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## The Relationship Between Distributive Leadership And Teachers' Collective Efficacy

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### Abstract

This study aims to examine the relationship between distributive leadership and teachers' collective efficacy. In addition, this study also measures to what extent distributive leadership is practiced in relation to teachers' collective efficacy as well as the contributions and influence of distributive leadership on teachers' collective efficacy among primary school teachers in Perak. This study uses a quantitative approach with survey design using questionnaire as the instrument. Data is collected using stratified random sampling and easy random sampling. A total of 440 respondents were involved in this study. Two statistical analysis have been used, which are descriptive analysis for distributive leadership and collective efficacy of teachers, and inferential analysis using Pearson's correlation to examine the relationship between the two variables. The findings of this study found that the level of distributive leadership was high (min = 4.106, SP = .456) and the collective efficacy of teachers was also high (min = 4.061, SP = .430). While the correlation analysis shows that distributive leadership has a positive and significant correlation to the collective efficacy of teachers. In sum, leaders who practice distributive leadership styles are able to influence the collective efficacy of teachers.

**Keywords:** Distributive Leadership, Collective Teachers' Efficacy, Organizational Management, Teacher Commitment.

### Introduction

School leadership today, should provide empowerment opportunities for every teacher to be actively involved in joint decision making for school excellence. This is because the key to successful leadership is influence rather than power (Blanchard, 2012). In fact, the effectiveness of the school depends on the ability of committed teachers and school community to work together collectively towards a goal and for continuous sustainable improvement of school excellence (Amin, 2005). This is in line with the idea of educational reform as stipulated in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (PPPM) which is to enhance the quality of school leadership in achieving successful student outcomes (PPPM, 2013). Distributive leadership emphasizes the need to empower teachers in leadership aspect as well as the sharing of responsibilities between leaders and followers. It attempts at developing teachers' competencies to contribute to organizational excellence and school

improvement processes. The Ministry of Education has planned to elevate the teaching profession by shifting towards the practice of distributive leadership. The transition towards a distributive leadership model will enhance the quality of leadership capabilities at every organizational level in the school (PPPM, 2013). Nevertheless, the practice of leadership empowerment does not mean that there is no control over the subordinates. As a matter of fact, in performing their duties, they are still subject to and bound by the organizational rules and procedures.

School leadership is no longer the responsibility of the headmaster alone, but also involves various parties such as middle leaders and teachers. However, the opportunity for school leaders to interact with teachers on a daily basis is very limited, especially in large schools due to the large number of teachers and students. The complexity of the tasks also proves a challenge to the leaders. Therefore, school leaders need to work with the leadership team by allowing teachers to participate in decision making (Gronn, 2002). School leaders are also responsible for developing a culture of strategic consensus that transcends knowledge and expertise in order to build an effective teamwork. A culture of consensus will encourage the dissemination of expertise and skills among teachers in order for them to work efficiently and effectively which will lead to better teamwork capabilities. In this regard, the emphasis on school leaders as role models to foster a culture of consensus among staff is relevant (Amin Senin, 2011). Therefore, school leaders need to have the ability and inspiration for the development of the school, and being responsible for leading a dynamic change through effective leadership style (Fullan, 2009). This is because style is an important element in leadership as it is experienced daily (Muda, 2005).

