

THE RELATIONSHIP OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP WITH PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PRACTISE IN HIGH PRESTIGE SCHOOL IN SELANGOR

Rodzimah Mohd Rodzi^{1*}, Mahaliza Mansor²

¹Ms., Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia, ainss_78@yahoo.com

²Dr., Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia, mahaliza@fpe.upsi.edu.my

*Corresponding Author

Abstract

The objective of this study is to identify the role of the headmaster's instructional leadership and its relationship with teacher's professional learning practise in high prestige schools of Selangor. A quantitative research design is selected to answer the research questions and hypotheses. An instrument is used to measure the implementation of headmaster's instructional leadership role and teacher's professional learning practise in selected school. 244 teachers from six high prestige schools of Selangor were chosen as respondents using the systematic random sampling. The data were analysed by its mean, frequency and percentage statistics using descriptive method. Inferential statistics of t-test, ANOVA and Pearson Correlation are used to answer the research questions. The results obtained were used to identify the differences as well as the relationship between the headmaster's instructional leadership and the teacher's professional learning practice in school. Overall, the findings have shown that there is a positively significant relationship between the headmaster's instructional leadership and the teacher's professional learning practices. This study has also indicates that both headmaster's instructional leadership and teacher's professional learning are being practised at high level by the high prestige schools of Selangor. This study is expected to have an impact in teacher's professionalism development as envisaged in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025. This is because teachers engage in such a wide range of activities with the students. Therefore, a proactive teachers' professional learning practice supported by the headmaster's instructional leadership will led to positive impacts purposely to students' learning quality in the classroom.

Keywords: Instructional Leadership, Teacher's Professional Learning, Exploratory Factor Analysis.

1 INTRODUCTION

Education in Malaysia suggests that headmasters to practice instructional leadership in school as suggested by (Hallinger & Lee, 2012). This is because it is believed to contribute to the students' academic achievement (Mohd. Yusri & Aziz, 2014). According to Glickman (2002), instructional leadership role by nurturing a positive school learning culture can motivate the students towards the learning process.

However, headmasters can only influence the student's achievement by exploiting other intermediary variables (Leithwood & Levin, 2010; Sirinides, 2009) for example in this study were the teachers.

In addition to the instructional leadership of headmasters, teachers are also the important deciding factor in determining the schools' success. However, the research findings indicated that teachers always losing their confidence or efficacy and losing focus towards teaching and learning tasks thus causing weakened teaching competency (Mohd Yusri & Aziz, 2014). Teacher's professional learning practice aimed to improve the knowledge, expertise and teacher's attitude towards their careers (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). It is believed to be able to ramp up teacher's self-confidence if they have the power of knowledge and mastering the contemporary teaching trends. This process will certainly help them in educating the students efficiently and with more dedication. Results of a study conducted by Nor Foniza and Hamzah (2012) showed that through the support of instructional leaders who dare to take the risks in providing conducive learning environment and creating learning opportunities through productive professional learning among the teachers, can improve the teacher's professionalism and further continue the excellence of the school.

1.1 Statement of problem

Based on the results of Pisa (Programme For International Student Assessment) 2012 and Timss (Trends in Mathematics and Science Study) 2011, the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 has been devised with an agenda to develop a world-class education system to improve on the national education quality in order to compete with other developed countries. This is a continuous effort in developing the human capital that is comprehensive, progressive, high morals and highly ethical. Two important variables in the implementation are headmasters who play the instructional leadership role in school administration and teacher's professionalism development through professional learning practices in schools.

1.2 Significance of study

Therefore, the priority of this study is towards evaluating the relationship between instructional leadership of headmasters and teachers' professional learning practices in Selangor's high performing schools for three years after the implementation of Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025. This is because the teacher's professional learning practices through headmaster's instructional leadership is believed can efficiently increase the student's learning process in school (Hafsah, Mohd Johan, Siti Patimah & Tajul Ariffin, 2012). The findings give an impression to the other headmasters that these two variables worked in tandem in leading a school towards excellence. In addition, this study is also necessary in gathering empirical data to build an information source on the transformation shift four and five of Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 implemented in our country.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section will discuss about instructional leadership and professional learning practise by past researcherr.

