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Education (1)

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Do Malaysian Teachers' Innovative Behaviour Influenced by Psychological Empowerment?

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Do Malaysian Teachers' Innovative Behaviour Influenced by Psychological Empowerment?

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Background/Objectives and goals

A school success depends on the ability of its principal to fulfil the vision and mission agreed by the staff members i.e teachers, students, parents and support staffs. Furthermore, teachers support and contribution in the effort of becoming an effective organization is crucial as the 'one man show' principle in managing school will usually less successful (Harris, 2004). Akhiar Pardi (2012) proclaims that in order to be success in changing process, school should possed a few criterias such as strong leadership, clear mission and goals, high expectations of students, conducive learning environment, opportunities for learning, and classroom monitored on a regular basis. Previous studies such as by Levine and Lezotte (1990) and Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) show that power-sharing, cooperation and collaboration are among the factors that contribute to school performance.

Teachers plays important roles in providing support to the principals in school management process. As emphasized in Malaysian Vision 2020, liberalization of educational policies has become the main focus to the existence of democratization, privatization and decentralization of power in Malaysian education system. Decentralisation of power is intended to promote school-based management and teacher empowerment (Lee, 1999). According Bamoran and Gahng Porter (1994), empowerment is a key element of education reform strategy. The involvement of teachers in school management can also be enhanced using empowerment. Previous studies by Zhang and Bartol (2010), Fernandez and Moldagaziev (2013) showed that empowerment has increase the level of teachers' involvement in school decision-making and highly correlated with teachers performance, including job satisfaction, commitment and teacher innovative behaviour. In modern management, empowerment is an important component in creating an effective and successful organization. Thus, empowerment is strongly encouraged in educational organizations in enhancing the progress and effectiveness of the organization.

Empowerment, in brief, is defined as to give power or authority to; authorize, especially by legal or official means. According to Wan Mohd Zahid (1993) empowerment is a form of decentralization process and discretion in thinking and planning on how to implement the best way of change management, curriculum management and others. Conger & Kanungo (1998) proposed the concept of empowerment as a motivational construct.

Empowerment has long been practised in the Malaysian education system (Educational Planning & Research Division, 1995). Somehow, empowerment has been used by administrators in key areas such as curriculum, student affairs and extra-curricular and other tasks such as administration, personnel and finance (Hussein Mahmood, 1997). With the implementation of empowerment in school, all decisions pertaining to the school goals and objectives can be decided collaboratively. This situation will create a sense of belonging and responsibility among organization members in achieving its stated goals.

However, this concept has been strengthened by Ministry of Education (MoE) and clearly emphasized in the 8th shift of Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013 that empowerment will become as one of main agenda in Malaysian education transformation (Ministry of Education, 2012). This is in line with Zulkapli Muhammad (2008) who believes that bureaucracy in school management will creates a culture that denies teachers to involve in decision making process. Thus, there is a need of empowerment as an effort to improve the efficiency of distributing tasks and responsibilities to designated subordinates. This initiative will promote the potential of staffs to exhibit their talent and creativity, becoming an efficient decision-maker and possess high self-esteem and motivation to improve the performance and productivity of organization (Short, 1994).

Maeroff (1998) believes that teachers' empowerment has already been practiced in schools, especially in the classroom, either directly or indirectly through teacher involvement in teaching and learning. As suggested by Educational Planning and Research Division (1995), some reasonable aspects can be empowered at school level in Malaysian context i.e. managing the instructional period, classroom control, communicating and forming the best relationships with students considering the curriculum, level of students ability and organization environment. An empowered teacher will acquired a significant level of autonomy in the process of recovery strategy and methods in implementing education policies (Educational Planning and Research Division, 1995). Abdul Shukor Abdullah (1991) states that the concept of school management that is based on the principle of empowerment has been widely practiced by school administrators. It is characterized by democratic management and grants recognition to subordinate to utilize their creativity and innovation for organization excellent.

However, Gamoran and Gahng Porter (1994) argued that although empowerment is a key element in the strategy of education reform, it can only be achieved if the practice is able to generate psychological perception of empowerment among subordinates (Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998; Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997). As psychology aspect is important in order to implement empowerment efficiently, Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and Spreitzer (1992) began to focus on the psychological aspects of empowerment that name as 'psychological empowerment'.

