Conceptualizing Creative Leadership and Collaborative School Culture
Zaidatol Akmaliah Lope Pihie¹, Suhaida Abdul Kadir² and Keetanjaly Arivayagan³

1, 2, 3Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, MALAYSIA.

ARTICLE INFO
Article history: 
Received: 4 May 2017; 
Received in revised form: 26 May 2017; 
Accepted: 6 June 2017;

Keywords
21st century leadership, 
Creative Leadership, 
Collaborative, 
School Culture.

ABSTRACT
Lately in educational organization, voluminous studies accentuate the momentous of leadership in mobilizing creativity. Creativity skill is seen as one of the important skills required for the 21st century leadership, which is also known as the tool for creative leader’s mind in engaging and stimulating ideas to execute outcomes. Hence, leaders should create an opportunity by involving every employee and stakeholders in schools to contribute their ideas towards developing creative solutions to enhance school productivity. The focal point of this article is to offer a conceptual framework on creative leadership practices among school leaders towards collaborative school culture. Intensive reviews of literature will be used in the fields of creative leadership and school culture with the aim to nurture leaders into better leaders and encourage collaborative school culture. The framework contributes a new shed on the implication of creative leadership practices and collaborative school culture. It also will contribute a new theory development and offered suggestions for follow up research.

© 2017 Elixir All rights reserved.

Introduction
The 2020 Vision policy plays an important phase in the Malaysia education system which focuses on sustained and productivity-driven growth through technologically literate, critically thinking work force and prepared mindset to participate fully towards the 21st century global economy (Malaysian Education Blueprint Annual Report 2013, 2014; The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, 2012). This paradigm shift requires school principal to perform a dual function of an administrative leader and pragmatic leader (Shahril, et al., 2010). In order to ensure the vision becomes a reality, principals required to be dynamic, creative, innovative, and possess a desire for change (Chan Yuen Fook, 2009). In conjunction with this, school culture plays an important role in this paradigm shift. Earlier researches were more focusing on "school culture", however, the twenty first century researches are much more attentive in constructing "collaborative school culture" at schools (Gumuseli, & Eryilmaz, 2011). This is because collaborative school culture comprises the value and features collaborative among the stakeholders and supports unity (Gumuseli, & Eryilmaz, 2011). Hence, this paper links the two concepts of: (a) Principal creative leadership practices and (b) Collaborative school culture.

21st Century Leadership
21st century leadership is defined as interaction process which involves a process to convey the visions with acquired situational knowledge and conjoint the leader, the environment and the followers with the aim to accomplish the visions (Lorz, n.d). Eventually, creative leadership leads people through a common practice or technique of finding and defining problems, resolving them, and implementing the new solutions (Stoll & Temperley, 2009) such as problem solving, in new and useful ways.

Research in leadership has become massive and substantial from the late 70’s till to this day (Petrie, 2014) especially in school leadership (Kee & Premavathy, 2010; Philip, 2009; Southworth, 2002).

Instructional leadership is seen as learning centered leadership with the aim of improving the learning strategies (Kee & Premavathy, 2010). Meanwhile, transformational leadership makes an attempt to reform the school to keep pace by serving the demand of the new millennium (Afshari, Ghavifekr, Parhizkar, & Ayouf, 2013; Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009). On the other hand, while changes are happening, researchers have introduced entrepreneurial leadership as an approach that encourages school leaders to be proactive, risk taker and innovative in venturing into new directions (Zaidatol, Soib, & Afsheh, 2014). The juxtaposition of these three leadership practices creates very interesting challenges and opportunities - accentuate on the instructional learning, engaging with reform and taking expansion opportunities in creating a prepossessing educational landscape. However, researchers have also encounter creativity as an important tool of a leader’s mind in directing changes towards an effective school in this challenging reform environment (Botha, 2013; Kuan Chen Tsai, 2012). Nevertheless, creative leadership is a well-rounded and a distilled mixture which consists of a set of overlapping of instructional leadership, transformational leadership and entrepreneurial leadership (Turnbull, 2012; Petrie, 2014; Sohmen, 2015; West-Burnham, 2008)

