

# THE INFLUENCE OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP ON TEACHER COMMITMENT TOWARDS ORGANIZATION, TEACHING PROFESSION, AND STUDENT LEARNING IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MIRI, SARAWAK, MALAYSIA

SII LING @ MEE LING

**ABSTRACT:** *A principal's role is critical in sustaining or diminishing teacher commitment. Teacher commitment recorded only average in Malaysia. Accordingly, the researcher is interested in studying the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher commitment in the educational institution, exclusively in the government secondary schools in Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia. The survey instrument was developed based on conceptual framework on transformational leadership, teacher commitment, and literature review. Quantitative survey method was applied and four broadly hypothesized relationships were tested with a sample of 1,014 trained teachers serving in twenty-seven secondary schools in Miri, Sarawak. The findings showed either direct or indirect relationship between transformational leadership, teacher commitment, and moderators. They offer insights on how leadership practices affect teachers' commitment and sense of teaching efficacy. It also necessitates for leadership development of school leaders to acquire transformational leadership qualities that are crucial in changing teachers' attitude and improving their commitment level. Future endeavors should compare these findings with similar predictors, criterion, and moderators in other areas.*

**KEY WORDS:** *School leadership, principal's role, teacher commitment, transformational leadership, and educational institution in Sarawak, Malaysia.*

## INTRODUCTION

A principal is the most powerful and influential individual in school. The role of a school principal is considered as the first and foremost important person in ensuring the effectiveness of the school and efficiency in running the school (Sabariah *et al.*, 2002). Thus, educators and policymakers alike seek a frame for effective leadership that can produce sustainable school improvement and continuous teacher commitment (Lambertz, 2002). It was also purported by B.M. Bass (1990) that leadership style that encourages employees' commitment is essential for an organization to successfully achieving their goal.

**Sii Ling @ Mee Ling** is a Ph.D. Student at the Faculty of Education UM (University of Malaya), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. For academic purposes, she can be contacted at: Lot 822, Bunga Raya 4, Taman Bumiko, 98000 Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia. E-mail: [me2867sl@yahoo.com](mailto:me2867sl@yahoo.com)

School leadership is absolutely crucial to energize and bring dynamism to our schools. It is the vital role of a school leadership to nurture professional growth and bring effective leadership to bear in schools. It is also definitely the utmost role of the most effective and dynamic school leadership that a school leader should take heed and adopt as it affects the level of teacher commitment in the education arena in Malaysia. School leadership has become a priority in education policy agendas internationally. It plays a key role in improving school outcomes by influencing the motivations and capacities of teachers, as well as the school climate and environment.

### **STUDIES ON THE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

Moreover, researchers like S.M. Hord (1992); T.J. Sergiovanni (1992); K. Leithwood, D. Tomlinson and M. Genge (1996); M. Fullan (1996); D.T. Conley (1997); L.E. Wood (1998); L.W. Reid, J.T. Roberts and H.M. Hilliard (1998); J.M. Perez *et al.* (1999); and P. Tesker and M. Schneider (1999) point out that a number of studies emphasize the importance of transformative leadership for school principals. It is significantly important for school principals to embrace transformational leadership as it affects the level of teacher commitment. Besides, principal's leadership has great influence towards the school achievement quality, students' achievement, and teachers' commitment (Ibrahim, 1998).

The role of the principal is critical in sustaining teacher commitment by being attentive to personal and school context factors. Moreover, the principal's role is equally critical in addressing the system context factors that diminish teacher commitment (Day, Elliot & Kington, 2005). Today, principals are being evaluated by student achievement on standardized achievement tests (Kavanaugh, 2005). Therefore, L.J. Matthews and G.M. Crow (2003) noted that the demand of raising student achievement has placed an unprecedented level of public scrutiny on the job performance of principals. To appropriately meet the challenge of tomorrow's schools, the new approach demands that the principal, staff, parents, and community work together sharing a vision of how to help all students achieve (Lunenburg & Irby, 2006). In brief, an examination of the influence of school leaders on the process and outcomes of schooling is essential to the larger context of educational improvement. Therefore, the study of principal leadership can be informative to schools just as the study of leadership in other organizations is valuable to understanding organizational outcomes (Yukl, 2006).

Traditionally, the teaching role has been one of nurturing and developing students' potential. However, teachers' work today comprises a complex mix of various factors that include teaching, learning new information and skills, keeping abreast of technological innovations, and dealing with students, parents, and the community. These are demanding roles and there are growing concerns about teacher well-being and competence. In particular, teachers are experiencing increasing levels of attrition, stress, and burnout (Pillay, Goddard & Wilss, 2005).

On top of that, Sabariah *et al.* (2002), in their research, discovered that the level of teacher's organizational commitment was only average in Malaysia. This is definitely not a healthy phenomenon if a nation aims to progress holistically in education system. This average level of teachers' commitment to their profession absolutely needs immediate and serious attention.

Moreover, teachers' commitment is reported to decrease progressively over the course of their teaching career (Huberman, 1993; and Fraser, Draper & Taylor, 1998). At the beginning of a teacher's career, there is an early stage of commitment to teaching associated with the choice of professional identity followed by a stage of experimentation and search for new challenges; teachers often experience a stage of conservatism and which can lead to eventual disengagement. This transition, from an enthusiastic engagement with the profession to a more distanced and limited involvement, reduces a teacher's willingness to reform classroom practice, engagement to school initiatives and levels of participation in extra-curricular activities. A decrease in commitment levels during the course of the teaching career is also problematic in relation to the retention of experienced teachers in the classroom. Thus, attention should be given to alleviating this issue or it would lower the quality of teachers' commitment in the educational system (Huberman, 1993).

Besides, N. Fauziah *et al.* (2008) also discovered that teachers had low to moderate levels of professionalization, and there was no correlation between affective commitment and job environment in a study conducted in Malaysia. It also reported that teachers only had moderate levels of affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Thus, a more dynamic principal leadership style is needed and must be studied in order to improve the teachers' commitment level.

