

Role Reconsideration of School Improvement Partner (SIPartner +) and Transformational Leadership in Coaching Processes in the District Education Office

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Abstract

The fundamental role of the School Improvement Partner (SIPartner +) in the District Transformation Program (DTP) is to guide and support principals/teachers towards improving the quality of leadership and organisational management. The Leadership Coaching approach is used to guide principals/teachers towards organisational effectiveness. Nevertheless, studies on the role of SIPartner + and the coaching approach used to guide it are lacking. This research examined the role of SIPartner + and transformational leadership practices for principals employing a coaching approach. A total of 117 SIPartner + employees in the District Education Office (PPD) throughout Malaysia were sampled. Quantitative research is a survey using questionnaires used to collect data. Selection of study samples was made randomly. Data were analysed utilising SPSS Version 23.0. Inference analysis showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between the role of SIPartner + and transformational leadership practices with the coaching process implemented. The findings also revealed that there is a contribution of SIPartner + roles and transformational leadership practices to effective leadership and improving school performance. As such, the role of SIPartner + is still pertinent to the contemporary challenges and needs of the education system in Malaysia.

Keywords: *transformational leadership, school improvement partner, district transformation program, coaching process and educational leadership*

1. Introduction

The main goal of the District Transformation Program (DTP) is to improve the quality of education of schools under the control of the District Education Office and the State Department of Education (JPN) [15]. Among the progressive efforts taken to support organisations, in particular, PPD is the establishment of the School Improvement Partner (SIPartner +). SIPartner + serves to provide guidance and support to school leaders in developing their school system [24]. Through this program, school leaders will not feel alone in leading and improving their school. As a result, the quality of service they provide will improve. According to the District Transformation Program Management Handbook (Edition 2.0 and Edition 3.0) published by the Daily School Management Division [12, 15], it is evident that SIPartner +'s establishment is to provide direction and assistance to the Principal / Headmaster (PGB) towards advancing the quality of leadership and organisational administration.

SIPartner + officers are accountable for developing the professionalism of school-based school leaders. To this end, the Leadership Coaching and Mentoring (LCM) approach is adopted in face-to-face meetings between SIPartner + acting as coaches and school leaders acting as coaches [15]. SIPartner + helps school leaders develop themselves.

1.1. School Improvement Partner (SIPartner+)

SIPartner + is created to render direction and assistance to principals (PGB) towards promoting the quality of leadership and organisational management [12]. SIPartner + is responsible for developing the professionalism of school-based school leaders. They also need to present supervision and help to school leaders in developing the school organisation they lead. In an attempt to accomplish this goal, the Leadership Coaching approach is used in face-to-face

meetings between SIPartner + acting as coaches and school leaders acting as coachees. SIPartner + needs to perform the coaching and mentoring activities for the development of school leader professionalism and thus improve school achievement [13].

SIPartner + appointed among Education Services Officer is answerable to the KPPD and acts as a mentor, consultant in the field of leadership development and executing interventions to raise the quality of school leaders at the district level. Among other tasks entrusted to SIPartner + are the Professional Learning Community (PLC) program, and best practices' writing and sharing while the efficiency aspect is focused on improving the quality of school leaders based on Standard Kualiti Pendidikan Malaysia Gelombang ke-2 -SKPMg2 [15].

1.2. Transformational Leadership

The findings confirmed that transformational leadership is proficient of forming current and future educational leadership [6] and is ideally applied as the foundation of educational management. The concept of transformational leadership was popularised by [4]. According to Burns, a transformational leader can bring followers to encourage each other to grow their work performance to the next level by support and motivation. Transformational leadership can inspire its followers by improving the assumptions, perceptions and motivations of working towards the realisation of goals through the power of their followers' personalities and vision [6]. There are four dimensions of transformational leadership, specifically individual considerations, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and superior influence. Individual considerations in transformational leadership concentrate more on each individual with his or her behaviour. On the other hand, intellectual stimulation functions as an impetus for the subordinates to seek to improve their knowledge, to adopt a new approach and to be creative in their current development. Inspirational motivation highlights the dimensions that present respect for leaders. Transformational leaders are considered to have an enormous weight when it comes to building trust, respect, and admiration for their followers. Besides, transformational leaders can also transform, encourage and facilitate the followers to attain victory through the fulfilment of collective goals.

1.3. Coaching in Education

Coaching works as an essential catalyst, and there is a link between coaching and employee achievement development within an institution [8, 26]. Coaching too presents a critical approach to leadership and management to assist employees to develop their potential and quality of work, build capacity, respond to change and provide support in fulfilling their position [27, 26]. Studies linked to coaching strategy in education suggest a positive impression. Among them is the concept by [19, 29]. The conclusions of the study noted that coaching could help in improving the culture of leadership to produce educational leaders who can contribute collectively to educational institutions continuously. Besides, the study of improving high-performing schools also practised coaching approaches to intensify the capabilities of principals, middle leaders and teachers in the domains of goal setting, professional community learning (PLC) development, leadership sharing and creating a conducive culture for student learning.