Educational leadership today no longer focuses on the leadership of headmasters alone to shoulder all responsibilities as leaders in an educational institution (Halim & Ahmad, 2015). As posited by Fullan (2002), leadership style in schools can be regarded as weaknesses as it may make schools less effective. According to the Report of the Inspectorate of Schools (2003), it is found that effective leaders place more emphasis on leadership aspects such as the leadership style practiced, knowledge and thinking culture, consensus, drive and motivation to work, instructional leadership and leadership empowerment in the workplace. This is because the leadership of the headteacher is an important aspect in ensuring the effectiveness of the school in affecting student outcomes. The level of teacher efficacy is also influenced by the leadership style of the headmaster. Leadership sharing practices are fundamental to the sustainability of the school change (Fullan, 2006). ). School leaders need to encourage leadership among teachers so as to motivate them to make their own decisions, especially when it relates to their professional skills. One of the behavioural aspects that influences teachers' performance is self-efficacy while collective efficacy is actually built based on the self-efficacy of the teacher himself or herself. Therefore, school leaders need to motivate their teachers to implement their best potential by increasing their commitment in teaching and learning (Leithwood et al., 2006). As posited by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001), teachers who have positive self-efficacy tend to influence student behavior and their learning outcomes. Zaidatol et al. (2011) in their study found that teachers' self-efficacy was positively related to student behavior and learning outcomes.

## Literature Study

### **Distributed Leadership**

The idea of distributive leadership arises due to the complex nature of educational tasks since the responsibility of managing various complex tasks in the organization is distributed to different individuals (Hoy & Miskel, 2012). According to Spillane (2006) distributive leadership is the framework used to analyze inordinary leadership practices as it encourages more individuals to be involved as leaders both formally and informally in various leadership functions. Hence, distributive leadership focuses on the interaction between three main elements namely leaders, followers and situations in all leadership activities. Through distributive leadership, teachers work together collectively and collaboratively according to their respective expertise and then make joint decisions in shaping the culture and determining the goals to be achieved (Harris, 2012). The main tenet of this leadership is to work collectively towards achieving the same goal through communication and interaction among members within the organization (Malloy, 2012; Halverson, 2007). The distribution of leadership can have a significant impact on teacher involvement in decision making as it involves more teachers in leadership roles, while concomittantly encourages innovation through a strong leadership team (Bortha, 2014). Distributive leadership is a leadership process that involves collaborative relationships based on shared values that brings about positive change effects (Bortha, 2013).

Nevertheless, distributive leadership does not replace individual leadership or head teachers but focus on social interactions between leaders and followers and how they work together to solve problems or achieve organizational goals (Bennet et al., 2003). Recognition of teachers' ability to participate in leadership shows that leaders trust their teachers' abilities and feel comfortable in sharing power, responsibility and accountability (Hatcher, 2005). This is because the world of education is becoming more complex and requires a variety of types of expertise and skills to solve problems in the organization. Moreover, distributive leadership is able to reduce the gap between leaders and their employees and encourage the division of leadership functions (Gronn, 2008; Bolden, 2007). Spillane (2001) argues that the concept of distributive leadership has changed from the role of an individual to more diverse leadership practices. The purpose is not merely to highlight the expertise of teachers individually but to show the interdependence of colleagues, which can improve the organization as a whole (Harris, 2008). Furthermore, Spillane (2004) also contends that effective leadership practices result from reciprocal influences between leaders and followers whereby followers are no longer seen as passive individuals who simply follow instructions from top leaders. Regardless of the hierarchical status, teacher leaders who have expertise in certain situations can lead although they do not have higher positions as compared to the others (Bennett et al., 2003). Hence, distributive leadership assumes that the diversity of roles involving school leaders and teachers in social contexts and situations is based on duties and responsibilities and is not based on position in the organization (Spillane, Haverson & Diamond, 2001).

In conclusion, Spillane (2006) states that distributive leadership is a theoretical framework used to analyze irregular leadership practices where more individuals are involved as leaders. Therefore, distributive leadership practices are widely spread through collaboration, collective effort and in coordination with the organization. In relation to that, Spillane (2004) is of the view that distributive leadership is at the center of the teaching and learning process and that the distributive framework involves two main aspects, namely leader plus and practices. Leadership is not limited to those in the top leadership, such as in traditional dualism i.e. 'followers of the leader' whereby the leader leads while the followers are relatively passive and submissive (Bolden, 2011). Spillane, Hunt, and Healy (2009) assert that

the interaction between school leaders, followers and situations in a leadership practice as a dynamic, inclusive, collaborative relationship and its meaning and knowledge is contextually constructed (Gunter, Hall and Bragg, 2013).

