

# Transformational Leadership of Headmasters and Professional Learning Communities in Primary Schools, Manjung, Perak

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The purpose of this study is to investigate the Transformational Leadership of headmasters and Professional Learning Communities in primary schools, Manjung District, Perak. Transformational Leadership (TL) and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are essential elements to achieve Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2015. TL of a headmaster is critical in implementing PLCs in primary schools. This study design is a quantitative method to investigate the correlation between TL of headmasters and PLCs in primary schools, Manjung, Perak. The data collected was through a questionnaire. A total sampling, N=351 was selected through random sampling. Data obtained was analysed with SPSS version 21. The study's result show that there is a significant relationship between the TL of the headmasters and the PLCs ( $r = .76$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). These findings demonstrate TL is important in promoting PLCs in schools. Overall, the results of this study can provide (i) valuable information to headmasters in implementing PLCs in schools, (ii) guidelines to the District Education Office Manjung in promoting the PLCs in schools, and also (iii) the important data to Ministry of Education for creating effective schools in Malaysia.

**Key words:** *Transformational Leadership, Professional Learning Communities.*

## Introduction

Education is the backbone of a Malaysia's development (PPPM 2013-2025). The development of a country directly depends on the success of education in a country (Lokey & Dali, 2016). Therefore for the sake of progress and potential in Malaysia and to address the challenges of globalisation that is growing rapidly, the Ministry of Education must ensure that the education system in the country in the 21st century must be work efficient and coordinated by the latest developments in the world of teaching (PPPM 2013-2015). To face the globalisation challenge, the Ministry of Education must develop a plan to develop a world-class education so that Malaysian citizens are well prepared.

To face the globalisation challenge and develop world-class education, the Ministry of Education has developed a new National Education Blueprint that is the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Blueprint, 2015). From the Blueprint 2013-2025, there are 11 shifts to deliver a step change in outcomes envisioned by all Malaysians. The 5th shift in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 is to ensure high-performing school leaders in every school (Blueprint, 2015). The aim for the 5th shift in Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013 -2025 is to produce a high calibre of headmasters in school organisations. To achieve the 5th shift in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, Transformational Leadership is needed (Blueprint, 2015), whereby leaders in each and every school can achieve high-performing standards in their schools. The 5th shift in educational transformation system seeks accountability and greater support through the New Principal Career and thus encourages better work from students (Rabindarang, Bing, & Yin, 2015). Great leadership of a headmaster can encourage outcomes from students in school. Hence the 5th shift in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 that enhances the leadership of headmasters, can also encourage positive outcomes from students.

Besides that, the 4th shift in Malaysia Blueprint 2015 is to transform teaching into a profession of choice (Blueprint, 2015). To achieve the 4th shift in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, Professional Learning Communities are needed. This statement supports DuFour, Eaker, and Many (2006), where Professional Learning Communities believe that teachers are committed and work collaboratively and continuously, thus transform teaching into a profession. This statement is supported by Zuraidah Abdullah and Muhammad Faizal A.Ghani (2014); Professional Learning Communities able to create a learning culture in a school organisation able to enhance the professionalism of teachers. Therefore, the Ministry of Education has developed a variety of programs such as iThink, VLE Frog and ICT teaching to transform teaching into a profession of choice.

According to Wahab, Fuad, Ismail, and Majid (2014), transformational leadership can improve subordinates in the organisation through organisation processes that are exciting



changes and give empowerment to achieve greater heights and organisation processes. Furthermore, results of a research show that transformational leadership of a leader has an effect on the quality of a program, and certain transformational outcomes are more efficient (Hirtz, Murray, & Riordan, 2007). This statement, supported by Ling and Ibrahim (2013) asserted that a headmaster must ensure that PLCs must run effectively and efficiently in schools.

In conclusion, education is the backbone of a country's development (PPPM 2013-2025). The development of Malaysia depends directly on the success of its education and the implementation of its objectives and programs. For success, the education program, Ministry of Education has developed a new National Education Blueprint that is the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Blueprint, 2015). From the Blueprint 2013-2025, there are 11 shifts to deliver a step change in outcomes envisioned by all Malaysians. From the Education Blueprint 2013-2025, the aim for the 5th shift in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 is to produce a high calibre of headmasters in school organisations, while the 4th shift is to transform teaching into a profession of choice. To achieve the shift, TL and PLCs are needed.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

The Malaysian education system has developed rapidly, and the various transformations have been introduced to meet the challenges and face the globalisation challenge today. The reforms and transformations made lead to the formation of school effectiveness (Cheng, 2005). Therefore, the effectiveness of schools is an issue that is frequently discussed by researchers (Edmonds, 1979; Scheerens, 1990). Hence, the Minister of Malaysia has come out with several of education policies and development plans in order to form school effectiveness.

