THE INFLUENCE OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP OF MIDDLE MANAGERS ON TEACHER COMMITMENT THROUGH PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY AND THE ROLE OF TRUST IN LEADER AS A MODERATOR

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by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EPRD	Education Planning and Research Department
HOTS	Higher Order Thinking Skills
IAB	Institut Aminuddin Baki
MEB	Malaysia Education Blueprint
MOE	Ministry of Education Malaysia
PIMRS	Principal Instruction Management Rating Scale
PLC	Professional Learning Community
PLCA	Professional Learning Community Assessment

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PENGARUH KEPIMPINAN INSTRUKSIONAL PEMIMPIN PERTENGAHAN TERHADAP KOMITMEN GURU MELALUI KOMUNITI PEMBELAJARAN PROFESIONAL DAN PERANAN KEPERCAYAAN KEPADA PEMIMPIN SEBAGAI MODERATOR

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini mengkaji pengaruh kepimpinan instruksional pemimpin pertengahan terhadap komitmen guru, dan peranan komuniti pembelajaran profesional (KPP) sebagai mediator serta kepercayaan kepada pemimpin sebagai moderator antara hubungan kepimpinan instruksional pemimpin pertengahan dan komitmen guru. Kajian ini direkabentuk menggunakan kaedah tinjauan. Soal selidik yang diubahsuai daripada Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) oleh Hallinger dan Murphy (1985), Professional Learning Community Assessment (PLCA) oleh Huffman dan Hipp (2003), Omnibus T-Scale oleh Hoy dan Tschnnen-Moran (2003) dan komitmen guru oleh Nordin (2007) telah digunapakai sebagai alat ukur kajian. Pengumpulan data kuantitatif telah dilakukan melalui kaedah soal selidik terhadap 400 orang guru sekolah menengah berdasarkan pecahan zon mengikut geografi dengan menggunakan kaedah *multi-stage sampling*. Pengujian hipotesis dilakukan dengan menggunakan skor min, prosedur regresi berganda dan regresi berganda berhierarki yang ditentukan melalui kriteria Baron dan Kenny (1986). Dapatan utama kajian mendapati kepimpinan instruksional pemimpin pertengahan, KPP, kepercayaan kepada pemimpin dan komitmen guru berada pada tahap yang tinggi. Kajian ini juga mendapati mengurus program instruksional mempunyai pengaruh yang kuat kepada komitmen guru. Kajian ini juga mendapati mengurus program instruksional dan mewujudkan iklim pembelajaran yang positif mempunyai pengaruh yang kuat terhadap KPP. Seterusnya, kesemua dimensi KPP berfungsi sebagai mediator separa antara pemantauan kemajuan akademik pelajar dan komitmen guru terhadap sekolah. Akhir sekali, kajian ini mendapati kepercayaan kepada pemimpin mempunyai pengaruh moderator yang positif

terhadap kepimpinan instruksional dan komitmen guru. Hubungan antara kepimpinan instruksional dan komitmen guru terhadap pelajar menjadi lebih kuat sekiranya guru-guru mempunyai kepercayaan yang tinggi kepada pemimpin. Kesimpulannya, kepimpinan instruksional dan amalan KPP mampu meningkatkan komitmen guru dan seharusnya disebarluas di sekolah-sekolah di negara ini. Selain itu, kepercayaan guru-guru terhadap pemimpin memainkan peranan yang penting dalam meningkatkan komitmen guru. Salah satu implikasi yang diperolehi daripada kajian ini ialah sudah tiba masanya untuk pengetua sekolah berkongsi tanggungjawab sebagai pemimpin instruksional dengan pemimpin pertengahan kerana ianya boleh dianggap sebagai platfom latihan dan titik permulaan untuk mereka terus mencebur ke bidang pengurusan. Kajian ini juga turut membincangkan cadangan-cadangan penambahbaikan berdasarkan dapatan kajian, diikuti oleh cadangan untuk kajian lanjutan.

THE INFLUENCE OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP OF MIDDLE MANAGERS ON TEACHER COMMITMENT THROUGH PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY AND THE ROLE OF TRUST IN LEADER AS A MODERATOR

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of instructional leadership of middle managers on teacher commitment, professional learning community (PLC) as the mediator and trust in leader as the moderator on the relationship between instructional leadership and teacher commitment. This study is designed using the survey method. The questionnaire was adapted from Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) by Hallinger and Murphy (1985), Professional Learning Community Assessment (PLCA) by Huffman and Hipp (2003), Omnibus T-Scale by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2003) and teacher commitment by Nordin (2007). The questionnaire was administered to 400 secondary school teachers based on their geographical locations which have been clustered into zones using a multi-stage sampling. The hypotheses were tested using mean score, multiple regression procedure and hierarchical multiple regression as specified by Baron and Kenny (1988). The study shows that the instructional leadership practised by the middle managers, PLC, trust in leader and teacher commitment were at a high level. Secondly, managing instructional programme had the most influence on teacher commitment. In addition, both managing instructional programme and developing positive learning climate had the same impact on PLC. It is also discovered that all dimensions of PLC functioned as partial mediators between monitoring student progress and teacher commitment to school. The result of the study also indicates that instructional leadership was positively related to teacher commitment. The relationships between all the seven dimensions of instructional leadership and teacher commitment to student were stronger among teachers with high trust in leader than among those with low trust in the leader. In conclusion, instructional leadership and the

