

Culturally Responsive Leadership in Malaysian Small Schools Context: A Preliminary Survey

Kepimpinan Responsif Budaya dalam Konteks Sekolah Kecil Malaysia: Tinjauan Awal

MOHD NORLIZAM MOHD RAZALI & AIDA HANIM A. HAMID

ABSTRACT

Principals and headteachers are leaders in schools. Various past studies showed that the leadership of school leaders may influence students' achievement. These past studies demonstrated that the leaderships of school leaders also influence the actions and achievements of the teachers in schools. Thus, as stated in the fifth Malaysia Education Development Plan 2013-2025 (MOE, 2012), the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) decided to place high-performing leaders in schools. This study discussed culturally responsive leadership. It examined the background, culturally related issues in Malaysia, and dimensions of culturally responsive leadership in the small school context in Malaysia based on past studies in external and domestic contexts related to culturally responsive leadership. This study was a preliminary survey that aimed at confirming the appropriateness of the dimensions found in the culturally responsive leadership framework introduced by Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis (2016) derived from the literature review. The data for this study was collected using semi-structured interviews involving two headteachers and two teachers from small schools. The findings from the interview were analysed and discussed further in this study, with the support of secondary data. In conclusion, the dimensions found in this framework are suitable as culturally responsive leadership practices in Malaysia and to be used as a basis in the implementation of further studies related to culturally responsive leadership in small schools in Malaysia.

Keywords: Leadership; culturally responsive; small school; teachers; head teacher

ABSTRAK

Pengetua dan guru besar adalah pemimpin di sekolah. Pelbagai kajian lepas menunjukkan kepimpinan pemimpin sekolah boleh mempengaruhi pencapaian pelajar. Kajian-kajian lepas ini menunjukkan bahawa kepimpinan pemimpin sekolah turut mempengaruhi tindakan dan pencapaian guru di sekolah. Justeru, seperti yang dinyatakan dalam Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia kelima 2013-2025 (KPM, 2012), Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia (KPM) memutuskan untuk menempatkan pemimpin berprestasi tinggi di sekolah. Kajian ini membincangkan kepimpinan responsif budaya. Ia mengkaji latar belakang, isu berkaitan budaya di Malaysia, dan dimensi kepimpinan responsif budaya dalam konteks sekolah kecil di Malaysia berdasarkan kajian lepas dalam konteks luar dan domestik yang berkaitan dengan kepimpinan responsif budaya. Kajian ini merupakan tinjauan awal yang bertujuan untuk mengesahkan kesesuaian dimensi yang terdapat dalam rangka kerja kepimpinan responsif budaya yang diperkenalkan oleh Khalifa, Gooden, dan Davis (2016) yang diperolehi daripada tinjauan literatur. Data kajian ini dikumpul menggunakan temu bual separa berstruktur yang melibatkan dua orang guru besar dan dua orang guru dari Sekolah Kurang Murid. Dapatan daripada temu bual dianalisis dan dibincangkan dengan lebih lanjut dalam kajian ini, dengan sokongan data sekunder. Kesimpulannya, dimensi yang terdapat dalam rangka kerja ini sesuai sebagai amalan kepimpinan responsif budaya di Malaysia dan dijadikan asas dalam pelaksanaan kajian lanjutan berkaitan kepimpinan responsif budaya di sekolah kecil di Malaysia.

Kata kunci: Kepimpinan; responsif budaya; sekolah kurang murid; guru; guru besar

INTRODUCTION

The diversity of backgrounds of the people in Malaysia who live in a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious society makes Malaysia a unique country. The three major races in Malaysia have the largest population as Malaysians are Malays, Chinese, and Indians. In addition, Malaysia has an indigenous population consisting of various races and ethnicities. The indigenous people in peninsular Malaysia are Orang Asli and have the three biggest races, namely Negrito, Senoi, and Proto Malay. While the State of Sarawak consists of 27 ethnic groups and the State of Sabah has 32 community ethnic groups (Department of Information Malaysia 2017).