Malaysia has adopted a centralised administrative system for education. The Ministry of Education set educational policy and development plans. Every school across the country is required to implement all policies and development plans that have been set (Mahmud, Jalil, Rahman, & Murad, 2014). Therefore, success or failure of educational policy and development plans directly depends on the effectiveness of the headmasters in schools. In the 5th shift in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, transformational leadership is needed (Blueprint, 2015) to enable headmasters in each and every school to perform high standards in their schools.

The 5th shift in educational transformation system seeks accountability and greater support through the New Principal Career and thus encourages better outcomes from students (Blueprint, 2015). Therefore, the transformational leadership of headmaster is a need in the

5th shift in educational transformation system to enable headmasters in school to perform to high standards.

Based on the above discussion, TL is the necessary approach for schools to become a professional learning community, but how can a TL headmaster enable the success of PLCs in schools? Many scholars in the education field believe that the key to a successful program is leadership. However the effects of specific leadership on quality performance have not yet been determined (Hirtz et al., 2007; Kurland, Peretz, & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2010). Furthermore, there is little research done regarding the correlation between TL headmaster and PLCs in public primary schools. Also, PLCs has only recently been launched in public primary schools in Manjung District, Perak. Therefore, the success of PLCs is still unknown.

Therefore, researchers conclude that the purpose of this study is to investigate the correlation between TL of headmasters in implementing PLCs in primary schools in Manjung District, Perak.

### **Research Objective**

Based on the previous research done by other scholars, this study attempts to investigate the following objectives:

1. To determine the relationship between the TL of headmasters and the effectiveness of PLCs in primary schools, Manjung District.

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Transformational Leadership***

There are many leadership approaches in the education organisation, but one of the most well-known approaches was transformational leadership. In the 1980s, transformational leadership was one of the approaches that depressed a major focus of research and studies (Abdul Ghani Abdullah, Abd.Rahman Abd. Aziz, & Ahmad, 2008). Therefore, transformational leadership is an essential element in this study.

In the middle of 1980s, Bass (1985) provided a single version of transformational leadership which was more detailed and refined but fully consistent with earlier results, which was Bass (1978), House (1976) and Abdul Ghani Abdullah et al.,(2008). Transformational leadership referred leaders to perform superior leadership, i.e., leaders broaden and evaluate the interests of the subordinates, generate subordinates' awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the organisation, and also compel their subordinates to look beyond their self-

interest for the good of the organisation (Bass, 2006). As a result, the subordinate will achieve a higher level of self-interest in the organisation.

According to Gholamreza Jandaghi, Hassan Zareei Matin, and Farjami (2009), transformational leaders are referred to as the leaders who try to show the organisations new ways for improvement and progress by generating new ideas and perspectives. They also mobilise the organisation by motivating managers, employees and members of the organisations to make radical changes, transforming organisational pillars to achieve necessary readiness and capabilities to move in this new route as well as achieving higher levels of idealised performance.

In addition, Abdul Ghani Abdullah et al. (2008), said that transformational leadership refers to the process whereby an individual can relate and communicate with another person. Transformational leadership also refers to a method that combines the charismatic leadership and has distant views. Transformational leadership can be defined as leaders who encourage subordinates to do more than the organisation requires. They are proactive and help subordinates achieve unexpected goals. The leaders are models of integrity and fairness; they set clear goals, have high expectations of subordinates, provide support and recognition, care about the emotions and passions of subordinates, and get subordinates to explore their self-interest in order to reach for the improbable (Amir Sadeghi & Pihie, 2012). Amir Sadeghi and Pihie (2012) also stated that transformational leadership comprised four dimensions: (1) idealised influence (attribute and behaviour), (2) inspirational motivation, (3) intellectual stimulation, and (4) individualised consideration.

