Effective School Leadership as Change Manager in Malaysia.

Nur Shakirin Sabri[1*], Solehah Kamaruzaman[2], Norzabidi bin Abu Bakar[3]
*[1,2,3](Faculty of Management and Information Technology, Master of Management Candidate,
University Sultan Azlan Shah, Perak, Malaysia.)*
Corresponding Author: Nur Shakirin Sabri

ABSTRACT: *Malaysia education system has went through many changes over the years. In order to prepare our students to be competent to the outside world and to develop skill needed to face the 21st century, we have seen drastic improvement to the quality of education in Malaysia since the latest The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025. All educators played important roles in implementing the changes, but the burden is even greater for school leaders. School leaders have been put under the microscope to demonstrate their contribution in improving school's achievement and students' performance. The discussion in this paper is on how the school leaders should react to change and executing the effective leadership as change manager in order to navigate all implementers through changes towards deemed success and organizational objectives.*
KEY WORD: *Effective Leadership, Change, Change Manager, Education*

I. INTRODUCTION

Malaysia education system has always experienced transformation and improvements to suit its times and to meet the demands of the nation's needs in this globalization era. These changes require a lot of commitment and change of way of thinking as well as the ways of working of its stakeholders such as teachers, students, school leaders, other school partners, parents, members of community etc. School leaders have been put under the microscope to demonstrate their contribution in improving school's achievement and students' performance. Hence, today's educational system requires an effective leader as a change manager in achieving the goals and the vision of the nation.

We have seen the education transformation which is a continuation from Razak Report (1956), Education Act 1961 and Education Act 1996, Master Development Plan (2006-2010) and the latest The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 which verifies the critical mission of education in shaping Malaysia into a knowledge-based economy, proficient to take part in the increasingly globalised economy. According to Ministry of Education Malaysia (2013), students who are shaped from this education transformation will have knowledge, thinking skills, leadership skills, bilingual skills, spiritual ethics and possess national identity in line with the National Education Philosophy which dictates: "Education in Malaysia is a continuous effort towards developing individual's potential in comprehensive and integrated way to create a balanced and harmonious human being in terms of intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical. Such efforts are to generate Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable, honourable, competent and have ability to achieve personal well-being. They can also contribute towards the harmonious and prosperity of family, society and country".

II. EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

School leaders play an important responsibility in guiding schools through the process of changes by excellent management. The classic management functions are planning, leading, organizing and controlling. Effective leaders comprehend how important that planning, leading, organizing and controlling are playing roles to steer through changes towards organizational success and know that these activities are highly integrated in the day-to-day management activities. Through planning, effective leaders provide clear directions for the organization i.e. school leader setting visions and missions of the school, formulating strategies to increase students' success, establishing objectives and targets in order to set course of actions to drive towards improving school achievements.

By organizing effectively, school leaders should able to identify different roles and assign task to the right subordinate, this way effective leaders can maximized the utilization and building the strength of subordinates in order to ensure the accomplishment of organization objectives. However, despite job specialization, effective leaders may encourage job enrichment, empowerment and establish teamwork that encourage conducive working environment.

Leading is about connecting with subordinates by communicating interpersonally, motivating to work towards achieving goals, inspiring and encouraging subordinates to boost productivity. Effective leaders should

have better understanding of each of their subordinates in order to have information that facilitate in shaping behaviour and energizing subordinates to exerting effort, increase productivity and strive to accomplish goals.

Controlling is about taking measures, comparing, finding aberration and correcting the organizational activities that deviate from organization's objectives. There are three steps in controlling that has been in practiced by Malaysia school leaders in order to make sure students' achievement, (1) set up performance standards by noting students' exam marks in terms of take of value (TOV), operational targeted increment (OTI) and expected target results (ETR), (2) comparing actual results against OTI and ETR, and (3) correcting activities when the OTI is deviate to ensure ETR is achieved. Effective controlling is closely connected with objectives and standards provided in planning. Effective leaders should be able to communicate the check and balance efficiently together with subordinates.

III. CHANGE MANAGER

As changes are inevitable, it's principals and school leaders jobs' to inspire and to support changes so that the school can act upon to the changes in order to make sure the best end results for all its students, fortify the professional practice teachers and other personnel, revamp the school and working environment, and boost the school culture for all stakeholders. Principals and school leaders as change manager must understand the dynamics of changes whether it is externally imposed or internally driven which effective change manager customize their leadership strategies and implement plan strategically.

Effective change manager should bring together the whole stakeholders, including the larger community i.e. parents and community entities, to be part of owning the initiative to challenge of changes, engage in the planning and design the executing strategies to adjust, adapt or seeking solutions to crisis. Building a shared understanding through effective communication with the stakeholders is a crucial role of school leaders in order to justify transformational changes, which consist of honest discussion by identifying the issues, threats or opportunities, and then gave convincing reasons to create a sense of urgency. To accomplish these, effective school leaders as change manager should connect with stakeholders by building strong coalitions of team with clear roles defined that commit to one another, understand and willing to carry out their roles and responsibilities working together in achieving the organizational goals. A strong team with shared vision helps to ensure that all stakeholders are focused on the same goals and effective change manager should continually monitor, control and adjust. This is because effective visions should be focused but flexible (Kotter, 2006).

Change also affects the psychological and emotional process that involves perceptions of stakeholder towards change and how the stakeholders respond to the change. These can be broken down into four psychological related cycles; (1) denial, (2) resistance, (3) exploration, and (4) commitment. Effective school leaders can support and plan to address these occurrences through these suggestions:

Table 1: Suggestion Response of Effective School Leaders at Each Change Cycle Stage

Change Cycle Stage	Suggestion responses of effective school leaders:
(1) Denial	Listen, response with rationale and provide support to any subordinates' doubt and fear so that those impacted feel contented and have a sense of control.
(2) Resistance	Honest discussion, empathetic leadership, and keep on communicating the vision and mission of the school effectively. School leaders should remain engaged with the team to steer and stay focus to achieve the target. Share success; recognize educator's hard works and commemorate short-term victories may positively motivate and keep the momentum going towards larger goals.
(3) Exploration	Identify successful practices, making adjustments and spreading best practices. School leaders should provide space for stakeholders the opportunity to offer input and make suggestions for successful practices, provide training so that the implementers of change comprehend the change and have the expertise for successful implementation, and provide support or continuous coaching that helps sustain adaptation of new practices being effectively employed and all team members are on track to the desired outcome.
(4) Commitment	Integrate change into the school culture, consolidate change and maintain momentum towards greater success. A positive school culture that contains elements such as collegiality, trust, and support can smooth the progress of embracing change.

IV. CONCLUSION

It is important to note that change is a process that is non-linear and messy. School leaders must have leadership capabilities that respond to change positively and drive the teams towards the desired changes, developing improved school culture and promoting continuous improvement for greater success and students' achievement. Throughout the transformation process, school leaders should maintain focus and resilience in implementing changes. Thus, we can conclude that effective leadership can helps to smooth the transition of any transformational change that always happening in the education world.

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