The Ideal of Leadership in Primary School

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Abstract—**The study aims to identify the manifestation of learning leadership characteristics in school. It explores the concept of the leadership as a part of learning process in human life and how learning plays role in leadership. To meet the purpose of the research, the qualitative approached was employed, as this study is descriptive in nature. The data was gathered through the utilization of the semi-structural interview in two different primary schools. In accordance with previous theories, it is found that the application of learning leadership aids the participant of the study to be a better leader. The improvement of school programs are indirectly derived from the manifestation of the characteristics of learning leadership namely faith in oneself, the aspiration towards excellence, the tenacity to challenge themselves, the engagement of support from others, and the continuous deliberate practice. Through the act of learning, the leader will evolve toward the betterment and so will the organization.**

Keywords—learning leadership; characteristic; primary school

I. INTRODUCTION

Leader usually seen as an individual with higher competence or the ability in one or many fields, who are able to influence the member to work together towards the goals. It indicates that the success of an enterprise or an organization highly depends on one's leadership. Without the existence of the leadership, the enterprise will surely fail to reach the intended goals or objectives [1]. The leadership itself is delineated as the act of leading and guiding. The leaders exist to manage and help the organization toward the success, further the leaders also have the responsibility to the member of the organization to help them improve in every aspect of life [2]. The importance of the leadership however creates many myths around them that deter people for even trying to fulfill their leadership potential [3].

Regardless, the existence of the leader remains paramount proven by many conducted research related to the subject. It is proven by the conducted research which is found that among the good leader and the worst leader, both can bring out the talents of their member. The worst leader at best can bring out until 40% of one's talents. The similarity found from the good leader who are able to bring out in the minimum 40% with the maximum almost 95%. Even many believe that the good leader can bring out more than 100% of their talents, as well as the talents that they do not know they have. The significance difference in average is almost 64% between the good leader and the worst leader. It is evident that a good leader can bring out their optimal talent and make a difference [2].

Related to the leadership and its characteristics, Kouzes & Posner has proposed five fundamental characteristics to be an exemplary leader [2]. The characteristics include confidence in oneself, aspiration towards excellence, courage to face challenge, engaging support from other, and the tenacity to practice deliberately. The exhibition of those characteristics are believed to be the reflection of excellence act of leading. Leadership inspire people not only those who lead but those who are led. Leadership is inspirational—it inspires people through some values in which guide them toward success and significance in life. As a part of operating modern and independent world, leadership offers inspiration, transparency, reputation, purpose, and commitment [4].

Based on the proposed theory, this study intents to examine and explore the manifestation and real-life application of each exemplary characteristics of learning leadership in primary school. This issue is discussed through the elucidation of the existence of one particular act of leadership and leadership style that will also prove that the leadership can be gained through the act of learning. Further, the issue also will be expounded through the illumination of what makes the leader different is the competence, believe, principles as well as the motivation to improve not only for themselves but also organization and every individual under his/her power. Therefore, this paper will address the idea of leadership as the created and nurtured competence that can be gained through learning and exercise.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Importance of Leadership

Leadership is delineated as the act of guiding and leading towards the betterment. It implies huge responsibility shouldered by the leaders, not only as a guide, motivator and also as an inspiration for their followers to improve and stay true towards the goals. The absent of the role of the leader and the leadership in one organization might lead to impending doom of the organization. Therefore, leader and the leadership play significant role in organization and in life in general. It is proven by the fact that leadership has been subject to so many studies examining the high performing organizations in literature. The focus of the study range from the leadership style, cultural competitiveness as well as the notion of learning orientation as the based element of the leadership style and its performance [5].

Thus, the knowledge regarding the leader and everything that comes with it including style and characteristic become equally important and intriguing to investigate in order to give the enlightenment on the significant role of leadership.

B. Learning Leadership

Learning leadership implies that a good leader is a good learner at the same time it also indicates that the process of leading is intertwined with the process of learning as a part of human life. A good leadership creates change and improvement in life. It is in line with Mezirow stated that "The entire process of learning is a journey to change –change that is growth enhancing development" [6].

Most of the generation of leader at school or principals are invigorated to be an instructional leaders, how over only a few of them actually encouraged to be a learning leader. The instructional leaders mostly pay attention to the planning, implementation and evaluation, meanwhile the learning leaders are enforced to focus on how things are learned and what to be learned to enhance the organization including the instructional function. The deep of the learning leadership include the following six steps: (1) expectations; (2) demonstrations; (3) hospitality; (4) possibility; (5) inquiry; and (6) the whole learner [7].

The previous steps especially in terms of inquiry and possibility, indicate that process of learning is a never ending process proven by the research. Biologically speaking, our brain does not learn somehow and incidentally, more or less well, or only when it has to do so. From an evolutionary perspective, the human brain has evolved to do nothing else better than learning and to prefer nothing else to it [8-10]. Consequently this type of Leadership is what really close to the nature human being as a learner.