practice of PLC were able to increase the commitment of teachers and should be distributed to other schools in the country. In addition, teachers' trust in leader leaders also plays an important role in improving teacher commitment. One of the implications gained from this study is that it is timely for the principals to share with their middle managers the responsibilities as instructional leaders as senior assistants can be considered as a training ground for the principalship and also as a starting point for most of the senior assistants who expect to move into other areas of school management. Discussion on further research as well as recommendation for future studies are also presented in this study.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Teaching and learning is a very challenging task that school administrators and teachers have to face. Some of these challenges are the issue of teacher performance, accountability, student expectations and the demand in building students' 21st century skills (Eduviews, 2008). As mentioned by Joesoef (2009), school leaders have to ensure that teachers provide instruction that is not only suitable, interesting and meaningful, but also preparing the students to be competitive in the working environment. Thus, school administrators normally have to face the pressure in ensuring that teachers are effective. This is because teachers are often evaluated based on the students' examination result and their teaching practice.

Teachers are under pressure. They have to deal with their own unique sets of challenges that could add more emotional and professional stress to their lives, for example, teachers are asked to attend more professional development and they have to deal with the increasingly exhausting course content (Eduviews, 2008). Teachers in Malaysia are burden with continuous professional development which are normally held on Saturdays and take a longer duration. Siti Nur Aisya and Ahmad Zabidi (2016) found that the aspects of day and duration of professional development has a weak relationship with the improvement of teachers' professionalism. This is because teachers are reluctant to attend training held on Saturdays and they also feel that the duration of long professional development may disturb their daily routine at schools and may even reduce their commitment to the training.

Moreover, teachers' work is not merely imparting knowledge to the learners but they also have to deal with the increased amount of reporting needed, additional assessment, and preparing different types of teaching materials for diverse learners. Not only that, the teachers also have to deal with students who have different sets of experiences and expectations. This is because students now live in a digital world, where Internet, text messaging, social networking and multimedia are the most important applications in their lives. Subsequently, students would expect the same level of technology opportunities to be used in their schools. Obviously, teachers have to be updated with all these technology. Otherwise, there would be no collaboration between the way students live and the way they learn, and finally student engagement suffers. Thus, this is a challenge to the teachers as Joesoef (2009) points out that the way of learning in the 21st century is very demanding as students have to learn more and differently in order to gain more knowledge and master more skills.

Next, there is a need for the school leaders to play their roles as instructional leaders. In the context of school leadership in Malaysia, schools are led by principals. Being school principals, they have to carry out instructional leadership responsibilities on top of already demanding management responsibilities. However, the current leadership trends are no longer seeing school leaders assuming all responsibilities as instructional leaders alone. Enueme and Egwunyenga (2008) point out that principals do not have enough time to practise instructional leadership because they are too occupied with responsibilities of running the schools. Therefore, in making sure that instructional leadership is also being practised in schools in Malaysia, principals should share the instructional leadership responsibilities with the middle managers (senior assistants, head of departments, head of *panitias*, and senior subject teachers) and teachers in the schools (Alimuddin, 2006). Harris (2002) emphasises that the leadership trends are not just focusing on the ability, skills or talents of individuals but rather on focusing how to create a culture of shared responsibility in the organisation. Therefore, the responsibilities as instructional leaders have to be shared

among members in the organisation because teachers too have knowledge and experience needed, particularly in the context of teaching and learning (Hall & Hord, 2001; James Ang & Balasandran, 2009).

Instructional leader is an individual who has a strong influence on teachers because teachers put great belief in the practice of instructional leadership. In order for the instructional leaders to generate trust from the teachers, they need to have the latest knowledge in teaching skills in guiding and leading the teachers towards their career advancement. Rozita (2010) believes that the practice of instructional leadership could enhance teachers' performance and commitment if the teachers have trust in the leaders. In other words, the level of trust of the school teachers in their leaders could have an impact on the commitment of the teacher.

Schools have been considered as places for teaching where the scenario of teacher teaching and student learning is a norm. However, the challenge in 21st century has changed the perception of schools from places for teaching to learning places for both students and teachers. In other words, schools should be seen as learning organisations. In a study done by Ishak and Nor Asikin (2003), they found that it is the responsibilities of the school leaders to develop a learning community, where members are capable of learning new skills and knowledge continuously. Therefore, one of the ways Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) can encourage building learning organisation is by implementing professional learning community (PLC) in schools (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia [KPM], 2014). In addition, according to Dufour (2004), building schools to be PLC seems to be the most appropriate way in ensuring that teachers are always up-to-date with the most recent teaching techniques through continuous adult learning.