1.4. The GROW Model

The GROW model was developed by the guidance pioneer, Sir John Whitmore over 20 years ago in his book entitled "Coaching for Performance". It is one of the most well-known and widely used models in education. The GROW model provides a simple framework for recognising practical answers to problems [28]. Also, there are four critical components of the GROW model in completing coaching and mentoring. The four elements are goal, reality, option and wrap-up. A goal is what one wants to achieve, the coachee and not the coach decides that. Reality refers to the current situation. What it is and happening presently and the focus will be on the present reality in multiple perspectives such as explaining the principal contemporary issues, opportunities or possibilities. Besides, the highlight of the present goal is to focus on solutions

and prioritise what needs to be done first. The choice is to refer to the options available. For instance, the best choice is between the available options, the constraints and challenges that may come and the way forward. The choices made are specific, measurable, achievable and realistic (SMART). While, the final stage that is a wrap-up. It refers to the action to be exercised, which is an action towards a solution to the situation that will harvest result.

2. Methodology

The purpose of this study was to identify the relationship between the role of SIPartner + and the transformational leadership practice of SIPartner + with the coaching process implemented for school leaders. The objectives of this study are to:

1. Identify the relationship between the role of SIPartner + and the coaching process implemented by SIPartner +.

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between the role of SIPartner + as a leader, mentor and reporter in the coaching process.

2. Identify the relationship between SIPartner + transformational leadership practice and SIPartner + coaching process implemented.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between SIPartner + transformational leadership practices in the dimensions of superior influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual considerations with the coaching process implemented by SIPartner +.

3. Identify the contribution of SIPartner + roles and Transformational leadership practices in the coaching process to school leaders.

Ho3: There is no significant contribution between the role of SIPartner + (leaders, mentors and reporters) and SIPartner + transformation leadership practices (superior influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual considerations) with the coaching process implemented by SIPartner +.

In this investigation, the questionnaire instrument used to measure the role of SIPartner + was adapted and modified according to a study from The Managerial Roles of Public Community College Chief Academic Officer, Texas University [1]. The SIPartner + transformational leadership practice questionnaire was adapted and modified from the findings introduced by [2], the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) and the Transformational Leadership Practice questionnaire [9]. The questionnaire instrument for measuring the coaching process implemented by SIPartner + was adapted and revised according to the findings of the Coaching Leadership: Leaders' and Followers' perception Assessment Questionnaires in Nursing [20].

The study population consisted of all SIPartner + officers working at PPD throughout Malaysia. The sample size of the SIPartner + required in this study was 148 [16] out of 245 populations. The sample selection was randomly chosen. The return of the questionnaire was 120 samples. After the data cleaning process, only 117 samples were analysed. Data obtained from the questionnaire were analysed utilising the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23.0. Pearson Correlation Analysis was used to recognise the relationship between the role of SIPartner +, transformational leadership practices and the coaching process implemented in collaboration with school leaders while multiple regression analysis was used to identify the contribution of the role elements and transformational leadership elements to the coaching process.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Ho1 There is no significant relationship between the role of SIPartner + as a leader, mentor and reporter in the coaching process

An analysis of the correlation relationship between the role of SIPartner + and the coaching process implemented is shown in the figure below.

Findings of Pearson’s correlation analysis between SIPartner + role dimensions and coaching process. Table 1 shows the relationships between each dimension in the role of SIPartner + leaders, mentors and reporters in the coaching process, in detail.

Table 1. Correlation between SIPartner + role dimensions and coaching process implemented by SIPartner +

SIPartner + Role Dimensions		r	r ² Variants	Sig.	Relationship Levels
Leader	The Coaching process	0.399**	0.159	0.000	average
Mentor	The Coaching process	0.674**	0.454	0.000	strong
Reporter	The Coaching process	0.514**	0.264	0.000	strong

Table 1 shows that there is a significant relationship between SIPartner + roles through role dimensions, leaders and coaching process. The overall verdicts of this correlation analysis proved that the SIPartner + role dimensions as a mentor have a strong relationship with the coaching process at $r = 0.674$ and $\text{sig} = 0.000$ ($p < 0.005$), followed by the role of SIPartner + as reporters with values of $r = 0.514$ and $\text{sig}.0,000$ ($p < 0.005$). Nonetheless, the relationship between SIPartner + leader roles was moderate to $r = 0.399$ and $\text{sig}.0,000$ ($p < 0.005$). This analysis attested that SIPartner + could play a role as a coach to the principal/headteacher.

