RESPECTIVE APPROACHES IN PROMOTING DISTRIBUTIVE LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the understanding of distributive leadership and promoting it through the respective approaches, in order to build the credibility of future leaders in schools. The question is, who will lead and manage the school in future when the senior and middle level managers in school prefer to apply for Master Teacher posts in order to gain fast benefit for better grade and pay? Therefore is it feasible to promote distributed leadership in order to manage the school effectively and identify future leaders? Leadership based not on the traditional notion premised upon an individual hierarchical and structural position, that is, only the head teacher's leadership that counts. Rather, leadership is dispersed, to be a shared activity, in the form of team work. In Islam, all beings are leaders. The method of study comprised conversation, consultation, observation, experiential, and document review with senior and middle managers, academic and non academic staff. Distributive leadership is partly practiced in Muzaffar Syah Science Secondary School (MOZAC) by a group of teachers who are capable, competent, enthusiastic, and committed. These teachers are given certain responsibilities and roles to keep the various components of the school together. These teachers possess good interpersonal and collaborative skills and able to move other teachers to consensus thus creating a win–win situation. Rotation of leadership position is also practiced to create neutral leader or mediator by acknowledging the teachers' strengths, commitment, and passion. If distributive leadership can be promoted in schools, improvement in performance of the school can be achieved and future leaders among the teachers can be identified.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

I intend to write on the respective view because most of my senior academic staff does not want to be leaders. Why? First, they believe that they do not possess leadership quality, that is, they lack self confidence. Secondly, to them leaders are structured. Hierarchical wise there are limited posts at the top and thus only offered to the selected ones especially the senior teachers. Thirdly, even though they are federal government servants and can be posted anywhere in Peninsular Malaysia, yet most of them preferred to stay put in their hometowns or states. The fourth reason is they are academically inclined or self centred or less interest in personnel growth through administration. Apparently when there are a lot of vacancies for Master Teacher posts offered by the Malaysian Ministry of Education, most of them have the intention to apply for the posts and are reluctant to take up the succession challenge at middle and senior management level. To them, it is the easiest way to gain more pay; faster than having hierarchical post which are limited and takes time to be appointed. Besides, if they are appointed to be Master Teacher, they only stay put in their present school or they would not be transferred to other schools. I personally agree and support their ideas and intentions but the problem is who will lead and manage the school in the future? Can they sustain their performance as Master Teacher for not being transferred?

I always inform my staff that in managing any organizations in this world, we are managing human beings. If we can have good relationship with them, we will work in a happy and harmony organization. So, we need to work as a team in order to manage leadership in a form of teamwork. We will find effective leaders in every successful school. These leaders are well educated, self-motivated, and self-directed teachers: most of them know far more about their given work area than their managers. School leadership is primarily about learning and teaching. Learning and teaching lie at the heart of successful school leadership. In Islam all beings are leaders. All leaders must be responsible for what they do. I believe that some of us do possess the characteristics of distributive leadership and we can promote distributive leadership in any organization that we lead and manage but probably not in a short period. In order to address this issue, we have to understand the relationship of roles and leadership as well as the concept of distributive leadership.

LEVELS OF ROLE

In schools, roles are allocated and authority is delegated to various personnel concerned. The process of distribution is formally initiated by the principal who identifies and delegates leadership responsibilities to respective individual teachers such as key subject's teachers, forms or class coordinators, heads of departments, deputy principals and the so call front-line officials, middle managers, and the top management. Thus, the school, as a system, is filled with many interlocking official roles. Each role acts as a link, for example to keep the various component of the school together as an organization to perform some assigned functions smoothly. Principals cannot possibly be the 'pillars of organizational effectiveness' in every area that contributes to a school's reputation for excellence: they can't be every where at the same time. Status and role are thus two sides of a single coin. Status is a socially identified positions; role is the patterns of behaviour expected of persons who occupy a particular status. Developing leadership potential over time requires placing individuals in a variety of roles, with an expanding range of responsibilities and accountabilities. As far as possible roles should be designed around the individual – to provide roles that will intrigue and challenge their best talent (National College for School Leadership, 2003). Through the allocation of roles, leadership is distributed because it involves setting a direction for the school which includes developing the people and the organization.