In conclusion, it is about time for the middle managers to play their roles as instructional leaders in the organisation. The instructional leadership role is now to be seen from the perspective of a partnership with members in the organisation to enhance teacher performance. This can result in a big impact on the organisation such as developing leadership skills.

1.1 Background of the Study

The national education system in Malaysia consists of pre-school education, primary education, secondary education and post-secondary education. The secondary education consists of lower and upper secondary schools. According to the MOE portal in 2013, there are a total of 1,928 (83.2 per cent) national secondary schools in Malaysia. These national secondary schools are the major share in the Malaysian education system. Moreover, one of the six strategic thrusts of the *Pelan Induk Pembangunan Pendidikan 2006-2010* (KPM, 2006) is to strengthen the national schools as the school of choice. This means that these schools will be equipped with sufficient and quality education facilities, sufficient trained teachers as well as adequate number of supporting staffs. This gives a greater impact for the instructional leaders to play their roles to the fullest for the benefit of the teachers, students and schools. The national secondary schools are responsible in producing quality students who are knowledgeable, skilful and competent (Ministry of Education Malaysia [MOE], 2012a).

In order to sustain the quality of the education in Malaysia, these national schools have to report the performance of their school through the *Standard Kualiti Pendidikan Malaysia* (SKPM) 2010 instrument. SKPM 2010 is a clear and comprehensive education quality standard that consists of five established standards covering all aspects that lead to the quality of education, namely (1) School Leadership, (2) School Management, (3) Curriculum, Co-curricular, Sports and Student Affair, (4) Teaching and Learning; and

(5) Students Outcome. Each standard has a number of aspects and the assessment of each aspect is made on a scale of six scores and the total of all aspects in the standard determines the standard score. From this score, the schools' performance are determined by putting the schools from Band 1 to Band 7, whereby Band 1 is the high-performing schools and Band 7 is the low-performing schools (KPM, 2010). According to Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB) Annual Report 2013 (MOE, 2014), it is reported that in 2012, there was 3.1 per cent secondary schools with Band 1, 6.4 per cent with Band 2, 8.3 per cent with Band 3, 31.4 per cent with Band 4, 47 per cent with Band 5, 3.7 per cent with Band 6, and 0.1 per cent with Band 7. This shows that most secondary schools in Malaysia fall under Band 5 and the government is trying to reduce the number of schools in Band 5, 6 and 7. This is also reported in the MEB Annual Report 2013, whereby the quality of schools, which is measured from Band 1 to Band 7 has improved from 2012 to 2013 (MOE, 2014). Overall, the number of high-performing schools (Band 1 and 2) in 2013 increased to 9.68% compared to 9.45 in 2012, while the number of low-performing schools (Band 6 and 7) decreased to 2.76% compared to 3.82 in 2012.

In Malaysia, the structure and organisation of educational administration is centralised and its administrative structure has four distinct hierarchical levels, namely (1) federal, (2) state, (3) district and (4) schools (MOE, 2008). The institutions representing these levels are the Ministry of Education, the State Education Departments, the Districts Education Offices and the schools. In Education in Malaysia: A Journey to Excellence (MOE, 2008), it outlines the responsibility of each four distinct administrative level. At the federal level, the MOE is responsible for the effective implementation of the education policy and the administration of the entire education system. The State Education Departments coordinate and monitor the implementation of national education programmes, projects and activities besides providing feedback to the central agency for overall planning. At district level, the offices serve as an effective link between the schools and the State Education Departments. At school level, it is the responsibility of the principal who is both

the administrative and instructional leader (MOE, 2008). The principal is assisted by the administrative senior assistant who is responsible for administration aspects of the school organisation, the student affair senior assistant who assists in all matters related to students' welfare and the co-curricular senior assistant who manages the school co-curricular activities. Schools with double session have afternoon supervisors who assists the principal in supervising the daily administrative and instructional activities of the afternoon session. Hence, throughout this paper, the term 'administrative senior assistants' is also referred to as the 'middle managers'.

In order to ensure the quality of school performance, principals have to deal with instructional and management responsibilities. Often times, school principals do not seem to have enough time allocated to practise instructional activities (Enueme & Egwunyenga, 2008). Thus, school principals could share the leadership activities among the senior assistants and teachers. As for the instructional and management responsibilities, the administrative senior assistants can be empowered to take this responsibilities. Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2001) even highlighted that the administrative senior assistants are also responsible in improving the teaching process by giving direct guidance to teachers and encouraging in-house training. They are also viewed as the key manager for the curriculum. They have to monitor, supervise and evaluate the curriculum in the school (Pusat Perkembangan Kurikulum, 2001). Thus, by involving directly with curriculum, the administrative senior assistants are actually already practising instructional leadership functions.