2.1 Instructional leadership

Instructional leadership issue was discussed by education researchers since the 1970s. Various definitions have been proposed by previous researchers but all the definitions lead to a framework of a leader who leads a learning community.

Instructional leadership chronology started with researches and write-ups from several known leaders in education management field such as Halpin (1966); Druckers (1969); Edmonds (1979) and Sergiovanni (1987). They had demonstrated instructional leadership plays an important role in determining the smoothness, efficiency and effectiveness in managing an organization such as a school. For Donmoyer and Wagstaff (1990), an instructional leader is someone who gives a significant impact towards students' opportunities to study well in class. As time evolved, Miller, Goddard, Larsen, and Jacob (2010) had a relatively modern perception in their definition of instructional leadership. According to them, formerly traditional tasks of headmasters were such as setting school goals, provide resources for learning, curriculum management, controlling teaching plan and evaluating the teachers. But with the current widespread use of educational technology in instructional activities nowadays, headmasters need to use a more sophisticated perspective in developing teachers' professional learning and using firm data to make decisions in their instructional leadership.

This study used four roles contained in the theory of instructional leadership by Hallinger and Murphy (1987). The featured roles were as follows:

2.1.1 Frame The School's Goal

The role of headmasters in formulating goals in collaboration with the school community who were executing the goal. This was to ensure that schools had a mission to be accomplished unambiguously with particular emphasis on the students' academic development.

2.1.2 Instructional Supervising and Evaluating

This role showed the headmasters paying attention to the observation on teaching the teachers in making sure maximum student's learning process. It was intended for teachers to continually improve and enhance the quality of teachings to increase the student's learning level and developing human capital (Khairiah, 2013).

2.1.3 Developing Professional Learning

Headmasters played a role in enhancing the skills and capabilities of their teachers through productive professional learning practices. It was based on the realization that the teacher's professional learning practice was considered as an important strategy for the teaching progress and effectiveness (Baharom et al., 2013).

2.1.4 Providing Incentives to Students

Role in giving incentives so that students are motivated to increase their efforts and as an encouragement to other students to emulate their friends' success. Providing incentives to students result in student in doing things earnestly (Aniza & Zaidatol Akmaliah, 2013).

2.2 Professional learning

Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1989) defined professional learning as learning using whatever activities or processes in order to improve the skills, attitudes, understanding and performance in playing the role as teachers in the present or in the future. The activities included courses, reading academic materials or teachers' inquiries (Joyce & Calhoun, 2010), while the result was improvement on knowledge and instructional practices of teachers (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson & Orphanos, 2009). Amin (2008) in his observations on the education system in Malaysia had defined the practice of teacher's professional learning as in any other school's program which aimed to improve teachers' skills in carrying out their duties more effectively.

The study used four practices contained in the professional learning theory by Hallinger and Murphy (1987). The highlighted practices were as follows:

2.2.1 Individually-guided Learning Practices

This practice is a process in which teachers plan and pursue activities that are believed to promote their learning based on their self-interest (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989).

2.2.2 Study Group Practice

The opportunity to learn in a group is an important factor for teachers to improve their professionalism. Interactive learning opportunities and collective participation are positive factors that could increase the teachers' professionalism (Armour & Makapoulu, 2012).

2.2.3 Training Practice

This program is run by a committee of the respective subjects intended to ensure the instructional theory and content being delivered by teachers correctly, accurately and systematically making it easier for students to understand (Joyce & Calhoun, 2010).

2.2.4 Developing Professional Portfolio Practice

This practice encourages teachers to prepare files on their professional portfolio. Teachers are required to constantly documenting all the information about the instructional and learning such as teaching plans or career information in the portfolio (Roberts & Pruitt, 2009).

2.3 Relationship between Instructional Leadership and Teacher's Professional Learning Practices

Results from previous studies had demonstrated instructional leadership positively contributed to the quality

of teaching through professional learning practices (Hallinger, 2011). The findings by Nor Foniza Maidin and Mohd. Izham (2012) had stated that a school leader will focused on ensuring continuous learning among teachers in order to achieve the goals of the school in becoming a learning organization that can improve the teachers' professionalism continuously and thoroughly, especially novice teachers. This was reinforced by Suraiyah (2013), who stated that one of the keys to effective instructional leadership was to encourage and foster the teacher's professional learning practice. This proved how important the role of headmasters who applied instructional leadership in improving the effectiveness of teacher's professional learning activities.