The diversity of Malaysia's society has a significant impact on the cultural diversity which are found present in schools. As a result, school leaders must demonstrate a form of leadership that satisfies the students' need from diverse backgrounds (Khalifa 2018). Additionally, Nur Ayuni and Amir (2019) noted that schools can foster national unity through the activities of leaders and teachers who take more effective measures to unite students of many ethnic and racial backgrounds. Thus, schools play a critical role to respect the cultures of others. Additionally, the responsibility of school leaders is not restricted to the students' and society's culture. School officials should also consider the variety of learning styles that may have an effect on student achievement. Hendro (2019) emphasises that in addition to concentrating on students' learning needs, school leaders should comprehend the diversity of students' talents and levels in order to provide holistic education. Holistic education will succeed if it is supported by all school stakeholders, including school administrators, teachers, parents, and society. Each component that contributes to the efficiency of holistic education in schools should be coherent in its implementation of their respective roles.

Effective leadership is crucial for fulfilling the needs of all students especially those who are marginalised, minorities, or students with behavioural issues. As learning organisations, schools strives to meet the needs of all students. Cherilynne (2019) claims that culturally responsive school leadership contributes to academic success by enabling the inclusion of all students, regardless of their diversity. According to Muhammad Hisham Adnan, Jamalul Lail Abdul Wahab, and Azlin

Norhaini Mansor (2017), school leadership is crucial in defining an excellent culture and a school leader must be alert about this in managing the school. Effective leadership requires the ability to view others' needs objectively. It transforms the school into a community who are committed in fulfilling the needs of all students. At a larger scale, education demands leaders with authority and capacity to improve school quality globally.

BACKGROUND

In Malaysia, schools with a population of 150 students and below are categorised as small schools (MOE 2012). According to data collected in 2021, 30.75% of schools in Malaysia are small schools (MOE 2021). The majority of these small school localities are also in the rural areas, which is 73%, and on average, the academic achievement in these small schools is at a low level compared to other non-small schools. The total composite average score for these small schools is only 68%. It is 4% behind non-small schools (MOE 2012).

Studies revealed that poor performance of small schools in rural areas is due to factors such as student background, socio-economic, locality and school location, teacher teaching style and student learning, and leadership style of school administrators (Marzuki, Jabil, and Rosmiza 2014). Malaysian Education Blueprint (PPPM 2013-2025) has planned efforts to foster the improvement of student achievement in small schools. These efforts include the effective leadership model, teacher teaching delivery, and the collaboration of parents and the community (MOE 2012).

The leadership style of a school administration has a favorable effect on the school organization and it also enhances the quality of student accomplishment (Asnawi and Rosnah, 2021). The Malaysian Education Quality Standards placed a premium emphasis on school leadership (Board of Inspectors and Quality Assurance 2010). Individuals who play a significant role in enhancing, renewing, and sustaining the quality of education are seen as efficient school leaders. Nurul Jalilah (2013) argues that school leaders should develop a leadership style that is appropriate for the scenario, as they are always dealing with individuals who have feelings, such as students, teachers, and school personnel. Effective leadership styles have the potential to influence the group's behavior and attitudes. Effective school leaders may urge them to collaborate with the

community in order to accomplish the school's common goals. According to Kral Erkan (2020), successful school leaders possess the characteristics and abilities to foster relationships that contribute to the school's success with innovative leadership approaches potentially applied to boost student achievement through continuous improvement and system sharing. As a result, this study focuses on the activities related to the cultural responsibility leadership of school leaders in small schools.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In 2013, an incident occurred at a school in Gelang Patah, Johor. A Chinese female teacher issued abusive words against certain races. This incident had affected students and the community. It also gave a negative view of teachers (Utusan Online 2013). In 2016, a headmaster was racist towards a Malay teacher at a school in Mersing, Johor (Utusan Online 2016). In another incident in Batu Pahat Johor in 2021 (Utusan Online 2021), a teacher had segregated students in co-curricular activities according to race. All these incidents had affected the community's doubts about the role of school leaders in making the school a neutral institution that accepts cultural diversity in education practice. Thus, as schools become increasingly complex, school leaders must adopt new and relevant leadership styles to engage all students. School leaders need to adopt and emulate positive leadership attitudes, values, and strategies that recognize and respond to student, family, and community cultures (Nieto and Bode 2012). This is also supported by Klar et al. (2020) that leadership practices must respond to cultural diversity and all stakeholders are welcomed to get involved in school activities including parents and community for positive school improvement,

