

**INFLUENCE OF COACHING
COMMUNICATION BY MIDDLE-LEADERS
TOWARDS TEACHER'S PERFORMANCE:
TEACHING SELF-EFFICACY AS MEDIATOR
AND TRUST TOWARDS COACH AS
MODERATOR**

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UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

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by

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In the name of Allah, The Most Gracious and The Most Merciful of all. Praise and peace be upon Prophet Muhammad S.A.W, his family members and companions.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKEPT	Akademi Kepimpinan Pendidikan Tinggi
CC	Coaching Communication
CMV	Common Method Variance
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
GTP	Government Transformation Program
HOP	Head of Panels
ITE	Institute of Teacher Education
LCML	Leadership Course for Middle Leaders
ML	Middle Leaders
OLS	Ordinary Least Square
PPD	District Education Office
SMKs	Daily Secondary Schools
TP	Teachers' Performance
UUM	Universiti Utara Malaysia

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**PENGARUH KOMUNIKASI BIMBINGAN OLEH PEMIMPIN
PERTENGAHAN TERHADAP PRESTASI GURU: EFIKASI KENDIRI
PENGAJARAN SEBAGAI MEDIATOR DAN KEPERCAYAAN TERHADAP
PEMBIMBING SEBAGAI MODERATOR**

ABSTRAK

Secara amnya, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji amalan-amalan yang dilaksanakan oleh guru-guru sekolah menengah melalui pengaruh komunikasi bimbingan oleh pemimpin pertengahan terhadap prestasi guru. Secara khususnya, kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk mengkaji peranan kepercayaan terhadap pembimbing sebagai pemboleh ubah moderator yang berpotensi melalui hubungan komunikasi bimbingan dan efikasi sendiri pengajaran. Peranan efikasi sendiri pengajaran dalam kajian ini juga berperanan sebagai pemboleh ubah mediator terhadap hubungan komunikasi bimbingan dengan prestasi guru. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah gabungan yang merangkumi pelbagai peringkat prosedur persampelan melalui kaedah yang pertama iaitu persampelan rawak berstrata dengan melibatkan empat buah sekolah dari negeri di sebelah utara Semenanjung Malaysia seperti Perlis, Kedah, Pulau Pinang, dan Perak Utara. Di samping itu, kaedah yang sama digunakan untuk menentukan bilangan guru-guru yang terlibat. Kemudian, persampelan berstrata berkadar dilaksanakan untuk menentukan bilangan sampel dalam setiap strata. Sebanyak 398 orang guru sekolah menengah dari semua empat buah negeri yang terlibat mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini. Selain daripada itu, sebanyak 8 orang informan dari empat buah negeri juga turut mengambil bahagian dalam sesi protokol temu bual menggunakan soalan separa berstruktur yang telah disediakan untuk kajian ini. Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa amalan-amalan yang

dipraktikkan oleh pembimbing bimbingan terhadap guru-guru sekolah menengah adalah pada tahap sederhana dan tinggi. Dapatan yang sama juga dapat dilihat pada amalan-amalan para guru akademik di sekolah. Hasil dapatan ini menunjukkan pengaruh signifikan yang positif terhadap semua hipotesis yang berkaitan dengan hubungan secara langsung dan dapatan analisis tematik berdasarkan cadangan berkenaan strategi-strategi yang akan dilaksanakan di sekolah-sekolah di Malaysia. Selain daripada itu, dapatan kajian juga mengesahkan bahawa terdapat pengaruh mediator secara separa oleh efikasi sendiri pengajaran dan peranan kepercayaan terhadap pembimbing menunjukkan moderator yang positif di dalam hubungan pembolehubah yang terlibat. Oleh itu, kajian ini menyumbang kepada ilmu-ilmu yang berkaitan dengan pengurusan pendidikan dan kepimpinan dimana kajian ini berupaya untuk mengukuhkan dan mengakui akan keberkesanan peranan pemimpin pertengahan dalam konteks pendidikan di Malaysia.

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AS MEDIATOR AND TRUST TOWARDS COACH AS MODERATOR**

ABSTRACT

The study generally aims to identify practices executed by secondary school teachers with the influence of coaching communication by middle leaders towards their performance. Specifically, the study also aims to identify the role of trust towards coach as the potential moderator variable between coaching communication and teaching self-efficacy while the role of teaching self-efficacy in this study is the mediator towards coaching communication and teachers' performance. This study employed a mix-methods approach in using multistage sampling procedures by first identifying through stratified sampling method involving four schools from the Northern parts of Peninsular Malaysia; namely Perlis, Kedah, Pulau Pinang, and North Perak according to their local zones. Similarly, the same method was conducted for the number of teachers involved. Then, proportionate stratified sampling was employed in identifying the number of samples for each stratum. A total number of 398 secondary school teachers from all four states participated in this study. Besides, an overall number of eight informants from four different schools have engaged in a semi-structured type of interview protocol. The result has shown considerable practices of coaching communication by middle leaders towards secondary school teachers with the level portrayed are at moderate and higher level. Similarly, the practices employed by the academic teachers for other variables are at the same stake of practices. Consequently, the results of both methodologies