### **Teachers Collective Efficacy**

Social cognitive theory is one of the frameworks used in understanding and predicting changes in human behavior. It is named as social cognitive theory because all the information or learning is gained through social interaction with others. It identifies human behavior as a response to personal, behavioral and environmental factors (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Collective efficacy refers to the mutual trust by a group of members in an organization to plan and implement the necessary actions to achieve their objectives by combining their ability together (Bandura, 1997). Teacher collective efficacy is a dynamic group-level attribute that involves interaction between group members. It is a shared belief within a group to perform an action to achieve the desired result (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 2001). Teacher behavior and actions are assessed within the context of group norms (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). In contrast to self-efficacy, collective efficacy is associated with task, effort, perseverance, shared thinking, stress level and group achievement. Teacher self-efficacy is the individual teacher's action when each teacher needs to carry out his or her duties while the teacher's collective efficacy is a collective action when each teacher needs to take action to achieve common goals and there is interdependence with each other in every action taken (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007 ). Thus, teacher self-efficacy shows more impact on individual student achievement while teacher collective efficacy shows teacher collective contribution to student achievement and the organization as a whole (Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2000). This justifies that if collective efficacy has improved organizational performance it means that concomitantly collective efficacy has also increased (Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2000). Hence, as teacher collective efficacy is positively linked to student achievement so the task and role of school leaders is to systematically develop teacher collective efficacy since increasing teacher collective efficacy will also lead to student achievement (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 2001).

### **Objective of Study**

This study attempts to explore the relationship and influence of distributive leadership on teachers' collective efficacy in schools. Among the objectives of the study are as follow:

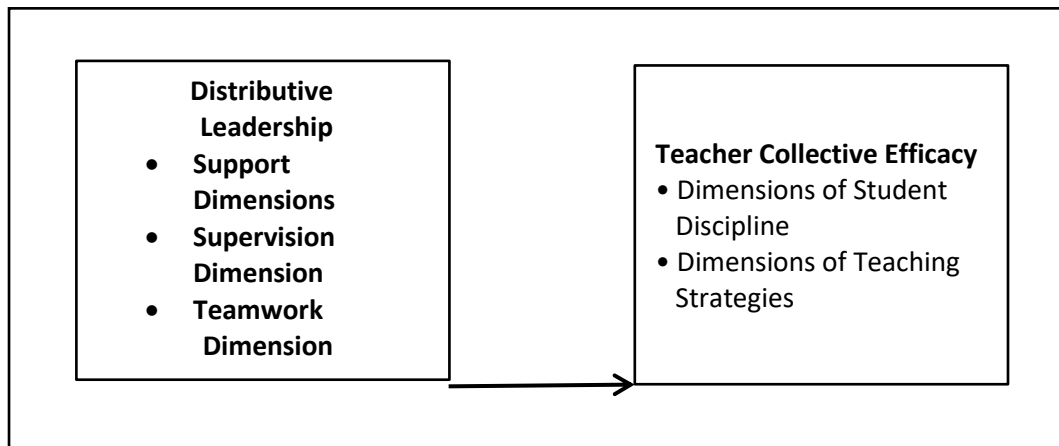
1. To identify the level of distributive leadership and teachers' collective efficacy.
2. To determine the relationship between distributive leadership and the teachers' collective efficacy.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The conceptual framework of the study refers to the dimensions involved in each variable. It is based on the adaptation of previous studies, which serves as a guideline in this study and is supported by the distributive leadership model by Spillane (2001) and Gronn (2000). Distributive leadership developed by Hupia et al. (2009) consists of three dimensions, namely support, supervision and team collaboration. These dimensions involve the relationship between leaders and followers in the form of collaborative efforts. The dimensions of support, supervision and cooperation point to the practices of leaders and followers as well as the situations existing in the organization. These leadership practices promote spontaneous working relationships through the involvement of teamwork and collective



effort (Hulpia et al. 2009). While teachers' collective efficacy is based on the model by Tschannen and Moran (2004) which measures two main criteria, namely, student discipline and teaching strategies that influence student achievement. This model has been chosen based on the theory put forward by Bandura (2000). The framework of this study as shown in Figure 1 illustrates the relationship and influence of distributive leadership on teachers' collective efficacy.