Building on the work of Conger and Kanungo (1988), Thomas and Velthouse (1990) defined psychological empowerment as intrinsic motivation manifested in four cognitions reflecting an individual's orientation to his or her work role: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. The cognition includes four main aspects i.e. the **meaning**. It is a dimension of the job characteristics model, involves a fit between the requirements of one's work role and one's beliefs, values and behaviours; **competence** is a belief in one's capability to perform work activities with skill; **Self-determination** is a sense of choice in initiating and regulating one's actions and reflects autonomy over the initiation and continuation of work behaviour and processes such as making decisions about work methods, pace, and effort and; **impact** that refers to the response about his ability to influence or the degree to which one can influence strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes at work. Hence, psychological empowerment in this study refers to what extent teachers feel their work is meaningful; to what extent teachers feel they are competence and self-determination in their work; and to what extent teachers feel they have an impact on what happening in schools.

Previous studies have revealed that the level of psychological empowerment in an organization have a positive impact on its effectiveness. According to Koberg, Boss, Senjem and Goodman (1999), psychological empowerment can affect the performance of subordinates in the organization (Spreitzer, 1995). In fact, psychological empowerment will produce subordinates who are more prepared to accept any changes, innovative and motivated to produce innovation in the organization (Sprietzer & Quinn, 2001). It also able to influence the commitment and job performance (Cunningham, Hyman & Baldry, 1996) and generate an active rather than passive approach towards work (Spreitzer, 1995). Subordinates who lack of psychological empowerment, will not sense any meaning of their work, lack of confidence in their skills and abilities, do not acquire any freedom in decision making and will not show any progress in carrying out their tasks. Thus, the mutual understanding between administrator and teacher is needed to improve teacher psychological empowerment as well as their commitment, energy and motivation for changes. Furthermore, the characteristics of excellent teachers will be developed as they constantly improve their knowledge and skills to deal with new circumstances and always ready for innovation (Akhiar Pardi & Shamsurina Shamsudin, 2012).

According to Macey and Schneider (2008) the practice of psychological empowerment is able to create conducive working environment and be one of the factors that may affect the individuals' interest to their work and becoming more innovative. Sprietzer and Quinn (2001) believe employees who acquire psychological empowerment will be better prepared to face the changes and be creative and innovative to produce new idea. Barat and Farr (1990) define innovative behaviour as generating, promoting and realizing new ideas for individual, teamwork or organization. It also refers to the employees' creativity and their involvement in bringing changes

and new ideas in duties or in solving their problems (Azra Ayue, Siti Aisyah Panatik & Rose Alinda, 2014) This behaviour is often associated with employees' creativity, however innovative behaviour implies more creativity and produce a wide range of benefits and have a clearer useful components (de Jong & den Hartog, 2007).

Innovative behaviour among administrators and teachers is essential in order to manage school efficiently and creatively, as organization requires new knowledge, ideas, energy and creativity in every employee so as to be competitive in the dynamic environment (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001). Armbruster (2008) explains that, in order to survive in global changes and competition, an organization must embarks on innovation activities that are highly correlated in producing better performance and productivity as well as high level of teachers' commitment (Janssen, 2003). Moreover, teachers also should acquire innovative behaviour, willing to change and adapt to new working approaches in accordance with the current trend of globalization to increase the school performance and effectiveness.

The innovative behaviour is promoted among teachers as education system in Malaysia is in the process of becoming an education hub of Asian region. In fact it is one of the key aspects focused by the Ministry of Education and apparently stated as a theme of recent Teachers' Day celebrations for instance in 2012 and 2014. In 2012, the theme was *"Innovative Teachers Accelerating National Education Transformation"* which describes the importance of innovative teachers in the process of transforming education in Malaysia. According to Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin (2012), Malaysian former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, innovative teacher refers to those who is constantly thinking about what are the challenges that will be faced by students; able to assess students achievements and potential holistically; and proactive in improving their students performance. While in 2014, the theme was *"Teachers: Catalyst for Creativity, Generator of Innovation"* which provides a clear picture of creativity and innovative agenda to transform Malaysian education system as portrayed in Education Development Blueprint (2013-2025). Referring to the theme, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin (2014) proclaimed that it was time for teachers to inspire creativity and innovation in educating students. This is because Malaysia is heading to be a developed country where the economy is based on k-economy that drives by innovative people. Thus in order to encourage Malaysian teachers to be innovative and creative, an Innovative Teacher Award competition, which was introduced in 2002, was held to give awards and recognition for teachers who are initiated innovative education projects.

However, innovative work behaviour will not instil in an individual teacher without any urged factors from organization. As revealed by Teng Bee Guek (2008) and Janssen (2005), supervisors support for innovation is able to enhance innovative behaviour of their employees. In addition, Zhang and Bartol (2010) found that power disseminated by empowerment will increase

the sense of psychological empowerment that greatly influences employees' creativity. They also proclaim that psychological empowerment has a significant influence on the employees' readiness to engage in creative process to fulfil organization mission. In particular, when an employee accepts that his work is meaningful and important, he will spend more effort to understand the issues from many sources in order to generate innovative alternatives.