Research done by Wan Roslina (2011) claims that the middle managers in the national secondary schools in Malaysia normally would practise two instructional leadership dimensions, which are managing instructional programme; and developing positive learning climate. The middle managers are responsible in administering the instructional activities in the school by working together with teachers in areas related to the evaluation, development,

and implementation of curriculum and instruction. Specifically, they can manage the instructional activities through supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum and monitoring student learning.

The middle managers also have to develop a positive school learning climate in their schools. Hallinger and Murphy (1987) define school learning climate as school conditions that can influence students learning. Thus, the middle managers or the administrative senior assistants can shape the learning climate directly and indirectly by protecting instructional time, selecting and participating in high-quality teacher development programmes consistent with the school mission and promoting incentives to teachers and learning.

Besides principals' leadership style, teacher commitment also plays an important role towards achieving school efficiency. A research done by Arumugam, Cheah, Yahya, Yaakob and Rozlina (2015) shows that principals' transformational leadership has a significant relationship on teacher commitment where principals' inspiring motivation dimension is the domain of the transformational leadership style. They also agree that lack of commitment would impede the principals' efford to develop their schools and some of the examples showing the lack of commitment among teachers are disobeying rules and regulations, late to class, showing boredom and uncreative in teaching and lazy to check students' work. Hence, this shows that the leadership style of a principal is able to produce a more effective and committed teachers (Arumugam et al., 2015).

Furthermore, while demonstrating and practising instructional leadership, the middle managers also have to ensure that teachers do have trust in them. The success of a school is often said to have a relationship with the level of trust in leaders. Yukl (2006) believes that leaders can shape the teachers' performance by imparting mutual trust and cooperation from the teachers. In fact, Mangin and Stoelinga (2011) point out that to improve teaching practise of the teachers, the middle managers need to establish trusting relationships with the teachers. In addition, Yilmaz (2008) affirms that when teachers have trust in their leaders,

then they are willing to be vulnerable to the leaders' action. In fact, when trust is prevalent, the school atmosphere would be open and cooperative, teachers would be more responsible, productivity would increase, good team work, and high job satisfaction. Once teachers have trust in their leaders, it encourages the teachers to work harder, to be more motivated and committed towards the school, students, teaching work and the profession. As Solomon (2007) concludes that middle managers have to play a critical role in maintaining the commitment of the teacher by giving more attention on personal and school context factors.

In addition, schools should be viewed as learning community. A school learning community normally promotes an active collaboration with principals, teachers, students and parents, discussing on what could be made to improve the quality of learning in the school. One of the ways in encouraging learning community is by practising PLC in their schools. In Malaysia, MOE has promoted PLC as one of the programmes to support teachers in enhancing their professionalism. The MEB 2013-2025 Annual Report 2015 reported that in 2015, MOE has expanded PLC to 356 new schools nationwide, increasing the number to 1,548 schools since 2011. PLC is conducted through collaboration among teachers in improving the quality and practices for teaching and learning. Various activities are implemented such as sharing of knowledge and expertise, group work and coaching partnership (MOE, 2016). A study carried out by Rahimah and Zuraidah (2006) found that PLC is actively being practised among the national secondary schools in Malaysia and one of the benefits of PLC includes better informed and committed teachers (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003).

In conclusion, middle managers, especially the administrative senior assistants, need to practise instructional leadership and build trust in leader to sustain teacher commitment. The national secondary schools also need to be viewed as PLC and as to investigate whether PLC can mediate the relationship between instructional leadership of the administrative senior assistants and teacher commitment.

1.2   Statement of Problem

The quality of the education system is largely dependent on the quality of the teachers. In Malaysia, teachers need to equip themselves with the 21st century learning approaches as MOE is committed in improving the quality of education system. The ministry is now emphasising on students' active participation, the application of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in curriculum, assessment and co-curricular activities, and also the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to prepare students for the changing landscape of higher education and future opportunities (MOE, 2017). However, in order for the teachers to be able to equip themselves with the 21st century learning approaches, the involvement and commitment from the teachers is needed. As Habib and Syed Kamaruzaman (2011) point out that teachers must be willing to make a difference and ready to lead the change in their school, understand technology, innovative, diligent, trustworthy, skilled and ready to learn. In short, the willingness and commitment of teachers can determine the success or failure in the implementation of an effective educational planning.

One of the issues on willingness and commitment of teachers is that teachers are becoming less committed in performing their roles because they are burnout. Teaching in school is not an easy task anymore. Teaching workloads in schools is excessive as teachers are now faced with increasing reporting and extra testing. Too much time is spent on filling in form and marks for reporting and they even have to do extra testing and classes for the students. They do not have time to prepare for their lesson the next day. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2009) reported that 30 per cent of teachers in Malaysia are lack of pedagogical preparation. Teachers who are not committed in their teaching work may not make a good and creative use of class time and may not have high faith for the students' performance. On top of that, the use of technology-based tools and resources in education also have added a burden on the teachers. No doubt, this technology

environment has definitely created a lot of innovations for teaching and learning, but at the same time, these innovations are actually asking more from the teachers.