Hence creative leadership will be viewed as great importance in the Malaysian educational transform. There is a need to focus in depth on leadership as an important subset of the set of characteristics of collaborative school culture in Malaysia. Creative leadership is seen as an ability to solve problems and develop creative solutions to increase productivity, engage teachers and encourage growth (Botha, 2013). The leader must be a part and parcel of a school organization that has the capable of producing the conditions that enables students, teachers and communities work together to generate ideas. These ideas will help the organization to move forward towards the reform and schools are aware that
they need to adapt to rapidly changing times. This boundary can be reduced if the leader present as catalyst for changes through creativity which involves the process that leads to changes (Puccio, Murdock, & Mance, 2011; Thomson, 2011).

**Creative Leadership**

Puccio, Murdock & Mance (2011) defined creative leadership as a compute of level of leadership practices that produce extraordinary results through cognitive style of problem-solving and decision-making. This process necessitates a common language to help people communicate their thoughts efficiently. They must be able to quickly understand which stage of the creative process they are in at any given moment. They also must recognize that different people prefer various stages of this creative process. They must also become skilled in managing other people and teams in a fluid but orderly fashion through the creative process. Mastery of this process provides a blueprint they can use for providing innovation leadership that gets results (Delia, 2013). In short, leaders need a process formula to guide them and tools to make the formula work.

Basadur (2004) stated that one of the important ingredients of high performing individuals, teams and organization is creativity. Thus, to be creative means releasing talent and imagination. It also means the ability to take risks and seeking new ways of seeing, interpreting, understanding and questioning (Harris, 2009). Epstein, Kaminaka, Phan, & Uda (2013) opined creativity in leadership through four key traits that were derived from generativity theory which are capturing, challenging, broadening and surrounding in articulating the creative expression. This means removing structural and cultural barriers that actively prevent students, school teachers, parents and community from working together, learning from each other and equipping each other to be creative through interaction and dialogue (Stoll, 2008).

In this study, creative leadership means a leader with an influential role based on their enumerated characteristics to inspire creativity and innovation to subordinate at workplace. The concept of creativity in leaders will be explored using Generativity (Epstein, 1999). Dr Robert Epstein, an American psychologist is the novelist of Generativity Theory. Generativity theory is also known as the theory of creativity which provides a competency framework for the scientific study of understanding the creative process through generative thinking such as leaders encourage their followers to apply nontraditional thinking, to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate problems (Botha, 2013).

Epstein (1999) presented four main core skills and abilities that assist people in expressing creativity individually which are Capturing, Challenging, Broadening and Surrounding shown in Fig. 2. The first competency is the preservation of new ideas (capturing). Recalling and drafting down the fresh ideas which appears spontaneously. The second competency is to seek challenges (challenging). Individuals are exposed to challenging and tricky tasks that require them to think out of the box all the way through the trial and error renaissance of past behaviors will emerge, when current behavior is ineffective. “Thus, learning to manage failure – and not to fear failure – is an important means of boosting creativity (Epstein, 1999, p. 765). The third competency is to broaden skills and knowledge (broadening). Knowledge outside areas of expertise will escort to a more diverse repertoire of behaviors. The fourth and last core competency is changes in the physical and social environment (surrounding). “A static environment is deadly for generative processes” (Epstein, 1999, p. 765).

![Fig. 1. Generativity Theory (Epstein, 1999).](image)

Epstein, Kaminaka, Phan, & Uda (2013) saw creativity in leadership that has a time dimension and involves originality, adaptiveness and realization. They have categorized the dimensions into eight competencies as described in Table 1:

(i) Provide resources, (ii) Manage surroundings, (iii) Provide feedback and recognition, (iv) Models core competencies creativity expression, (v) Challenges subordinate, (vi) Encourage broadening, (vii) Encourage capturing and (viii) Manage teams that were derived from Generativity Theory which will be explained further in theoretical framework (Epstein, Kaminaka, Phan, & Uda, 2013).

