

The Relevance of Goal Path Theory in Addressing Teachers' Innovative Behavior in Educational Organizations

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Abstract

Innovation among teachers is essential to enhance educational outcomes in producing quality human capital. Teacher innovation is often associated with leadership practices in schools. However, the extent to which all leadership practices impact teacher innovation is uncertain. Therefore, this paper discusses the extent to which distributive leadership practices are used to address issues of innovative behavior among teachers. The discussion in this paper shows alignment between elements in distributive leadership practices and teachers' innovative behavior. It can be concluded that in conducting research, the suitability between dependent and independent variables can be determined by referring to the elements contained in the referenced theory.

Keywords: Distributive Leadership, Behavior, Innovation, Educational Organization, Leadership Practices

Introduction

The fifth shift in the Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013-2025 by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) has transitioned to a distributive leadership model to foster a more impactful leadership style for producing higher quality school leaders. According to Lee Huee Kun & Izham (2023), and Masyany & Hazri (2023), there is a significant relationship between distributive leadership and teachers' innovative behavior. Nik, Aida, & Norasmah (2021) also noted that distributive leadership by the principal influences teacher leadership in schools to realize school goals. Teachers' innovative behavior is closely related to innovation in their daily teaching and learning activities. If the school culture does not encourage or appreciate teachers' efforts in innovation, teachers are more likely to withhold new ideas. Teachers might also resist innovation due to fear of change, uncertainty about new methods, or

concerns about potential negative effects. Therefore, this practice of distributive leadership needs to be ingrained as a culture and strengthened as a relevant approach to facing the increasingly complex and rapidly developing educational challenges. In conclusion, the principal's leadership and the influence of teachers' innovative behavior are interdependent, and these variables need to be managed well.

Theoretical Framework

The researcher chose the Path-Goal Theory developed by Robert House in 1970. According to Robert, a leader's behavior is closely related to the approach used during their leadership period. Each leader faces different challenges and situations, even within the same school. Therefore, the principal's role is crucial in motivating teachers to achieve the school's goals and improve their job performance. This includes assisting teachers in finding the most effective paths to achieve their goals, removing obstacles, and providing the necessary guidance and support.

The theory of teachers' innovation is grounded in the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) in this study. This theory was developed by Albert Bandura in 1977 and emphasizes the role of learning through observation, imitation, and modelling in the development of individual behavior. Bandura stated that every individual needs to learn by observing the behavior of others, and the impact of this observation will influence their actions, thoughts, and self-motivation. (Ford et al., 2022) The three concepts in cognitive theory are:

- a) **Observational Learning (Modelling or Imitation):** In the field of education, teachers can learn new behavior by observing and taking appropriate actions.
- b) **Self-Efficacy:** Self-efficacy refers to a teacher's belief in their ability to successfully accomplish a task and achieve goals. It is essential for motivating teachers to face new challenges that may arise from their actions.
- c) **Cognitive Processes:** Cognitive processes involve observation, memory, and thinking in learning. For example, teachers attend to and interpret the information they receive to determine if it influences their learning and behaviours. If a teacher wants to introduce innovation in education, they can relate demonstrations, models, or examples of innovative teaching techniques or approaches in their innovations.

Based on these concepts, teachers' innovative behaviours will form in generating ideas, promoting ideas, and realizing ideas. Teachers who wish to introduce innovation in education need to emphasize all these components because a teacher's teaching strategy will involve students' cognitive processes, encourage critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving.

Suitability of Theories in the Context of Education in Malaysia

The researcher states in their study that the Path-Goal Theory and the Teacher Innovative Behavior Theory are suitable for the field of education in Malaysia. Previous research indicates that distributed leadership is closely related to recognition and appreciation of teachers' contributions and achievements. When teachers receive encouragement, they are more motivated to develop innovations in their teaching practices. (Printy & Liu, 2021) Regarding the construct of innovative behavior among teachers, it leads to more effective teaching and learning methods. Teachers who engage in innovation will use appropriate strategies, technologies, and new pedagogical techniques, making their teaching more effective in improving learning outcomes. Students' interest will also increase with elements

of innovation as it fosters curiosity and active participation during the teaching and learning process.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Based on the article, the researcher does not provide a conceptual framework in their writing. From the findings of the study, I conclude that the researcher defines distributed leadership of the principal as the independent variable with four components: school mission, vision, and goals; school culture; shared responsibility; and leadership practices. On the other hand, the teacher innovative behaviours is considered the dependent variable with components including idea generation, idea promotion, and idea realization. According to this framework, the independent variable contributes to the dependent variable, and they are interrelated.

