therefore, more researches on identifying significant leadership mediators are required to clear such unclarities (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Hoy, Tarter, & Hoy, 2006). Along this line of idea, the contribution between instructional leadership practices and school culture and the contribution between instructional leadership practices and teacher's efficacy of a secondary school was investigated. Does instructional leadership have direct effects on school academic achievement? Does instructional leadership work through school culture or does instructional leadership work through teacher's efficacy? These are the three major questions that have guided the empirical phase of this study.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the utility of three independent constructs which is Instructional leadership, School culture, and Teacher's efficacy in predicting school academic achievement. Further to explore school culture and teacher efficacy as a potential mediator of the relationship between instructional leadership practices and school academic achievement. To achieve these objectives, the following research questions submitted:

1. What is the relationship between instructional leadership and school academic achievement?
2. What is the relationship between school culture and school academic achievement?
3. What is the relationship between teacher's efficacy and school academic achievement?
4. Does school culture mediate relationship between instructional leadership practices and school academic achievement?
5. Does teacher's efficacy mediate relationship between instructional leadership and school academic achievement?

1.5 Research Objective

In general, the objective of this study was to investigate whether instructional leadership has a significant effect on school academic achievement in secondary school of southern zone of Peninsular of Malaysia, whether directly or indirectly. Specifically, there are five (5) aims of the current research. These are to:

1. Determine relationship between instructional leadership practices and school academic achievement
2. Determine relationship between school culture and school academic achievement.
3. Determine relationship between teacher efficacy and school academic achievement.
4. Determine mediation effects of school culture on the relationship between instructional leadership practices and school academic achievement.
5. Determine mediation effects of teacher efficacy on the relationship between instructional leadership practices and school academic achievement.

1.6 Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses addressed under this current research were included and can be viewed as follows;

- H1. Instructional leadership has positive effect on school academic achievement.
- H2. School culture has positive effect on school academic achievement.
- H3. Teacher's efficacy has positive effect on school academic achievement.
- H4. School culture mediates the relationship between instructional leadership practices and school academic achievement.
- H5. Teacher efficacy mediates the relationship between instructional leadership and school academic achievement.

1.7 Significance of Study

The findings of this study would be used as information to practitioners and also can contribute to the theory. The results of this study should advance the development of the theory of instructional leadership and its influence within the educational context. Examined the influence of instructional leadership to school culture and teacher's efficacy on school outcomes will extend the current body of information within educational literature regarding the effects of this theory of leadership and the promises it holds on changing the practices of teachers. Finding of the study will guide the school administrators in planning and implementing desirable instructional leadership practices for it will give bits of knowledge to them to contemplate upon in the selection of effective leadership style for the school community because school principals are also often not clear what form of assistance that can give to teachers to improve the teaching process in the classroom. An understanding the powerful mediator of the principal instructional leadership behaviors shared by teachers as being critical to enhancing teacher self-efficacy and build a healthy school culture in schools can be used to develop effective district training programs for current principal practitioners designed to shore up their skills in supporting classroom teachers.

This study which is geared to improving school academic achievement will be useful to the teachers in the sense that they will know that a part of the demands of their occupation is to be emphatic on the delivery of quality instruction. They may further enlighten them on what are expected to them by their stakeholders. This study will be useful for parents and students as the principle recipients of this endeavor will be made mindful of the consequences of School Academic Achievement based on the national examination. The students will have the capacity to perceive how the school applies exertion on their instructional welfare. They will be made acknowledge too that the efforts given to them by their teachers are worthy of emulation.

This research will also assist policy makers in making informed decisions regarding which education programs to fund. In this capacity, they are positioned to implement immediate change mechanisms into the system of principal education programs. Though the accountability measures for educational outcomes continue to rise, the amount of funding into public education is decreasing. The state of the national economy is causing the federal government, and many states and local school districts to slash funding of education. Numerous school districts have slashed teacher in-house training, cut programs, and implemented other cost-saving measures in order to cope with the funding decreases. Supporting policy makers in their efforts to make critical financial decisions regarding the funding of programs that promote principals' ability to effectively support teachers in their efforts to educate students is critical in this era of financial uncertainty.

1.8 Delimitations

Delimitations of a study address how a study is narrowed in scope (Creswell, Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). This study gathered data from sixteen (16) secondary public schools only from one district in each state of southern zone in Peninsular Malaysia whilst private school and boarding school were not included. For school academic achievement, this study only used data for one-year results for PT3 in 2014.

1.9 Limitations

There are still several limitations of my study which must be noted. The researcher investigated the instructional leadership of principals in one district only for the three states in Malaysia. For the purpose of this study, the scope of secondary schools is narrowed down to only within three districts which is district of Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan, district of Melaka Tengah, Melaka and district of Kota Tinggi, Johor. Inferences from the results limit generalizability to that school district. The second limitation is to measure School Academic Achievement using PT3 (assessment for lower form in secondary school) result for secondary school. To determine broader achievement outcomes, it would be necessary to administer multiple tests throughout a student's academic career. Such longitudinal research was beyond the scope of this study. The third limitation is the instruments that were used in the study are from the western country which is already established but translated in Malay language. The study's target sample was selected the population only for secondary daily public schools and not included secondary boarding schools. Researcher has very limited time to adopt and adapt a few instruments and develop new instrument which will suit with Malaysian context.

1.10 Definition of Terms

Terms used for this study are defined below for clarity and understanding.

1.10.1 Instructional Leaders

For the purpose of this study, Instructional leadership represents leadership behaviors of a school principal and expressed in a conceptual framework that proposes three dimensions in this role as defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school learning climate (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

1.10.2 School Culture

For the purpose of this study, School culture includes shared experiences both in and out of school, such as traditions and rituals that create a sense of community, family, and team membership (Wagner, 2006, p. 41)

1.10.3 Teacher Efficacy

For the purpose of this study, Teacher efficacy is defined as teachers' beliefs in their ability to provide effective instructional practices and improve student achievement (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2002).

1.10.4 School Academic Achievement

For the purpose of this study, school academic achievement is defined as a student's learning of curriculum expectations demonstrated at a given time. The school academic achievement referred to School Grade Average for academic achievement on Form 3 Assessment (PT3) in the year of 2014. This assessment is used due to its new standardized use across all lower secondary schools.

1.11 Summary

Leadership characteristics play an important role in promoting and managing school development by influencing subordinate both directly and indirectly. In today's 21st century schools, the standards of higher accountability for schools to demonstrate student achievement have become increasingly reliant on leadership. Factors often outside the direct control of schools were the most influence of factors affecting student learning. Regardless of this finding, leadership was and still is looked to as the panacea for many of the woes facing schools. School principals can be removed or replaced with relative ease if a school is not performing. As a result, policymakers often neglected other intervening factors when focusing on leadership as the primary strategy for school change or reform. This study can strengthen previous research results by finding intervening factors such as school culture and teacher's efficacy and how leadership practices on these factors contribute to successful school academic achievement.

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

- Murni, M. Y., Mohd Helmi, A. B., Hasni Y. Z., Zaidatol Akmal, L. P., Foo, S. F. & Ramli, B.(2016).The Ideology Of Instructional Leadership Among Principals On Student Academic Achievement. *Imperial Journal of Interdisciplinary Research (IJIR)* Vol-2, 390-395
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