Level 1	Teacher as leader	Managing self and having some whole-school leadership responsibilities
Level 2	Leads team	Managing other's in team
Level 3	Leads team across the school	Managing teams on whole-school issues
Level 4	Leads school	Primary responsibility for leading school

LEADERSHIP

From my personal experience and reading, leadership do not have to come from the top. Anybody at any level who can persuade or drive others to create substantial change for the betterment and achievement of others or organizations have the potential to be a leader. However, when referred to a few of my senior academic staff for the meaning of leadership, most of them understand leadership based on the traditional notion premised
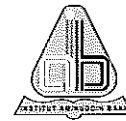
upon an individual hierarchical and structural positions. To them, leader is thought of as the person who exercises discretion and influence over the directions of the school. In most cases they always want the principal to instruct or make the decisions because they respect their leader who holds considerable positional power. So, what is leadership? In 'The nature of leadership', an article written by Barker (2001:124), quoted Gemmill and Oakley (1992) who defined leadership as 'a process of dynamic collaboration, where individuals and organization members authorize themselves and others to interact in ways that experiment with new forms of intellectual and emotional meaning'. Why do they define leadership as a process? First, leadership is a process that is not specifically a function of the person in charge. Leadership is a function of individual wills and of individual needs, and the result of the dynamic of collective will organized to meet those various needs. Second, leadership is a process of adaptation and of evolution: it is a process of dynamic exchange and the interchanges of value. Leadership is deviation from convention. Third, leadership is a process of energy not structure. In this way, leadership is different from management: management pursues stability, while leadership is all about change (Barker, 1997). Therefore, Barker (2001) defined leadership as a process of transformative change where ethics of individuals are integrated into the mores of a community as a means of evolutionary social development. According to Lambert (2003), leadership is about contributing to, learning from, and influencing the learning of others. It is also creating the opportunities for others to learn: when skilfully approached, professional development is as much about adult learning as student learning.

Leadership is not all about directing. Followers or team members do not like to be bossed around. They prefer to be treated equal, for they consider themselves to be valuable contributors towards arriving at a common or shared goal.

DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP
Gronn (2002) defined leadership as 'emergent work–related influence' and identifies two broad meanings of distributed leadership. First, numerical view, which refers to 'the aggregated leadership behaviour of some, many or all of the members of an organization or an organizational sub-unit', leadership which is 'dispersed rather than concentrated'. As Gronn (2002:655) suggests, it is not only the head teacher's leadership that counts but also the leadership roles performed by deputy heads, substantive teachers, support teachers, members of school councils, boards or governing bodies and students. Second, distributed leadership is a concertive action, rather than aggregated, individual acts. According to Gronn, there are three forms of concertive action that may be attributed to leadership. First, spontaneous collaboration concerning tasks where leadership is evident in the interaction and relationships in which people with different skills, expertise and from different organizational levels combine to pool expertise and regularize conduct for the duration of the task. Second, shared role which emerges between two or more people, involving close joint working 'within an implicit framework of understanding' and emergent 'intuitive understandings'. Third, institutionalization of structures of working together (concertive mechanisms), for example as a committee. These three forms of concertive action represent successive stages in a process of institutionalization. In each case, the agents constituting the membership of the units act conjointly. Conjoint agency means that agents synchronize their actions by having regard to their own plans, those of their peers, and their sense of unit membership. Conjoint agency entails at least two processual components, such as interpersonal synergy and the reciprocal influence. There

are two types of synergies that are the formal and informal. Formal synergies are based on role incumbency while informal synergies are anchored on personal relations. Formal synergies include four subtypes such as cross-hierarchy, trusteeship, parity of relations, and separation of powers.

ELEMENT OF DISTRIBUTION

Oduro's (2004) findings demonstrate that (i) Although head teachers have an idea of the concept of distributing leadership, the term itself does not form an integral part of their day-to-day working vocabulary (ii) The process by which leadership is distributed in schools may be understood in terms of the initiative head teachers take to share leadership responsibilities with teachers, the creation of an environment in which teachers feel free to own initiatives and assume leadership responsibilities and the ways in which head teachers, teachers, and students or pupils relate to each other in order to promote a greater sharing of leadership. Therefore, the researchers distributed leadership is not a new leadership technique but rather an intellectual label that seeks to re-enforce the fact that leadership needs to be a shared activity in schools. According to Oduro, the elements of 'dispersed leadership', 'collaborative leadership', 'democratic leadership', and 'shared leadership' project an element of distribution.

From the above understanding, distributed leadership are non-person centered, it is distributed among formal and informal leaders. We can no longer belief in the power of one but to a belief in the power of everyone because leaders work with and through others. The principal, senior assistance, heads of departments and key stages rely on colleagues to put into practice agreed ways of working. Distributed leadership is an activity-based approach to leadership and it focuses on the tasks to be accomplished. Essentially distributed leadership is a networking that interacts individual relationship with others and creates trust and respect when people work together which are essential conditions for learning and leading. The initiatives for distributed leadership arise from cultural influences embedded in society. Therefore, distributed leadership is not something new. It is a shared activity in the form of teamwork or web which we do practice it without realizing the respective term related.