Looking at the history of a long standing list of leaders around the worlds with different vision, principles, background, social standing, education, and even different purpose and goals there is always one thing they have in common namely the ability to learn. Most of the leaders learn through the mistake, the failure, the falling that they have to endure before they can stand proudly on top. Through the falling, the mistake, they learn to be an exemplary leader to follow. As a leader with Learning capacity there are at least five fundamentals or characteristics of learning leadership which are believe in yourself, aspire to excel, challenge yourself, engage support, and practice deliberately [2].

The leader with the capacity to learn will have faith in their self. Being self-confidence is the part of being a leader and having faith as a leader reassure the member of organization. Siewiorek stated that the occupational skills, learning leadership and the leadership ability in general will help the human population to thrive and work efficiently in the ever changing and complex situation such as these time [11].

III. RESEARCH METHOD

A. Research Method

The main purpose of this research is to identify and investigate the application of learning leadership in real life, especially in the area of education. Two primary school are chosen as the samples which are considered representing the existing institutions. The respondents as principal, and teacher who are chosen purposively from the selected school institutions.

In the senses, the study seeks to provide evidences of the manifestation of application derived from various leadership theories, proving the existing theories of learning leadership, and identify the manifestation of the theories, the study focused on investigating and exploring the occurring phenomenon. Subsequently the qualitative approach favoring more on the process of how the phenomenon may occur instead of the result, in line with the circumstances and the condition of this study. Therefore the study will be explored through qualitative and descriptive means.

B. Instruments

To aid the qualitative approach the interview and questionnaires were chosen as the techniques to gather the sought data in this study. The interview is purposively designed to gain clearer view or understanding towards the characteristics of the leaders including their capacity and experience in the line of duty. The respondents are chosen due to their practical experience in the educational institution with different environment as it becomes the main focus of this study on how the leader strive through learning, regardless the situation or the given odds. Meanwhile, the questionnaires are used to identify principal leadership capacities and learning leadership growth.

The interview consists of several questions that indicates and related to the five fundamentals of exemplary leader: believe you can, aspire to excel, challenge yourself, engage support, and practice deliberately [2]. The indicators will be identified through the use of the learning leadership characteristic in real life application by the mentioned respondents. To follow Patton & Cochran, the interview was conducted in semi-structural condition, in which the interviewer used the prepared guideline made up of open-ended questions defining the area to be explored understanding, attitude, and leadership perception [12].

To maintain the validity and the reliability of the data gained from interview, the conducted interview were recorded. The recorded interview aims to aid the researcher in transcribing the data from the interview. Fraenkel & Wallen assert that the use of recording or video-taping can give more benefits to the research as the recording can be played for several times, this gives the researcher opportunity to gain valid and thorough information through several times playing [13].

C. Research Questions

The stage of the study is directed to explore the questions and the leadership growth related to five fundamental of

learning leadership i.e: first believe you can, second aspire to excel, third challenge yourself, fourth engage support, and fifth practice deliberately. In order to specify the focus of the study, the research is formulated as follow:

- How does learning play a role in leadership?

- How the exhibition of action as exemplary leader helps the leadership practice?

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. *How does Learning Play Role in Leadership?*

The identification and the interview with the respondents lead to discovery that the path towards leadership clearly engraved with the process of learning. The significance of learning is reflected through the demonstration and the outcome of the leadership itself. The believe of how learning influence greatly in the act of leading is supported by Brown & Posner, the conducted research found that there is a significant relationship between the act of leading and learning process [14]. Further this study found that the survival of one's leadership and the leading ability come gradually through different situation and experience, as can be seen from the following excerpt:

"…in the leadership, there are many factors. We need to see the situation and condition. What is happening in school, we observe and involve little by little, not through the sudden act, impulse and force. So from the given situation and condition, what can we learn from the environment."

The previous excerpt confirms the needs of learning in the eye of the respondents as one of the requirements in the process of learning. The respondents learn from the environment and the given situation, he assess factors and to improve the school, as stated above. Further outcome of the study led to discovery that the act of leadership is practiced through the staff of the school not only the principals as a leader but also the teacher and most of staff of primary school. Additionally, the examination of the leadership practice in the primary school sample are stem from the process of learning. It indicates that the leadership and learning is intertwined and plays important roles in organization including at school as the self-govern individuals.

The success of leadership and the ability to lead is not necessarily come naturally, some of them found later on life and come through the long process and journey of learning. The ability to learn and the learning in leadership has been reported as one factor that can be an anchor in an exceedingly turbulent and unpredictable organization environment [14-18]. The impact of learning in human life, has also been examined in so many studies that leads to the conclusion that humans are born to learn [10, 19, 20]. Biologically speaking, our brain does not learn somehow and incidentally, more or less well, or only when it has to do so. From an evolutionary perspective, the human brain has evolved to do nothing else better than learning and to prefer nothing else to it [9]. In fact, the brain is always learning whenever it processes information, as human's brain have neo-plasticity that will constantly change through the stage of learning and

information process [8]. The outcome indicates that learning leadership implies that a good leader is a good learner. Further it suggests that process of leading is intertwined with the process of learning as a part of human life [2]. Thus, proven the substantial role of learning in leadership.

Aside from the substantial confirmation of the role of learning in the act of leading and in all human life in general, the examination of the gained data indicates the existence of the five fundamentals of exemplary leader exhibited by the respondents.

