MULTIDIMENSIONAL LEADERSHIP ORIENTATIONS AND LECTURERS' WORK COMMITMENT: THE MEDIATION OF LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS AMONG MALAYSIAN POLYTECHNIC HEADS OF DEPARTMENT

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Abstract
The purpose of this study was to determine if the perceived leadership effectiveness of heads of departments in Malaysian polytechnics mediates the relationship between their leadership orientation and the work commitment of lecturers. Leadership orientation was defined in its structural, human resource, political, cultural, and educational dimensions, based on Bolman and Deal’s leadership frame and Sergiovanni’s leadership model. A total of 841 lecturers and 76 department heads from Malaysian polytechnics participated in this study. Hierarchical Linear Modelling was used to determine the department heads’ perception of the impact of their leadership effectiveness on the relationship between their leadership orientation and lecturers’ work commitment. The study proved that the heads of department practiced multidimensional leadership, and that the effect of this on lecturers’ work commitment was mediated by lecturers’ perception of department heads’ leadership effectiveness.

Keywords: hierarchical linear modeling, leadership effectiveness; leadership frames; work commitment

INTRODUCTION

In order to achieve its goal of becoming a developed nation by 2020, Malaysia needs to create a better educated and more highly skilled population. It is the objective of higher education to produce professionals that meet the nation’s demand for human resources, who can acquire and apply their knowledge in the context of contemporary society and also provide facilities for research and consultant services (National Higher Education Action Plan, 2007). Malaysian higher education is responsible for developing human capital with the capability to compete in the global economy (Mohamed Khaled, 2008); and the success of higher education is directly related to the competence of its workforce. Accordingly, educational leaders must apply effective leadership skills and create an environment that fosters a culture of excellence to attract the most able, and to motivate existing staff. Leadership in Malaysian higher education is challenged on how to best approach educational reform, in order to deal with the changing nature of a fast-paced, technology-rich, competitive, and globalized world. This is particularly pertinent to educational leaders in polytechnics. As a tertiary education provider, polytechnics contribute significantly to the development of first-class mentality human capital, and therefore must embrace changes in educational leadership (Imran, 2009). Polytechnic leaders articulate the strategic intent of