Based on that, the following conceptual framework was proposed.

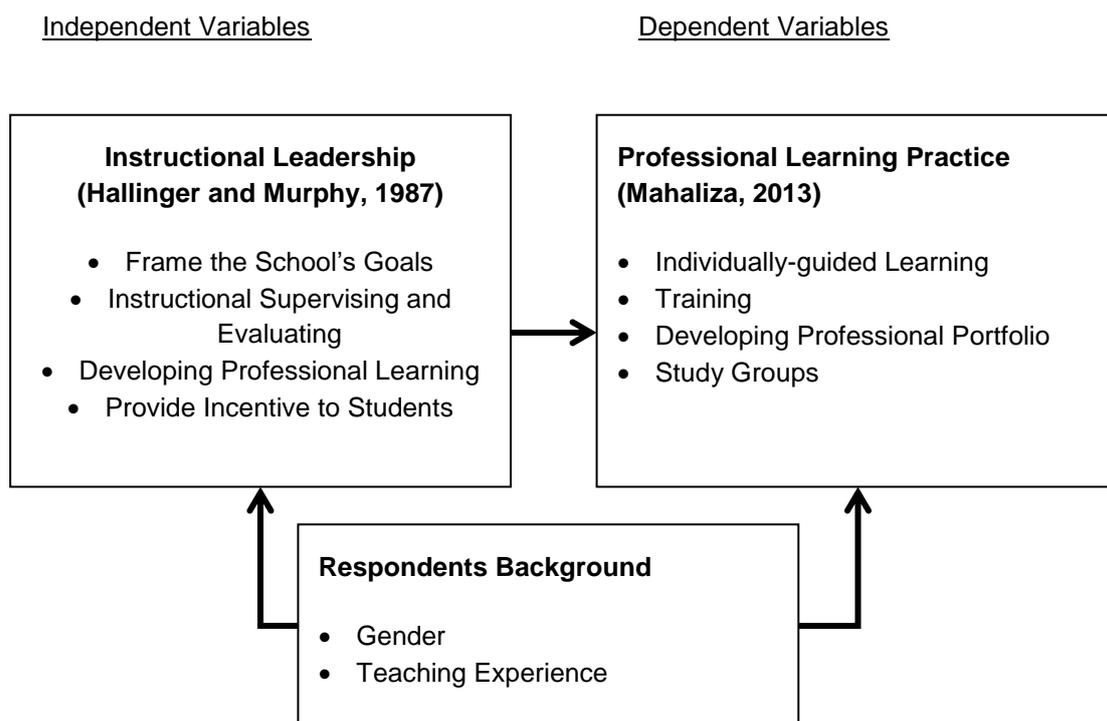


Figure 1. Conceptual Study Framework

3 METHODOLOGY

This study used descriptive survey model utilizing quantitative methods that studying the population by means of data measurement from some prescribed samples (Ary, Jacobs & Sorenson, 2013). In measuring the variables on leadership of the school practicing instructional leader, the research instrument used was based on Principal Instructional Rating Scale (PIMRS) (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987) questionnaires that was modified by Mohd Yusri and Wan Abd Aziz (2011) while the variables on teacher's professional learning was based on questionnaires modified by Mahaliza (2013). In interpreting the levels for variables on instructional leadership, the mean score of between 1.00 to 2:33 interpreted as low, mean score 2.34 to 3.67 interpreted as a moderate and the mean score 3.68 to 5.00 interpreted as a high level of instructional leadership role practised by headmasters (Landell, 1997). As for the professional learning practice variables, the mean score of 1.00 to 2:00 interpreted as low level, mean score of 2:01 to 3:00 interpreted as a moderate level and the mean score of 3.01 to 4:00 interpreted as a high level professional learning practice (Mahaliza, 2013).

The reliability of the headmaster's instructional leadership has an alpha value of 0.956, whereas the reliability score of teacher's professional learning is 0.945. This showed that all items used in this study were well above the acceptance score. Data collection was carried out for 14 days. The researcher asked permission from the head teachers of the selected schools to get the teacher's response. Data were collected and analyzed using SPSSX-window version 20.0 (Statistical Packages for Social Science 20.0) for the t test, analysis of variance and correlation analysis.

