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Vol. 8(3) 2019, Pg. 166 - 181

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Head Teachers' Competency in Managing Change: A Study in the National-type Chinese Primary Schools in Perak, Malaysia

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Abstract
The increasing demands for accountability and excellence continuously challenge the roles of head teachers in the process of school change. To best lead change in school, effective change leadership is crucial as it is the key to any change initiatives. The study was to identify the level of competency in managing change (CIMC) of the head teachers in National-type Chinese Primary Schools (NCPS) in Perak, Malaysia, that included the change leadership technical competency (CLTC) and the change leadership emotional intelligence (CLEI). The analysis of the survey was performed based on the data of 875 respondents i.e. 50 head teachers, 144 senior assistants and 681 teachers. The findings revealed that, a) the head teachers of NCPS were rated as *Quite Good* in CIMC, CLTC and CLEI; b) the head teachers of NCPS achieved a higher mean score in CLEI than in CLTC and the difference was significant; c) in terms of sub-dimensions, the head teachers of NCPS were rated as *Quite Good* across all the four sub-dimensions of CLTC; and *Good* in *Emotional Regulation* and *Emotional Utilization* whereas *Quite Good* in *Emotional Understanding* and *Emotional Perceiving and Expressing* of CLEI. The study provided useful feedback in designing change management training programmes based on the distinct needs of the head teachers of NCPS. Besides, it offered the Ministry of Education and relevant parties another dimension of enhancing and enlarging head teachers' capacity for change, particularly in advancing a more comprehensive analysis in exploring change leadership competency towards continuous school improvement and effectiveness.
Keywords: School Change, Change Leadership, Competency in Managing Change, Change Leadership Technical Competency, Change Leadership Emotional Intelligence

Introduction

A substantial body of research has revealed that there is a significant relationship between educational leadership and school effectiveness (Eacott, 2011; Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Leithwood & Louis, 2012; Robinson, 2010). As the education landscape

is shifting rapidly due to the increasing demands for accountability and excellence, school change is unavoidable; this indicates the need to bring educational leadership to a transformational edge if it is to be effective (Tai & Omar, 2018a; Wallace Foundation, 2011). Schools require effective change leaders if they are to provide the best possible education for students (Tai & Omar, 2018b). To best lead change in school and ultimately to transform the education system successfully, effective change leadership is crucial as it is the key to any change initiatives.

However, as the school environment is typified by an increased level of complexity and challenges as a result of the organizational contextual volatility and rapid change, school leadership is no longer task-driven per se, but emotionally compelling (Tai & Omar, 2018b). Therefore, both technical competency specified for specific behavioral dimensions of the school change process, and school leaders equipped with non-technical competency i.e. the emotional intelligence at all levels of leadership and applied across the complete terrain of the change process are needed for school leaders to lead change effectively in schools. School leaders who are competent only in either one of the competencies, are unlikely to be able to handle numerous complicated problems in the face of change; the increasing demands for organizational effectiveness constantly challenge both competencies to be complemented with each other so as to enable leaders to best lead change in the organization.

The Malaysian education system is entering an intensive period of change with the launching of Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 (Ministry of Education, 2013). In the pursuit of educational change and reform, the Ministry of Education Malaysia provides different types of professional development programs for school principals and head teachers to enable them to acquire competencies to meet the demands of leading change effectively in schools. The main purpose of the study was to examine the patterns of competency in managing change (CIMC) of the head teachers in the National-type Chinese Primary Schools in Perak, Malaysia; this includes the change leadership technical competency and non-technical competency i.e. the change leadership emotional intelligence of the head teachers of NCPS. The study may broaden our understanding about school leadership in NCPS and provide information that can align practices to address context specificity in enhancing school leadership development in the implementation of the Blueprint.