Moreover, findings from previous studies has proved that psychological empowerment has positive impact on employee performance (Roslee Talib, 2012; Spreitzer, De Janasz & Quinn, 1999; Koberg, Boss, Senjem & Goodman, 1999). Nik Azida Abd Ghani (2007) in her study showed that antecedent factors such as trust and working environment, organizational support and resources can motivate employees to feel that they are being empowered by the administrator. Meanwhile Spreitzer et al. (1999) revealed that supervisors who have high levels of psychological empowerment become more innovative, have influence on their superior and have inspiration in carrying out their responsibilities. This supported by Campbell and Martinko (1998) and Chung-Park (1995) that revealed that experienced workers who had low psychological empowerment will feel the lack of power and support and as a result they becoming demotivated.

Though previous studies had proved that psychological empowerment is important in motivating employees for being innovative, the relationship between these two aspects is still vague as lack of research on them in school management area in Malaysia. There is only a study conducted focused on principals psychological empowerment in Sarawak by Linton @ Jerah Britten (2003) indicated that the level of psychological empowerment is at moderate level. As mentioned by Abdul Latif (2004), although empowerment tries to be adapted in education system in Malaysia, its effectiveness is still questionable due to the bureaucratic structure of the system. Usually superiors in a bureaucratic system are not willing to share their power and does not trust employees in carrying out duties (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001). They fear with too many initiative by employees and consider suggestions as criticism (Glutterback & Kemaghan, 1999).

Based on the argument of the importance of psychological empowerment and innovative behaviour in school effectiveness, yet lack of research in the particular area of study, there is a need to explore these two aspects in Malaysian school management context. As mentioned by Janssen (2005) and Spreitzer et. al (1999), psychological empowerment is closely related to the role of leadership and administration that able to make employees more motivated and creative in producing innovation. Thus, this study sought to determine the level of psychological empowerment and innovative behaviour among Malaysian secondary teachers, the relationship between these two variables and the influence of psychological empowerment towards teacher innovative behaviour. In fact, the findings of this study are expected to contribute to the

proliferation of knowledge related to psychological empowerment and innovative behaviour among scholars and practitioners of educational management area.
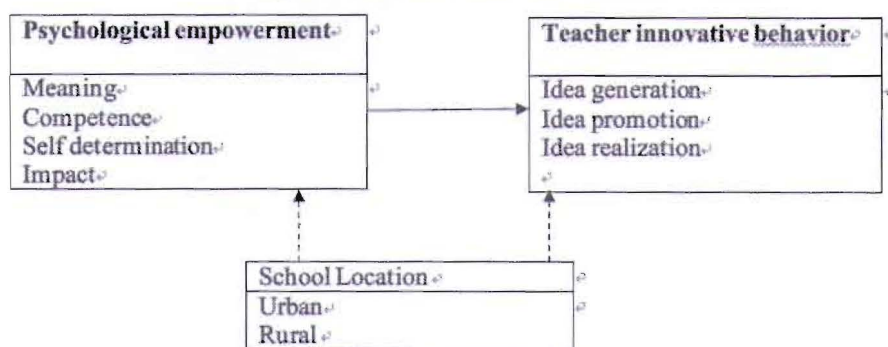
In particular, the objectives of this study are to identify:

1. the level of psychological empowerment of teachers
2. the level of innovative behaviour of teachers
3. the significant difference of psychological empowerment between teachers in urban and rural schools.
4. the significant difference of teachers innovative behaviour between urban and rural schools.
5. the significant influence of psychological empowerment dimensions towards teachers' innovative behaviour.

Method

This study utilized a survey method using a questionnaire as an instrument that enables the generalisation of the finding (Mohamad Najib, 1999). The study involved two variables, namely psychological empowerment as the independent variable and innovative behaviour as the dependent variable. In addition to the two main variables, the school location was highlighted in a research framework to identify the significant difference of these two variables based on school location. The research framework is as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Research framework

Psychological empowerment
Meaning
Competence
Self determination
Impact

Teacher innovative behavior
Idea generation
Idea promotion
Idea realization

School Location
Urban
Rural

The questionnaire is divided into three sections:

Part A: Background of respondents i.e. gender, age, race and school location

Part B: Psychological Empowerment adapted from Spreitzer (1995). This section consists of 12 items representing four dimensions such as meaning, competence, self determination and impact

Part C: The teacher innovative behaviour adapted from Janssen (2000). This section contains 9 items that represent three dimensions i.e. idea generation, idea promotion and idea realization.