**Figure 1: Theoretical Framework**

## Methods

This study uses quantitative methods by using a survey approach through questionnaires as a research instrument to examine the relationship between the influence of distributive leadership as an independent variable on teachers' collective efficacy as a dependent variable. According to Creswell (2008), research in the form of surveys can describe a phenomenon that is happening as well as collect data directly from the subjects in order to make generalizations to the population. The instrument of this study was adapted and modified from Distributed Leadership by Hulpia, Devos and Rosseel (2009) and Collective Teacher Belief Scale (CTBS) by Tschannen-Moran & Barr (2004). Since this is a quantitative research, statistical data is used as the research medium. Each item in this questionnaire uses a 5 point likert scale and is based on the teachers' perceptions when answering the questionnaire. Meanwhile, the total sample consists of 440 national primary school teachers in Perak. The sampling technique used in this study is in the form of stratified random and simple random, which is divided according to the districts in the District Education Office (PPD) in the state of Perak. There are 12 PPDs in the state of Perak which consists of a population of 15196 national school teachers and the total sample is divided based on the total population from each district involved. Selection of respondents was done through simple random according to the PPD district. We used the IBM SPSS Statistics (SPSS) software package to see the inter-correlations between variables. Then, Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 26 was employed to undertake a statistical analysis particularly geared towards identifying the normality of the data collected, as well as generating the reliability and correlational analyses. Data obtained using questionnaires will be analyzed descriptively and inferentially. The researchers had conducted a pilot test before conducting the actual study. The test was intended to identify the level of reliability and validity of the research tool. A reliability analysis was conducted to identify the internal consistency of the instruments employed in this study in reflecting the research context. The researcher used the Cronbach

Alpha coefficient method to measure the reliability value of the items in terms of the internal consistency. Typically, the data obtained are deemed as reliable when all of the factors being assessed yielding values more than 0.80 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1978).

The researchers found that the overall value of Distributed Leadership was 0.918 and the Collective Teacher Belief Scale (CTBS) was 0.863. The data collection process began in February 2018 and was completed in Jun 2018. Out of 440 of respondents, 143 (33.4%) are males and 297 (66.6%) are females. Mean score analysis was conducted to show the mean level of the variables, namely, distributive leadership and teachers' collective efficacy. Table 1 shows the mean scores of both variables. The mean score findings are as follow, the mean of distributive leadership is at a high level (mean = 4.1068, SP = 0.4561). The mean teachers' collective efficacy is also high (mean = 4.06125, SP = 0.4309).

**Table 1: Variable Mean Scores**

Variables	Min	Standard deviation	Level
Distributive Leadership	4.1068	0.45613	High
Teacher Collective Efficacy	4.0612	0.43090	High

Pearson correlation test has been used to study the relationship between distributive leadership with teachers' collective efficacy. Pearson correlation test results are shown in table 2 below:

**Table 2: Correlation Analysis Between Variables**

Variables		Leadership	Collective Efficacy
Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1	.486**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	440	440
Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.486**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	440	440

Based on table 2, it is found that the correlation coefficient of distributive leadership with the teachers' collective efficacy is at the value of  $r(440) = 0.486$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . The correlation coefficient indicator explains that there is a positive and moderate significant relationship between leadership and teachers' collective efficacy.