Furthermore, Shibru and Darshan (2011) defined transformational leadership as the relationship between leaders and subordinates with a sense of responsibility for the subordinates' development. They enhanced the relationship that arouses and maintain the trust between leaders and subordinates, build confidence and fulfil the desire of subordinates. The main goal of this leadership is to transform subordinates to build a relationship that transforms a dependent relationship into a collaborative relationship with each other. In the Shibru and Darshan (2011) research, there were four components in transformational leadership: (1) idealised influence (attribute and behaviour), (2) inspirational motivation, (3) intellectual stimulation, and (4) individualised consideration. To conclude, transformational leadership can be defined as a leadership approach that describes the communication and relationship between leaders and subordinates to encourage subordinates to do more than the organisation requires and help subordinates achieve unexpected goals, and the leaders are models of integrity and fairness. Leaders who set explicit goals, have high expectations of subordinates, provide support conditions, recognise the ability of subordinates, manage the emotions and passions of subordinates, and get subordinates to look beyond self-interest to achieve for the improbable. The components of transformational leadership were discussed in

above sections. Originally transformational leadership was believed to be comprised of three elements: (1) idealised influence, (2) intellectually stimulating, and (3) individually considerate. However, after research was conducted the 4I's formed. This review is based on the latest four components of transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Therefore, these four domains are used in this study.

### ***Professional Learning Communities***

Up until now, the literature review has not been made widely to discuss or analyse the concept of PLCs. This statement is supported by DuFour et al. (2006), in which the concept of PLCs has not been discussed or analysed wisely by scholars. Morrissey (2000) stated that the term PLCs characterises itself: a school that draws in a gathering of experts who meet up for learning inside a regular, self-made group. PLCs is more mind boggling, and more productive in a social setting, where the subordinates can cooperate, test their thoughts, and challenge their derivations and elucidations, and process new data with each other (Roberts, 2010). When one adapts alone, the individual is the sole wellspring of new information and thoughts (Sujirah Binti Ibrahim & Zuraidah Abdullah, 2011). At the point when new thoughts are handled in collaboration with others, many wellsprings of knowledge and ability extend and test the new ideas as a feature of the learning background. The expert learning group gives a setting that is wealthier and all the more invigorating.

Hord (1997) characterises PLCs in schools with five dimensions: (1) supportive and shared leadership, (2) shared values and vision, (3) collective learning and application of learning, (4) supportive conditions, and (5) shared personal practice. The dimensions are the same as researchers used in the study.

## **Methodology**

### ***Research Design***

The study was conducted in a non-experiment quantitative research method. According to Azizi et al. (2007), researchers do not have direct control of independent variables because non-experimental research is a systematic empirical investigation, and independent variables cannot manipulate. In fact, according to Chua (2013), the quantitative research method can be used to determine cause and effect and their relationship among the variables.

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between the independent variable (Transformational Leadership of Headmaster) and dependent variable (Professional Learning Communities) in the Manjung district. Hence, non-experimental quantitative research method is used in this research.

### ***Population and Sampling***

The sample selected by researchers was through random sampling. This sampling method is another way to formulate the number of units in the population, and has the same probability of becoming the number of units in a selected sample (Berger & Zhang, 2005). Random sampling is without replacement or random sampling is a research sampling that have distinct units which are selected from the N units in the population, so that the sample selected is equal to the population (Thompson, 2012). In addition, according to Montgomery and Runger (2010), the advantage of a random sample is that there is no requirement of advanced auxiliary information; each selection is independent of other selections, and every possible combination of sampling units has an equal and independent chance of being selected. Also, random sample procedures are easier than other probability sampling procedures, and it is easier than other probability sampling procedures in statistical procedures to analyse data.

Primary schools in Manjung District are divided into under enrolment schools (SKM) and normal daily schools (SJK(C), SJK(T), SK). For the purpose of selecting the sample for this study, the researchers randomly selected the samples (teachers) from normal daily schools and under-enrolment schools. The population of primary schools at Manjung is 4000 teachers. Based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the Table for Determining Sample Size from a Given Population, the sample chosen is 351 samples from primary schools at Manjung. The samples were selected randomly from the primary schools in Manjung District, Perak.

### ***Instrument***

The data collected in this study was through a questionnaire. There were two types of questionnaires used in collecting data on the TL of headmaster and PLCs in primary school in Manjung District, Perak. The questionnaires were the Transformational Leadership Questionnaire (TLQ) and the Professional Learning Communities Questionnaire (PLCQ).

The TLQ items were adapted and adopted based on the Habib Ismail and Zaimah Ramli (2012) previous study that used to measure the level of TL of a headmaster in primary school. While items in PLCQ were used to measure the Professional Learning Community (PLCs) in the Secondary Schools Community in Malaysia which was developed by Zuraidah Abdullah and Muhammad Faizal A.Ghani (2014). Hence, both of these questionnaires were suitable for this study.

The Item questionnaire was modified from the instrument TL built by Habib Ismail and Zaimah Ramli (2012) according to the study. This instrument was chosen because it was designed specifically to measure the effectiveness of TL which is one of the main focuses of this study. Researchers chose a psychometric instrument because the content is good and the

instrument focused on TL dimensional. Researchers have selected four dimensions of TL: (1) idealised influence, (2) inspirational motivation, (3) intellectual stimulation, and (4) individualised consideration that were appropriate dimensions of this study.