The eight creativity competencies for school leaders and teachers derive from the core competencies (Epstein, Kaminaka, Phan, & Uda, 2013). Epstein and his research team had developed it into eight types of skills and abilities for teachers, school leaders and manager in an organization to boost their competencies in creativity as shown in Table 1. This theory refines the ideas through elaboration and successive improvement of ideas into creative responses (Chance, 1999).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Provide Resources</td>
<td>School leader provides teachers with adequate resources to allow them to develop novel ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Manage Surroundings</td>
<td>School leader changes the physical and social environments of teachers in school on a regular basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Provide feedback and Recognition</td>
<td>School leader communicates and works together with teachers by encouraging creative thinking which involves withholding judgement at certain times and provides incentives for the expression of new ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Models core competencies of creativity expression</td>
<td>School leader sets a good exemplar by managing own creativity skillfully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Challenges Subordinate</td>
<td>School leader set difficult and challenging tasks for teachers through the school vision without stating the conditions and boundaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Encourage broadening</td>
<td>School leader provides opportunities for teachers to obtain training, experience and knowledge outside of their current areas of expertise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) Encourage capturing</td>
<td>School leader provides opportunities, support and training that allow teachers to preserve new ideas as they occur with appropriate resources through establishing variety of method and welcoming anonymous suggestion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) Manage team</td>
<td>School leader manages the teams by optimizing the creativity output.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Epstein, et al., 2013)
However, only few leaders have the appropriate competencies necessary for the expression of creativity because society in general discourages most people from expressing creativity at workplace (Epstein, 1999).

Hence, Generativity Theory provides strategy for recognizing the necessary competencies, assessing the current competency levels and providing the appropriate training for an effective leader (Chance, 1999; Epstein, 1999).

Collaborative School Culture

School culture is defined as “pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group has learned as it solved it’s problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein, 1992, p. 12). Schleecty (2001) defined collaborative school culture as teachers and administrators work closely towards school improvement.

In this study, collaborative school culture means school leaders, teachers, parents, community and stakeholders team up, and support each other and works in partnership towards school’s mission. School culture is part of school change and collaborative process. Collaborative school culture will increase school performance because collaborative culture comprises of value and features that are receptive of new ideas and plays an important role in creating a collaborative environment among stakeholders, educators, students and administrators (Kabler, 2013).

Gruenert & Valentine (1998) have developed collaborative school culture into six dimensions; (i) Collaborative Leadership; (ii) Teacher Collaboration; (iii) Unity of Purpose, (iv) Professional Development; (v) Collegial Support and (vi) Learning Partnership as shown in Table 2. These six dimensions were developed through extensive literature review. Research conducted by Jessie (2007), DuFour & Marzano (2005), Wilhelm (2010) and Bland (2012) opined that a collaborative school culture may have a greater impact on school achievement.

Table 2. Definition of collaborative school culture dimensions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Collaborative Leadership</td>
<td>School leaders build, perpetuate and underpin a positive affiliation among stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Teacher Collaboration</td>
<td>School teachers engross in constructive feedback to enhance the effectiveness in educational.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Professional Development</td>
<td>School teachers are encouraged in gaining relevant experience in order to achieve a high standard of performance in the workplace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Unity of purpose</td>
<td>School teachers incessantly toil towards unified academic goals and vision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Collegial support</td>
<td>School teachers work collectively by contributing their knowledge and share their expertise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Learning partnership</td>
<td>School teachers, parents and students work communally towards students’ betterment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Gruenert & Valentine, 1998)

Past Studies on Creative Leadership and Collaborative Leadership

In Gruenert (2005) study, he has examined the relationship between school culture and student achievement in elementary, middle and high schools. His findings showed a significant correlation between school culture and school leadership. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) described the link among school culture, leadership, and student achievement. They stated, “fostering school culture that indirectly affects student achievement is a strong theme within the literature on principal leadership” (p. 47).

This statement is in support with Zacher and Johnson (2014) study as they opined that school leadership is the prime mover to create a collaborative environment among the stakeholders.