Leadership, Change and Competency

Leadership plays a critical role in any organizational development. Many definitions about leadership emphasize that the fundamental role of the leader is about setting a direction and developing the needed strategies to achieve the organizational goal. Early in the year 1985, Bennis and Nanus (1985) point out that, “management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things”. This is in line with what Kotter (1990) emphasizes, that “management is about coping with complexity; leadership, by contrast, is coping with change” (p. 86). Following this, Elliott (1992), Kerfoot (1999), cairns (2000), Kellerman and Webster (2001) and Yukl (2002), stress that leadership is change focused as leaders challenge the *status quo* and thus leading change is the *sine quo non* of a leader. In relation with this, it is important to note that leadership needs to be understood in a change context (Higgs & Rowland, 2000; Zenger, Ulrich, & Smallwood, 2000).

As leadership is inexorably linked to the management of change, it is essential for leaders to possess specific leadership competency to lead and manage change, particularly to manage

and cope with the dynamics within or outside the organization during the change. Indeed, leadership is often discussed in term of competency (Boyatsis, 1982; Bueno & Tubbs, 2005). Competency has become the building blocks of leadership selection and development processes; statements of leadership competencies are used as the basis for strengthening an organization's leadership team and determining the types of leadership development opportunities that are needed for future leaders (Ulrich et al., 2000). Importantly, by conceptualizing leadership in terms of competency implies that leadership can be learned and taught (Intagliata, Ulrich, & Smallwood, 2000). By acquiring and practicing new knowledge, skills and abilities, individuals are able to transform themselves to become better leaders.

Change Leadership Competency

Competency is viewed as the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes possessed by the leaders to perform their tasks and roles excellently (Tai & Omar, 2018a). Competency can be categorized as technical and non-technical (Rothwell, Hohne & King, 2007). During a change process, technical competencies are specific to certain roles to cope with the change whereas non-technical competencies such as emotional intelligence are core competencies that can be applied across the complete terrain of the process of change (Tai & Omar, 2018b). Leaders with either technical or non-technical competency are insufficient for effective change leadership as leadership is embedded in broader social relationships; it involves rational and cognitive activities as well as emotional engagement and unconscious dynamics.

Specifically in this study, change leadership technical competency (CLTC) is confined to four important components, namely i) *Goal Framing*; ii) *Capacity Building*; iii) *Defusing Resistance and Conflict*; and iv) *Institutionalizing* (Tai, Omar, Sahari & Khuan, 2014). *Goal Framing* stresses the importance of constructing a goal to direct the change effort, presenting the rationale of the need for change, and having a clear direction of how to achieve the goal. *Capacity Building* highlights the importance of head teachers to prepare teachers with the knowledge and skills to meet change requirements, especially in developing teachers' competencies in teaching and learning. Mitigating resistance and conflicts are the fundamental roles of the head teachers in the phase of *Defusing Resistance and Conflict*. *Institutionalizing* emphasizes the importance of sustaining the achievements of the change. At its best, attention needs to be given by head teachers to consolidate a change and hold on to gains (Tai et al., 2014).

The Non-technical Competency i.e. the change leadership emotional intelligence (CLEI) refers to the emotional intelligence of head teachers in leading change whereby their cognitive competence are informed by emotions, and these emotions are managed cognitively. It encompasses four main components: i) *Emotional Perceiving and Expressing*; ii) *Emotional Utilization*; iii) *Emotional Understanding*; and *Emotional Regulation* (Omar & Tai, 2018). *Emotional Perceiving and Expressing* is the ability of the head teacher to perceive, differentiate and express emotions in the self and others. *Emotional Utilization* is defined as the ability of the head teacher to harness self and others' emotions in order to facilitate cognitive activities, for example, thinking, judgement and problem solving, leading to effective performance. *Emotional Understanding* is conceptualized as the head teacher's ability to understand the relationships among different emotions, the causes and the consequences, the complex feelings and transitions among emotions in self and others. *Emotional Regulation* refers to the head teacher's

adaptive ability to reduce, prevent, modify or enhance an emotional response in self and others to achieve the desired goals.

The National-type Chinese Primary School

The National-type Chinese Primary School (NCPS) is one type of primary schools in Malaysia. Most of the NCPS operate as government-aided schools. The government is responsible for funding the school operations, teachers' training and salary, and setting the school curriculum (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). However, funding in other areas such as the building of the school and utility expenses, are the responsibility of the local ethnic communities even though the NCPS has been an integral part of the national educational system since 1957. Particularly, the NCPS are managed by boards of directors made up of strong supporters from the local Chinese community, who place a high priority in safeguarding and ensuring an environment conducive to study.