Most importantly, the level of commitment is directly influenced by the principal's leadership. Hence, K. Singh and B.S. Billingsley (1996) indicated the importance of principal leadership in enhancing teacher commitment and the effect principals can have on teachers' collegial relationship in a study. Furthermore, lack of acknowledgement and professional support from school leaders diminished teachers' commitment (Elliott & Crosswell, 2001). In addition, commitment to the workplace is becoming understood as a hallmark of organizational success (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990). The level of teachers' commitment is seen as a key factor in the success of current educational reform agenda (Crowley *et al.*, 1998).

Furthermore, transformational approaches to leadership have increasingly been advocated for schools and the importance of individual principal-teacher relationship in schools was highlighted (McCormick, 2004). Besides, transformational leadership would contribute to teacher commitment to organization values, exclusively through collective teacher efficacy. Moreover, leadership would have direct effects on teacher commitment and indirect effects through teacher efficacy. Furthermore, transformational leadership had an impact on the collective teacher efficacy of the school, teacher efficacy alone predicted teacher commitment to community partnerships, and transformational leadership had direct and indirect effects on

teacher commitment to school mission and commitment to professional learning community (Ross & Gray, 2006).

Besides, transformational leadership enhances an organization by raising the values of members, motivating them to go beyond self-interest to embrace organizational goals, and redefining their needs to align with organizational preferences (Ross & Gray, 2006). In addition, transformational leadership also contributes to a closely related concept, organizational citizenship which refers to an individual's willingness to go beyond the formal requirements of the job, to engage in productive functions, and to enhance organizational effectiveness (Koh, Steers & Terbong, 1995; Leithwood, Tomlinson & Genge, 1996; and Nguni, Slegers & Denessen, 2006).

The researcher is interested in studying the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher commitment in the educational institution, exclusively in the government secondary schools in Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia. Minimal research attention has been directed towards the relationship between transformational leadership practices and teacher commitment in secondary schools in Malaysia, essentially in Sarawak. However, there has been research on the relationship between teachers' commitment and job satisfaction. Numerous reasons that lead to job satisfaction are high salary, favorable working environment, and rewards. Nevertheless, the major cause of job satisfaction is the principals who embrace transformational leadership quality that enhances its impact to the teachers' commitment to their profession and, thereafter, bring positive impact to the students' academic performance.

The deficiencies in our existing knowledge about the relationship between transformational leadership behaviors and teacher commitment are obvious. By examining this relationship between transformational leadership and teachers' commitment in education institutions, we can increase our understanding on the importance of transformational leadership and its impact on the teachers' commitment. Moreover, this study provides the basics for assessing and improving the school principals' leadership qualities in Sarawak, Malaysia. Next, it helps the principals to acquire transformational leadership qualities which perceived to get teachers' commitment. Besides, it alerts the Ministry of Education of Malaysia to understand the needs of implementing transformational leadership among the school principals to gain teacher commitment in Malaysia.

Teacher commitment has been identified as one of the most critical factors for the future success of education and schools (Huberman, 1993). The level of teachers' commitment is considered to be a key factor in the success of the current educational reform agenda as it heavily influences teachers' willingness to engage in cooperative, reflective, and critical practice. This is because teaching is a complex and demanding profession. To sustain their energy and enthusiasm for the work, teachers need to maintain their personal commitment to the job (Day, 2000). This concept of commitment, as investment of personal resources, has long been associated with the professional characteristics of a teacher. Besides, teaching is a

complex and demanding work and there is a daily need for teachers to fully engage in that work with not only their heads but also their hearts (Day, 2000).

### **AIM, OBJECTIVE OF STUDY, AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The purposes of this study were to investigate: (1) the level of teacher commitment; (2) teachers' perception of their principal's transformational leadership qualities; (3) the relationship between transformational leadership i.e. idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration with teacher commitment i.e. towards organization, towards teaching profession, and towards student learning; (4) the relationship between moderators and teacher commitment; and (5) the differences in the mean scores among the transformational leadership and teacher commitment components in relation to teachers' demography i.e. age-group, years of teaching experience, status, and service category.

The questions formulated are as follows. *First*, what is the extent of the principal's practice of transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) in secondary schools in Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia? *Second*, what is the extent of teacher commitment (towards organization, towards teaching profession, and towards student learning)? *Third*, what are the extents of relationship between moderators (teacher efficacy and teaching experience) and teacher commitment? And finally, *fourth*, what are the differences in the mean scores of transformational leadership and teacher commitment in relation to teachers' demography (age-group, years of teaching experience, status, and service category) in this study?

### **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

On the "Transformational Leadership Theory" is grounded on the theory by B.M. Bass and R.E. Rigglo (2006). On the other hand, the framework on "Teacher Commitment" is adapted from V. Danna (2002).

***On the Transformational Leadership Theory.*** Factor analytic studies from B.M. Bass (1985) to J.M. Howell and B.J. Avolio (1993) and from P. Bycio, R.D. Hackett and J.S. Allen (1995) to B.J. Avolio, B.M. Bass and D.I. Jung (1997) have identified the components of *Transformational Leadership*: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

*First*, it is "idealized influence". Transformational leaders behave in ways that allow them to serve as role models for their followers. The leaders are admired, respected, and trusted. Followers identify with the leaders and want to emulate them; leaders are endowed by their followers as having extraordinary capabilities, persistence, and determination. Thus, there are two aspects to idealized influence: the leaders' behaviors and the elements that are attributed to the leader by followers and other associates. In addition, leaders who have a great deal of "idealized influence" are willing to take risks and are consistent rather than arbitrary. They

can be counted on to do the right thing, demonstrating high standards of ethical and moral conduct.