Another issue on willingness and commitment of teachers is that teachers are less committed in equipping themselves with current teaching skills and up-to-date knowledge from day-to-day. A qualitative study was conducted by the Higher Education Leadership Academy *(Akademi Kepimpinan Pengajian Tinggi)* on the teachers' pedagogical skills. From 125 teaching observations in 41 schools throughout Malaysia, it is found that only 12% of the teachers delivered the high standard of teaching, indicating that this group of teachers would implement the best pedagogical practices, while another 38% is at satisfactory level. On the contrary, 50% of the observations shows that the teaching delivered was not satisfactory. This shows that teachers are more dependent on passive teaching, and they are only keen on making sure students understand the basic content of the subjects for the purpose of summative assessment rather than applying HOTS in their teaching (KPM, 2014). This finding suggests that teacher commitment in Malaysia need to be looked into as teacher commitment can affect student academic achievement and school performance (Rozi, Abd Latif, Sofiah & Faezah, 2016). Therefore, this study looks at ways of making teachers to be more committed in their work.

Furthermore, strong leadership is important in ensuring positive outcomes in schools. The most effective school leaders are not only managers but also instructional leaders who can transform their school environment (MOE, 2017). Moreover, a growing body of literature has studied on the role of instructional leadership in schools as school leaders' instructional leadership have a positive influence on schools (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003; Andi Audryanah, 2007; Hallinger & Murphy,1985; Sazali, Rusmini, Abang Hut, & Zamri, 2007). However, these studies on instructional leadership are mainly done on the role of the principals as instructional leaders, and very little discussion is done on the role of the middle managers as instructional leaders particularly on the administrative senior assistants. As

Hallinger (2005) also proclaims that discussion on instructional leadership as a shared functions, reference made to teachers, head of department or even the senior assistants as instructional leaders is very limited. The middle managers, especially the administrative senior assistants, can play their role as instructional leaders to boost the teachers' performance. In fact, Lambert (2002) believes that school leaders need the participation from other teachers in the school in order to carry out the role of instructional leaders. However, these middle managers are seldom given the opportunity to play their roles as instructional leaders because they are not given the chance to make their own decision since all decisions in the schools are made through the principals. They would normally carry out more managerial skills rather than instructional. Marks and Printy (2003) argue that this style of management could affect the teachers' commitment because they find it difficult to discuss, ask or share information and ideas regarding teaching and learning with these middle managers whereas instructional leaders should work together with teachers towards school's excellence by searching for ideas and expertise of teachers in curriculum, instruction and testing. Thus, study on middle managers, especially the administrative senior assistants, as instructional leaders need to be carried out.

Besides the role of instructional leaders of the middle managers, school environment can also help in enhancing teacher commitment. PLC, which is another way of encouraging schools to be a learning organisation can reduce the burden added to the teachers' teaching workload. Scholars done abroad on PLC are mostly studying on the direct relationship between PLC and the impact on student achievement (Croasmun, 2007), teacher improvement (Graham-Migel, 2008; Michelen, 2011) and leadership (Alva, 2009; Gaspar, 2010). There are also other studies which are merely investigating the implementation on PLC (Walker, 2006; Wiener, 2007). Studies done on PLC in Malaysia are mainly focuses on the implementation of PLC (Rahimah & Zuraidah, 2006; Zahizan, 2011). However, the role of PLC as the mediating variable in the relationship between leadership and the psychological impacts of teachers is very rare. The question of whether PLC can mediate the

relationship between instructional leadership of the middle managers and teacher commitment need to be investigated.

In addition, many middle managers do not seem to realise the need to allocate time to develop their relationships with the teachers. According to Bas (2012), teachers having great faith in their school leaders would work harder to do their duties and work collaboratively with other colleagues. The absence of trust in schools could not only bring negative school environment, but also tarnish the commitment of the teachers. Therefore, teachers' perception of trust towards the administrative senior assistants is an important aspect to look into. In fact, Dirks and Ferrin (2001) carry out a research to investigate the moderating influence of trust on behaviours, whereby trust is a stronger predictor of individuals' performance when they work together than independently. Therefore, this study is going to examine whether trust in administrative senior assistants moderates the relationship between instructional leadership of middle managers and teacher commitment.

In line with the above problems, this research needs to be carried out to study the influence of instructional leadership of the administrative senior assistants on teacher commitment. This study also needs to identify the influence of PLC as the mediator and trust in leader as the moderator on the relationship between instructional leadership of middle managers and teacher commitment from teachers' perspectives.