portrayed positive significant influence for all hypothesized direct relationship as well as thematic analysis based on the suggested implementation strategies that can be applied in Malaysian schools. Besides, the result also confirmed partial mediating role of self-efficacy of teaching and positive moderating role of trust towards coach in the relationship. Thus, this study contributes to the body of knowledge in the educational management and leadership field by strengthening and acknowledging more towards the roles of middle leaders in Malaysian educational settings.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The verdict of producing high-skilled teachers that equip with high quality performances has been impacted due to some educational reforms and changes across the globe (Ng, 2019; Moyo, 2020; Pushpanadham & Nambumadathil, 2020). These changes have also resulted to more challenging needs for teaching profession due to overwhelming demand of human capital, constant needs, and higher expectations of the society towards education (Jamil, 2014; Johari et al., 2018; Saad, 2019).

However, these have drawn attention among previous scholars as several past studies have provided empirical evidence by stating that teachers' performance plays crucial role in determining school qualities (Vagi et al., 2019; O' Brien et al., 2019; Tantawy, 2020). Besides, it is one of the valuable assets in realizing the successfulness of organizational performance (Anwar et al., 2012; Erni et al., 2016; Heriana Hartiwi et al., 2020). Therefore, it is essential to note that teachers' performance is one of the key aspects in fulfilling the needs for the schools' organizational context.

Looking deeper into the context of Malaysian education system, one of the shifts that highlights on the aspirations embedded in the Education Blueprint 2013-2025 is Shift 4 in emphasizing Transform Teaching into The Profession of Choice (Ministry of Education, 2013). This aspiration has been implemented by the Ministry of Education in showcasing several aspects of competency and performance-based career progression by the year of 2016 onwards. The Malaysian Government has

been providing more autonomy to schools and their leaders through peer-led culture of professional excellence programme that include coaching as a platform in producing high-skilled teachers that perform best in both individual and towards organizational performance (Ministry of Education, 2013; Bush et al., 2018).

A study conducted by Kho et al. (2019) has supported this through the implementation of coaching as a tool for teachers' professional development. The latter studies have also been reinforced by local researchers in implementing coaching in developing teachers' performance (Wan Norhasma & Nurahimah, 2019; Selvarajoo et al., 2020). Therefore, through this initiative, it is believed to be impacting teachers' roles in performing their teaching and learning practices as well as contributing more to schools' organizational context (Tantawy, 2020; Adams & Muthiah, 2020).

As more autonomy has been given to schools' management, the delegation of responsibilities from the top-level educational leaders to more inferior levels such as head of committee members in the school hierarchy has resulted a considerable management work for middle leaders to carry out the roles of coaching for the academic teachers (Anthony et al., 2018; Nadeem & Garvey, 2020; Hunt & MacPhee, 2020).

Besides, the act of coaching is believed to be played important roles for the academic teachers in defining the attributes of individual performance (Ellington et al., 2017; Gurr, 2018; Kho et al., 2019) in their teaching and learning practices as well as encapsulating the importance of performance towards the organizational institutions (Abd. Razak, 2017; McKenzie & Varney, 2018; Din, 2021). Additionally, these middle leaders who performed the roles of coach are

simultaneously collaborate and communicate with their colleagues while leading the academic teachers through communicative environment for sustainable further action (Grice, 2019).

The influence of coaching practices has also resulted on the successfulness towards other variables in the past studies. Several studies on the self-efficacy of teaching and trust towards coach have also seen relevant up to the current years (Ying-Leh & Abdul Ghani, 2014; Schiemann, 2019; Brinkmann et al., 2021). Besides, the element of communication is seen scarce in the context of coaching practices by middle leaders towards teachers' performance. Kho et al. (2019) has argued on this by stating that the "in-the-moment" coaching process between middle leaders and academic teachers in determining the successfulness and understanding of the professional development programme is still less debated.

Therefore, this study is intended to identify the interrelation influences between coaching communication by middle leaders towards teachers' performance with regards to the variable of self-efficacy of teaching as the mediator as well as trust towards coach as the moderator variable.

1.2 Background of the study

This section intends to briefly explain on the main variables involved in the study and the explanation will be put into sub-topic according to each variable. Additionally, the gist of some information regarding middle leaders will also be thoroughly explained in the next paragraph.

1.2.1 Middle Leaders in Schools' Organizational Context.

Middle leaders have been well covered in papers by previous scholars since decades (Bennett et al., 2007; De Nobile, 2018; Gurr, 2019). However, Bennett et al. (2007) has made a major review regarding school middle leadership in the schools' organizational context. The author has found out that there were two key aspects that have influenced the terminology and the phenomenon for a short review of definition which include the roles of middle leaders in covering a whole-school focus and their loyalty towards their own department as well as a growing culture of hierarchical line management and a professional rhetoric of collegiality. However, the definition is believed to be vague and particularly problematic in a sense of which organizational context that Bennett has referring to whether in a corporate field or others (Gurr, 2019). Thus, there are some other scholars who have opposed to what have been proposed by Bennett et al. (2007) and eventually come out with their own understanding by defining middle leaders in a more thorough explanation.