In addition, the item questionnaire was modified from the instrument PLCs built by Zuraidah Abdullah and Muhammad Faizal A.Ghani (2014) according to the study. Researchers have selected five dimensions of PLCs: (1) supportive and shared leadership, (2) shared values and vision, (3) collective learning and application of learning, (4) supportive conditions, and (5) shared personal practice. These were appropriate dimensions of this study.

The questionnaire consisted of 69 items that had been presented to respondents to complete. The questionnaire consisted of four sections which were Section A, Section B, Section C, and Section D. Section A was about school information, where Section B was about demographic variables.

Section C consisted of items about TL while Section D consisted of items about PLCs. Section C measured the dimensions of the TL of headmasters where it covered: (1) idealised influence (5 items), (2) inspirational motivation (5 items), (3) intellectual stimulation (items), and (4) individualised consideration (5 items). Meanwhile, Section D has 49 items related to PLCs where it covered: (1) supportive and shared leadership (11 items), (2) shared values and vision (10 items), (3) collective learning and application of learning (9 items), (4) supportive conditions (9 items), and (5) shared personal practice (10 items). Table 1 below refers to the distribution of the questionnaire items.

**Table 1:** Distribution of questionnaire items

<b>Distribution of questionnaire items</b>			
<b>Section</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Number of items</b>	<b>Total of items</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>School Information</b>	A1, A2, A3	3
<b>B</b>	<b>Demographic respondents</b>	B1,B2,B3,B4,B5,B6,B7,B8	8
<b>C</b>	<b>TL</b>		
	(i) idealised influence	II1,II2,II3,II4,II5	5
	(ii) inspirational motivation	IM1,IM2,IM3,IM4,IM5	5
	(iii) intellectual stimulation	IS1,IS2,IS3,IS4,IS5	5
	(iv) individualised consideration	IC1,IC2,IC3,IC4,IC5	5
<b>D</b>	<b>PLCs</b>		
	(i) shared values and vision	SVV1,SVV2,SVV3,SVV4,SVV5,SVV6,SVV7,SVV8,SVV9,SVV10,	10
	(ii) supportive and shared leadership	SSL1,SSL2,SSL3,SSL4,SSL5,SSL6,SSL7,SSL8,SSL9,SSL10,SSL11	11
	(iii) collective learning and application of learning	CLAL1,CLAL2,CLAL3,CLAL4,CLAL5,CLAL6,CLAL7,CLAL8,CLAL9	9
	(iv) shared personal practice	SPP1,SPP2,SPP3,SP4,SPP5,SPP6,SPP7,SPP8,SPP9,SPP10	10
	(v) supportive conditions	SC1,SC2,SC3,SC4,SC5,SC6,SC7,SC8,SC9	9
		<b>Total</b>	80

For every item in the questionnaire, the respondents answered the question by rating on the 5 Points Likert Scale which shown in Table 2.

**Table 2:** 5 Points Likert Scale Scoring

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>(SD)</b>	<b>(D)</b>	<b>(N)</b>	<b>(A)</b>	<b>(SA)</b>
1	2	3	4	5

The 5 Point Likert Scale was chosen rather than 4 Points Scale. Although some researchers argue that most respondents chose the midpoint in 5 Points Likert Scale, however, the scale with midpoints is suitable for education as the midpoints will not affect the reliability and validity, but also not forcing respondents to choose a direction (Tsang, 2012).

### ***Analysis Methods***

The inferential statistical analysis was used to infer the results obtained from the sample. The inference to be utilised in this study was the Pearson-r test. According to Chua (2013), the Pearson-r test is used to identify the dependent and independent variable in the relationship.

### **Data Analysis and Research Findings**

The Pearson correlation coefficient test was conducted by researchers to examine the relationship between Transformational Leadership of the headmaster and the Professional Learning Communities in primary schools, Manjung District, Perak.

**Table 3:** Pearson correlation coefficient between TL and PLCs

	TL			PLCs		
N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	r	p
351	3.52	.55	3.66	.63	.76	<.001

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The test had carried out at alpha value,  $\alpha = .05$ . The null hypothesis states that the correlation between the two variables is 0. From Table 3, the results showed that there is a significant relationship between Transformational Leadership of headmasters and Professional Learning Communities in primary schools, Manjung District, Perak.,  $r(349) = .76$ ,  $p < .05$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no relationship between Transformational Leadership of headmasters and Professional Learning Communities in primary schools, Manjung District, Perak is rejected at the significance level of .05. Thus, the data provide sufficient evidence to conclude that there is a significant relationship between Transformational Leadership of headmasters and Professional Learning Communities in primary schools, Manjung District, Perak.