The questionnaire was distributed to a total of 427 randomly selected teachers from 16 secondary schools consist of eight urban and eight rural schools in Penang, Malaysia. The data of these

respondents were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 20.0. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in order to fulfil the research objectives.

Result

The finding of this study was described into several sub topics according to the research objectives. The level of psychological empowerment and innovative teacher behaviour are categorized by mean score and determined according to Nunally (1986) categorization as stated in Table 3.1 below:

Table 3.1: Range Of Mean Score for Level Determination by Nunally (1986)

Mean score	Level	
1.00 to 1.80	Very low	
1.81 to 2.60	Low	
2.61 to 3.40	Moderate	
3.41 to 4.20	Moderately high	
4.21 to 5.00	High	

3.1 The level of psychological empowerment and innovative behaviour among teachers

The level of psychological empowerment is shown in Table 3.2 below. Based on Table 3.2, the mean score (mean = 4.48, SD = 0.59) indicates the level of psychological empowerment of teachers is at high level. For each dimension, the findings indicated the mean score for **meaning** (mean = 4.83, SD = 0.44) and **competence** (mean = 4.74, SD = 0.49) suggest that these two dimensions are at high level among teachers. While the dimensions of **self-determination** (mean = 4.00, SD = 0.91) and **impact** (mean = 3.60, SD = 3.60) are at moderately high level. Hence it can be conclude that teachers in secondary schools in Penang are practicing psychological empowerment at the high level.

Table 3.2: Level of Psychological Empowerment

Variable	Mean	Std	Level
Psychological empowerment	4.48	0.59	High
Meaning	4.83	0.44	High
Competence	4.74	0.49	High
Self determination	4.00	0.91	Moderately high
Impact	3.60	3.60	Moderately high

Meanwhile Table 3.3 below shows the mean score and standard deviation of teacher innovative behaviour and each dimension of it. Based on Table 3.3 the level of innovative behaviour among teachers is at moderately high, with the mean score (mean = 3.95, SD = 0.88). Furthermore, the findings in Table 3.3 also indicated that all of innovative behaviour dimensions are at moderately high level such as 'idea generation' (mean = 3.86, SD = 0.85), 'ideas

promotion' (mean = 3.96, SD = 0.93) and 'ideas realization' (mean = 3.82, SD = 0.95). Thus, it can be concluded that teachers' innovative behaviour is at the moderately high level.

Table 3.3: Level of innovative behavior

Variable	Mean	Std	Level	
Teachers innovative behaviour	3.95	0.88	Moderately high	
Idea generation	3.86	0.85	Moderately high	
Idea promotion	3.96	0.93	Moderately high	
Idea realization	3.82	0.95	Moderately high	

3.2 The differences of psychological empowerment and innovative behaviour level between rural and urban schools teachers

The independent sample t-test analysis was utilised to identify the significant differences of psychological empowerment level between urban and rural schools. The result of t-test in Table 3.4 below, t (425) = 1.73, (ρ = .08), indicates that there is no significant differences of psychological empowerment level between teachers in urban and rural schools. Thus this finding reveal that teachers, regardless their school location, have same level of psychological empowerment.

Table 3.4: The t-test analysis for psychological empowerment

School categories	N	Mean	Std	Df	t	p
Urban	201	4.23	0.39	425	1.73	.08
Rural	226	4.15	0.49			

Level of significant p < .05

Table 3.5 shows result of independent sample t-test analysis in identifying the significant difference of innovative behaviour level between rural and urban schools teachers. The results, t (425) = -2.92, ρ = .01, shows that there is significant difference of innovative behaviour between teachers in rural and urban schools. This indicates that teachers in rural and urban schools have different level of innovative work behaviour. The mean values suggest that teachers in rural schools are more innovative compare to urban school teachers.

Table 3.5: T-test analysis for innovative behaviour

School categories	N	mean	Sp	Df	t	p	
Urban	201	3.70	.703	425	-2.92	.01	
Rural	226	3.90	.726				

Level of significant p < .05

3.3 Significant predictors of psychological empowerment towards innovative behaviour

The multiple regression analysis was utilised to identify the significant predictors of psychological empowerment dimensions towards teacher innovative work behaviour. The value of adjusted R^2 in Table 3.6 below shows only 28.1% of variance changes of teachers innovative work behaviour is contributed significantly by three of psychological empowerment dimensions i.e. **competence** (β = .43, p = .01), **Self-determination** (β =. 15, p = .01) and **impact** (β = .16, p = .01). This result indicates that only three dimensions of psychological empowerment became significant predictors of teacher's innovative behaviour in schools.