Grootenboer et al. (2017) has captured the complexity by distinguishing middle leaders according to different context in the organization. Thus, the term middle leaders have been defined as those who shared both acknowledgment of leadership position as well as those who have a significant teaching role in their educational institution. In other words, they can be seen as a person who mediates the role of the principal or the head of school and the teaching staff that have practiced their leading role from or among teaching colleagues (Willis, 2018; Gurr, 2019; Grice, 2019). Similarly, De Nobile (2018) agreed and has updated the term mentioned by Bennett et al. (2007) by clearly summarizing on the roles of middle leaders and by describing lucidly the differences between middle managers, middle

leaders, and teacher leaders. Therefore, the terminology differences derived according to the context of the study.

Leadership in the context of Malaysian educational settings has been occasionally referred to a figure of a director, principal, and headmaster (Ekaterini, 2011; De Nobile, 2018; Din, 2021). The current status of the middle leaders has been identified in the national education policies (PPPM 2013-2025 and the New Narrative of Educational Practices 2019) as to function as learning catalysts and mediators in most of the aspects that covered in school operations (Norazlina Ros et al., 2023)

Middle leadership has also played vital roles in determining a successful organization (Hallinger & Wang, 2015; Harris et al., 2019). Having said that, a ‘one man shows’ role in the organization is seen to be less executed and thorough attentive measures have been given to middle leaders’ job specifications in schools’ organizational contexts (Abd Razak, 2017; McKenzie & Varney, 2018; Din, 2021). For instance, in schools’ organizational contexts, this responsibility is taken by replacing the principals’ roles while they are unavailable at school. Furthermore, the middle leaders have also led to improve teaching process among the academic teachers through direct guidance as well as in-house training encouragement (Way et al., 2016; Abdullah et al., 2019; Din, 2021). Thus, by involving directly with the academic teachers in terms of the curriculum aspects as well as professional development programmes in schools, middle leaders have indirectly practiced instructional leadership functions.

In a similar vein, middle leaders in the context of this study are referring to the head of panels (HOP) in secondary schools that has been attached in the Professional Circular Letter No. 4/1986 (Ministry of Education, 2013). Besides, in this Malaysian educational context, each leader has its own roles in delegating tasks in the institution.

As mentioned in the above paragraph, one of the middle leaders' roles is to involve in the curriculum matters since most of the HOPs are closely related to the subject taught in schools (Din, 2021). Previously, this role has been adapted well by a team of excellent teachers appointed by the State of Education Department called Specialist Improvement Specialist Coach (SISC+) (Leng, 2014; Balang et al., 2020). However, according to Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013-2025, the HOP members have been given a mandate to perform the responsibilities to cater the needs of other classroom teachers (Ministry of Education, 2013; Abdullah et al., 2019; Din, 2021).

Besides, middle leaders are believed to be 'intermediate leaders' towards the subject taught in schools as this has led to the implementation of Professional Community Learning (PLC) within school contexts (Chua et al., 2020). Similarly, Hassan et al. (2020) has mentioned on the needs of collaborative initiatives by a group of teachers in schools to use PLC as a platform to share thoughts and experiences towards the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning performances (PdP). Thus, middle leaders are one of the key players in facilitating the academic teachers towards their performance in schools.

While the presence of empowerment portrayed by middle leaders at school level, the element of coaching is often being addressed by previous scholars in supporting the academic teachers' professional development as well as developing a positive school learning climate (Edwards-Groves et al., 2019; Bryant et al., 2020). Besides, previous studies have also discovered that the relationship between middle leaders and the academic teachers throughout the coaching session that eventually boost out their beliefs in performing best in their respective fields including self-efficacy of teaching (Ellington et al., 2017; Rosato, 2019; Brinkman et al., 2021), trust (Irvine et al., 2017; Anthony & Nieuwerburgh, 2018; Grice, 2019) as well as teachers' performance that include both individual performance and organizational performance (Hawkins, 2012; Anthony & Nieuwerburgh, 2018; Abdullah et al., 2019; Sitti et al., 2020; Din, 2021). Thus, with all the evidence portrayed in the above paragraph, this study suggests that school middle leaders is indeed one of the crucial posts in the schools' hierarchical context that coaches teachers to increase teachers' performance.