1.3   Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to investigate the influence of instructional leadership of middle managers on teacher commitment among secondary school teachers in Peninsular Malaysia. This study also investigates the influence of PLC as mediator and trust in leader as moderator on the relationship between instructional leadership and teacher commitment. The specific objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To identify the level of instructional leadership of the middle managers, professional learning community, trust in leader and teacher commitment,

2. To investigate the influence of instructional leadership of the middle managers on teacher commitment and professional learning community,

3. To investigate the influence of professional learning community on teacher commitment,

4. To investigate the influence of professional learning community as the mediator on the relationship between instructional leadership of middle managers and teacher commitment,

5. To investigate the influence of trust in leader as the moderator on the relationship between instructional leadership of middle managers and teacher commitment.

1.4 Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of instructional leadership of the middle managers, professional learning community, trust in leader and teacher commitment?

2. Does instructional leadership of the middle managers influence teacher commitment and professional learning community?

3. Does professional learning community influence teacher commitment?

4. Does professional learning community mediate the relationship between instructional leadership of the middle managers and teacher commitment?

5. Does trust in leader moderate the relationship between instructional leadership of the middle managers and teacher commitment?

1.5 Hypotheses

The hypotheses for this study are related to Research Questions 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Hypothesis 1 (refer to Research Question 2)

H_{o1}: Instructional leadership of the middle managers does not have a significant influence on teacher commitment.

Hypothesis 2 (refer to Research Question 2)

H_{o2}: Instructional leadership of the middle managers does not have a significant influence on professional learning community.

Hypothesis 3 (refer to Research Question 3)

H_{o3}: Professional learning community does not have a significant influence on teacher commitment.

Hypothesis 4 (refer to Research Question 4)

H_{o4}: Professional Learning Community does not mediate the relationship between instructional leadership of the middle managers and teacher commitment.

Hypothesis 5 (refer to Research Question 5)

H_{o5}: Trust in leader does not moderate the relationship between instructional leadership of the middle managers and teacher commitment.

1.6   Significance of the Study

This study investigates the influence of instructional leadership of the middle managers on teacher commitment. The role of PLC as the mediator and trust in leader as the moderator are also examined. Most studies done on instructional leadership are focusing on the principals (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003; Blase & Blase, 2000; Enueme & Egwunyenga, 2008). In fact, most empirical studies on instructional leadership in Malaysia education setting are also focusing on the principals (Mohd Suhaimi, 2004; Premavathy, 2010; Simin, Mohammed Sani, Komathi, Kumar & Amuta, 2015, Sukarmin, 2009; Zainal Aalam, Quah & Mistirine, 2017). In this present study, the role of administrative senior assistants as instructional leaders is studied. There is an extensive research and literature on the school leaders as instructional leaders but little research on the instructional leadership role of the middle managers, and this leaves a gap in the literature. Therefore, it is hope that this study adds value to the previous studies by closing the gap in the literature middle managers' role as instructional leaders and creating an extensive capacity for instructional leadership in Malaysian schools.

The result of this study hopes to provide a greater insight on the concept of middle managers' instructional leadership in the context of secondary school education in Malaysia. MOE is hoped to realise the valuable contribution of the middle managers' role as instructional leaders and the impact it has on education system. The findings of this study gives an indicator of the training needed for the middle managers to be effective instructional leaders. They should possess knowledge to be instructional leaders and practise them systematically and continuously. In other words, they need to be competent and knowledgeable because with this knowledge, they could manage and lead their organisation by being proactive, analytical, innovative, and efficient (Ishak & Nor Asikin, 2003). Institut Aminuddin Baki (IAB) could organise more courses to develop and upgrade the leadership expertise of these middle managers on instructional leadership once they are appointed the

position of principals in schools. Thus, this study serves as an indicator of training needed for the teachers and therefore, the MOE and IAB could plan, prepare and implement trainings for leaders or future leaders to be effective instructional leaders.

The findings of this study is also hoped to assist the State Education Department (*Jabatan Pelajaran Negeri*) in the process of selecting teachers to be the middle managers. They should be clear about their roles as instructional leaders as well as managers in the schools. This is because the post of the middle managers has to be a training platform for them to learn managing the school before they become the principals. Moreover, Marshall (1992) believe that middle managers who can lead the school as instructional leaders may serve more productively as senior assistants and looking forward for higher administrative positions.

In addition, this study hopes to assist the administrative senior assistants to practise and implement the concept of learning community through PLC in their schools. The administrative senior assistants are hope to realise the valuable contribution of collaboration within the school community and its impact on improving teaching quality and student performance. The findings of this study can also give an exposure for the administrative senior assistants in outlining activities and programmes to encourage collaboration with the school community.