*Second*, it is “inspirational motivation”. Transformational leaders behave in ways that motivate and inspire those around them by providing meaning and challenge to their followers’ work. Team spirit is aroused. Enthusiasm and optimism are displayed. Leaders get followers involved in envisioning attractive future states; they create clearly communicated expectations that followers want to meet and also demonstrate commitment to goals and the shared vision. “Inspirational motivation” leadership and “inspirational motivation” usually form a combined single factor of charismatic-inspirational leadership. The charismatic-inspirational factor is similar to the behaviors described in charismatic leadership theory (Bass & Avolio, 1993).

*Third*, it is “intellectual stimulation”. Transformational leaders stimulate their followers’ efforts to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways. Creativity is encouraged. There is no public criticism of individual members’ mistakes. New ideas and creative problem solutions are solicited from followers who are included in the process of addressing problems and finding solutions. Followers are encouraged to try new approaches, and their ideas are not criticized because they differ from the leaders’ ideas.

*Fourth*, it is “individualized consideration”. Transformational leaders pay special attention to each individual follower’s needs for achievement and growth by acting as a coach or mentor. Followers and colleagues are developed to successively higher levels of potential. “Individualized consideration” is practical when new learning opportunities are created along with a supportive climate. Individual differences in terms of needs and desires are recognized. The leaders’ behavior demonstrates acceptance of individual differences. A two-way exchange in communication is encouraged and management by making around workspace is practical. Interactions with followers are personalized. The individually considerate leader listens effectively. The leader delegates tasks as a means of developing followers. Delegated tasks are monitored to see if the followers need additional direction or support and to assess progress; ideally, followers do not feel they are being checked on (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

***On the Teacher Commitment.*** V. Danna (2002) points out that regardless of the efforts of the most capable leaders in a school, accomplishing school goals depends in large part on a better understanding of the sources, nature and development of a teacher’s commitment. An understanding of teachers’ level of commitment is important because it reflects their personal interpretation of how absorbing and meaningful their work experiences are.

Commitment refers to one’s level of involvement in the organization. Commitment describes an outcome in which one agrees with a decision or request and makes a great effort to carry out that decision or request effectively (Yukl, 2006). For a complex, difficult task, commitment is usually the most successful outcome

from the perspective of the agent who makes an influence attempt (Yukl, 2006).

Teacher commitment has been emphasized in three broad categories: commitment towards organization, commitment towards teaching profession, and commitment towards student learning (Dannetta, 2002). *First*, “organizational commitment” definitions include the belief in and acceptance of organizational goals and values; willingness to exert effort on the organization’s behalf; and a desire to remain in the organization (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982). *Second*, “commitment towards teaching profession” is generally the degree to which one has a positive, affective attachment to one’s work (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; and Coladarci, 1992). *Third*, “commitment towards student learning” focuses on the degree to which teachers are dedicated to student learning regardless of the other issues that may be involved (e.g. academic difficulties and social background).

*First*, on the “commitment towards organization” creates a sense of community, affiliation, and personal caring among adults within the schools and facilitates integration between personal life and work life (Louis, 1998). Many factors impact teachers’ levels of “commitment towards organization”. Specifically, previous studies show that teachers’ “commitment towards organization” is influenced by: *beliefs and acceptance of organizational goals* (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1979 and 1982; and Riehl & Sipple, 1996); *level of involvement in decision making* (Kushman, 1992); *orderly climates conducive to learning* (Rosenholtz, 1989; and Kushman, 1992); and *student achievement* (Kushman, 1992).

S.J. Rosenholtz (1989) suggested two workplace factors that shape teacher commitment towards organization-psycho-social rewards and task autonomy. Psycho-social rewards are important in shaping organizational commitment. For the work to be motivating, people must have knowledge of the success of their efforts (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). The amount of positive feedback one receives from doing work and one’s knowledge of his or her own performance are directly related. Feedback can be obtained directly from the work itself or it can be obtained from external recognition and approval that may be offered by others within the organization. When people are able to gain estimates of their particular worth based upon positive performances, it amounts to psycho-social rewards (Rosenholtz, 1989).

Increased task autonomy is another organizational condition that S.J. Rosenholtz (1989) suggested can enhance teacher commitment. Professional autonomy has a strong association with teacher commitment and gives teachers a sense of making greater contributions to the organization (Nir, 2002). Again, S.J. Rosenholtz suggested that as people are given more autonomy and discretion to exercise judgment and choice, they become more aware of themselves as causal agents in their own performance. Professional independence and discretion bolster motivation, responsibility, and commitment while a lack of autonomy is cited as a reason for dissatisfaction, absenteeism, and defection (Chapman & Hutcheson, 1982). When specific rules and mandatory teaching practices are counter to the professional practices that teachers know are successful, frustrations develop that can outweigh their rewards and inevitably the academic success of the school suffers (Rosenholtz, 1989).

*Second*, on the “commitment towards teaching” refers to the teaching profession in a general sense. Accordingly, W.A. Firestone and S. Rosenblum (1988) described this dimension as emphasizing fulfillment from exercising craft skill. They also suggested that higher levels of commitment are experienced when there is a sense of relevance or purpose in one’s work. Teachers with no sense of relevance on their teaching are not as committed as others, possibly due to the frustrations of their work. Not only do teachers leave the profession because of frustration but also because they become attracted to alternative activities (Fresko, Kfir & Nasser, 1997).

Commitment and the degree to which teachers are satisfied and enjoy what they are doing are interactions that take place throughout a teacher’s career (Fresko, Kfir & Nasser, 1997). Meanwhile, W.A. Firestone and J.R. Pennell (1993) noted that the committed teacher is one who is intrinsically motivated because of a sense of meaning in the job responsibilities. The level of commitment is further enhanced when there is a connection to the larger purpose as opposed to a routine task. To maximize intrinsic motivation and commitment, tasks should be neither too complex nor too simplistic, but optimally challenging (Deci & Ryan, 1985). It is incumbent upon administrators to discern the difference and provide the appropriate support as needed in various situations.