The NCPS adopt the same national syllabus used by the government schools and offer the same school-leaving examination, the Primary School Achievement Test (*Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah*). The Malay language is a compulsory subject in NCPS whereas English is conducted as a third language. The teaching of the Chinese language is compulsory in NCPS and is the medium of instruction for all non-language subjects. As the NCPS is specifically designed for the Chinese children to learn their mother tongue as well as their culture, 90% of the students are Chinese. However, there have been an increasing number of non-Chinese children in NCPS in the past ten years. This is perhaps due to NCPS **having stricter disciplinary and educational methods** (Raman & Tan, 2015)**.** The rise of China as an economic powerhouse may have also raised the awareness of the need to learn Mandarin.

Methodology

Sample

The study was conducted by employing a quantitative approach using the survey method. To select the respondents for the survey, multiple-staged stratified random procedure was applied due to its highly recommended efficiency. This approach allows each important segment of the population to be adequately represented with a higher possibility of greater accuracy (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). There were altogether 185 NCPS over 10 districts of Perak. The researchers decided to have a total of 30 percent of the total number of the NCPS as sites for the research; as a result 56 NCPS were identified for the study. As there is only one NCPS in the district of Perak Tengah, it was decided to include it for the study. Drawing on this foundation, the proportion of each stratum was calculated based on 55 NCPS and the total number of school of each district involved in the study is shown in Table 1.

As self-rating and self-evaluation may suffer from inflation, unreliability and bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), the data was collected through the approach of triangulation, i.e. from the head teachers, senior assistants as well as the teachers. For every NCPS, the head teacher was identified as the first respondent whereas three senior assistants and fifteen teachers were also selected randomly as respondents. As shown in Table 1, for each school, there were 56 head teachers, 168 senior assistants and 840 teachers or a total of 1,064 respondents (56+168+840) involved in the study.

Table 1. Total number of schools and respondents of each district of Perak engaged in the survey

Districts of Perak	No. of NCPS in each district	No. of NCPS involved	No. of head teachers involved	No. of senior assistants involved	No. of teachers involved
Kinta Utara	35	10	10	30	150
Manjung	24	7	7	21	105
Batang Padang	23	7	7	21	105
Larut	23	7	7	21	105
Kinta Selatan	22	6	6	18	90
Hilir Perak	20	6	6	18	90
Kuala Kangsar	16	5	5	15	75
Hulu Perak	11	4	4	12	60
Krian	10	3	3	9	45
Perak Tengah	1	1	1	3	15
	185	56	56	168	840

Survey Instrument

The CLTC of head teachers was examined using the Change Leadership Technical Competency Scale developed by Tai et al. (2014). It consists of four main dimensions namely, a) *Goal Framing*; b) *Capacity Building*; c) *Defusing Resistance and Conflict*; and d) *Institutionalizing*. With three items for each dimension, it constituted 12 items and the factor loading of each item ranging from 0.80 to 0.90, each dimension with the Composite Reliability Index (CRI) of 0.76, 0.76, 0.74 and 0.74, respectively. The CLTC scale provides evidence for convergent validity as the Squared Multiple Correlations (SMC) are all above the threshold of 0.5 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010), and the Averaged Extracted Values (AVEs) all surpassed 50% (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). It also held discriminant validity since all AVEs of the factors were greater than 0.5 (Kline, 2011) and CRIs were greater than 0.60 (Awang, 2012).

The CLEI of head teachers was measured using Change Leadership Emotional Intelligence Scale developed by Omar and Tai (2018) in the Malaysian education setting based on the ability-based EI model introduced by Mayer and Salovey (1997). The CLEI scale consists of four important components: a) *Emotional Perceiving and Expressing* (three items), *Emotional Utilisation* (four items), *Emotional Understanding* (five items) and *Emotional Regulation* (four items). It held good CRIs with .62, .64, .61 and .73 for the above four components respectively. The convergent validity of CLEIS was adequate as the AVEs were all well above 50% (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), with a range of 53% to 70%. It also held discriminant validity, as all the AVEs of the factors were greater than 0.5 (Kline, 2011), and the CRIs were greater than .60 (Awang, 2012).