### Discussions

The findings of the study, which is based on descriptive analysis from the respondents' perception showed that the mean score of distributive leadership among teachers is high (Mean: 4.1068; SP: 0.45613). This shows that the practice of distributive leadership in national primary schools is at a high level. The findings of this study support the findings of a study by Norasmah and Rofilah (2013) that teachers are prepared to adopt distributive leadership practices. Similarly, the mean score level of teachers' collective efficacy among teachers is high, at a mean of 4.061 and a standard deviation of 0.4309. This shows that the level of teachers' collective efficacy in national primary schools is at a high level. These findings give

the impression that teachers' collective efficacy is high due to the collective and collaborative efforts among teachers in schools.

The findings of the study show that the mean score of organizational commitment among teachers is also high, at a mean of 3.963 and a standard deviation of 0.3923. This shows that the level of organizational commitment among teachers in national primary schools is at a high level. These findings give the impression that the high organizational commitment of the teachers reflects a positive attitude and their keen interest in performing their duties as teachers in the school with the support and encouragement of the school leadership. This study found that there is a significant relationship between distributive leadership and teachers' collective efficacy which are moderately high correlated. Pearson correlation test results show a positive and significant relationship between distributive leadership and teachers' collective efficacy, of  $r(440) = 0.486^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . This indicates that the increase in distributive leadership has a relationship with the increase in teachers' collective efficacy. This shows that the practice of distributive leadership has correlation with teachers' collective efficacy as in the sharing of responsibility collectively and collaboratively which can influence their attitudes towards achieving organizational goals. This cooperative collaboration is identified as a leadership team collaboration that includes the spirit of togetherness, openness, trust and communication (Kozlowski and Ilgen, 2006; Holtz, 2004). Distributive leadership can reduce isolation through teamwork and enhance the development of professionalism and motivation as well as contribute to the effectiveness and improvement of school performance (Harris, Muijs & Crawford, 2003).

In addition, distributive leadership has a significant influence and contribution on teachers' collective efficacy. The higher the distributive leadership is practiced by the school leadership the higher the increase of the level of teachers' collective efficacy, especially in the dimension of teamwork. This gives the impression that the style and attributes in distributive leadership allow opportunities for the distribution of power among teachers to engage in leadership practices and shared responsibility in decision making and problem solving, which is able to increase teachers' collective efficacy. When school leaders are open in adopting distributive leadership then these practices have a positive relationship with teachers' efficacy or teachers' beliefs about their personal competencies and their overall ability to provide students with the strategies needed for learning (Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2000). This is also supported by Gaziel (2009) who argues that distributive leadership style provides empowerment opportunities for teachers to play a role in achieving the school vision which will increase teacher motivation, job satisfaction and loyalty to the organization.

### **Implications**

Leadership today can no longer be regarded as only one leader endeavour who is able to lead his or her organization well. In fact, leadership is also gradually seen as involving a string of increasingly complex and burdensome tasks. The findings of the study indicate that the increase in distributive leadership will also increase in teachers' collective efficacy. Hulpia et al. (2009) posit that teacher commitment can be increased if distributive leadership is not practiced too rigidly. School leaders need to explore more ways to be less formal and teachers need to be given more opportunities to lead (Davis, 2009). Apart from that, this study also found that there are strong mediators that can determine the implementation of distributive leadership with teachers' collective efficacy, which is teacher empowerment. The findings of this study are in line with the studies that have been conducted by Bogler and Somech (2004) and Gaziel (2009). The empowerment of these teachers can be enhanced by involving



teachers in decision making in schools and this can increase the teachers' commitment to the organization (Firestone & Pennel, 1993; Bogler & Somech, 2004). This is due to the fact that the elements of distributive leadership such as supporting and encouraging the development of employees and empowering them work better than delegating power for individuals to take on new leadership roles. Currently, the responsibility of school administrators is to build the capacity of teachers not only in curriculum and co-curricular management skills but also in the field of leadership. As such, leaders who have characteristics such as ethics, creativity and innovation, community development, prioritizing subordinates, assisting subordinate self-development, empowering subordinates and having conceptual skills will more easily gain subordinate cooperation to achieve success in implementing change and achieving organizational goals.