Balkar (2015), Yaakob Daud et al. (2015), Zhu, Devos, and Li (2013), and Qusayla, Chua, and Bambang (2021) did their studies on issues related to school leadership. These studies discovered that principals and headmasters are responsible individuals who shape the organization and formation of school culture. Yet, to what extent do principals and headmasters implement culturally responsive practices? Several studies explained the lack of studies on school leaders' culturally responsive practices and suggested further studies on these practices (Ramalho 2013; Mitchell 2015; Riehl 2000; Smith 2016; Theoharis and Scanlan 2015; Webb-Johnson 2006; Webb-Johnson and

Carter 2007). Studies also shown that leaders in schools need to adapt their decisions according to schools' diversity because culture has its influence on leadership practices and educational leaders need to understand the upcoming impacts if they work in multicultural communities (Dorfman et al. 2012; Fisher 2021). Based on these findings, then there is an urgent need for this study to be seriously considered.

Past studies on school leadership in small schools done by Hallinger and Heck (1996), Clarke and Wildy (2004), Yusof (2007), Wahlstrom and Louis (2008), Bronson (2013), Zakaria (2016), and Nitce (2020) found that principals and headmasters should require specific skills to be leaders in small schools. In the context of these small schools, the roles of administrators and teachers are slightly different in managing and leading schools compared to other non-small schools. According to a study conducted by Serirama, Roslee, and Dayang (2019) involving small schools in rural areas, there is a high relationship between school leaders' leadership and teachers' competence. In addition, Zakaria (2016) and Nitce (2020) discussed the correlation between the headmaster's leadership factors on teacher performance and student achievement in small schools. Given the heterogeneous demographic context in small schools, there is a clear need for school principals to practice cultural responsiveness. More specifically, the studies noted above or lack thereof demonstrate the need to identify and describe culturally responsive practices and strategies used by principals in small school contexts to develop an engaging and inclusive school environment for all students.

STUDY FRAMEWORK

The diagram below describes the conceptual framework of this study. The framework shows four dimensions representing the variable. It is adapted from previous studies and serves to guide the implementation of this study.

The first part is the culturally responsive leadership of headmasters, which is a variable that critically uses the four dimensions of self-reflection, forming culturally sensitive teachers, inclusive school environments, and parent and community involvement (Khalifa, Gooden and Davis 2016). The following is in figure 1 the framework culturally responsive leadership.

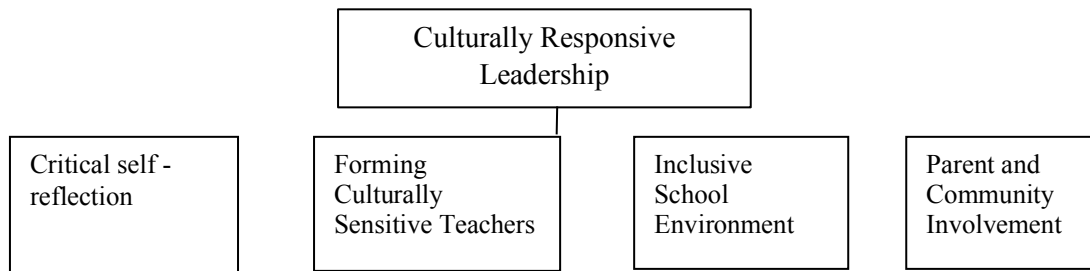


FIGURE 1. Framework Culturally Responsive Leadership
 Source: Khalifa, Gooden dan Davis (2016)

The relevant concept of pedagogical culture was introduced by Gloria Ladson-Billings in 1994 and by Geneva Gay in 2002. Meanwhile, the culturally responsive leadership framework used in this research was developed by Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis (2016) contains four dimensions in culturally responsive leadership namely critical self-reflection, forming culturally sensitive teachers, inclusive school environment, and parent and community involvement. Next, the discussion will focus on each dimension in the framework of culturally responsive leadership in the context of Malaysia and in particular small schools. Several interviews were conducted with headmasters and teachers in small schools to gain an overview of culturally responsive leadership practices in small schools.