Table 3.6: Significant predictor of psychological empowerment towards innovative behaviour

Independant variable	Coefficient value of adjusted β	t value	Sig
Dimensions of psychological empowerment			
Meaning	-.05	-1.07	.29
Competency	.43	8.65	.01*
Self determination	.15	3.36	.01*
Impact	.16	3.50	.01*
R square	.288		
Adjusted R squared	.281		
F value	5.36		
Sig F	.01		

Sig value p<.05

Discussion and conclusion

In order to achieve the education goal, it is important for schools to establish procedures for each unit, staffs and school members in order to generate productivity in the organization effectively. School productivity may produce a high quality services if a productive school community who act and strive for self-improvement using creativity and ingenuity exists in the organization (Zaidatul Akmaliah Lope Pihie, 1991). A study by Scott and Bruce (1994) shows several factors i.e. leadership, support for innovation, expectation of management tasks, career level and style of problem solving has a significant relationship with innovative behaviour of individual. In other word, this finding clearly explains that school administrator has to be a catalyst in changing the innovative behaviour of teachers.

The professional literature on school effectiveness indicates that a greater involvement of teachers in school management usually produces improvements in the organization effectiveness (Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Harris, 2004). And, according to Janssen (2005) and Spreitzer et. al (1999), employees motivation and innovative work behaviour are closely related to their psychological empowerment level. Empowered individuals do not wait

passively for the working environment to provide direction; but instead, they take a proactive and innovative approach toward shaping and influencing their work environment.

This study indicates that the level of psychological empowerment among teachers in Malaysian secondary school is at high level (mean=4.48, SD= 0.59) with two dimensions at high level i.e. **meaning** (mean=4.83, Std = 0.44) and **competency** (min=4.74, SP=0.49) while the other two i.e. **self determination** (mean=4.00, Std = 0.91) and **impact** (mean=3.60, Std = 3.60) are at moderately high level. This finding is in line with studies by DeCicco, Laschinger & Kerr, (2006) and Spreitzer (1996) that the dimension of **meaning** is the highest factor contributes to the empowerment psychological level compare to the dimension of **impact** that becomes the least contributed factor. As mentioned by Spreitzer (1995), this finding suggests that teachers, in general, feel their work is important and meaningful to them; acquire ability and skills to perform their duties and granted freedom and trust in carrying their duty in creative and innovative way.

Syed Ismail Syed Ahmad Mustapa & Subki Miskon (2010) stated that an innovative teachers able to generate new ideas and translate the curriculum goals and needs by using creative and innovative methods, approaches and strategies of teaching and learning. This study revealed that the level of innovative work behaviour among secondary schools teachers in Penang are moderately high with mean = 3.95, SD = 0.88. The finding suggests that secondary school teachers in Penang are in the midst of becoming innovative. As what Yusliza (2012) believes, innovative teachers will not be bound with traditional methods of teaching. However, there will be resistance and challenges for teachers who are trying to be innovative and promote their new ideas for change as their colleagues will try to maintain the status quo and avoid the uncertainty and insecurity resulted from the changes (Janssen, 2003).

In addition, this study also indicates the different level of innovative behaviour between teachers in urban and rural schools. Teachers in the rural schools are more innovative than teachers in the urban schools. This finding contradicts with Shahira Ramli (2012)'s believes that creativity and innovative are lie in human resources regardless of location, whether urban or rural. According to her, Malaysians should embrace innovation as part of their way of life and it was not confined only to the scientists, researchers, and academics. However, in the context of educational development in Malaysia, the differences of teachers innovative work behaviour may affected by the implementation of the educational policy that stated in Malaysian Education Development Blueprint 2006 specifically the policy of *'Bridging the gap between urban and rural schools in Malaysia'* (Ministry of Education, 2006, Ministry of Education, 2013). The policy that aims at improving the performance of rural schools has indirectly encourages teachers in rural schools to be more innovative. Besides the government policy, this study also reveals that psychological empowerment contributes 28.1% to the variance changes of teachers' innovative work behaviour

level. And three of its dimensions become the significant predictors i.e. **competence**, **self-determination** and **impact**. This contribution describes the existence of social exchange between leader and subordinates based on trust to the leader and organization (Blau & Alba, 1985). Thus, as revealed in this study, it can be concluded that psychological empowerment is greatly influence employee innovative work behaviour and important to increase the readiness of employees to engage in creative management process (Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Fernandez & Moldagaziev, 2013). The aspect of empowerment need to be focused in the effort of developing innovative culture in Malaysian education system.

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