PROMOTING DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOL

School leaders are recruited almost exclusively from the teaching population, so we need to identify a pool of high potential candidates, develop leadership competencies in those candidates through intentional learning experiences, and then select leaders from the pool of potential leaders. Probably this is one way for us to argue with the traditional hierarchical view of leadership in schools.

In order to improve leadership quality in schools, the traditional roles of principals and teachers must be renegotiated through knowledge. In essence, if teachers are to be empowered in democratic learning communities then formal preparation for leadership should include teachers. (Don Ledingham's Learning Log, 2007). In promoting distributed leadership in schools, the respective approaches stated below probably have been practiced by most of us.

As a learner

Everybody in school including the principal must participate as a learner in classrooms and professional-development sessions. This practice demonstrates that learning is important and enriches knowledge, understanding, and ability to contribute to the important dialogue about improving instruction in content or context areas. We also learn through respective websites or do benchmarking against certain schools that are better of than us. We do give hand to help others who need our help in our respective niche areas. Thus, participating in professional-development efforts builds leader's credibility and trust, and focuses our ability to scrutinize instructional and transformational practices.

Task specificity

From what have been discussed above, basically, it seems that distributed leadership is already been nurtured in the school but due to certain circumstances it faded away. Why? Some of the senior staff are self-centred and are 'plateau' leaders, formalized rules and regulations which govern all activities and people. In order to develop and nurture back the distributed leadership, my senior assistants and I applied the Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership styles (Linstead, Fulop & Lilley, 2004). We gave direction and supervised enthusiastic and committed teachers who lack competence. For teachers who are competence but lack commitment, we also support them by coaching in order to rebuild their enthusiasm and self-esteem. For those teachers who are competence to do a task but lack confidence or motivation; we give support and encouragement to raise their flagging commitment. Finally, to teachers who are both competent and committed to achieve a particular task, we merely delegate task to them. Delegating responsibility and authority to senior and middle management teams gives more teachers opportunities to share in decision-making and were 'empowered to lead'.

Minimizing Roles

As the complexity of roles has increased due to the expansion of various educational reforms in our educational system, an analytical assessment may possibly be given regarding the roles concerned. Moreover, there has been evidence of role-conflict which has led to the ineffectiveness of some units or sections in attaining their objectives. This is because an individual or officer might perform many roles and a role conflict may arise either due to time energy conflict, or conflict between roles, or conflict with different roles played by different people. Therefore, the principal who is responsible for the whole administration and management, and well-being of the school must see that the roles of the teachers are well defined and carefully distributed. Teachers who are qualified in certain fields should be given appropriate duties because they will perform better if they are given responsibility in accordance with their aptitude, ability, and interests.

Due to the above conflicts between roles, for the first stage, we manage to minimize the roles of teacher by putting off certain inactive or underperformed sub-units through extra-curricular activities. On students' side, we manage to increase their membership for the respective activities handled by them. Why? Through our conversation and observation, teachers cannot cater too many workloads and roles or doing too many clerical works from sub-units. We had to be selective and used our discretion because we have almost 630 students with only 65 teachers. So, by minimizing their roles, tasks are relatively straightforward and relatively easy for a group of people to work interchangeably on tasks and jobs. Indeed there are many advantages in this: it allows flexibility in the use of staff (work does not stop if someone is away); it improves communication (everybody

knows what is going on); and it may be motivating through the existence of task variety, identity, significance, responsibility, and feedback. There are certain improvements for the respective quarters at state and national level in our school especially through the extra curricular activities on academic.

Job rotation

In leadership development, job rotation is an approach to management development where an individual is moved through a schedule of assignments designed to give them breadth of exposures to the entire operations. Job rotations are lateral transfer of employees between jobs in an organization. The aim of management job rotations is to help individuals increase their portfolio of knowledge and skills. Job rotations broaden individual's experience and giving those in-depth exposures to areas outside the functions or occupational specialties for which they were originally hired and which they have advanced. Employees are more likely to follow the leader if they have confidence that the leader understand their area, the organization, and the industry, and job rotation builds the credibility of future leaders (Kouzes and Posner, 1989).