Both CLTC and CLEI scales are six-point likert scales. Respondents were asked to rank their responses from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Scoring was accomplished by assigning 1 to “strongly disagree”, 2 to “disagree”, 3 to “moderately disagree”, 4 to “moderately agree”, 5 to “agree”, and 6 to “strongly agree”. The level of CLTC and CLEI are measured based on two main indicators; the frequency of the performance and the performance rating of satisfactory–dissatisfactory as shown in table 2.

Table 2 Raw scores of CLTC and CLEI and its level and indicators

		Indicators	
Raw Scores	Level of CLTC / CLEI	Frequency of the Performance	Performance Rating
5.51 - 6.00	Very good	Almost all of the time	Very satisfactory
5.01 – 5.50	Good	Often	Satisfactory
4.01 - 5.00	Quite good	Quite Often	Quite satisfactory
3.01 - 4.00	Fair	Sometimes	Average
2.01 - 3.00	Quite poor	Quite Rarely	Quite Dissatisfactory
1.51 – 2.00	Poor	Rarely	Dissatisfactory
1.00 – 1.50	Very poor	Almost Never	Very Dissatisfactory

Data Analysis

A total of 1,064 sets of questionnaire were sent via post to the concerned 56 NCPS in Perak. The data collection process was conducted over a time span of two months and adhered to all ethical considerations. Eventually, a total of 889 sets of questionnaires were returned with a response rate of 83.55%. Excluding the 14 sets of questionnaires that had illegible responses, 875 sets of questionnaires were finally included for the final analysis. These included 50 sets from head teachers, 144 from senior assistants and 681 from teachers. To analyse the data, descriptive statistical analysis was employed to obtain scores and means. Besides, based on the significance level of .05, the inferential statistical analysis, i.e. the t-test, was employed to test the significance of the differences between the concerned variables.

Demographic Characteristics

Of the respondents engaged in the survey, 79.54% (N=696) were female and 20.46% (N=179) were male. Among the respondents in the sample, the age group of 31 to 40 years consisted of 34.40% (N=301); the age group of 51 to 60 years 29.14% (N=255); 41 to 50 years 24.34% (N=213) and the age group of 41 to 40 encompassed 12.12% (N=106). More than half of the respondents or 56.46% (N=494) had a Diploma degree, followed by 40.11% (N=351) respondents with a Bachelor's degree and 3.43% (N=30) had a Master's degree. In terms of working experience, 32.91% (N=288) of the respondents had worked more than five years, 22.97% (N=201) 6 to 10 years 20.57% (N=180) more than 20 years, 14.52% (N=127) 11 to 15 years, and 9.03% (N=79) had worked 16 to 20 years.

Findings

As shown in Figure 1, the mean score for CIMC, CLTC and CLEI were 4.92, 4.86 and 4.97 respectively. Based on the raw scores and the level displayed in Table 2, this revealed that the head teachers of NCPS achieved the level of *Quite Good* in CIMC, CLTC and CLEI as the mean scores fell within 4.01 to 5.00. In comparison between CLTC and CLEI, the head teachers of NCPS achieved a higher mean score in CLEI (M=4.97) than in CLTC (M=4.86); a difference of 0.11 was observed and importantly the difference was significant, t=271.273, df=874, p<.05 (Table 3).