Empirical evidence by Keetanjaly and Zaidatol (2016) indicated that leaders should encourage subordinates to participate in decision making through roles that focus on engaging parents and community in planning, implementing, and monitoring work activities. Asmah (2014) has conducted a study on school leadership and school management stated that the concept of a collaborative culture is the more equitable distribution of power for decision making among members of the school. Such an environment promotes collaborative planning, collegiality, supportiveness and an atmosphere that adopts experimentation and creativity.

A study by Zacher and Johnson (2014) showed that collaborative culture supports leaders working with creativity, learning commitment and the strength of cohesive freedom value. The principal role in supporting and creating a collaborative culture in school needs to be developed and flourished as these is important in the current education settings especially in the context of school, family and community partnership. This research conceptual framework as showed in Figure 2 is built from the understanding of Generativity Theory (Epstein 1999; Epstein, et al., 2013) and model of collaborative school culture (Gruenert & Valentine, 1998) with an objective to illustrate the relationship between creative leadership and collaborative school culture based on the literature review.

Fig. 2. Conceptual Framework.

Conclusion

Creative leadership will be viewed as great importance in the Malaysian educational transform. There is a need to focus in depth on creative leadership as an important subset of the set of characteristics of school culture. It also gives an idea how Malaysian Government policies play a role in synthesizing current characteristics of school effectiveness (e.g. The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, 2012). This fact can be supported through this study which shows...
there is a growing demand to apply the creative leadership skills towards creating a collaborative school culture.

Acknowledgements
Authors would like to take this opportunity to thank Emeritus Professor Dr Robert Epstein, Emeritus Professor Dr Jerry Valentine and Professor Steve Gruenert for granting them permission to use their survey tool in this research. Authors also would like to thank the FRGS - (06-01-16-1801FR) for providing fund to conduct this research.

References


Biographies

Zaidatol Akmaliah Lope Pihie is a Professor at the Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia. She has served in UPM since 1981. She graduated from Southern Illinois University – Carbondale, USA. She completed her Ph.D degree in 1992 and was promoted as Associate Professor in 1997 and offered as a full professor in 2003. From April 2001 to November 2002, she was appointed as the head of education department, as Deputy Dean of Faculty of Education from November 2002 to November 2005 and appointed as Deputy Dean (Research and Graduate Studies) from September 2010 to September 2012. She was also a Senate member in April 2005 to March 2008, and July 2011 to June 2014. Her areas of specializations are in entrepreneurship education, leadership and educational management as well as teaching methodology. She has presented and published a number of academic papers overseas and locally within her area of interest. She supervises 30 Ph.D students and 18 had graduated. She is actively involved in research activities. Her researches are mostly related to her area of expertise. She had received 3 gold medals, 6 silver medals and 9 bronze medals from UPM through her research effort. Professor Dr Zaidatol Akmaliah Lope Pihie can be reached at zalp@upm.edu.my

Suhaida Abdul Kadir is a Senior lecturer at the Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia. She completed her high school at MARA Junior Science College, Kuala Terengganu. She holds the doctoral degree from Universiti Putra Malaysia. She was appointed as senior lecturer with University Putra Malaysia in 2007. Previously she served as coordinator at Pusat Kokurikulum UPM, coordinator for Educational Administration graduate program, coordinator for Business and Entrepreneurship program, and coordinator for Teaching Training and Counselling Practicum (Accounting and Business) of the Faculty of Educational Studies. She has been involved in research and consultancy works, both university and national level in the area of teacher education, entrepreneurship education, accounting education and student development. Dr Suhaida Abdul Kadir can be reached at suhaida@upm.edu.my

Keetanjaly Arivayagan is currently pursuing her Ph.D in Educational Administration and working as a Research Assistant at Faculty of Educational Studies, University Putra Malaysia. She graduated with a Master’s degree in Educational Administration from University Putra Malaysia (UPM) in 2016 and Bachelor of Science degree in Plant Technology from University Malaysia Sabah (UMS) in 2007. Keetanjaly can be reached at keetanjaly@gmail.com