Administrative support for teachers can enhance teacher commitment to teaching (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988). Support from administrators contributes to teachers’ performance and willingness to stay in the teaching field (Dworkin, 1987). A primary area of support is student discipline. Teachers expect the principal to control the public spaces in the school and to be sympathetic when teachers have problems with uncontrollable students (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988). Teachers also expect administrators to reduce paperwork, support them in parental disputes, and minimize outside interruptions to their classroom (Rosenholtz, 1985).

*Third*, on the “teacher commitment towards students” can be conceptualized as a commitment to students as unique, whole individuals (Louis, 1998) or as a commitment to student learning. W.K. Hoy and his colleagues’ conception of teacher commitment consist of the committed behaviors directed toward both the social and intellectual development of students (Hoy & Tarter, 1997; and Hoy & Sabo, 1998). Commitment to students as unique, whole individuals is a form of commitment that may motivate teachers to interact with students on a more sensitive level such as adolescent development issues or extracurricular activities (Louis, 1998). So, “commitment towards student learning” involves teacher dedication to helping students learn regardless of academic difficulties or social background (Dannetta, 2002).

As student learning increases, teachers gain intrinsic rewards and thus become more committed (Kushman, 1992). Teacher commitment to students may not necessarily contribute much to student learning (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988). Although high teacher commitment may not increase academic success, W.A. Firestone and J.R. Pennell (1993) noted that low teacher commitment contributed



to a reduction in student achievement. Teachers with lower levels of commitment develop fewer plans to improve the academic quality of their instruction. They are less sympathetic toward students, have more anxiety, and have less tolerance for frustration in the classroom.

### **METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH LIMITATION**

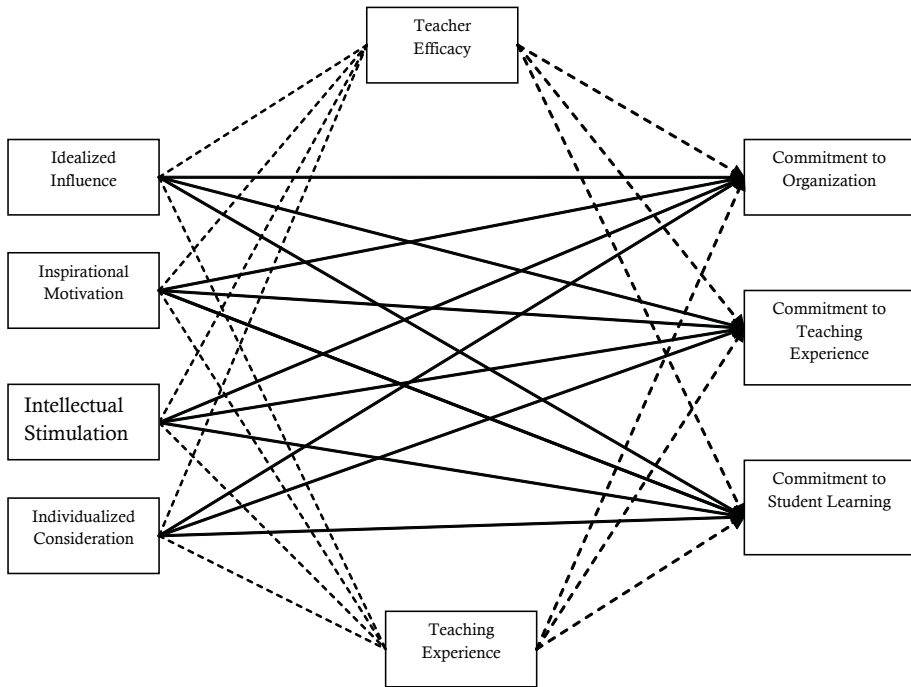
Quantitative survey method was applied and four broadly hypothesized relationships were tested with a sample of 1,014 trained non-graduate and graduate teachers serving in twenty-seven secondary schools in Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia. Data were gathered via survey instruments entitled “Transformational Leadership and Teacher Commitment” developed based on conceptual framework on transformational leadership (Bass & Rigglo, 2006); teacher commitment (Dannetta, 2002); literature review; and two components of moderators i.e. teacher efficacy (Guskey & Passaro, 1994) and teaching experience (Adeyemi, 2008).

A survey questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data as E. Babbie (2001) suggested that survey is the best tool to collect authentic data from a big population through a sampling technique. The general theoretical correlation between these three variables and their components were shown in figure 1 below.

The variables were: *transformational leadership* (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration); *teacher commitment* (towards organization, towards teaching profession, and towards student learning); and *moderators* (teacher efficacy and teaching experience).

Next, a survey research was the most suitable tool used in this study as the researcher did not have any authority over the transformational leadership practices in secondary schools in Sarawak. Moreover, any practices, plans or others concerning transformational leadership was beyond the ability of the researcher. Besides, a research design was also best used to analyze a big and scattered population of teachers in Sarawak. In addition, there were many researchers who had used a quantitative survey research to conduct studies on transformational practices and teacher commitment (Amoroso, 2002; Barbuto, 2005; Antonakis, Avolio & Sivasubramaniam, 2007; and others).

This study employed a survey questionnaire as it could present sensitive questions for the respondents to answer, and the respondents would also feel more relaxed in giving their feedback since their identities were protected (Sekaran, 2003). Next, it was also more practical and effective to be used for a big population as it could accommodate a bigger sample size that improved statistical accuracy by determining the population parameter and thus reducing the sampling error (Konting, 2005). Besides, it was cheaper and faster to conduct, and easier to enter the data into the computer and analyzed them more fairly using the consistent format (Othman, 2002).



**Figure 1:**  
Possible Relationships between Transformational Leadership,  
Teacher Commitment, and Moderators.  
(Source: Adapted from V. Dannaeta, 2002; and B.M. Bass & R.E. Riggio, 2006).