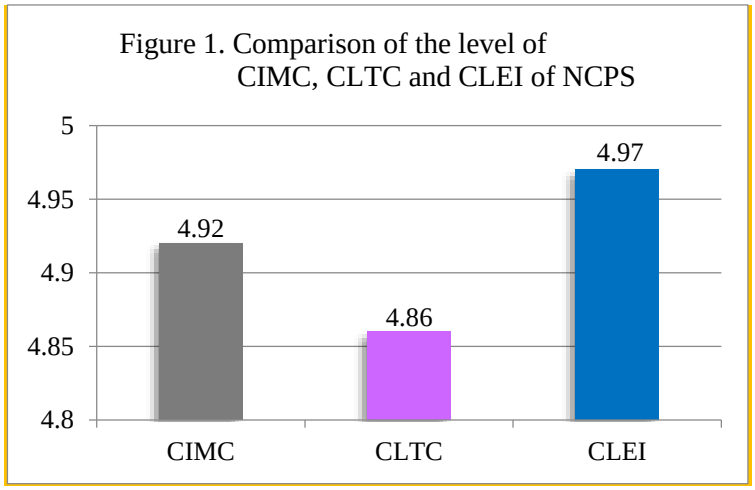


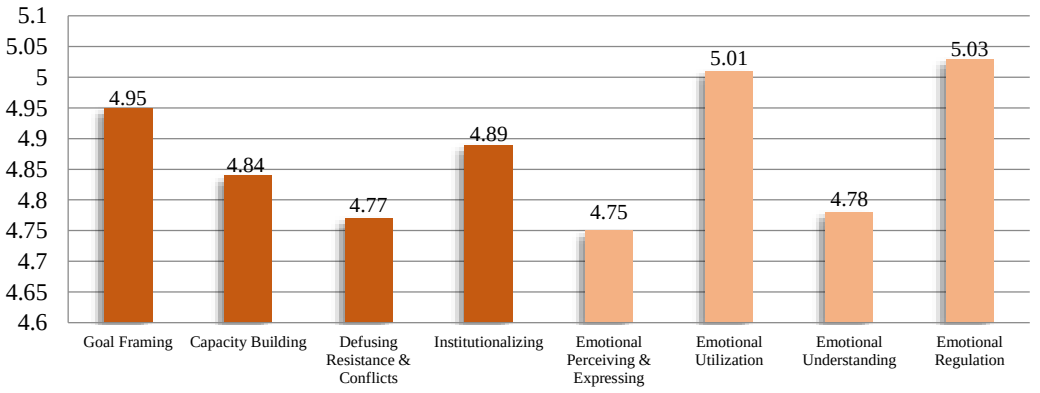
Table 3. One sample t- test for CLTC and CLEI of NCPS

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
CLTC	271.273	874	.000	4.86343	4.8282	4.8986
CLEI	244.150	874	.000	4.89008	4.8508	4.9294

In terms of sub-dimensions, as shown in Figure 2, the head teachers of NCPS achieved the level of *Quite Good* across all the four sub-dimensions of CLTC as the mean scores ranged from 4.77 to 4.95. For CLEI, the head teachers of NCPS achieved the level of *Good* in *Emotional Regulation* (M=5.03) and *Emotional Utilization* (M=5.01) and *Quite Good* in *Emotional Understanding* (M=4.78) and *Emotional Perceiving and Expressing* (M=4.75).

In summary, a) the head teachers of NCPS were rated as *Quite Good* in CIMC, CLTC and CLEI; b) the head teachers of NCPS achieved a higher mean score in CLEI than in CLTC and there was a significant difference between these two competencies; c) in terms of sub-dimensions, the head teachers of NCPS achieved the level of *Quite Good* across all the four sub-dimensions of CLTC; and *Good* in *Emotional Regulation* and *Emotional Utilization,* and *Quite Good* in *Emotional Understanding* and *Emotional Perceiving and Expressing* of CLEI.

Figure 2. Mean scores of the sub-dimensions of CLTC and CLEI of NCPS



Discussion

Few important observations were obtained from the above findings. Firstly, as a whole, the head teachers of NCPS achieved the level of *Quite Good* in CIMC that includes the CLTC and CLEI. With the raw scores and the level of CIMC suggested in the study, this revealed that the head teachers of NCPS had demonstrated CIMC in terms of CLTC and CLEI, 'quite often' with 'quite satisfied' performance. This implied that the level of practising change leadership competency of the head teachers of NCPS in the state of Perak, Malaysia is yet to be enhanced. Since only those head teachers equipped with concerned CIMC are able to drive and transform the schools effectively, it is essential for the head teachers of NCPS to 'often' practise CIMC, CLTC and CLEI with 'satisfied' performance instead of 'quite often' in terms of frequency with 'quite satisfied' performance.