The findings of this study is also hope to help the administrative senior assistants to take a closer look at the significance of building trust in leaders among the teachers. Having trust in leaders could help in maximising the teachers efforts towards a common goal, hence, resulting in higher teacher commitment. Therefore, this study serves as a platform for instructional leaders in administering an understanding about issues related to trust in leaders. Finally, this study hopes to provide a significant contribution to the existing literature on instructional leadership, PLC, trust and teacher commitment. Next, an empirical confirmation of the influence of instructional leadership of the middle managers and teacher

commitment; and the roles of mediator and moderator are to be references to other researchers and a basis for further research on instructional leadership in secondary schools education.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

This study investigates the influence of instructional leadership of middle managers on teacher commitment among secondary school teachers in Peninsular Malaysia. This study also investigates the influence of PLC as mediator and trust in leader as moderator on the relationship between instructional leadership and teacher commitment. However, in conducting this study, there are some unavoidable limitations and delimitations.

This study focuses on the national secondary schools in Peninsular Malaysia. The selection of the secondary schools is selected randomly from states in Peninsular Malaysia. The findings of this study provides an overview of secondary schools in Peninsular Malaysia, excluding Sabah and Sarawak. Therefore, the findings from these selected schools can only be generalized only to secondary schools in Peninsular Malaysia.

This study employs a survey questionnaire which is completed by the teachers themselves based on their assessment of each variable studied. The secondary school teachers' perception on PLC, trust in leader and their evaluation of their work commitment may affect the accuracy of the data obtained from the questionnaires. According to Baron and Kalsher (2001), perceptions of the respondents in a study can influence the interpretation, attitudes and their behaviour accordingly. This in turn may affect their response in the survey.

Next, teachers in secondary schools consist of those with various years of teaching experience. There are senior teachers, who are considered experienced teachers, and have served in many educational organizations as teachers before serving in the current school. There are also teachers, who are normally fresh graduates, who have just graduated from universities and come to schools without any teaching experience. The respondents for this study are selected from those who have served at least two years in schools. According to Sala (2002), the period of two years is sufficient period for teachers to know their leaders better and then make the evaluation more objective. Head of departments and heads of *panitia* are not selected as respondents for avoiding any bias in the evaluation because they are the representative of the principals and senior assistants in various aspects of administration and leadership of the schools.

This study was delimited to the type of schools selected. The type of schools selected for this study is the national secondary schools in Peninsular Malaysia. Religious, vocational, technical, fully-residential schools, national-type secondary schools (abbreviated as *SMJK*), high performing schools (*sekolah berprestasi tinggi)* and cluster schools are not included in this study in order to control the type of students, working environment and commitment that may differ across each category of the school.

This study was also delimited to the dimensions of instructional leadership. This study only employs two dimensions of instructional leadership, namely managing the instructional programme and developing the school learning climate, based on the model by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). However, the dimension of defining school vision is not included in this study because this dimension is most suitable to explore the instructional leadership practice of a principal (Wan Roslina, 2011). Moreover, in Malaysian education context, the vision and mission of any school are directive from the MOE.

1.8   Operational Definitions

1.8.1   Middle Managers

Blanford (2010) defines middle managers as selected teachers who are involved in the management of the schools together with the principals. In the context of this study, middle managers are referred to administrative senior assistants, who serve under the direction of a principal in a school. The administrative senior assistants are responsible for managing the instructional activities and developing positive school learning climate. The term 'administrative senior assistant' is used interchangeably with 'senior assistant of administration' in this study.

1.8.2   Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership refers to the school leaders who manage the instruction in the schools to enhance the teaching and learning. In the context of this study, it refers to the administrative senior assistants in the secondary schools who carry out instructional activities and promote school learning climate. This construct is measured by adapting the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) by Hallinger and Murphy (1985).

1.8.2(a)   Managing Instructional Programme

According to Hallinger (1990), one of the middle managers functions as instructional leader is to manage curriculum and instruction that are related to evaluation, development and implementation. In the context of this study, it refers to managing instructional activities that are more closely related to teaching-related activities. The term 'managing instructional activities' is used interchangeably with 'managing instructional programme'. There are three main functions of managing instructional programme:

(i)   Supervising and Evaluating Instruction

In the context of this study, it refers to the activities of inspecting and assessing classroom activities done by the administrative senior assistants such as reviewing students' work, conducting informal observations and discussing specific strengths and weaknesses in teacher's instructional practices.

(ii)   Coordinating Curriculum

In the context of this study, it refers to the administrative senior assistants' activities in making sure the curriculum in the schools is conducted properly, for example, using result of school assessment when making curricular decisions, monitoring classroom and student achievement, and take an active part in reviewing curriculum materials.

(iii)   Monitoring Student Progress

In the context of this study, monitoring student progress refers to activities done by the administrative senior assistants to ensure students are learning, such as meeting teachers individually to discuss student progress. By doing this, the administrative senior assistants could identify the students' potency and inability and one of the ways to assess the progress of the students is by using test performance. The term 'monitoring student progress' is used interchangeably with 'monitoring student learning'.