CRITICAL SELF-REFLECTION

This critical self-reflection refers to the practice of headmasters who have self-awareness, beliefs, values, and actions that are self-centred, the practices and actions of school leaders include having the nature of openness, fairness, responsibility, and always developing themselves through self-learning in improving self-efficacy. Towards achieving organisational objectives (Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis 2016).

According to the views of headmasters in small schools on the practice of self-reflection in identifying self-weaknesses:

“...We human beings can't escape from mistakes .. only if we realize we need to fix it quickly ... sometimes when I look at the poor school performance, I really think if I'm the cause ... try to find out what the problem is ...”

“... I told them (teachers), if there is something wrong with my actions, you (teachers) can just let me know, I can fix the weakness... I'm not angry and I will fix...”

TB\RKSK\Headmaster1

“...I'm open-minded ... we're not perfect ... so i want to increase my knowledge, im also follow the course that the teacher here does, it's nothing to improve my knowledge ... i don't have a problem if I'm reprimanded ... “

“.. I like if given an opinion by them (teachers)... in this small school there are not many so we need cooperation and the views of teachers also i accept and be used as a guide...”

TB\RKSK\Headmaster2

Next, the teachers' views on the fair and responsible attitude of headmasters in small schools:

“.. This school is not crowded, there are only eight teachers, so the rotation is fair, the headmaster will involve us all in all school activities... mmm .. It's just that there aren't many of us, so it's a rotation if outdoor activities have to be taken care of by protect instructional time (MMI)...”

“... ..headmaster is very concerned and responsible for the school and the children. If there is any headmaster la who will answer with our PPD or JPN only for information for headmaster...”

TB\RKSK\Teacher1

“... Mmm... no problem, any decision of headmaster will call a meeting first, if the activity is in accordance with the needs of who should go to the field, do not choose the headmaster according to the needs... if we are for the view of headmaster usually accept je .. no so the problem so far...”

“...My headmaster is not to be praised, it is very good. We are happy with him, any matter we will be in touch with him... happy simple story la .. “

TB\RKSK\Teacher2

Consistent with the interview findings in culturally responsive leadership is the ability of headmasters to make self-reflection on leadership practices that have been implemented to ensure impartiality or unfairness in their practices (Cooper 2009; Shields 2010). This self-reflection assists a leader to realize the need to be aware that his actions will shape organisational culture even as he was doing his work as a leader and recognize

how leadership practices influence his professional practices (Dantley 2005, 2008; Furman 2012; Madhlangobe and Gordon 2012). MOE also set various initiatives in improving the quality of leaders in small schools by building leadership skills among headmasters in small schools through guidance, supervision, headcount, and post mortem (MOE 2012).

FORMING CULTURALLY SENSITIVE TEACHERS

Khalifa, Gooden & Davis (2016) and G. Theoharis & Scanlan (2015) suggested that the principal has a role in influencing teachers to be sensitive to the diversity of students from various angles, namely from the point of view of cultural diversity and diversity of student abilities in schools. The efforts practised by the principal were providing a data-centric approach to students, training to improve teacher professionalism, teacher pedagogy that takes into account cultural diversity, and the practice of teamwork culture.

Based on the headmaster's interviews about forming teachers to be sensitive to the culture of students and the local community:

"... my school has teachers from various places ... there are Sarawak, KL, Johor, these people don't understand much about the culture here .. so when they start reporting, I really remember and I always order anything. so as not to cause problems with the community ... if you don't know, you can ask if there is a teacher here ..."

TB\MGPB\Headmaster1

"... the culture of my school is the same as other schools ... my teachers understand the culture here .. many are also from this area ... so I don't talk to them about this .. but I also told them they care about the sensitivity of the community here .."