L.R. Gay and P. Airasian (2000) suggested that a sample of 10-20% of the population is sufficient to carry out the research. However, the researcher increased the number of total respondents to 1,014 (53.26%) as J. Pallant (2007) had suggested that choosing a larger sample size than what was needed was necessary. This was to enable a possible sufficient collection of data, should there be any spoilt survey questionnaires such as respondents did not return the instrument or did not attempt in answering the instrument completely.

The samples were confined to school principals, trained non-graduate, and graduates teachers serving in twenty-seven government secondary schools in Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia as it contained sufficient samples whose qualification, certification, job confirmation, service category, and promotion were similar in the Ministry of Education in Malaysia. It was also in accordance to what U. Sekaran (2003) had suggested that certain groups were adequately represented through the assignment of a quota.

Next, it was a convenient sampling as the researcher was a trained graduate teacher serving in a government secondary schools in Miri and it was believed it would yield the most accurate assessment of their principals' leadership behaviors.

Besides, P.F. Amoroso (2002) suggested that gathering data from teachers working with a principal on a daily basis was determined to be the best source of this specific research design.

It was a stratified random sampling based on the listed government secondary schools in Sarawak as it was suitably used to obtain samples from a big and scattered population (Mertzens, 1998; Babbie, 2001; and Konting, 2005). Besides, it also ensured an availability of special characteristics which were needed to run statistical analysis in a study (Cresswell, 2005). Next, it could also reduce sampling error (Konting, 2005). Furthermore, disproportionate sampling was used as it had a sufficient representation of data which were necessary to examine the comparison in any hypotheses (Sekaran, 2003).

To collect data, a self-developed survey questionnaire was used as it permitted the collection of reliable and reasonably valid data in a sample and was cheap to administer (Anderson & Arsenault, 2002:170). It was motivated to collect data from a large number of respondents (McBurney, 2001:239). Next, J.W. Cresswell (2005) also suggested that the information in an instrument could also be used to answer research questions as required in a study.

The “Transformational Leadership and Teacher Commitment Questionnaire” consisted of six sections (school profile, principal’s and teacher’s profile, the practice of transformational leadership, teacher commitment level, and moderators), and had a total of 117 items.

The questions on school profile, principals and teacher’s profile were in nominal scale, and the other sections dictated the responses on a five-point Likert-Scale like 1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Moderate, 4 = Often, and 5 = Always; and 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Moderately Agree, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree.

To ensure the clarity and readability of the instructions, and the contents of the questionnaire, it was piloted to teachers in Bintulu (another division) in Sarawak, because B.W. Tuckman (1999) had suggested that pilot study was essential to be conducted among the population which would not be taken as the real samples in a study. To achieve a better response rate, the feedback from some respondents were identified and rectified.

To examine the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach’s Alpha was calculated to measure the internal consistency reliability of transformational leadership, teacher commitment, and moderators. The results showed the internal consistency reliability was above 0.90 in final stage excluding “commitment towards student learning”, “teacher efficacy”, and “teaching experience” which were below 0.75. However, all the scales had acceptable reliability as many researchers report that anything above 0.6 is acceptable.

Next, to examine its validity, the research instrument was analyzed using factor analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values measure of sampling adequacy were well above the acceptable level of 0.6 and thus factorability was assumed (Coakes, Steed & Dzidic, 2006).

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science) Version 15.0 program for windows for descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis, like mean scores and standard deviation, were used to examine the findings. Inferential statistics like correlation analysis was used to examine the strength and linear relation direction between two variables (Pallant, 2007). Next, Multiple Regression Analysis was used to test the hypothesis that a significant relationship existed between transformational leadership and teacher commitment, and between moderators and teacher commitment. Besides, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) were used to determine the significant differences in mean scores among transformational leadership and teacher commitment components in relation to demography.

It has relied primarily on samples drawn specifically from the trained teachers serving in secondary schools in Miri, Sarawak at a fixed period time only. Hence, the direction of casualty cannot be determined. Next, it is uncertain that the obtained results can be generalized to all the trained non-graduate and graduate teachers in other divisions in Sarawak. Besides, it is not a longitudinal study, and like any other cross-sectioned study, it can only provide a static perspective on fit. Thus, only conclusions or discussions of the general relationships between the variables were drawn in this study.

Moreover, respondents were told that the questionnaires were collected mainly for research purposes which are likely to result in less self-enhancement than when data are collected for administrative purposes (Farh & Werbel, 1986; and Korsgaard, Schweger & Sapienza, 2004). Next, some teachers might have preconceived opinions and expectations regarding differences in their principal's leadership behaviors and thus they might rate their leadership negatively as a way to seek revenge to blacklist him or her. On the other hand, some teachers might just simply answer the items for the sake of submitting the instruments. Besides, some might have rated their commitment level higher as a way to please themselves and their principal. All these unfavorable behaviors might distort the reliability and validity of the instrument.

Furthermore, some showed reluctance to respond to the instrument as they feared that their principal might check and read their answers and thus affected their annual performance report. Next, different cultural and international contexts may limit the generalizability of results. It is unclear whether the findings may have the same implications for teachers in different cultural environment as the values of the participants in this current study might not accurately represent the values of other countries. Comparative studies across cultures, schools in other divisions or areas are needed in order to truly understand many of the constructs, included in the study.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The model was specified and tested using Pearson Correlation, multiple regression, ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) and MANOVA (Multivariate Analysis of Variance)

analysis, and was found to fit the data reasonably. The high Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.723 to 0.954. It indicated that the items used for measuring transformational leadership and teacher commitment were reliable. On the other hand, KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) values which ranged from 0.617 to 0.868 showed that sampling adequacy was far greater than 0.6 and thus indicating that the instrument was significant (Coakes, Steed & Dzidic, 2006).