Head teachers who value teachers in a variety of ways will increase teachers' motivation especially when the head teachers value their subordinates' views and involve them in the decision-making process related to their field of expertise. Past studies have shown that organizations that successfully adopt a culture of employee appreciation by stimulating and applying their ideas, creativity and capabilities are able to sustain existing excellence throughout the current and competitive change (Stravrou-Costea, 2005). Head teachers as school leaders have the responsibility, power and authority to play a role in leading the human resources available to achieve the school's vision and mission. Head teachers need to encourage teachers to improve their competency by attending courses, seminars, workshops, furthering their studies, conducting action research and reflecting on shared knowledge with other teachers through professional learning community. Therefore, head teachers need to provide opportunities for individual learning process as well as enable them to apply their knowledge and expertise for the good of the organization. This opportunity will be able to increase the knowledge, creativity and skills of the teachers to be applied in teaching and learning processes. This becomes an added value to the organization as a whole. The process of teacher empowerment and devolution involves trust, communication, risk-taking, critical situations within the structure of the organization. In the view of the teachers who are entrusted to perform their responsibilities, it is a recognition that will make them to strive to perform those responsibilities well. This is because teachers who are trusted feel valued by their head teachers and hence, will make effort to be involved in developing the school. Past researches have shown that teachers who take a role in decision making are able to increase teachers' self-efficacy and encourage them to learn to perform their tasks more effectively (Maidin & Hamzah, 2013). The findings by Brown (2002) revealed that there is a significant relationship between leader behavior and follower behavior. The results of this study also support the findings of a study by Ross and Gray (2006) who stated that effective leadership style will influence the level of teacher efficacy and affect leadership by bringing about changes in student learning improvement.

The attitude and leadership style of the head teacher also plays a role in creating a conducive environment that encourages the involvement of teachers. When the hierarchical gap between the head teacher and the teachers is small, the teachers will become more comfortable to come up with ideas during the discussion or in the decision-making process. Discussions will become more meaningful as they gain a broader view on the issues which will lead to more accurate decisions. This is in line with the findings of Zarraga and Bonache (2005) that the open disposition of the leader allows his or her subordinates to freely discuss issues including the mistakes made and will try to overcome the problem while gaining new

knowledge and experience. This atmosphere will encourage teachers to be more committed to perform their duties and always attempt to make improvements. This is because the learning process influences creativity and the learning environment is conducive in encouraging innovation (Fenwick, 2003). Therefore, the open and transparent distributive leadership style in distributing tasks facilitates teachers to cooperate for common organizational goals and to further make continuous improvements. According Husain et al. (2020), that distributive justice significantly mediate the link between job characteristics elements such as autonomy and task identity and job satisfaction.

### Conclusion

Therefore, this study successfully reveals a significant and positive relationship between distributive leadership and the collective teachers' of efficacy. Distributive leadership is able to increase the level of teacher professionalism as well as teachers' collective efficacy through the contribution of the teachers' expertise towards organizational excellence. Therefore, school leaders need to change their image by developing the potential leadership capacity of the teachers who are able to collaborate in solving school problems. McNulty et al. (2005) stressed that the duties of head teachers in schools are not limited to routine administrative tasks but they need to mobilize all resources, both human and non-human capitals, especially the teachers so that they can contribute effectively and with commitment. The problems and progress of the school no longer lie on the shoulders of an individual leader but must be acknowledged and shared by all members in the school. Therefore, distributive leadership is able to accommodate the flexibility of management operations as well as meet the aspirations of leaders in creating mutual cooperation between teachers. In sum, positive interactions between head teachers and school staff are the key to the cooperation among them and the realization of effective leadership in order to be able to address various challenges. This also requires more analysis (such as multiple regression analysis) to be done in determining and testing the contribution of influence between distributive leadership on teachers' collective efficacy. Further it is recommended for future studies to add other dependent variables such as motivation to describe their respective relationships with distributive leadership.

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