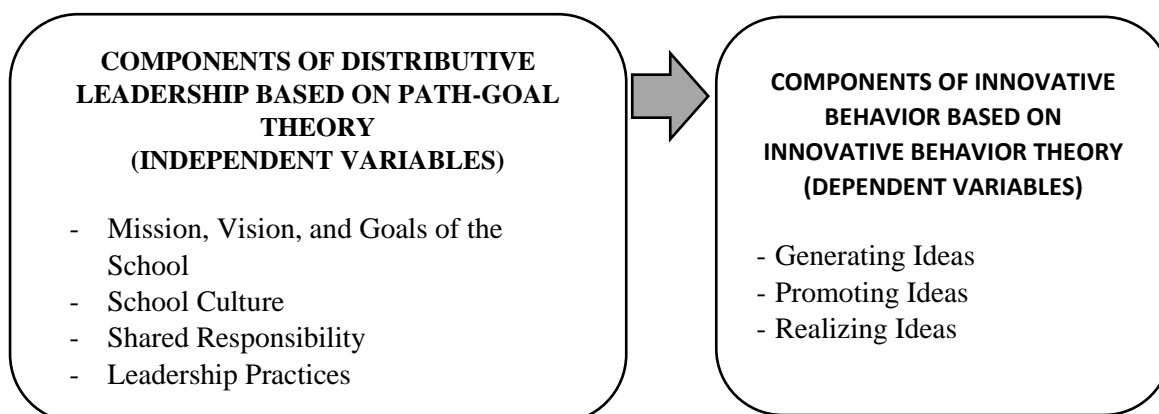


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of the Study

Source: Robert House (1970) and Albert Bandura (1997)

Research Findings Linking Components

The research findings show that components of distributive leadership are interconnected. The study examines the level of implementation of distributive leadership practices by principals, focusing on elements such as school culture, shared responsibility, vision, mission, and school goals, all of which scored high, between 4.01 and 5.00. Similarly, teachers' innovative behavior also showed high scores overall, with a mean score of 4.12, covering components like promoting ideas, realizing ideas, and generating ideas.

Perspective on the Use of Components in Theory

The study concludes that principals who practice distributive leadership positively impact teachers' innovative behavior. The theory used in the study supports this by demonstrating that distributive leadership enhances teaching quality and student learning outcomes. The research aims to understand how a leadership approach that emphasizes shared responsibility and decision-making affects teachers' willingness and ability to innovate in their teaching methods and practices.

Your perspective on using Path-Goal Theory and Teacher Innovative Behavior Theory to measure the impact of distributive leadership on teachers' innovative behaviours in schools is insightful. These theories effectively address the principal's role in encouraging teachers to generate, promote, and implement new ideas for teaching and learning activities.

Path-Goal Theory focuses on how leaders can help their followers achieve goals by clarifying the path and removing obstacles. In the context of distributive leadership, this theory suggests that principals can enhance teachers' confidence and effectiveness by involving them in decision-making processes and fostering a supportive environment for innovation.

Teacher Innovative Behavior Theory complements this by emphasizing the role of teachers in developing and applying new teaching methods. Teachers who are supported by distributive leadership are more likely to engage in innovative practices, contributing to improved teaching outcomes.

As you noted, research by Asiah & Asri (2020) and Nik et al. (2021) supports the idea that distributive leadership, which includes elements like communication, teamwork, trust, empowerment, collaboration, and collectiveness, enhances the relationship between principals and teachers and improves curriculum excellence and school goals. Syukri et al. (2020) also highlight that distributive leadership is crucial for increasing teachers' job satisfaction and fostering educational innovations.

In conclusion, adapting these theories within the framework of distributive leadership can help teachers become more competitive and better equipped to meet educational challenges. This, in turn, benefits students and contributes to the advancement of education for future generations.

Summary

This study clearly demonstrates how principals who empower teachers to make decisions can enhance teachers' creativity in teaching. When teachers are encouraged to try new approaches, principal leadership helps them become more enthusiastic about improving their teaching methods and fostering greater student interest in learning. Such leadership also supports teachers in becoming better leaders themselves and taking on important roles within the school.

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