The statistical values for skewness and kurtosis recorded between -1.96 to +1.96 and thus the data were of normal distribution and were suitable for data analysis (Chua, 2008). For skewness, it ranged from 0.036 to 0.612; and for kurtosis, it ranged from 0.054 to 0.671 in this study.

***On the Extent of Principal's Transformational Leadership Practice.*** Teachers perceived an overall low level of their principals' transformational leadership qualities as the mean scores recorded only 30.09. "Idealized Influence" recorded 41.88, "Intellectual Stimulation" stood 21.83, "Inspirational Motivation" recorded 27.77, and "Individualized Consideration" stood 28.86.

***On the Extent of Teacher Commitment.*** Teachers demonstrated an average level of commitment as the mean scores recorded 55.84. "Commitment towards organization" recorded 93.96, "Commitment towards teaching profession" stood 56.13, and "Commitment towards student learning" recorded 17.43.

***On the Extents of Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Teacher Commitment.*** There were partially significant linear correlations between transformational leadership and teacher commitment ( $r = 0.443$ ). "Individualized consideration" recorded the strongest linear correlation ( $r = 0.516$ ), and "inspirational motivation" had the weakest linear correlation ( $r = 0.463$ ) with "commitment towards organization". Next, "inspirational motivation" had the strongest linear correlation ( $r = 0.398$ ), and "intellectual stimulation" ( $r = 0.335$ ) had the weakest linear correlation with "commitment towards teaching profession". Besides, "intellectual stimulation" had the lowest correlation ( $r = -0.18$ ) with "commitment towards student learning", and it was not significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Significantly, "individualized consideration" ( $B = 0.370, p < 0.05$ ) contributed 26.6 percent of the variance (R Square = 0.266) in "commitment towards organization" as indicated by the F-value of  $[F(1,1012) = 367.202]$ . It indicated that "individualized consideration" ( $B = 0.516, p < 0.05$ ) was the main factor which caused the respondents to "commit towards organization". The combination of both "individualized consideration" ( $B = 0.370, p < 0.05$ ), and "idealized influence" ( $B = 0.182, p < 0.05$ ) caused an increase of 1.2 per cent (27.8 – 26.6 per cent) to the variance (R Square = 0.275) in "commitment towards organization"  $[F(2,1011) = 194.753, p < 0.05]$ . In brief, "idealized influence" and "individualized consideration" were predictors of "commitment towards organization".

Next, significantly, "inspirational motivation" ( $B = 0.264, p < 0.05$ ); "individualized consideration" ( $B = 0.295, p < 0.05$ ); and "intellectual stimulation" ( $B = 0.122, p < 0.05$ ) contributed 18.1 percent of the variance (R Square = 0.181)

in “commitment towards teaching profession” as indicated by the F-value of [F(3.1010) = 74.328]. It indicated that “inspirational motivation” (B = 0.398,  $p < 0.05$ ) was the main factor which caused the respondents to commit towards teaching profession. The combination of both “inspirational motivation” (B = 0.229,  $p < 0.05$ ), and “individualized consideration” (B = 0.218,  $p < 0.05$ ) caused an increase of 1.9 per cent (17.7 – 15.8 per cent) to the variance (R Square = 17.7) in “commitment towards teaching profession” [F(3.1011) = 108.948,  $p < 0.05$ ]. Besides, when “intellectual stimulation” (B = 0.122,  $p < 0.05$ ) was included, all the three independent variables contributed 18.1 per cent ( $r = 0.043$ ) of the variability in “commitment towards teaching profession” [F(3.1010) = 74.328]. In brief, “inspirational motivation”, “individualized consideration”, and “intellectual stimulation” were predictors of “commitment towards teaching profession”.

However, “idealized influence”, “inspirational motivation”, “intellectual stimulation”, and “individualized consideration” were not predictors of “commitment towards student learning” in this study.

***On the Extents of Relationship between Moderators and Teacher Commitment.***

There were significant linear correlations between moderators and teacher commitment. “Teacher efficacy” had the strongest linear correlation ( $r = 0.377$ ) with “commitment towards organization”, and the weakest linear correlation ( $r = 0.107$ ) with “commitment towards student learning”. Next, “teaching experience” had the strongest linear correlation ( $r = 0.292$ ) with “commitment towards organization”, and the weakest linear correlation with “commitment towards student learning” ( $r = 0.029$ ), and it was significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Next, significantly, “teacher efficacy” (B = 0.308,  $p < 0.05$ ) and “teaching experience” (B = 0.143,  $p < 0.05$ ) contributed 15.8 percent of the variance (R Square = 0.158) in “commitment towards organization” as indicated by the F-value of [F(2.1011) = 94.890]. In brief, “teacher efficacy” and “teaching experience” were factors to “commitment towards organization”.

Besides, significantly, “teacher efficacy” (B = 0.274,  $p < 0.05$ ), and “teaching experience” (B = 0.156,  $p < 0.05$ ) contributed 14.1 percent of the variance (R Square = 0.141) in “commitment towards teaching profession” as indicated by the F-value of [F(2.1011) = 82.919]. In brief, “teacher efficacy” and “teaching experience” were factors to “commitment towards teaching profession”.

Moreover, significantly, “teacher efficacy” (B = 0.107,  $p < 0.05$ ) contributed 10.7 percent of the variance (R Square = 0.107) in “commitment towards student learning” as indicated by the F-value of [F(1.1012) = 11.633]. In brief, “teacher efficacy” was a factor to “commitment towards student learning”.

***On the Differences in Mean Scores among Transformational Leadership and Teacher Commitment Components in Relation to Demography.*** To explain about the differences, there are three sections as follows:

***First, Differences in mean scores among transformational leadership qualities in relation to demography.*** There was a significant difference in mean scores among

transformational leadership qualities in relation to teachers' age-group [ $F(4,1009) = 3.756, p = 0.005$ ], and years of teaching experience [ $F(7,1006) = 2.456, p = 0.017$ ]. Therefore, the null hypotheses were rejected at the 0.05 level. However, there was a non-significant difference in mean scores between transformational leadership components and teachers' status [ $F(2,1011) = 2.435, p = 0.088$ ], and service category [ $F(5,1008) = 2.117, p = 0.061$ ]. Therefore, the null hypotheses were confirmed at the 0.05 level.