For this research sample (N=351), the Pearson Correlation strength between TL (M = 3.52, SD = .55) and PLCs (M = 3.66, SD = .63) is strong,  $r = .76$ ,  $p < .05$ .

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

#### ***Discussion***

First of all, the relationship between TL of headmasters and PLCs in primary schools, Manjung District will be answered based on inferential analysis that has been done. Hence, the data provided sufficient evidence to conclude that there is a significant relationship between Transformational Leadership of the headmaster and Professional Learning

Communities in primary schools, Manjung District, Perak  $r(349) = .76, p < .05$ . For this research sample ( $N=351$ ), the Pearson Correlation strength between TL ( $M = 3.52, SD = .55$ ) and PLC ( $M = 3.66, SD = .63$ ) is strong,  $r = .76, p < .05$ .

Until now there is no research about the relationship between TL and PLCs. However, some research shows that leadership is a correlation with PLCs. According to Yaakob and Yunus (2010), school leadership is essential to the success of PLCs and starting with school leaders, the PLCs are structured to be implemented. Also, according to Ghani and M Crow (2013), if a school wishes to create PLCs among teachers, headmasters should play a role efficiently and more. Therefore, the statement indirectly proved that the TL of headmasters is a correlation with the success implementation of the PLCs. Furthermore, the headmaster plays important functions in the successful implementation of a program, and TL is needed (Persson, Andersson, & Nilsson Lindström, 2005). Therefore, TL of headmasters is necessary for PLCs implementation in primary schools. Moreover, a Sahgal and Pathak (2007) study shows that TL enable leaders to accomplish professional growth and success of an organisation.

Although there is no research about the relationship between TL and PLCs, indirectly previous researches are in line with this study that there is a significant relationship between Transformational Leadership of a headmaster and Professional Learning Communities. As a conclusion, TL of headmasters is a correlation with PLCs implement in primary schools, Manjung District, Perak.

### ***Implication***

In this study, researchers proposed to understand the level of TL of headmasters; the level of implementation of PLCs; and the relationship between TL of headmaster and PLCs in primary schools, Manjung District, Perak. The result obtained from this study: researchers hoped to provide additional information to administrators and other school leaders as they implement PLCs in schools. Also, the result obtained from this study can be used as a guideline for headmasters in carrying and success of the implementation of PLCs in schools, Manjung District.

Data collected in this study provides understanding into the application and sustainability of PLCs and will guide policy-makers as they develop and refine guidelines for developing PLCs in schools. Educators will get meaningful information, relevant about TL and PLCs in school improvement organisation and culture. Finally, by having explicit data, the headmasters will be better able to implement education reform efforts so that student achievement increases.



Also, the result obtained from this study can be used as a guideline for District Education Offices in carrying and the success of the implementation of PLCs in schools, Manjung District. With the data provided, the policymaker can use the raw data to create a new policy that can lead to the success of the education in Malaysia.

The design of this study using a quantitative method, has been successfully studying the phenomenon in the context of the actual study. The quantitative research applied in this study was to answer the research question and achieve the objectives, by using a questionnaire as an instrument to involve many participants of the study. The results obtained by this method will provide an overview of the TL of headmasters and PLCs in primary schools, Manjung District, Perak.

### ***Conclusion***

Educational leadership is now no longer as traditional leadership such as individual leaders or heros. The idea of leadership has been changing. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, educational leadership transformation from traditional task leadership shifted into group-centred leadership as a delegate to the school community.

This research is about TL of headmasters in implementing PLCs in primary schools, Manjung District, Perak. The problem statement is concerned with headmasters' leadership styles that have a significant influence and impact on the implication of PLCs in primary schools. Hence, one of the research aims of this study is about TL of headmasters in implementing PLCs in primary schools in the district of Manjung, Perak.

Our country and society need a quality education to keep up with the challenges of globalisation. School leaders, teachers, need to be changed. School leaders need to do something for the school's outcomes. Similarly, teachers carried out a variety of education policies and planning translated from the Blueprint 2013-2015 (Blueprint, 2015).

School leaders and educators should act on their initiative to implement these recommendations. Headmasters and teachers need to carry out education policy and planning. School leaders and educators must together make the proposal not as instructed, but voluntarily and on their own initiative. Thus, the TL of headmasters influences teachers to the success of PLCs and is needed to produce a healthy and collaborative culture in school and enhance students' outcomes.



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