Indeed, to ensure school leaders are able to manage school change effectively, change management has been introduced as an important component for school leaders' professional development courses in Malaysia. For instance, change management has become one of the important modules for the National Professional Qualification for Educational Leaders (NPQEL) program, the mandatory preparatory training programme for all new school principals and head teachers in Malaysia (Institut Aminuddin Baki, 2015; 2016; 2017). It is also part of the important content for the Programme Residency and Immersion or PRIme, another leadership development program for those soon-to-be appointed school principals and head teachers (Institut Aminuddin Baki, 2015; 2016; 2017). Moreover, change management is also an important tenet for the School Transformation Programme 2025 that was launched in 2015 by MOE with the aim for school improvement and effectiveness (Ministry of Education, 2017).

However, whether the above professional development programs are effective to enhance the school leaders' competency to lead change would depend on several related factors. For example, in terms of content, the professional development and CPD programs should be able to help school leaders address affective, cognitive, behavioral and motivational aspects in schools as real change can only occur while all of the mentioned aspects are addressed effectively (Hoestra, Beijaard, Brekelmans & Korthagen, 2009; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Another factor could be the disconnection between theory and practice. It is important to ensure that there is a more applied and experiential form of learning that is job-embedded, where school leaders can connect theory, practice and student outcomes for continuous school improvement (Goldring,

Preston & Huff, 2010; Nicolaidou and Petridou, 2011); instead of acquiring more knowledge, the programs' emphasis could be more about making sense of the current knowledge, hence developing reflective skills as a way of exploring and reforming practice (Dempster, Lovett & Fluckiger, 2011; Huber, 2008).

In terms of learning impact, the different pathways of professional development with multi-phase designs and modularization of the programs should be applied in achieving the purpose; instead of a single approach, the effectiveness of the professional development and CPD programs can be realized through a balanced and comprehensive approach (Michaelidou & Pashiardis 2009; Petridou, Nocolaidou & Karagiorgi, 2017). In fact, the various programs offered to school leaders should be customized as they vary in their needs at different school contexts and school developmental stages, as well as at different points in their careers (Tai & Omar, 2018a). This is particularly true of professional development programmes that apply a one-size-fits-all approach (Joyce & Calhoun, 2010).

Secondly, although the head teachers of NCPS were rated as *Quite Good* in CLTC and CLEI, they achieved a higher mean score in CLEI than in CLTC and the difference was significant. This implied that the head teachers of NCPS were able to apply CLEI in the process of managing school change more effectively than in CLTC. CLEI is a set of abilities involved in reasoning about emotions, and using emotions to inform cognitive activities such as reasoning and problem solving (Omar & Tai, 2018b). Schools are basically organizations interlocked with wide social, cultural, economical and political power relationships; thus emotions are constantly at play. Intense emotional reactions and job stress are often the results when head teachers try to cope with emotional dissonance arising from a constant changing environment. To maintain an emotional equilibrium and to address the emotional well-being of the staff and students, emotional competency is a central concern of school leadership development; cognition alone would not be sufficient to help head teachers handle complicated problems in today's complicated education arena. This is the interpersonal and adaptive competence with which the head teachers conduct themselves within the working environment that makes human work more efficient.

Thirdly, a close examination of the sub-dimensions of CLTC revealed that the head teachers of NCPS were rated as *Quite Good* in *Goal Framing*, *Capacity Building*, *Defusing Resistance and Conflict* as well as *Institutionalizing*. The head teachers were rated as *Quite Good* in *Goal Framing*; this implied that they 'quite often' practise *Goal Framing* with 'quite satisfied' performance i.e. they were quite able to develop achievable change goals for the school; to present the reasons why they wanted to have change; and to have a clear direction of how to achieve the change goals effectively. However, we need to bear in mind that the likelihood of the head teachers of NCPS in engaging teachers to the change would be relatively high only if they 'often' practise *Goal Framing*; this competency enables head teachers to gain insights into mapping the school system dynamics that are relevant to the change and where the leverage points are for producing that change.