1.2.2 Teachers' performance in enhancing organization qualities.

In determining smooth process of teaching and learning inside the classroom, teachers are seen as a leader, thus, a leadership role has been portrayed in completing the jobs and the responsibilities (Suharsaputra, 2013; Septi et al., 2018). Besides, by performing best inside the classroom, teachers' performance can be seen as one of the pivotal roles in determining school's organizational performance (Johari et al., 2017; Septi et al., 2018; Sitti et al., 2020). Despite of being driven by strong internal factors that highlight on the individual aspects such as commitment, motivation, and ability (Lixia, 2017; Siiti et al., 2020), the external (situational) factors such as

adequate amount of rewards (Thanomton et al., 2018; Finishawati et al., 2021), and supportive leadership with conducive school working culture (Ruth, 2017; Alzoraiki et al., 2018; Farooqi et al., 2019) have also led teachers' performance to be developed in school organizational settings. Thus, teachers' performance is based on various factors that complement with the teachers' preferences in performing best towards achieving their goals. However, by looking through in the context of this study, such factors like professional development as well as supportive leadership in the context of school working culture has become potential determinants in developing teachers' performance (Abdullah et al., 2019; Sitti et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021).

Past studies have discovered that teachers' performance has direct influence with supportive leadership culture (Erni et al., 2016; Werang et al., 2017; Bruns et al., 2018; Septi et al., 2018; Tantawy, 2020; Sitti et al., 2020). In a similar vein, Malaysian educational settings have highlighted this based on the importance of curriculum management as well as teachers' professional development through instructional leadership practice (Abdullah et al., 2019). This has also been embedded in one of the other nine competencies of Malaysian School Principalship Standard Competency which has been introduced by the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 2006). This competency has given an advantage for all school leaders in participating for the academic teachers' professional growth. However, the responsibilities have been shifted to middle leaders as in the head of subject committees in taking over the roles of the school principals' in developing teachers' professional development. It is believed that Hallinger and Murphy (1985) instructional leadership model as to be the most frequently used in most Malaysian educational settings (Hui & Jamal, 2016; Zakaria & Sufien, 2016; Safinaz et al.,

2016; Kean et al., 2017; Abdullah et al., 2019). Therefore, with the presence of empowerment at school level, middle leaders are seen as one of the potential determinants in reinforcing teachers' performance for the purpose of organizational qualities and positive school learning climate.

Teachers' performance in one hand has been one of the vital aspects in determining organizational qualities as performance often relates with the behaviour of a person in working towards achieving goals (Mwangi & Njuguna, 2019; Sitti et al., 2020). If the teachers themselves did not have competencies to perform better, the school organizational settings have been indirectly affected towards students' poor performance as well as lack of schools' optimal management (Jirangkul, 2017; Madrid, 2019). Although various teachers' development programmes have been cater for the purpose of professional development, some have not comprehensively taken into account in developing teachers' performance (Ikhwandra, 2016). This was due to the lack of performance management in the school organization that have neglected potential needs of the academic teachers as in excessive workloads due to abundant committees and this hinders them from improving their individual performance and organizational performance at one time (Soekijad et al., 2011; Septi et al., 2018; Saad, 2019). Thus, the issues of maintaining qualities for producing teachers that perform best in this two aspects of performance are still in the same state of situation.

Andriani et al. (2018) on the other hand has mentioned on the central role of leadership towards teachers' performance. Besides, Tantawy (2020) has recently discovered that the impact of teachers' performance has also been affected due to the effectiveness of school leaders in implementing the best educational practices and professional development that strategize the whole schooling system. Similarly,

middle leaders have also given greater impact on teachers' performance in enhancing organizational qualities through shaping culture in responding to the factors that influence the entire school as well as cultivating a shared sense of purpose with teacher teams (Song, 2012; Shaked & Chen, 2018; De Nobile, 2018; Bryant et al., 2019). Thus, in reaching out for better school organizational qualities, teachers' performance must be engaged with potential determinants that have led them to balance both individual performance as well as organizational performance.

1.2.3 Coaching Communication

Coaching is believed to be one of the approaches that used to be an effective mechanism in handling with teachers' personal abilities and pedagogical aspects of teaching in developing their professional development (Ying-Leh & Abdullah, 2015; Jacobs et al., 2018; Morgan et al., 2019; Nuss, 2020). The term 'coaching' itself varies from different aspects of definition.

Although four decades ago, Joyce and Showers (1981) have defined coaching as a collaborative relationship in which characterized by an observation and feedback cycle, other scholars have made a notion by stating that there is no clear consensus on core components for coaching (Kurz et al., 2017; Glover et al., 2018; Morgan, 2019). As Kurz et al. (2017) have noted that there has been a variety of operationalized definition of coaching based on various coaching foci (technical support, problem solving), actions (observation, collaborative planning, modelling, practice, feedback), and desired outcomes (environmental change, enhanced performance, promotion of autonomy), Kraft et al. (2018) has mentioned on the needs of evaluating specific coaching features such as teachers' needs, rather than only focusing on the efficacy of coaching programs as a whole. Thus, coaching

process involves mutual interaction between coach and coachees that is set to be based on various determinants in improving ones' ability to excel.