**Second, Differences in mean scores among teacher commitment components in relation to demography.** There was a partial significant difference in mean scores between teacher commitment components and teachers' age-group [ $F(4,1009) = 1.643, p = 0.161$ ]. Therefore, the null hypothesis was partially rejected. The general findings were "commitment towards organization" [ $F(4,1009) = 3.509, p = 0.007$ ]; "commitment towards teaching profession" [ $F(4,1009) = 0.739, p = 0.566$ ]; and "commitment towards student learning" [ $F(4,1009) = 1.732, p = 0.141$ ].

Next, there was a significant difference between teacher commitment components and years of teaching experience [ $F(7,1006) = 3.286, p = 0.002$ ]. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected at the 0.05 level. The general findings were "commitment towards organization" [ $F(7,1006) = 3.224, p = 0.002$ ]; "commitment towards teaching profession" [ $F(7,1006) = 2.678, p = 0.009$ ]; and "commitment towards student learning" [ $F(7,1006) = 0.989, p = 0.438$ ].

Moreover, there was a non-significant difference between teacher commitment components in relation to teachers' status [ $F(2,1011) = 0.812, p = 0.444$ ]; and service category [ $F(5,1008) = 1.707, p = 0.130$ ]. Therefore, the null hypotheses were confirmed at the 0.05 level.

**Third, Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA).** There were no significant differences in the mean scores for transformational leadership practices in relation to age-group [ $F(4,1014) = 1.425, p = 0.120$ , Pillai's Trace = 0.026]; service category [ $F(20,1014) = 0.918, p = 0.564$ , Pillai's Trace = 0.021]; years of teaching experience [ $F(28,1014) = 0.982, p = 0.492$ , Pillai's Trace = 0.031]; and status at school [ $F(8,1014) = 0.895, p = 0.520$ , Pillai's Trace = 0.008]. Thus, the null hypotheses were not rejected.

Moreover, there were no significant differences in the mean scores of transformational leadership practices for the interaction effects between demography in relation to transformational leadership practice.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

**On the Extent of Transformational Leadership Practices.** The findings (a low level of transformational leadership practices) did not support the studies which highlighted the dynamism of transformational leadership that could bring changes to the level of teacher commitment. According to B.M. Bass (1990:21), transformational leadership occurs when leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their employees, when they generate awareness an acceptance of the purposes and mission of the

group, and when they stir employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group. Together, heightened capacity and commitment are held to lend to additional effort and greater productivity (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Barbuto, 2005; and Spreitzer, Perttula & Xin, 2005).

***On the Extent of Teacher Commitment.*** The findings (a moderate level of teacher commitment) matched with the studies that teachers in Malaysia had low to moderate levels of professionalisation, and the study also reported that teachers only had moderate levels of affective, continuance, and normative commitment (Fauziah *et al.*, 2008).

Many factors impact teachers' levels of commitment towards organization. Specifically, previous studies showed that teachers' commitment towards organization was influenced by: *beliefs and acceptance of organizational goals* (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1979; and Riehl & Sipple, 1996); *level of involvement in decision making* (Kushman, 1992); *orderly climates conducive to learning* (Rosenholtz, 1989; and Kushman, 1992); and *student achievement* (Kushman, 1992).

***On the Extents of Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Teacher Commitment.*** There were partially significant linear correlations between transformational leadership and teacher commitment. *First*, "individualized consideration" and "idealized influence" were factors to "commitment towards organization". This finding matched with a study that "individualized consideration" is one of the most important factors in describing transformational leadership in collectivistic culture when an emphasis on teamwork was also expected (Karen *et al.*, 2005). Next, "inspirational motivation", "individualized consideration", and "intellectual stimulation" were factors to "commitment towards teaching profession".

Besides, there were no factors influencing "commitment towards student learning". It matched with the previous study that teachers were reluctant to show "commitment towards student learning" as teachers were most dissatisfied with student motivation and discipline, lack of recognition, and administrative support (Darling-Hamond, 1999).

In brief, the findings were partially supporting with the studies that transformational leadership had a significant positive effect on organizational commitment (Koh, Steers & Terbong, 1995; and Geijsel, Slegers & Berg, 2003). Higher levels of organizational commitment are reported among employees when leaders are perceived as being more transformational.

Moreover, transformational leadership behaviors were found to have significant impact on teacher commitment (Amoroso, 2002). Furthermore, K. Leithwood *et al.* (2004) also reported that transformational leadership had significant direct and indirect effects on teachers' commitment to change.

***On the Extents of Relationship between Moderators and Teacher Commitment.*** There were significant linear correlations between "teacher efficacy" and teacher commitment. The findings support with studies that teachers who have higher levels of teaching efficacy are better able to cope, have higher levels of commitment to



teaching, and experience greater satisfaction with their job (Nir & Kranot, 2006); and the school principal plays an important role in fostering teacher commitment and teacher efficacy (VanderStoep, Anderman & Midgley, 1994). Next, school administrators can also enhance teacher commitment by building teachers' self-efficacy (Chan *et al.*, 2008).

Besides, the findings supported the hypothesis that "teacher efficacy" and "teaching experience" were factors determining teacher commitment (towards organization, towards teaching profession, and towards student learning).

The findings support the studies "teacher efficacy" and "teaching experience" have significant positive effects on teacher commitment. Furthermore, a key individual variable that has been consistently found to be a significant predictor of teacher commitment is teacher efficacy (Coladarci, 1992; and Ebmeier, 2003). For teaching experience, it has been documented that as teachers' service durations get longer, their organizational commitment levels increase (Celep, 2000). This was apparent based on increases in the levels of commitment to the school, teaching work, and work group (Solomon, 2007).