TB\MGPB\Headmaster2

Based on the teacher's interviews on shaping cultural sensitivity among teachers:

"... my headmaster always remind of these things because this school has a lot of Indian students .. you have to understand their culture, headmaster also always orders ... any action make sure it doesn't go against the culture ... this school is mine Malay teachers, headmaster and friends helped me a lot to understand the culture of this student .. I feel very grateful .. if it is not difficult too ... It is important for me to know about the culture of students in school because this is a sensitive matter"

TB \ MGPB \ Teacher1

"..... so far he doesn't really emphasise on student culture because here everyone is the same .. but we have to get to know our students if it's not difficult too ... but there is a chat with friends the story about the background of these students ... he

started to understand a little bit ... headmasters also often pay attention to students and the community ... so this seems very important...."

TB \ MGPB \ Teacher2

Based on the above statement, coinciding with the study conducted by Khalifa, Gooden, and, Davis (2016) stated that cultural responsiveness in schools is important to be practised by teachers because it shows the teaching and pedagogical cultural responsiveness among teachers has a positive impact on students. In this aspect, school leaders need to influence teachers to understand the culture of students through their background as well as the local community. When teachers demonstrate positive change through action, they do not only centre norms on student culture but also focus on aspects of humanity, inclinations, language, understanding, interests, family, and space (Foster 1995; Howard 2003; Ladson- Billings 1995).

Based on 73% of small schools in Malaysia being in rural areas with diverse backgrounds, training appropriate to the school situation will be provided to teachers to understand culturally in small schools (MOE 2012). Various MOE initiatives in improving the quality of Malaysian teachers do not only cater to small schools but to all schools nationwide. Through efforts to strengthen the ability of teachers to perform tasks efficiently and effectively. MOE has developed a Master Plan for the Development of Teacher Professionalism (PIPPK) which is a document to help Malaysian teachers plan career development and continuous professional development. (MOE 2016). MOE has distributed a circular 600-1/5/2 Vol. 4 (2) dated 16 January 2019 on the implementation of the Continuous Professional Development (MyPPB) credit points that must be achieved by a Malaysian teacher is a minimum of 42 credit points for one year (MOE 2019). The implementation of these efforts is to ensure that Malaysian teachers are highly competent and of good quality.

INCLUSIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

An inclusive school environment involves the practice of a headmaster who creates a school environment that is friendly, accepting, celebrates, and optimizes cultural, academic, and ability diversity both among teachers and students. Headmasters also ensure the involvement of various students in school programs/activities to develop the potential of students. (Madhlangobe and Gordon 2012 and Khalifa 2011).

Based on a headmaster's interview about an inclusive school environment:

"..... this school we have many programs so that these students like to come to school, caring teacher program, festive celebrations just want to ask students for their interest in coming to this school ... we also have initiatives if students are weak There are also additional classes provided .. this is the initiative of my teachers .. indeed these people are diligent .. usually we, if there is any celebration, we invite not only children but once with parents .."

TB\PSI\Headmaster1

"... ooo, I always tell the teachers to attract the interest of children to come to school ... there are not many students so my relationship with students is very close ... it's easy to monitor students because there aren't many .. when it comes to activities with the students in this school, my teacher and I do a lot of activities, but it's not as much as a big school because there aren't many children and teachers ... but indeed, if there are academic activities and celebrations, we do a lot of inviting outsiders ..."

TB\PSI\Headmaster2

Based on teacher interviews about inclusive school environments:

"... there are many activities that involve students at my school .. everyone has to be involved because there are not many .. but it's fun because headmaster is so supportive. Here there are also additional classes, the teacher himself wants to help the students ... if the student's activities are of any kind, like school sports, deepavali celebration, thaipusam ... and all sorts of things ... the students really like coming to school ... because at school there are all kinds ... headmaster is also involved in all programs with this student"

TB\PSI\Teacher1

"..... my school headmaster is very concerned about this student ... if there is a problem, he will investigate ... but there are also students who go home after school to help their parents ... that's when they come to school kind of tired .. but it seems that people like to come to school .. headmaster always tells the teacher if there is a problem with the students, let him know that we are done together .. this small school is easy, he wants to control and do activities for the students ... the same activities are like other schools but it's not big because there aren't many children .. if it's an outdoor program, we will send participants because headmaster wants to give exposure to these students .. sometimes there are also winners ..."