Coaching is also one of the developmental techniques that has essentially based on one-to-one interaction or discussion in enhancing job performance (Ying-Leh et al., 2015; Glover et al., 2018; Mohammad, 2018; Selvarajoo et al., 2020). Although coaching involves both parties to be actively participated towards goal-driven oriented, the element of communicative competencies have seen scarced and often overlooked (Ying-Leh et al., 2015; Steenderen, 2019; Suhaili et al., 2020). Such competencies can be varied from basic skills of listening and speaking, questioning and answering, feed-backing and sharing while more advanced skill is often focusing on the needs of decision-making (Mohammadisadr et al., 2018). Marsh et al. (2010) has previously referred to this issue as coaches who attempted to the analysis of communication support with others have more effectively achieved their purposes. Besides, in the latter studies, some scholars have mentioned on the importance of communication in the coaching process has led effective coaches to be aware of and respect individual teachers' expectations and emotions despite of some inconveniences that have caused these teachers to be reluctant in interacting with them (Hunt & Handsfield, 2013; Jacobs et al., 2017; Suhaili et al., 2020). Thus, coaching communication in the context of this study refers to the behaviour of the middle leaders that act as coaches in improving teachers' performance through bilateral interaction in accomplishing their individual performance as well as enhancing organizational performance.

There has been greater demands over the recent years from various organizations in developing their human capital as many of these companies perceived coaching as one of the potential developmental tools and strategic

initiatives to improve both individual as well as organizational performance (Bowen & Schofield, 2013; Ying-Leh et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2019; Wan Norhasma & Nurahimah, 2019). This statement has led to several reasons to be highlighted due to the effectiveness of coaching with regards to teachers' performance. Firstly, in the context of education, coaching process normally involves direct advice, assistance and attention to teachers (coachees) that fits with their own time schedules. This will eventually lead to more one-to-one session with the teachers and their performance growth plans can be continuously supported from time to time (Leithwood, 2016; Mohammadisadr et al., 2018; Gurr, 2018). Secondly, coaching communication has created greater impact for teachers in schools as one crucial valuable asset to the organization (Dee Garret & Juarez, 2013; Ying-Leh et al., 2015; Bruns, 2018; Nuss, 2020). These aspects are very important to note for the typical dyad of coach-coachee relationship which encompasses more than just coaching on its own but also cater for both personal and organizational growth in producing high performing teachers in schools (Boud & Brew, 2013; Dee Garrett & Juarez, 2013; Baier et al., 19; Hunt & MacPhee, 2020). Hence, all of these evidences have summarized that the roles of coaching communication in influencing teachers' performance are interrelated to one another.

Leithwood (2016), on the other hand explains on the roles of middle leaders in schools as one crucial source and coaching has become one of the platforms that serve these middle leaders in executing the overall process of coaching towards teachers' performance. In a similar vein, organizational performance that involves two tiers of management in schools can be retained through coaching by middle leaders and teachers in determining the quality of schools and this will eventually

lead to a stagnant performance growth in future time (Brock & Carter, 2016; Shaked & Chen, 2018; Willis et al., 2018; Grice, 2019).

Van Nieuwerburgh and Barr (2017) has concluded that in ensuring on the positive experiences for both learners and educators, coaching is assumed as part of the initiatives implemented in educational settings. Anthony et al. (2018) has supported this through his study on how middle leaders have been offered opportunities to be introduced to coaching initiatives in their schools. Besides, several past studies relating to the Malaysian educational context have also highlighted the role of middle leaders in participating coaching as part of the professional development initiatives in bringing up teachers' potential for their professional growth (Vikaraman et al., 2017; Ali et al., 2018; Wan Norhasma & Nurahimah, 2019; Salwati et al., 2019). Thus, with all of the empirical evidences of coaching definitions stated in the above mentioned, this study hypothesized that coaching would have been one of the determinants in carrying out the functions of instructional leadership in facilitating teachers to increase teachers' performance.

1.2.4 Teachers' Self-Efficacy

Teachers often perform best when they know, think and have strong believe in what they actually conduct in the classroom (Choi & Lee, 2017). Bandura (1977) has highlighted on this notion nearly four decades ago when 'teachers' self-efficacy' or 'efficacy beliefs' in particularly of their self-perceptions of teaching capabilities have been recognized as one of the powerful aspect of teachers' perceptions. In other words, teachers are believed to engage with tasks in which they feel competent with and refused to participate in which they do not (Liu et al., 2017; Huang et al., 2019; Parchler et al., 2019; Brinkmann et al., 2021). Besides, teacher's self-efficacy has

also been regarded to a variety form of aspects according to experience gained, experience obtained from others, social influences factors as well as physical and psychological welfare (Rosato, 2019; Muhammad et al., 2020). Thus, based on the definition stated in the above mentioned, teachers' self-efficacy portrays to be one of the central psychological mechanisms that has led to action taken by the teachers in developing their inner self-beliefs towards their performance.