The analysis below presents the degree of relationship between the two variables to see the strength of the relationship.

Table 2. Relationships between the role of SIPartner + and the coaching process implemented by SIPartner +

		The Role of SIPartner +	The Coaching Process
The role of SIPartner +	Pearson Correlation	1	.654**
	Sig. (2- tailed)		.000
	N	117	117
The Coaching process	Pearson Correlation	.654**	1
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000	
	N	117	117

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Based on Table 2, the findings indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between the role of SIPartner + and the coaching process implemented with values of $r = 0.654$ and $\text{sig} = 0.000$. The strength of the relationship between the role of SIPartner + and the coaching process was moderate positive relationships [11]. From this analysis, it can be concluded that the null hypothesis (H_0) found no significant relationship between the role of SIPartner + and the coaching process failed. It suggests that there is a significant relationship between the role of SIPartner + and the coaching process implemented with school leaders.

3.2. Ho2 There is no significant relationship between SIPartner + transformational leadership practices in the dimensions of superior influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual considerations with the coaching process implemented by SIPartner +

An analysis of the correlation between SIPartner + transformation leadership practices and the coaching process is shown in the figure below.

Findings of Pearson’s correlation analysis between dimensions of SIPartner + transformational leadership practice and coaching process. Table 3 presents the relationships between each of the dimensions of SIPartner + transformational leadership practice, namely superior influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual considerations with the coaching process, in detail.

Table 3. Correlations between dimensions of SIPartner + transformational leadership practice with the coaching process implemented by SIPartner +

Dimensions of Transformational Leadership Practice		r	Variants r ²	Sig.	Relationship Levels
Superior Influences	The Coaching process	0.547**	0.299	0.000	Strong
Inspirational Motivation	The Coaching process	0.716**	0.512	0.000	Strong
Intellectual stimulation	The Coaching process	0.721**	0.519	0.000	Strong
Individual Considerations	The Coaching process	0.742**	0.550	0.000	Strong

In Table 3, the correlation analysis shows that there is a significant relationship between transformational leadership practices through dimensions of superior influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual considerations with the coaching process. These four dimensions of transformational leadership have a strong relationship with the coaching process. The dimension of individual considerations has the strongest relationship with the coaching process with values of $r = 0.742$ and $\text{sig.} = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$); was followed by an intellectual stimulation dimension with values of $r = 0.721$ and $\text{sig.} = 0.00$ ($p < 0.005$); inspirational motivation dimension with values of $r = 0.716$ and $\text{sig.} = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$) and dimension of superior influence with values of $r = 0.547$ and $\text{sig.} = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$).

The analysis below shows the degree of relationship between the two variables to see the strength of the relationship.

Table 4. Relationships between SIPartner + transformational leadership practices and processes coaching conducted by SIPartner +

		Transformational Leadership Practices of SIPartner +	The Coaching Process
Transformational Leadership Practices	Pearson Correlation	1	.802**
	Sig. (2- tailed)		.000
	N	117	117
The Coaching process	Pearson Correlation	.802**	1
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000	
	N	117	117

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

According to Table 4, there is a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership practice and coaching process with values of $r = 0.802$ and $sig. = 0.000$. The strength of the relationship between transformational leadership practice and the coaching process is a significant positive relationship [11]. Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho2) that suggests there is no significant relationship between transformational leadership practice and coaching process by SIPartner + was rejected. It means that there is a significant relationship between transformational leadership practices and the coaching process implemented by SIPartner + officers to school leaders.

3.3. Ho3 There is no significant contribution between the role of SIPartner + (leaders, mentors and reporters) and SIPartner + transformation leadership practices (superior influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual considerations) with the coaching process implemented by SIPartner +

The results of the multiple regression analysis are shown in Table 5. The analysis shows that four independent variables showed significant correlation and contribution ($p < 0.005$) to the coaching process implemented by SIPartner +. The independent variables are individual considerations, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and reporters.

The findings registered that R^2 (0.685) is a combination of dimensions — dimensions inherent in the role of SIPartner + and transformational leadership practices examined. These dimensions were predictors with a significant correlation (68.5%) ($p < 0.005$) with the coaching process implemented by SIPartner +. The findings of this analysis confirmed that there is still another percentage of about 33% contributed by other factors to the effectiveness of the coaching process implemented for school leaders.