Job rotation can alleviate career burn-out and create a new challenge to stimulate individuals. This is because some good employees find that after several years of doing the same job, they lose their interest and motivation, and though they are not interested in leaving the organization, they are seeking different job challenges within the organization (Leonard and Nadler, 1989). Job rotation also tests how well high-potential management employees adapt to change, solve problems, and learn how to learn. By rotating management employees through different positions, decision-makers gains insight about how flexible high-potential management employees are and how well they perform under different conditions. Job rotation gives management employees exposure to new models of effective leadership and different management styles.

Consulting

When there is a vacancy of post or new task, we will normally expressing a need. When consult or ask any of the teachers or the 'middle-managers' whether they could volunteer to fill up the vacancy or lead the new task or assignment, normally we acknowledge teacher's strengths. We look for those having passion, being committed, having a strong belief in the cause, and approaching it with tenacity. Other than that, we also look for those possessing good interpersonal and collaboration skills, having the ability to move groups to consensus, creating win-win situations, understanding different ideologies and being culturally aware. When any of them agrees to volunteer or accept the post, we will delegate responsibility to him or her. We will give them support and encouragement.

Every school in Malaysia does create its own conditions for learning, for both students and staff. Setting the proper context for learning and personnel growth is an essential important step. The concept of the professional learning community is related to the personnel, interpersonal, and organizational dimensions of the school working in a developmental or learning synergy. Second is the idea of leadership capacity as a route to generate the moral purpose, shared values, social cohesion, and trust to make this happen and to create impetus and alignment. Supportive and shared leadership requiring facilitative and collegial participation of the principal who shares leadership by inviting staff input, decision-making, and action in addressing school issues and challenges. Collective staff learning and application of learning can be used to seek new knowledge and application of learning solutions that address students' needs.

Principal and teacher leaders (team)

Leadership is the professional work of everyone in the school (Lambert, 2003). The complexity of the principal's role affirms the need to engage a significant number of classroom teachers as instructional leaders because instructional leadership must be a shared community undertaking. In contrast to traditional notions of leadership premised upon an individual managing hierarchical systems and structures, distributed leadership is characterized as a form of collective leadership, in which teachers develop expertise by working collaboratively. Teacher leadership brings decision-making authority to the classroom and gives teachers a new sense of responsibility and ownership in the school. We are developing teacher leaders who can coach colleagues, support learning communities, and lead instruction-based issues such as data analysis and planning, staff development, and etc. at school level. Leadership sources are distributed throughout the school community and teachers are empowered in areas of importance to them like multiple source of guidance and direction through ICT, experiential learning, small group work, role-playing, action research, case studies, benchmark, and etc.

Students' work and data

We propose that students' work and data should serve as the primary mechanism for schools in focusing and directing the efforts of professional learning communities. Teachers must have the capacity to analyze students' work and data, as they map out the critical targets for improving instruction in the classes. We use the data to guide schools in decision making and to identify students' needs, improve assignments, and instructions. Data also serve as the primary mechanism for school in focusing and directing efforts of professional learning communities.

CONCLUSION

From the above activities, teacher leaders developed and maintained relationship well. Relationship is based on trust, mutual protection and support. There is an open communication, strong sharing of common goals, values and beliefs; and members subordinate their own objectives to those in the group. All members of a social group are empowered to make decisions. Respect is based on expertise and knowledge. If some individuals carry greater weight when a decision is made, it is because of special relevant ability or skills which they possess. They see the school as part of the community, emphasize more on people not systems. We practiced this two years back and succeeded but recently a few of them were selected as Master Teacher.

Therefore, we need to create our school as an organization that can learn and change if we are to improve performance. Leadership is not a position or a person. It is a practice that must be embedded in all job roles at all levels in school. The work of leadership is about working with, for, and through people. It is a social act. So the moral purpose of school leadership is to create school in which all students learn, the gap between high and low performance is greatly diminished and what students learn will prepare them for success in their future, and ours. Respect and value each teacher's leadership potential, appreciate efforts of individuals to take risk, and also see a teacher's mistake as an opportunity for learning. Mutual trust should be at the centre of interactions between and among teachers, principals, students, and all stakeholders of the school that led to common vision, language, and action. From here we can identify future leaders among the teachers and distributed leadership in school is part and parcel of succession planning.

What we need in schools today is collaboration by having networking with colleagues in other schools, shared leadership, responsibility for one another's learning as well as one's own professional development. We need to nurture openness, receptivity, and responsiveness to alternatives approaches, ideas, and innovation. You're welcome to browse our school blog to see and understudy our students and teachers achievements and responsibilities through *http://www.muzaffarsyah.blogspot.com*. Through this blog, we help and share knowledge and collaborate with other schools throughout Malaysia or overseas. Once again, distributed leadership is not something new in our educational system; we do practice it due to our cultural influences embedded in our society.

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