B. *How the Exhibition of Action as Exemplary Leader Helps the Leadership Practice?*

Based on the data collected, the 1st fundamental namely the faith in self (believe you can) manifested through the act of persistence in realizing the school vision by changing the mind set and set the new paradigm. The relentless effort to work on schools and environmental weakness toward a better improvement is the best example of the fundamental one of exemplary leader in learning leadership. The 2nd fundamental related to the need and ideal to keep trying to improve and be better at each time (aspire to excel). The desire to excel usually relates to internal motivation. Motivation refers to "reasons that underlie behavior that is characterized by willingness and volition" [21]. In line with Lai, Gredler, Broussard and Garrison broadly define motivation as "the attribute that moves us to do or not to do something" [21]. This study leads to the discovery that both of the school have determination to constantly improve the school. It is manifested by the act of fixing the values, attitude and organizational moral in all aspect of the school. The leader tends to give out everything they have once they have clear ideals, values, and principles, they feel involved and responsible for everything that happens inside organization. This attitude is proven to be exhibited by both leaders as they clearly enforcing all the means necessary to improve the school situation. The sense of aspiration also affecting the member of the organization at the same time will have more sense of pride and sense of belonging for the organizational and individual development and success. Therefore, the leader can be indicated as the aspiring leader, when they have a sense of purpose, clear goals and forward looking [2,22,23].

The third fundamental namely "challenge yourself" refer to the tenacity to learn new things, or even face the issues head on. The study found that both leader perceive challenge as the chance to better themselves and organization, they embrace the challenge and make them count range from creating new rules, creating new program, and changing the parents and societal paradigm. The ability to challenge the condition and themselves related to the characteristic of transformational leader who keens to make groundbreaking action or decision [24]. Challenge will create the opportunity to learn, thus leader with keen sense of learning have a big amount of courage to face challenge outside or inside their territory, they have persistence and resistance towards problems. The needs to learn new to things and to improve the quality and capability become one of the aspects as a learning leader [2,25]. Consequently, they perceive challenge, new vision and initiative as a necessity as a form of experiment so, they can

learn and experience as well as exercise their ability to face problems and new worlds. Challenge creates a cycle of learning in which becomes the field of practice or even the battlefield practice [15,26-29].

As the educational leaders (school), the study has discovered that both respondents and leaders go along the way to help the school and encourage every aspect of educational stakeholders to involve in the process, proven by "Solving the school problems by involving parents and building good communication with school communities and stakeholders" or "seeking support from the government to improve the school facilities". The study suggests that the collaboration between leaders, school communities and parents or society in general leads to the success and the improvement of the organization in this case the school involved [30,31]. Both of the leaders exhibit the act of collaboration through the engagement of support from parents, surrounding society and government.

The last fundamental examined in this study is the "deliberate practice" by the leaders. As expected from any other activities, the mastery in the leadership and the capability in it is influenced by the amount of practice. The key the last fundamental is "deliberately" it implies that the conducted practice needs to be tailored and designed specifically based on the purpose of the practice to improve the weakness and reinforce the existing strengths. Ericsson et al. stated that deliberate practice demands high level focus and concentration, and for it to success and take effect it needs to be specifically designed to strengthen the performance beyond its current levels [32]. The activity needs to continuously, hence require a lot of time.

Regardless the amount of effort and time needed, the examination suggests that both leader believe in the significance of practice throughout the process of leading. It is proven by the annual meeting held at school or between leaders and teachers among school in order to share the strategies and experiences in teaching and leading. The meeting proven to be effective as most of the teacher and leaders can learn not only from their own experience but through others' mistakes and strengths. Further the form of practice is also realized through leadership training program, in which Hallinger & Liu believes that there is a potential benefit that can be gained from providing training focused on 'learning-centered leadership for principals and middle level leaders in rural schools [33]. It will aid the access to the development of the professional development opportunities [33,34]. To further the benefit of practice Paul & Wittham proposed the practice in leadership will enable individuals to develop the personal leadership and encourage the institution or organization to offer a chance for effective leadership development [35].

V. CONCLUSION

The outcome of the research suggests that the leadership is intertwined with the learning activity and process. It is proven that in this case leaders improve through learning. The organizational decisions, responsibilities come to the improvement through the act of learning both from the staff and leader in power within the school as organization.

Subsequently, learning leadership as an exemplary style of leadership serves as an eye opener to the fact that every human being has a chance to be someone and we all has a chance to be better through learning. It is also proven how the act of leading intertwined with the core of human as a learning-being. As an exemplary leader, one needs to have the quality of faith to believe in their self, in which they have purpose to make a betterment and aspiration towards the excellent, and never waver in the face of the challenge, but nevertheless are able to admit that they need support from those around them to the obtain greatness, and are still humble enough to keep trying to address their weakness and strengthen your existing strength as the process of never ending learning process to be a better leader. Being a leader is not only about the position but about how ones behave [36].

Everyone is different and follows a unique path of development. We are all on an evolutionary journey, but most of us will not realize it until a certain event has caused us to awaken and realize we are all involved in the process of growth and learning.

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