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## Investigating the Relationship of Adaptive Leadership and Leadership Capabilities on Leadership Effectiveness in Sarawak Schools

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### Abstract

When the National Educational Blueprint was launched in 2013, it had explicitly articulated its intention to provide an education system that would take into account the challenges of the 21st century. Adaptive leadership which originates from evolutionary biological sciences perspective has made significant strides toward the understanding of leadership in Knowledge-Era as an adaptive process in an unpredictable 21st century environment (Heifetz, 2004). This research was an attempt to take the first step toward the integration of leadership competence with capability that might lead to anticipated leadership effectiveness leadership in Sarawak schools. First, this paper defined the adaptive leadership (Heifetz, Karna & Kramer, 2004). Second, it explained how leadership capabilities (Hazy, 2004) could be used to compliment leadership competency in adaptive leadership to ensure leadership effectiveness. Third, this paper explained the leadership effectiveness processes based on Vanderbilt assessment for leadership effectiveness in schools (Porter, Polikoff, Goldring, Murphy, Elliot & May, 2010). Finally, it discussed the implications of adaptive leadership and leadership capabilities on leadership effectiveness in Sarawak schools particularly.

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## 1. Introduction

The 21st century poses a multitude of unpredictable challenges against the existing knowledge and practices (Goldstein, 2008). What are thought to be solvable may go hang-wire despite the desperation to dissolve some of the challenges. The occurrences of several ill-fated events around the globe have turn things upside down and the design of organisations has demanded many critical minds to address them adaptively and effectively (Marion, 2008).

First, the failure to address Katrina in 1996 crisis for example, was an example of the American Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) leadership failure to address critical issues by not adapting to the existing resources of present time but instead channelled responses via red-taped pipeline (Stephenson and Bonabeau, 2007).

Second, after weeks of failure to trace the disappearance of Malaysia Airline Boeing 737-200 flight MH370 on the 6th of Mac 2014 has made the Search and Rescue (SAR) efforts joint by 24 countries almost like a ‘wild-goose chase’ as reported by Astro Awani on 28th March 2014. Evidently, what is thought technically solvable is actually adaptively challenging (Heifetz, 2004).

Third, the new age challenges that derive from globalisation, technology explosion and the implication of terrorisms is the reality of the global need to adapt to current context (Barkema, Baum & Mannix, 2002; Schneider, 2002).

Fourth, almost everything must adapt to everything else (Linsky and Lawrence, 2011). This simply means nothing moves in isolation and any intervention into the system triggers consequences, intended or not, they need adaptation, capability and effective responses (Linsky & Lawrence, 2011).

Drawing from the above mentioned scenarios, Malaysia herself is of no exception in facing the new age challenges. In this sense, an educational institution emergency is, when it fails to deliver; a crisis is when it loses its role. The question whether Malaysia’s educational institutions are in crisis or in an emergency, the answer lies in how well Malaysia’s educational leaders adapt to their new environment and how fast they learn new leadership capabilities in order to lead effectively.

### 1.1. Difficulties of adaptive leadership in schools

Schools treat adaptive challenges and technical challenges with no differences. However, Figure 1 illustrates different types of solutions for technical problems, adaptive problems or challenges or the combination of both technical and adaptive challenges for different types of situations.

Type I or what Heifetz (2004) describes as technical challenges may be very complex and critically important but they have known solutions that can be implemented by current know-how knowledge (Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky, 2009).

Table 1. Distinguishing technical challenges and adaptive challenges.

Situation	Kind of challenge	Problem definition	Solution	Locus of work
Type I	Technical	Clear	Clear	Authority
Type II	Technical and adaptive	Clear	Requires learning	Authority & stakeholders
Type III	Adaptive	Requires learning	Require learning	Stakeholders

Source: Linsky & Lawrence, 2011; Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky, 2009; Heifetz et.al, 2004

As illustrated by Table 1 problems or challenges do not rigidly occur in fixed form as either solely as ‘technical’ or ‘adaptive’ but may come mixed both with technical and adaptive elements intertwined (Linsky & Lawrence, 2011; Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky, 2009; Heifetz, 2004). Type II refers to clear problems but unknown solution.

Type III adaptive challenges on the other hand, neither the problem nor the solution is explicit (Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky, 2009). In this sense, in order to make progress, it must go beyond authoritative expertise and they are by tolerating losses and generating new capabilities to thrive anew (Linsky & Lawrence, 2011; Heifetz, Grashow &

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