1.8.2(b)   Developing Positive School Learning Climate

The concept of developing positive learning climate in this study refers to Hallinger (1990) framework that focuses on broader scope of creating an "academic press" through the development of high standards and expectations for students and teachers. In the context of this study, it refers to activities that administrative senior assistants could carry out in

creating a learning environment for both teachers and students. There are four main functions of developing positive school learning climate:

(i)   Protecting Instructional Time

In the context of this study, it refers to administrative senior assistants' effort in making sure that learning time is fully utilized in the school and classroom, such as reducing public announcement made to avoid interruptions of teaching and learning process.

(ii)   Providing Incentives for Teachers

In the context of this study, it refers to administrative senior assistants' effort in appreciating the teachers' effort and hard work by giving rewards, praise and positive feedback to teachers.

(iii)   Promoting Professional Development

In the context of this study, it refers to administrative senior assistants' effort in building teachers' capacity through professional development.

(iv)   Providing Incentives for Learning

In the context of this study, it refers to administrative senior assistants' effort in appreciating the students' effort and hard work such as giving rewards to students for excellent achievement.

1.8.3   Professional Learning Community

Walker (2006) defines PLC as an environment, where teachers work collaboratively with other teachers, focusing more on learning than on teaching; and commitment to continuous improvement. In the context of this study, PLC is referred to activities done by teachers who work collaboratively to improve teachers' professionalism and students' performance. This

construct is measured by using the Professional Learning Community Assessment by Huffman and Hipp (2003). The characteristics for PLC are shared and supportive leadership, shared values and vison, collective learning and application, shared personal practice, supportive conditions (relationships and structures).

1.8.3(a)   Shared and Supportive Leadership

In the context of this study, shared and supportive leadership refers to a situation where both administrative senior assistants and teachers collaboratively carrying out specific duties and responsibilities in the schools. Teachers are consistently involved in discussion and the middle managers incorporate advice from teachers to make decisions. Rewards are also given for innovative actions. The middle managers should be proactive and leadership is promoted and nurtured among teachers. Finally, stakeholder shares responsibility for student learning.

1.8.3(b)   Shared Values and Vision

Shared values and vision in this study refers to teachers working in an environment that has a common purpose in working together towards student learning.

1.8.3(c)   Collective Learning and Application

In the context of this study, collective learning and application refers to Hord (1997a) definition where teachers working together to find ways to fulfil students' needs. The activities include teachers working together to seek knowledge and strategies, teachers plan and work together to address student needs, encouraging open dialogue, professional development focusing on teaching and learning, and teachers and stakeholder work together to solve problems in school.

1.8.3(d)   Shared Personal Practice

In this study, shared personal practice refers to ways of how middle managers encourage peer interaction whereby teachers share their experience among teachers and at the same time building a learning environment in the school. Some of the activities are teachers given the opportunity to observe their peers teaching practices and provide feedback, teachers sharing ideas for improving student learning, and teachers reviewing students' work. Coaching and mentoring could be one of the opportunities for teachers to share their expertise.

1.8.3(e)   Supportive Condition: Relationships

In the context of this study, relationships refers to condition that could bring together the feeling of acceptance and respect among teachers and students in schools. The activities are mainly creating a caring culture in the school.

1.8.3(f)   Supportive Condition: Structures

As for structures, in the context of this study, it refers to condition that could provide a platform for the teachers to make it easy for them to collaborate among teachers such as providing time and forming social network.

1.8.4   Trust in Leader

Trust refers to motivation to cooperate and the belief the teachers have towards their leader. In the context of this study, the term "leader" refers to the administrative senior assistants in the national secondary schools. This construct is measured by adapting the Omnibus T-Scale by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2003). In the context of this study, trust in leader refers to

teachers' having faith in their leaders and they can rely on their administrative senior assistants. The teachers believe that their administrative senior assistants are competent in their job and are always open with the teachers. Yilmaz and Altinkurt (2012) outline being honest, ready to fulfill promises made, and having a good leader-teacher relationships are among the ways that can build trust in leaders.

1.8.5 Teacher Commitment

According to Kirkpatrick (2007), teacher commitment refers to teachers' interest in, enthusiasm for and investment in his job. In the context of this study, teacher commitment refers to connection in the teachers' job, love their job and get passionate with what they are doing. This construct is measured by adapting the teacher commitment questionnaire developed by Nordin (2007).

1.8.5(a) Teacher Commitment to School

In the context of this study, teacher commitment to school refers to Nordin, Darmawan, and Keeves (2010) definition that teachers who are committed to their school and help to achieve the schools' objectives and remain working in the school. The teachers agree with the school policies and values, find their school a great school to work for, and feel that they gain a lot by working in the school.

1.8.5(b) Teacher Commitment to Student

Solomon (2007) defines teacher commitment to student as teachers who are dedicated to student learning, be it academic difficulties or social background. In the context of this study, teacher commitment to student refers to teachers' willingness to spend more time on