Knowledge in the area of a teachers' self-efficacy has been widely studied since decades ago up to the current years. This has been proved by the previous scholars as the needs and attention remain stagnant in its development within the educational settings (Woolfolk Hoy & Davis, 2006; Chao et al., 2016; Choi & Lee, 2017; Shahzad & Naureen, 2017; Muhammad et al., 2020). Hence, the implementation of coaching mechanism is considered as one of the initiatives in providing more attention on self-efficacy of teaching (Rosato, 2019; Brinkmann et al., 2021). Besides, in line with the needs of producing skilled teachers that perform best in the field of education in the 21st century, developing self-efficacy of teaching among school teachers have often been highlighted especially in combating challenging content, improving critical thinking and problem solving while having effective communication for the ability to perform task to collaborate and self-direction (Ying-Leh & Abdullah, 2014; Rosato, 2019; Weber et al., 2019; Gardner-Neblett et al., 2020; Ramli & Nurahimah, 2020).

Self-efficacy of teaching among teachers is vital in considering to their ability to be able to translate knowledge and skills into differentiated instruction practices (Ramli & Nurahimah, 2020). In order to realize on this, some previous studies have proved that teachers' self-efficacy has become one of the potential mediator in influencing teachers' performance (Song et al., 2018; Choong et al., 2019; Ali,

2019). Teachers who have higher beliefs towards the abilities to perform in teaching and delivering quality instruction at a rigorous pace can adversely impact students' performance as well as whole school performance (Rosato, 2019).

Besides, there is also a consensus in the literature that has highlighted on the element of coaching as one of the potential determinants in increasing teachers' self-efficacy in the coaching process (Kennedy, 2016; Loughland & Nguyen., 2020). This is in line with Brinkmann et al. (2021) statement as he stated that veteran and novice administrators can benefit from coaches who offer support and facilitate dialogue in developing two key aspects of self-awareness and reflective skills that outgrow growth in self-efficacy as well as individual leadership capacity. Thus, considering all the empirical evidences portrayed in the above mentioned, teachers' self-efficacy has become one of the potential variables in mediating coaching communication towards teachers' performance.

1.2.5 Trust and its benefit for coaching

Nearly three decades ago, trust has been defined by Rousseau et al. (1998) as 'a psychological state that covers the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviours of another' which then be closely linked to the coaching outcomes. This relates with several past studies from most of the corporate field that highlight on mutual trust that allows client to be more open and deeply reflect on their own thoughts instead of being vulnerably involved in social interaction (Mayer et al., 1995; Boyce et al., 2010; McEvily & Tortoriello, 2011; Hsieh & Huang, 2018; Schiemann et al., 2019). The role of trust has also been increasingly recongnized as an essential element in determining well-performing schools (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015; Oliveras-Ortiz, 2017). This includes the

importance of implementing higher sense of relational trust towards schools that foster collaboration between the faculty's members to grow professionally (Cranston, 2011; Oliveras-Ortiz, 2017; Weinstein et al., 2020). Besides, the presence of trust in coaching process allows conflicts and disagreement to be controlled hence it is considered as one of the crucial psychological elements for coaching to be effectively implemented in most of the educational settings (Ying-Leh & Abdullah, 2014; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015; Salwati et al., 2019). Thus, trust is one of the potential elements that can be embedded in promoting a high-quality coach-coachee relationship that will lead to more positive coaching outcomes.

Apart from that, one of the primary responsibilities taken by leaders in the organization is realizing the efforts of creating an environment that fills with mutual trust, (Ying-Leh & Abdullah, 2014; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015; Terblanche & Heyns, 2020). This is due to the mutual exchanges of getting desired outcomes from both parties. Besides, Social Exchange theory (SET) has been implemented in the context of this study and the core aspect of this theory in this study is based on mutual exchanges of trust between middle leaders and the academic teachers in the process of coaching. Salwati et al. (2019) has mentioned on the roles of mutual trust and support are part of the emphasis on teacher collegiality that enhancing the effectiveness of teacher leadership. Knight and Brame (2018) in a similar vein has proposed on greater interests on genuine curiosity and endeavours towards colleagues happened when there are people who have been "elite listeners" in the relationship. Thus, trust towards coach is believed to be a potential fundamental aspect in creating bonds between coach and coachee in building more effective coaching process in school organization (Gan et al., 2014; Ying-Leh & Abdullah, 2014; Morgan, 2019; Terblanche & Heyns, 2020).

Despite of the capability of leaders in cultivating the element of trust towards their subordinate in the organization, the value of trust towards coach can also be defined based on the level of trustworthiness of both parties towards one another (Gao et al., 2011; Kim & Kuo, 2015; Hsieh & Huang, 2018). This is due to a positive association discovered in the study conducted by Hsieh and Huang (2018) in deliberating level of employees' affective trust towards their coach have influenced their impression management feedback-seeking behaviour.