TB\PSI\Teacher2

Analysis of the interview above reveals that the findings are in line with the statement of culturally responsive leadership practices will create a friendly school for all students and the community (Madhlangobe 2009). According to Madhlangobe, culturally responsive leaders show a determination to create a school-friendly environment. In this leadership, a school leader enables him to change

attitudes and convince teachers to accept new teaching approaches that are more inclusive and empower students (Madhlangobe 2009). School leaders implement effective strategies to transform a fair school environment and believe all children are capable of learning if given equal opportunities to excel (Robinson 2010).

Malaysia Ministry of Education intends and aims to produce teachers who are sensitive to the backgrounds, needs of different students and address race relations positively and proactively (MOE 2012, Yasmin & Najeemah 2017). This effort is to ensure that all students get the same Education. The task of teachers in the 21st century is to be ready to face the transformation of education through more inclusive and futuristic educational policies. Based on the study conducted there is a significant influence between the teacher-student relationship in improving the quality of teaching (Normiati and Abdul Said, 2019). In addition, small schools that have this cultural diversity require teachers to always appreciate the culture of students, in the context of Education in Malaysia 21st century learning that focuses on cultural diversity is to create unity among the various races and ethnicities in Malaysia. (Halim and Nuhanani 2017). Among the competencies required by teachers is the need to identify the potential and uniqueness of students to produce meaningful learning (Malaysia Teacher Standard 2.0 2020).

PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

In this study, the dimension of parent and community involvement refers to the practice of headteachers who strive to create positive ties and networks that involve parents and the local community. Headteachers are also role models and constantly engage with the community and obtain information as well as understand the real situation of the background and socio-economic status of students and parents (Khalifa 2018; Scanlan and Johnson 2015).

The interviews with the two headmasters about parent and community involvement in small schools:

"..... this is mandatory here .. I always want to know the parents and the community here, this is not my school but our school and I will move anytime but you will all be here with this school. So I always tell them (parents and community) to take care of this school together ... all programs I will involve parents and the community herein this school we do have a meeting with representatives of parents and the community once a month ... we do a lot of activities together ... all the teachers know

the community here, we are all close ... many of them help the school ...”

TB\PIBK\Headmaster1

“... it has become our priority to always involve parents and the community here for school programs ... it is easy to involve them there are not many teachers here and if there are parents and the people of this village so many of them .. it’s fun to work together ... they like to help the school ... if there is a party or ceremony in the village, I and the teachers will be involved as well .. it’s like our family ... “

TB\PIBK\Headmaster2

The interview with two teachers about parent and community involvement in small schools:

“... as long as I teach here, parents and people here are really active, call me whenever they must come headmasters also always does programs with the residents here ... so because the teacher knows the parents here students are afraid to do something wrong ... here the residents mostly work near the estate so any activity we always do on Saturday or evening ... indeed everyone comes ... ”

TB\PIBK\Teacher1

“... here is a lot of hope for help from parents and residents because the school is small, there are not many teachers .. if the gotong-royong activities, school sports are really lively because parents and residents join together ... headmaster really supports it ... sometimes he is the one who spends for these programs ... but I think in this small school, the residents have to be involved if it’s not difficult ... we can also get to know our students from the residents here ... ”

TB\PIBK\Teacher2

Based on the findings of interviews with headmasters and teachers, it was found that the role of headmasters is important in maintaining the relationship between teachers and the community. The need for school leaders to develop skills that enable them to create space between the school and the community (Cooper 2009; Ishimaru 2013; Khalifa 2012). These leaders create togetherness between communities and learning organisations at the same time (Senge et al. 2012). In other words, these leadership practices focus on community engagement, and any decisions and activities for community-based purposes are core to culturally responsive leadership (Gooden 2005). The need for small schools to work with the community prioritises the needs of students (2012).