4 FACTOR ANALYSES VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

This section will discuss about sampling procedure, factor analyses, validity and reliability.

4.1 Sampling

Data used in this study consist of 2 batches of questionnaires responses from participants in 8 primary schools in Selangor. There are two phase of data collections. The first set of data was obtained from 2 primary schools in Petaling Perdana district in Selangor. This set of data was used in preliminary study as to perform exploratory factor analysis. There were 60 sets of questionnaires were distributed to each of these 2 primary schools. The number of questionnaires obtained from the first batch was 120 sets. Due to time constraints, the second batch of data was obtained from 6 high performance primary schools in Selangor. For the study with a population of 521 (JPS, 2015), it was expected to gather a total sample of 212 teachers in accordance to the systematic random sampling technique and formula in determining sample sizes by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). All data from the second group were used for the analysis of the t test, ANOVA and correlation tests. A total of 251 questionnaires were successfully received from 6 high performance schools, but only 244 sets were valid for analysis.

4.2 Factor analysis, validity test and reliability

The questionnaires had been administered to six panel which are trained teachers to identify if there were any confusion regarding the items and recorded in the space provided for improvements or been dropped out (Cresswell, 2013; Flowers, 2006). The purpose was to improve the items and to ensure it was suitable for the Malaysian context. Furthermore, it was important to get a feedback on the quality of the questionnaire to ensure it was easy to understand and using the appropriate language (Mahaliza Mansor, Norlia Mat Norwani & Jamal @ Nordin Yunus, 2011). The samples were asked to evaluate about the clarity of each items by using the scale given (Flowers, 2006). A scale of 1 to 10 was used to determine the validity coefficient for each item. According to Tuckman and Waheed (1981) in previous literature (Sidek Mohd Noah & Jamaludin Ahmad, 2005) if the total of the score obtained from the experts is 70% or above, it means that the item has a high score in the aspect of content validity. Otherwise the item will be dropped from the questionnaires (Rodzimah, Mahaliza & Norlia, 2015). The results of content validity were presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Content validity scores

| Panel | Panel 1 | Panel 2 | Panel 3 | Panel 4 | Panel 5 | Panel 6 | Cum. Score |
|--------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------|
| Instructional Leadership | 100 | 100 | 62.76 | 63.68 | 80.13 | 98.55 | 84.19 |
| Profesional Learning | 100 | 100 | 77.88 | 78.46 | 80.00 | 100.00 | 89.39 |

Meanwhile, to ensure the instrument has reasonable construct validity, the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) through orthogonal rotation with varimax method had been used. The EFA applied the following rules as suggested by literature (Hair et al., 2010; Chua, 2014):

- i. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity had to be significant ($p < .05$); 0.000
- ii. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling index $\geq .5$; .861
- iii. Eigenvalue > 1 ;
- iv. Items with the factor loading $> .5$ were retained;

However, for instructional leadership only four roles were retained such as frames the schools' goals, supervises and evaluates instruction, promotes professional development and provides incentives to students. While, the other 6 roles namely communicates the school's goals, coordinates the curriculum, monitors student progress, protects instructional time, provides incentives to teachers and maintains high visibility have been excluded. As for profesional learning, there were four factors retained as well, such as individually-guided, training, professional portfolios and study groups. Whereas, three factors which were collaborative problem solving, observation and assessment, as well as research study had been excluded. The results of exploratory factor analysis were presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Exploratory factor analysis values for the questionnaires

| Construct | Number of Factor | Number of item | Factor loading | Percentage of variance | Cronbach's α |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Instructional Leadership | 4 | 18 | .64 - .79 | 63.29 | |
| Frames the schools' goals | | 5 | .64 - .79 | 16.33 | .92 |
| Supervises and evaluates instruction | | 6 | .69 - .74 | 16.11 | .87 |
| Promotes profesional development | | 4 | .72 - .79 | 16.38 | .90 |
| Provides incentives to students | | 3 | .64 - .72 | 11.91 | .88 |
| Profesional Learning | 4 | 19 | .57 - .82 | 68.61 | |
| Individually-Guided Learning | | 4 | .59 - .82 | 9.96 | .85 |
| Study Group | | 4 | .74 - .82 | 13.88 | .94 |
| Training | | 5 | .57 - .82 | 16.70 | .82 |
| Professional Portfolio | | 6 | .80 - .84 | 17.95 | .94 |