In brief, there were significant linear correlations between "teacher efficacy" and teacher commitment. Next, "teacher efficacy" and "teaching experience" were factors to teacher commitment (towards organization and towards teaching profession). However, "teaching efficacy" was a factor to "commitment towards student learning".

***On the Differences in Mean Scores between Transformational Leadership and Teacher Commitment Components in Relation to Demography.*** To discuss about the differences, there are three sections as follows:

***First, Differences in mean scores among transformational leadership components in relation to demography.*** There were significant differences among age-group and years of teaching experience components in relation to "idealized influence", "inspirational motivation", and "intellectual stimulation" but not "individualized consideration" quality shown by their principal. However, there were no significant differences among status at school and service category components with regards to "idealized influence", "inspirational motivation", "intellectual stimulation" but there were significant difference in relation to "individualized consideration". In brief, there were partially significant differences among transformational leadership components in relation to demography.

***Second, Differences in mean scores among teacher commitment components in relation to demography.*** There were significant differences among age-group components in relation to "commitment towards organization" but not "commitment towards teaching profession" and "commitment towards student learning". Next, there were significant differences among years of teaching experience in relation to their "commitment towards organization" and "towards teaching profession", but not "commitment towards student learning". Besides, there were no significant differences among status at school in relation to teacher commitment. Furthermore, there were no significant differences among service category in relation to their "commitment towards organization", "towards student

learning” but there were significant differences in relation to “commitment towards teaching profession”. In brief, there were partially significant differences among demography and teacher commitment.

**Third, Differences in mean scores among demography on transformational leadership and teacher commitment.** There were no significant differences among demography in relation to transformational leadership and teacher commitment. This is the first paper that studies the influence of four dimensioned transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) and selected moderating variables (teacher efficacy and teaching experience) on the three broad conceptualization of teacher commitment (towards organization, teaching profession, and student learning). To some extent, the findings demonstrated that there was either direct or indirect relationship between transformational leadership, teacher commitment, and moderators (teacher efficacy and teaching experience).

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Clearly, the findings show supporting evidence for the notion that transformational leadership behaviors are strongly correlated to employees’ sense of commitment. As previously discussed, teacher commitment has been linked with commitment towards organization, towards teaching profession, and towards student learning; it is logical to assume that the practice of transformational leadership behaviors by school leaders enhances teacher commitment in secondary schools in Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia. Since no study has been conducted examining the relationship of transformational leadership and teacher commitment, exclusively among the trained teachers in Miri, this study would be viable and relevant to improve the school academic performance in Sarawak, Malaysia.

This study has highlighted the importance of transformational leadership and moderators (teacher efficacy and teaching experience) in improving the level of teacher commitment; and future endeavors should compare these findings with similar predictors, criterion, and moderators in other areas. Besides, it suggests that the school principals should seriously consider transformational leadership qualities in improving teacher commitment level in the school.

Besides, future research could consider multiple sources of performance ratings such as employing self and peer-evaluations, in addition to supervisory ratings (Barksdale & Werner, 2001). It did not examine the level of teachers’ commitment by the school principals as a confirmation on teachers’ self-assessment of their commitment in schools. Thus, another potential area for research is empirically testing and confirming teachers’ commitment level in schools by the school principals. Moreover, the sample size should also be increased with samples drawn from diverse locations or areas so as to promise generalizability of findings.

Future research should examine the impact of transformational leadership qualities and moderators in order to supplement and complement the findings of the

current research. Notably, from the results, teacher efficacy and teaching experience can be taken as independent variables in determining teacher commitment in schools. Nonetheless, the line of research can still be expanded by exploring other determinants which could be taken as predictors and moderators of teacher commitment.

Furthermore, teachers are influenced not just by their principals but also more generally by their peers (fellow colleagues) with whom they interact on a daily basis in the organization contact (Johanson, 2000; and Lamertz, 2002). Besides, factors like situation and school climate would probably have an impact on teachers' level of commitment.

Next, it was noted that leaders use interpersonal or inspirational influence tactics when encouraging colleagues to do tasks that they highly resist or when seeking performance beyond expectation (Bass, 1985; and Barbuto, 2005). Thus, future research could investigate the impact of fellow colleagues, characteristics of the situations, the school climate, and the characteristics of the followers and leaders on improving teachers' commitment level in schools (Yukl, 2006). In addition, data were confined to Miri, Sarawak; and thus the results were limited to generalization to the population as a whole. Therefore, it is recommended to conduct a state or national sample that would likely yield results that is more reflective and generalizable to the state or national population.

Moreover, it was designed to exclusively measure trained teachers' perception of their principal's transformational leadership qualities, and their own level of commitment. Expanding this study to include principals may result in a comparative research study that would compare the results of principals and teachers' responses. It would provide insights about principals' perceptions of their leadership behaviors compared to the perceptions of their teachers. It will thus be beneficial in the development of collaborative training opportunities.

Besides, it was designed through quantitative methods which did not allow further exploration of teachers' responses on survey items. It is, therefore, recommended to design a comprehensive qualitative study that includes an interview which allows respondents to write down responses in accordance to the questions. This will provide essential information on the other factors that determine teacher commitment.

Moreover, a study is needed to explore the collaboration efforts used between university administrator training programs and government schools to increase the awareness of the importance of transformational leadership qualities and the sense of teacher efficacy in improving teacher commitment level among newly trained school administrators. These findings add to the field of studies that transformational leadership continues to be a key element in gaining teacher commitment. It also offers suggestions for policy-amendable strategies which would then increase awareness of the significant positive impact that transformational leadership qualities and sense of teacher efficacy have in gaining teacher commitment.

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School leadership is absolutely crucial to energize and bring dynamism to our schools. It is the vital role of a school leadership to nurture professional growth and bring effective leadership to bear in schools.