Table 5. Contribution Regression analysis of SIPartner +'s role' dimensions and the transformational leadership practices of SIPartner + towards the coaching process implemented

Predictors	B	Beta B	t-Value	Sig.	R ²	Contributions (%)
Individual Considerations	0.224	0.281	3.235	0.002	0.551	55.1
Intellectual stimulation	0.198	0.281	3.502	0.001	0.623	7.2
Inspirational Motivation	0.188	0.258	3.229	0.002	0.662	3.9
Reporter	0.120	0.173	2.880	0.005	0.685	2.3
Constant	1.271		5.919	0.000		

Double R	0.828
R Square	0.685
R Square Modified	0.674
Standard Error	0.173

Among these four predictors, the top and highest predictors which contributed 55.1% to the coaching process implemented by SIPartner + officials to school leaders were individual considerations ($B = 0.281$, $t = 3.235$ and $p = 0.002$). The second predictor of 7.2% of the coaching process conducted by SIPartner + officers to school leaders was intellectual stimulation ($B = 0.281$, $t = 3.502$ and $p = 0.001$). While the top three predictors were inspirational motivations that contributed 3.9% to the coaching process implemented by SIPartner + officers toward school leaders ($B = 0.258$, $t = 3.229$ and $p = 0.002$). The last predictor of this study that accounted for 2.3% of the coaching process implemented by SIPartner + officers was reporter ($B = 0.173$, $t = 2.880$ and $p = 0.05$).

Based on the decisions of this regression analysis, the researchers note that the variables contributing to the coaching process implemented by SIPartner + officers consist of four independent variables particularly individual considerations, intellectual motivation, inspirational motivation and reporters.

3.4. Discussion

The verdicts proved that SIPartner + can play their part well and can practice transformational leadership to make adjustments in the leadership and organisational management aspects of school leaders adopting a coaching approach.

Analysing the strength of the relationship between the role of SIPartner + and the coaching process implemented shows a simple and significant positive relationship. It implies that there is a significant relationship between the role of SIPartner + and the coaching process implemented with school leaders. This finding demonstrated that SIPartner + is indeed proficient of being a successful coach in overseeing PGB by using the Leadership Coaching and Mentoring (LCM) approach. The conclusions of this research supported the findings [17] who stated that SIPartner + knowledge, skills and behaviours are at a high level in conducting the PGB mentoring process. In [10] explained his study findings that the higher the SIPartner + ability in terms of knowledge, skills and coaching behaviours, the more likely the transformation in PGB's capacity to lead schools. In [25] asserted that the guidance and peer coaching by SIPartner + has the potential to impact management quality in line with SIPartner +'s goal of enabling leadership for school improvement. The outcomes of this study also established the findings of a study administered [26], which declared that mentors should be skilled in guiding employees. A good mentor can convey the essence of coaching with an excellent presentation style in delivering new knowledge to the coached staff. The conclusions also attested that the strength of the relationship between SIPartner + transformational leadership practices and the coaching process, which is positively related and significant. It symbolises that there is a significant relationship between transformational leadership practices and the coaching process performed for school leaders. Transformational leadership plays a vital role in the creation of SIPartner + with positive school leaders. Positive interactions depend on the satisfaction of followers (school leaders) in their role under the leadership (SIPartner +). It is because the transformation process influences leaders' attitudes, effort, performance, commitment, and behaviour. Consequently, it leads to satisfaction [22]. The positive correlation between leadership and transformational performance indicates that followers' perceptions of "their work characteristics serve as mediators of the relationship between transformational leadership and performance" [21]. The selection of this leadership design has the potential to help SIPartner + develop school-based professionalism of school leaders and improve school performance. In terms of contribution dimensions of SIPartner + role with transformational leadership practice with coaching process for school leaders, it shows 68.5%. These contributions involve a combination of dimensions of individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and reporter. This conclusion revealed that in developing the coaching process, aspects of building a good relationship could form mutual understanding, mutual admiration and agreement between coaches and coachees to reduce gaps, foster appreciation and respect for one another [3, 26]. According to [7, 26], who explained that a coach needs to possess the vision to accomplish the goal, daily schedule, be motivated and competent to encourage in order to realise the vision. The capacity of the coach to motivate will motivate and encourage the coachee to realise the goal. SIPartner + also works well as a reporter. It is because most of the SIPartner + has had the experience of being a coach for school leaders for more than three years. They are already competent as a coach. This level of competence can be measured through the duration of experience in mentoring and taking on a leadership role [15].

4. Conclusion

Ergo, it can be concluded that in order to meet the demands of organisational development and leadership development in schools, SIPartner + needs to be a school improvement partner alongside principals and teachers. SIPartner + strives to render guidance and support to school leaders in promoting the school organisation they lead. Through this program, school leaders will not feel alone in managing and developing their school. Therefore, the quality of service they afford will improve. It is because it has been proven in some studies that scholars have attested that student accomplishment is at a higher level in schools led by principals or external teachers with external support and assistance.

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