Chapter 10
Embracing Successful ICT Integration Through MIC Transformational Model:
Exemplary Practices of a Malaysian School Leader

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ABSTRACT

The current worldwide ICT and digital transformation requires new leadership to demonstrate knowledge and skills suitable for the digital age. As ICT development advances, school leaders should maximize ICT usage in classrooms. This chapter highlights exemplary leadership practices by a Malaysian primary school leader. The objectives of the research are (1) to document leadership styles in managing teachers to successfully integrate ICT in their classrooms and (2) to investigate leadership strategies for successful ICT integration. A case study approach involving a semi-structured interview, observations, and documentary analysis were used. The data revealed that the leader pursued an innovative approach to instill technological transformation. Teachers acquired appropriate ICT skills essential to perform their tasks. The study reveals that successful ICT integration was achieved through the application of Maintain ⬗ Improve ⬗ Change (MIC) as part of transformational model practices based on the vision of the Ministry of Education and other strategies discussed in the chapter.

INTRODUCTION

Efficient school leadership is key in implementing government policies as well as managing teachers, staff and students. Leaders may practice any of the 12 types of leadership: Autocratic Leadership, Democratic Leadership, Strategic Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Team Leadership, Cross-Cultural Leadership, Facilitative Leadership, Laissez-faire Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Coaching Leadership, Charismatic Leadership and Visionary Leadership (Mathiasch, 2017). This chapter discusses the approach and strategies undertaken by a transformational leader to bring about changes in her school through ICT integration. Previously, a transactional leader ran the school. Generally, transactional leaders work via a "by-the-book" approach, and they maintain good relationships between themselves and subordinates to continue the status quo (Fareena & Azhar, 2016). Transformative leaders (in opposition to transactional leaders) tend to set higher and more challenging expectations to initiate or implement change (Jamalullail, Che Fuzlina, Hazita, & Samsidah, 2014). Kouzes (2009) defines transformational leadership as "leadership skills in those principals who can pioneer the school to a new level at the hinge of school development" (p. 100). Transformational leaders focus on concerted efforts, shared vision and power sharing for achieving success (YingXiu, 2012; Senge, 1994). Avolio and Bass (2004) define transactional leaders as creating and defining agreements or contracts to accomplish specific work purposes, determine the potential of any individual, and specify the compensation and rewards that can be expected upon successful completion of a task.

Different school leaders have different styles of managing and leading their schools. In implementing change such as in ICT integration, school leaders may either adopt or adapt a variety of methods to carry out ICT initiatives that the Ministry of Education, Malaysia (MOE) has imposed. Understanding leadership styles of school leaders would help provide others with a variety of strategies and tools to deal with educational change, especially ICT integration in schools (Sandling, 2015). For instance, the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013-2015 launched in 2013 was an initiative by the Malaysian government to enhance the educational system by making it competitive on the global stage (Bernama, 2018; MOE, 2013). Among other things, the Blueprint focuses on raising standards (quality), closing achievement gaps (equity), and maximising system efficiency (Ministry of Education, 2013). Because ICT is viewed as a catalyst for change, the MOE tries to equip school leaders with certain ICT skills and competencies to lead schools effectively as well as to provide ICT facilities and services to schools (Kelleher, 2017; Umar & Abu Hassan, 2015; Jacobsen & Hunter, 2002). Globally, various efforts have been made to train teachers to use ICT tools and integrate ICT successfully in schools (Livingston, 2012). To remain competitive, the MOE is training more school leaders to produce higher performing schools that emphasise communication, collaboration, creative thinking skills and critical thinking skills (Ministry of Education, 2013; Siavash, Maslin & Harihodin, 2013). Trained school leaders would support teachers as well as maximise ICT application to create pedagogy suitable for the digital age (Burnett, 2016, p. 4). Hence appropriate training would encourage the "participatory practices" (Jenkins et al., 2006) required for knowledge sharing and creativity with ICT tools or digital media (Burnett, 2016).

To succeed in this endeavour, the MOE should employ high-performing school leaders in every school. The successful ICT integration in schools depends on the effectiveness of leaders to inspire, aspire, motivate, and enthuse others to achieve goals set by MOE (Ibrahim et al., 2014; Aydin, Savier, & Uysal, 2013). The quality of school leaders is considered the second biggest school-based factor in determining student outcomes, after teacher quality. Research on school leadership has shown that an outstanding principal who has focused on instructional matters can raise student outcomes by as much

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