In a similar vein, Hakrow and Mathew (2020) have mentioned on their recent study regarding trust issues in the coaching process that has been raised as one of the initial hesitations between coach and coachee due to personal feelings as well as cultural incompatibility which has then lead to the decreasing level of trust from the employees' sides. Thus, the dynamic of how trust works in the organization has somehow given vast impact on the relationship between two parties in setting up the successfulness of the organization.

Besides, in the educational literature, several past studies have indicated on the capacity of trust towards coach as a moderator in the relationship involving the upper management and the academic teachers based on various aspects at the stage of individual level as well as organizational level (Forsyth et al., 2011; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2012, Ying-Lei, 2015; Li et al., 2018; Ng, 2020). Thus, once trust towards coach has been established, the academic teachers have also been developing their trusts for being more open towards receiving feedback and support from the coach.

1.3 Problem statement

In the context of educational settings in Malaysia have previously suggested that coaching has positive significant influenced towards teachers' performance particularly in their teaching practices as well as their professionalism conduct (Ying-Leh, 2015; Salwati et al., 2019; Nesaratnam et al., 2020). However, there are still some issues argued on the leadership roles in the process of coaching between school middle leaders and the academic teachers (Bush & Ng, 2019; Bryant et al., 2020; Chua et al., 2020).

This has been supported by the Western and Eastern scholars in which they have come to an agreement that middle leaders do not have direct authority towards teachers unlike the principals (Bryant, 2019; Lillejord & Borte, 2020). A study conducted by Suhaili et al. (2019) has mentioned on the lack aspect of leadership among Head of Science Panels in Malaysian schools which lead them to be less competent and less confident in coaching Science teachers. Besides, Wan (2017) and Abdullah et al. (2019) discovered the involvement of middle leaders were still at the stake of traditional and informal discussion boundaries which has led to a normal norm that has been practiced in the previous years. Thus, it is crucial to conduct this study as to cater the act of collaborative networking whether it is still lacking among ML in deliberating coaching among the academic teachers in schools.

Middle leaders have also been given vast exposures towards coaching by School Improvement Specialist Coach (SISC+) as the shift of this role however has been given a mandate to middle leaders in coaching the academic teachers at school level according to the Circular Letter No. 4/1986 (Ministry of Education, 2013). Hamzah and Rani (2018) revealed the attitudes of these middle leaders towards

SISC+ by giving less cooperation since they are at their comfort zone and neglect to communicate thoroughly with the members of SISC+. Thus, the element of communicative competencies in the coaching process have led to a question of how far this implementation would be communicatively delegated by middle leaders to the academic teachers at school level?

Apart from that, self-efficacy of teaching has also been linked with the influence of coaching in determining teachers' professional growth (Rosato, 2019; Brinkmann et al., 2021). Gumus and Bellibas (2020) as well as Liu and Hallinger (2018) revealed coaching practice has positively mediated the principals' leadership practices and teachers' performance. However, Choong et al. (2019) and Ali (2019) has stated that little consensus has been given to the constructive thoughts of communicative aspects in the coaching practice that mediates their inner natures, having higher beliefs in themselves to promote interpersonal skills in enhancing significant impact on teachers' organizational performance. Thus, self-efficacy is believed to be one potential mediator in determining the mediating effect between variables that are closely related to teachers' performance.

Trust on the other hand plays considerable moderating effect in the relationship with coaching in both corporate as well as educational settings (Gan et al., 2014; Ying-Leh & Abdullah, 2014; Vikaraman et al., 2017; Hui et al., 2019). Ozyilmaz et al. (2017) has mentioned on the role of trust in organization that have moderated the relationship between self-efficacy and workplace outcomes. However, Kho et al. (2019) and Salwati et al. (2019) highlighted on limited aspect of coach-teacher social exchanges in Malaysian educational settings when negotiation of social power and competence expectation have been argued between coaches' role and teachers' trust. This has led to a question whether the academic teachers have

gained trust towards coach by having higher beliefs to perform better or it might be otherwise. Thus, trust towards coach has shown considerably significant role as a moderating variable in this study to be further discussed.

Despite of all the variables stated in the above mentioned, coaching communication has been stated as one of the pivotal elements in the coaching process (Ying-Leh et al., 2015; Jacobs et al., 2017; Nuss et al., 2020). However, this aspect has been given less attentive measures especially in the context of coaching by middle leaders at school level. Kho et al. (2019) revealed dialogic approach in the coaching process is still at low level of practice. Besides, the norm of coaching in schools has been widely research based on the coaching process which the central focus highlighted more on the roles of curriculum, pedagogy as well as the assessment of the teachers' performance (Bruns, 2018; Kho et al., 2019). Van Nieuwerburgh (2017) argued on this by stating that the emergent of ideas and notions will vary depending on the nature of the coach towards each conversation in the process. Thus, these issues have led to the questions on how far CC is practiced by middle leaders in the coaching process? how far CC influences SET, TTC, as well as TP in schools? how far SET and TTC play role as the mediator and moderator in the relationship between CC and TP?