In the context of small schools in Malaysia, the relationship between parents and the community is paramount. Therefore, MOE emphasises the need for small schools to work with the community to meet the needs of students (MOE 2012). Past studies showed that student achievement is affected by

the role played by their parents. Parents who are proactive towards their children’s education have a positive impact on their children’s achievement (Kanammah, Melissa & Shahizan, 2013). In addition, community involvement is a necessity in sustaining the progress of a school. A study conducted in the district of Keningau, Sabah found that community involvement has a positive impact on development (Christina et al. 2019). This effort is also emphasised by the MOE when implementing the expansion and implementation of parental and community involvement in the school ecosystem (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2018). Through this expansion, parents and the community can contribute expertise and cooperate for school development. MOE also placed the need to improve performance in small schools by involving the community in the school environment. This effort has shown positive effects when SK Ulu Lubai, a small school in the interior won international recognition. Among the keys to success is the community as the backbone of school development sustainability (MOE 2012).

Referring to interviews with headmasters and teachers as well as initiatives implemented by the MOE, these four dimensions are a need for school leaders not only in small schools but also in other schools in Malaysia. Therefore, researchers will continue to explore this field to obtain more detailed information on culturally responsive leadership practices in small schools in Malaysia.

The findings of this study have implications and contributions for each dimension of culturally responsive leadership which includes critical self-reflection, developing of culturally sensitive teachers, creating an inclusive school environment, and parental and community involvement, in headteachers’ leadership practices in small schools. The results indicate that each component contributes to the practice of headmasters in small schools, although to varying degrees. Cultural leadership that is responsive has a favorable effect on the school environment. These findings supports the work of Dimmock and Walker’s (2005) which indicates that schools must play a critical role in establishing and maintaining an atmosphere that values diversity and community involvement in school organizations. Additionally, Brown et al. (2021) state that achieving comprehensive culturally responsive leadership practices requires not only the application of school leaders but also the ability of teachers to understand the diversity of students during training and professional development in order to shape

this culturally responsive leadership into effective leadership.

As a result, a good leader must possess four characteristics that are represented in a culturally responsive leadership style. Cultural leaders who are responsive are those that value education for all Malaysian pupils of diverse races. Additionally, as role-models to teachers on cultural diversity among children and communities, leaders are able to influence and encourage for teachers to grow. They gain understandings of how students' backgrounds affect the teaching practices of teachers. Additionally, the practice of responsive culture of the leader acts as a link between the local community and the school organization, ensuring that the school is accessible to all. As a result, the relationship between the school and the community improves, and the leadership may gradually increase the quality of teaching and learning.

CONCLUSION

Quality education is a need of developing countries, including Malaysia. It provides equality in society. To achieve this inspiration, the school leaders and the teachers need to change. School leaders are the determinants of the direction of the school. Leaders, need to do some initiatives to ensure success in schools. The leadership style practiced by school leaders is a determining factor in the success and effectiveness of the organization. On the other hand, the teachers need to review various educational policies and plans translated through Malaysia Education Blueprint (PPPM) 2013-2015, PPPB 2014, and many more recommendations to teachers. All these recommendations require teachers to continue to be prepared to apply various approaches to improve the quality of teaching. School leaders and teachers need to act on their initiatives to advance the nation's education towards the best education. School leaders and teachers need to embody educational policy and planning.

A culturally responsive approach in schools is a process that entails adjustments to administration, teaching, and learning, as well as overall school operations. It is critical for headteachers who apply culturally responsive leadership style to possess the knowledge and abilities necessary to ensure a culturally responsive school environment. Headteachers must be prepared to deal with diversity in the classroom, especially the students, and in the community, as well as to recognize the diversity that

exists within the school environment. The use of these leadership approaches not only impacts school culture but also creates opportunities for community involvement in school operations. The lesson learnt from this study is that cultural responsive leadership is an approach that is appropriate for the school environment, students' backgrounds, and the local community. Additionally, this leadership brings the community closer to school in which it facilitates students' development and school unity.

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MOHD NORLIZAM MOHD RAZALI
Fakulti Pendidikan,
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
Malaysia

Email: norlizam.razali@gmail.com

AIDA HANIM A. HAMID
Fakulti Pendidikan
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
Malaysia

Email: aidahanim@ukm.edu.my

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