The head teachers were rated as *Quite Good* in *Capacity Building*; this implied that they only had demonstrated the competency of *Capacity Building* 'quite often' with 'quite satisfied' performance. *Capacity Building* focuses on how the head teachers develop the capacity of the staff to face the challenges of the change, enhance their efficacy to work through the change

process and ensuring that their performance meet the required quality of the change (Tai & Omar, 2018a). These include the head teachers taking the initiatives "quite often" to develop the competence of the staff in teaching and learning; providing the staff with training in coaching; and enabling the staff to perform the new task with 'quite good' performance (Tai & Omar, 2018a). Any deficiency in staff capacity would slow down the change. Hence the head teachers of NCPS need to further enhance their competency in *Capacity Building* so as to enhance the school's readiness and capacity to succeed in the change. All these initiatives ultimately will enhance teacher efficacy that can make the change successful.

The head teachers also achieved the level of *Quite Good* in *Defusing Resistance and Conflict*. This implied that they 'quite often' practiced the above behaviors with 'quite satisfied' performance in managing school change. In other words, they were quite often able to anticipate the resistant behaviors of the staff that threaten the change initiatives; to make individuals who refuse to accept the change feel at ease and confident; and to defuse change conflicts by obtaining consensus from each party (Tai & Omar, 2018a) with quite good performance. Indeed, resistance to change is the main reason why organizational change efforts were difficult to be obtained (Deloitte & Touche, 1996). As the head teachers of NCPS are still at the level of *Quite Good* for this competency, they need to improve it urgently as it is crucial to turn change goals into reality. If the head teachers of NCPS fail to do so, it will generate negative emotions among the staff such as anger, resentment, frustration, anxiety, stresses or fear that Lines (2005), Martin, Jones, & Callan (2006), Oreg (2006) and Piderit (2000) concluded in their studies respectively.

The head teachers were rated as *Quite Good* in *Institutionalizing*, which implied that they 'quite often' practised and had given emphasis to the importance of sustaining the outcomes of the change with 'quite satisfied' performance. To this end, they were quite able to analyse whether the change was implemented according to plan and whether the implemented change was having the intended impact~~s~~; opportunities were being created quite often for departments in sharing best practices and that the new ways of working and the resulting achievements became the norms for the whole school; they are quite able to ensure that teachers continually contributed to the changes made, such as developing a mechanism to align or refine the new state continually (Tai & Omar, 2018a). However, Lewin (1958), Kotter (1990), Nilakant and Ramanarayan (2006) as well as Hayes (2010) stressed the importance of sustaining the achievements of the change, as otherwise the benefits would be lost if the organization slips back into the old ways of working. Therefore, it is essential for the head teachers of NCPS to further enhance their competence of *Institutionalizing* by 'often' practising it with 'satisfied' performance instead of 'quite often' in terms of frequency with 'quite satisfied' performance, so that the organization would be able to sustain the change.

Fourthly, a close examination in terms of the sub-dimensions of CLEI revealed that the head teachers of NCPS were rated as *Good* in *Emotional Regulation* and *Emotional Utilization* whereas *Quite Good* in *Emotional Understanding* and *Emotional Perceiving and Expressing.* The head teachers of NCPSs were rated as *Good* in *Emotional Regulation*, which implied that they had 'often' displayed *Emotional Regulation* with 'satisfied' performance. Most probably they were always able to reflectively monitor and manage the positive as well as the negative emotions of self and others. In addition, they always knew how to respond effectively to an emotional

experience in both self and others by employing effective alternative behaviors to produce the intended outcomes in the change process. As school change is inherently emotional and produces a range of feelings and emotions in individuals, the head teachers of NCPS need to use a variety of emotional regulation strategies and apply it to different situations effectively as the enhancement of the head teacher-teacher relationship contributes to workplace outcomes and organizational productivity.