Hence, all the questions stated in the above paragraph need clear justification since coaching has been actively implemented in schools with regards to the role of middle leaders in realizing the purpose of developing professional development among teachers (Ministry of Education, 2013). Besides, the core intention of this study in investigating the interrelation between the practice of CC by middle leaders, the role of SET and TTC as the mediator and moderator towards teachers' performance will be thoroughly identified.

1.4 Research Objectives

The research objectives in the present study are mainly to identify the influence of self-efficacy of teaching as a mediator in a relationship between coaching communication and teachers' performance. Besides, this study is also to identify the potential of trust towards coach as the moderator that interacts between coaching communication and self-efficacy of teaching. Thus, the research objectives are specifically intended to:

- a) Identify the level of coaching communication (CC) by middle leaders, self-efficacy of teaching (SET), trust towards coach (TTC), and teachers' performance (TP) according to teachers' perspectives.
- b) Identify the significant influence of coaching communication on teachers' performance.
- c) Identify the significant influence of coaching communication on self-efficacy of teaching.
- d) Identify the significant influence of self-efficacy of teaching on teachers' performance.
- e) Identify the significant influence of coaching communication on trust towards coaches.
- f) Identify the significant influence of trust towards coaches on self-efficacy of teaching.
- g) Determine the mediating role of self-efficacy of teaching on teachers' performance.
- h) Determine the moderating role of trust towards coaches on self-efficacy of teaching.

- i) Understand the influence of CC, SET, TTC, and TP towards school teachers.

1.5 Research Questions

Based on the objectives mentioned above, there are few questions that have been developed in this study.

- a) What are the level of CC by middle leaders, SET, TTC, and TP from the perspectives of secondary school teachers?
- b) Is there any significant influence of coaching communication on teachers' performance?
- c) Is there any significant influence of coaching communication on self-efficacy of teaching?
- d) Is there any significant influence of self-efficacy of teaching on teachers' performance?
- e) Is there any significant influence of coaching communication on trust towards coaches?
- f) Is there any significant influence of trust towards coaches on self-efficacy of teaching?
- g) Is there any mediating role of self-efficacy of teaching between coaching communication and teachers' performance?
- h) Is there any moderating role of trust towards coaches between coaching communication and self-efficacy of teaching?
- i) To what extent do CC by middle leaders, SET, TTC, and TP have influenced secondary school teachers?

1.6 Hypotheses

Based on the research questions above, there are several hypotheses have been developed in testing the significance of them at the rate of $p < .05$. These hypotheses will be discussed further in the next discussion.

- H₁: There is a significant influence of coaching communication towards teachers' performance.
- H₂: There is a significant influence of coaching communication towards self-efficacy of teaching.
- H₃: There is a significant influence of self-efficacy of teaching towards teachers' performance.
- H₄: There is a significant influence of coaching communication towards trust towards coach.
- H₅: There is a significant influence of trust towards coach towards self-efficacy of teaching.
- H₆: There is a significant influence of self-efficacy of teaching as a mediator between coaching communication and teachers' performance.
- H₇: There is a significant influence of trust towards coach as a moderator between coaching communication and self-efficacy of teaching.

1.7 Significance of the study

The importance of acknowledging teachers' performance in a context of school organizational setting has become one of the targeted agendas by the government of Malaysia in transforming the country's education system to be competed across the globe. This initiative has remained crucial up to the current years as teachers are among vital pillars in generating quality education and in

realizing to the successfulness of school organizational performance. Therefore, a very comprehensive yet thorough study is needed in identifying factors that have influenced teachers' performance for the purpose of their professional growth that has inclusively covered both individual performance as well as their organizational performance.

This study aided crucial platform for practitioners in the field of educational leadership and management since it highlights four important variables relating to the coaching leadership (Ali et al., 2018; Morgan et al., 2019; Salwati et al., 2019), self-efficacy of teaching (Song et al., 2018; Ali, 2019; Choong et al., 2019), trust towards coach (Edward-Groves et al., 2016; Schiemann et al., 2019; Terblanche & Heyns, 2020), and teachers' performance (Septi et al., 2018; Kho et al., 2019; Tantawy, 2020). Besides, this study also portrays thorough explanation relating to the body of knowledge regarding the relationship of middle leadership in the context of coaching (Abdullah et al., 2019; Bryant, et al., 2020). Thus, this study is indeed paralleled with the Malaysian Educational Blueprint (2013-2025) towards Shift 5 that highlights on the importance of empowering school leaders in schools. Apart from that, it might also be a source of reference for the Ministry of Education through the Centre of Leadership Training as in Institut Aminuddin Baki (IAB) in producing more quality middle leaders that can assist teachers in performing best in their respective institutions. Therefore, this justifies the significance of the study that portrays the roles of coaching communication by middle leaders towards teachers' performance.

Moreover, the present study is significantly catered for the aspects of theoretical implications. Looking from the aspect of theoretical perspectives, this study can explore quite a few theories, models and views from the previous educational leadership scholars who managed to support the related variables in a