Source: Rodzimah, Mahaliza & Norlia Mat Norwani (2015)

In terms of demographic characteristics, the percentage of respondents was higher for female teachers (71.7%) compared to the male teacher (27.9%). In terms of teaching experience, sample distribution of the variable teaching experience had allowed higher interval range for these two intervals which were groups 7-18 as well as 19 and above. That was because these intervals represented the same distribution within the studied population (Huberman, 1993). There was 12.3% between 1 to 3 years of experience, whereas 17.6% of the teachers surveyed were between 4 to 6 years of experience. There were 44.7% teachers classified having experience between 7 to 18 years and 24.6% were above 19 years of experience.

According to table 3, there were four roles of instructional leadership such as frames the schools' goals with a mean score of 4.26, supervises and evaluates instruction with a mean score of 4.10, promotes profesional development with a mean score of 4.34 and provides incentives to students with a mean score of 4.32; entire variables were at a high level. This reflected that the teachers had the perception that their headmasters had fulfilled the instructional leadership role in school management, at a high level.

Table 3. Mean Score and Standard Deviation for Each Instructional Leadership Variables

| Instructional Leadership | <i>n</i> | Mean | Standard Deviation | Level |
|--------------------------------------|----------|------|--------------------|-------|
| Frame the schools' goals | 244 | 4.26 | 0.54 | High |
| Supervises and evaluates instruction | 244 | 4.10 | 0.52 | High |
| Promotes profesional development | 244 | 4.34 | 0.52 | High |
| Provides incentives to students | 244 | 4.32 | 0.57 | High |
| | | | | |
| Instructional Leadership | 244 | 4.25 | 0.44 | High |

Based on table 4, there were four practices of teacher's profesional learning namely individually-guided with a mean score of 3.33, training with a mean score of 3.34, profesional portfolios with a mean score of 3.09 and study groups with a mean score of 3.23, with all practices were at a high level. This also showed that teachers had the perception that profesional learning practices had been performed at a high level in their schools.

Table 4. Mean Score and Standard Deviation for Professional Learning Practices

| Professional Learning Model | n | Mean | Standard Deviation | Level |
|-----------------------------|-----|------|--------------------|-------|
| Group Learning | 234 | 3.23 | 0.41 | High |
| Professional Portfolio | 222 | 3.09 | 0.40 | High |
| Exercise | 244 | 3.34 | 0.39 | High |
| Self-Learning Guide | 244 | 3.33 | 0.39 | High |
| | | | | |
| Professional Learning | 244 | 3.23 | 0.33 | High |

Table 5 displays the correlation between the headmaster's instructional leadership and the teacher's professional learning. This section addresses the research question, "Is there any relationship between headmaster's instructional leadership and teacher's professional learning?" In order to examine the strength of the relationship between these two variables, Pearson correlation coefficient was used. The numerical values of correlation coefficient yield a clear indication of investigation. According to Field (2009), Pearson correlation coefficient (r) is in the interval between -1 and +1, whereby the coefficient of +1 indicated a perfect positive correlation between the two variables. The coefficient value of -1 shows a perfect negative correlation and the coefficient value 0 indicated no linear relationship. To measure the strength of the variables that were examined in this study, Sheskin (2007) suggested the following interpretations on the correlation coefficient values. The value of 0.80 to 1.00 suggested strong relationship. The value 0.50 to 0.79 indicated very slightly strong relationship. However, correlations ranging from 0.20 to 0.49 shows very slightly relationships between variables. Conversely, the closer the final answer is to 0, the lesser the variables are associated together and the value 0.01 to 0.19 indicated a weak relationship. Lastly, the value 0.00 showed there was no relationship between variables. This study attempted to investigate the relationship between the headmaster's instructional leadership role and teacher's professional learning practice. According to the data in Table 5, there was a significant relationship between the headmaster's instructional leadership role and teacher's professional learning practice. For instance, the correlation coefficient between instructional leadership role and the teacher's training was 0.43, which indicated that there was a very slightly relationship between the two variables. In addition, for teachers' professional learning and the headmaster's supervises and evaluates instruction, there was also a very slightly relationship between the two variables with correlation value of 0.44 only. Furthermore, the correlation coefficient between headmaster's instructional leadership role and teacher's professional learning practice was 0.46 which indicated positive correlation, but very slightly relationship.