The head teachers of NCPS were also rated as *Good* in *Emotional Utilization*. This implied that they had 'often' displayed *Emotional Utilization* with 'satisfied' performance in managing school change. This indicated that they were always able to use emotion in directing and focusing their attention on pressing concerns and situations; in adopting a better emotional state in choosing among alternatives and solving problems; to use emotion in facilitating cognitive processes; and to use shifts in emotions to promote flexibility. In short, the head teachers of NCPS were always able to use *Emotional Utilization* to cope with disagreement, and defuse resistance or conflicts in the change process. The head teachers are increasingly working within roles that are politically sensitive, conflicted and complex; they need the ability to use emotions to facilitate thought and to guide their actions so that they can engage the change authentically, both emotionally and intellectually.

On the other hand, it was found that the head teachers of NCPS were perceived as *Quite Good* in *Emotional Understanding*. In other words, they had 'quite often' displayed *Emotional Understanding* with 'quite 'satisfied performance. This indicated that they were quite often able to understand how emotions evolved and changed over time; the determinants of emotions; the complex feelings; the relationships among various emotions; and transitions among emotions (Omar & Tai, 2018). The understanding of emotions of the staff has the potential to facilitate effective school leadership in multiple ways that helps head teachers in the nurture and building up of a conducive emotional climate. Also, learning to be a leader requires developing a self-awareness of one's vulnerabilities and how one's own emotion and behavior might affect the emotional experience of others (Harris, 2007). As the head teachers of NCPS are still at the level of *Quite Good* for this component, it is essential for them to further enhance this competency adequately; this inner strength can enable the head teachers of NCPS to foster emotional awareness and literacy effectively in schools in the face of change.

The head teachers of NCPS were also rated as *Quite Good* in *Emotional Perceiving and Expressing*. This indicated that they were 'quite often' able to identify and differentiate emotions accurately in their staff members through appearance, expression or behavior; to accurately express his or her feelings accurately and according to the needs of the staff when weathering the change with 'quite satisfied' performance. Both the above abilities 'quite often' enabled the head teachers of NCPS to facilitate the understanding of their staff and helped them address emotional issues to the staff accurately in the right time and place. *Emotional Perceiving and Expressing* is important, as it is the most fundamental aspect of non-technical competency in managing change that provides emotional information important to enhancing trust in any organization. As such, it is essential for the head teachers of NCPS to further enhance their ability in *Emotional Perceiving and Expressing* so that they are able to avoid stereotyping that may lead to performance deficits in any school change initiative.

Limitations and Future Direction of the Study

There were few limitations in the current study. The study was limited by the approach of the research. As school change is a complex subject and is context-specific, instead of just conducting a survey study, future research that allows for a longitudinal design to collect sufficient data within a longer time span may be able to address this limitation. Besides, the data of the current study was collected based on the NCPS in the state of Perak. It would be meaningful if similar research could be done across different samples from different states of NCPS. This certainly will advance our understanding of the phenomena greatly. In addition, the assumption made in the present study regarding the relationships between the contributory factors and the level of *Quite Good* in CIMC, CLTC and CLEI achieved by the head teachers of NCPS, which includes the effectiveness and relevancy of the training programs offered to the head teachers, has to be examined further by using specific instruments. Any future study to obtain such data would allow us to gain a more in-depth perspective of the phenomenon.

Conclusion

Head teachers are pivotal in securing school change; school change can only be successfully implemented if the head teachers involve themselves in rational and cognitive activities as well as emotional engagement. As it was found that the head teachers of NCPS only achieved the level of *Quite Good* in CIMC that includes the CLTC and CLEI, this implied that there is room for improvement to enhance their competence to meet the requirements as change agents to initiate school reforms effectively. Importantly, concerted efforts need to be taken to identify the root cause of why the head teachers of NCPS were still at the level of *Quite Good* in CIMC, CLTC and CLEI. The effectiveness and the relevancy of the professional development programs provided for the head teachers of NCPS might be the focus of the efforts besides giving consideration to the unique culture of the NCPS. The study provides basic insights into the emerging patterns of CIMC of head teachers in NCPS. It provides useful feedback in designing change management training programs based on the distinct needs of head teachers of NCPS. Specifically, the study offers the Ministry of Education, local practitioners and relevant parties another dimension of enhancing and enlarging head teachers' capacity for change. Additionally, the study contributes to the field of educational change management particularly in advancing a more comprehensive analysis in exploring change leadership competency towards continuous school improvement and effectiveness.

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