Table 5 Correlation Matrix between the Studied Variables

| | M | SP | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|----|------|-----|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1 | 4.25 | .44 | - | .46** | .80** | .83** | .81** | .82** | .41** | .43** | .36** | .19** |
| 2 | 3.23 | .33 | | - | .33** | .44** | .39** | .33** | .79** | .80** | .77** | .77** |
| 3 | 4.26 | .54 | | | - | .55** | .52** | .54** | .33** | .34** | .23** | .16** |
| 4 | 4.10 | .52 | | | | - | .60** | .57** | .31** | .33** | .36** | .24** |
| 5 | 4.34 | .52 | | | | | - | .55** | .38** | .38** | .29** | .18** |
| 6 | 4.32 | .57 | | | | | | - | .33** | .35** | .31** | .04** |
| 7 | 3.33 | .39 | | | | | | | - | .81** | .42** | .41** |
| 8 | 3.34 | .39 | | | | | | | | - | .43** | .47** |
| 9 | 3.23 | .42 | | | | | | | | | - | .56** |
| 10 | 3.09 | .40 | | | | | | | | | | - |

**p<.01, n=244

| | | | |
|----|--|-----|-----------------------------------|
| 1: | Instructional Leadership | 6: | Provide Incentives for Students |
| 2: | Professional Learning Practise | 7: | Individually-Guided Learning |
| 3: | Frame the School's Goals | 8: | Training |
| 4: | Instructional Supervising and Evaluating | 9: | Study Groups |
| 5: | Developing Professional Learning | 10: | Developing Professional Portfolio |

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In overall, teachers assessed both variables of instructional leadership and professional learning practices at a high level. These high levels were translated as headmasters frequently practiced their role as instructional leaders and the teachers implementing instructional learning practices at a high level of professionalism. In this study, four main roles highlighted were to frame the goals of the school, instructional supervising and evaluating; developing professional learning practices and provides incentives to students. While the four main practices applied by teachers in their professional learning were individually-guided learning, training, group learning and professional portfolio. This showed that the principals and teachers in these schools were committed to implementing the recommendations of the Malaysia's Ministry of Education, especially in the fourth and fifth transformation shift of Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 for three years after implementation. The shift meant that headmasters playing an instructional leadership role in running the school administration and elevate the teaching profession through teacher's proactive professional learning practices in school.

The study also showed that the relationship between headmaster's instructional leadership with teacher's professional learning practices is directly positive and significant despite at a level of moderately weak. The finding of this study was consistent with the research findings of Wan Nor Ashikin (2012) that was carried out in a high performing school as well. This gives the impression that the excellent instructional leadership produced only a small impact and unable to fully affect the teacher's professional learning in the school under study. Among the factors that may be considered as the outcome of the finding to this study was firstly, the study was done on high-performing schools where teachers were already trained and productive in ensuring their self-skills are always at its best and is able to assess their own learning requirements (Guskey, 2002). In addition, 70% of the respondents are teachers who have been teaching for over 10 years and can be classified as highly skilled teachers (Chin, 2014).

The findings of this study further reinforced the instructional leadership theory proposed by Hallinger and Murphy (1987) and professional learning model by Mahaliza (2013) when all elements highlighted in this study achieved a high mean score. This study suggests that each headmasters need to apply instructional leadership based on the context of each school. This was because in determining the direction and the success of any school, the school required a solid work group driven by headmasters who practice effective instructional leadership (Preliminary Report, PPPM 2013-2015, 2012). This study suggests focusing on teacher's professional learning because quality teacher produces quality students. Headmasters should give the opportunity, space and useful experience to teachers in order to improve their professionalism through the practice of professional learning (Rosnah and Muhammad Faizal, 2013). This study also suggests that the teacher's professional learning practice is very important because the teachers are main pillars in executing the aspiration of Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025. The key element in ensuring the effective professional learning practices is headmasters who played a role in the administration of instructional leadership.

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