THE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS’ ROLES IN TEACHING SUPERVISION IN SELECTED SCHOOLS IN PERAK, MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

The changes in the public educational sector demands that the school principals play a bigger and more important role in educational supervision. As a matter of fact, in the educational administrative system in Malaysia, the supervision concept varies. At the school level, supervision was normally done by either the principal, the headmaster or the senior teacher empowered by the authority. Teaching supervision is a critical issue in educational leadership. It involved lots of leadership aspects, identifying, supervision, teacher’s skills, students’ performance, the effectiveness of the school types and technical skills. Nevertheless, there is not much known how the principals’ supervision effectiveness are correlated with curriculum implementation, teaching material preparation and improvement of teachers professionalism. Data were collected using structured questionnaires from 120 secondary school teachers in District of Central Perak. The findings revealed that the effectiveness of principals’ supervisions were correlated with curriculum implementation, teaching material preparation and the improvement of teachers professionalism. The findings were supported by previous studies despite the fact that they were conducted in different context and respondents. For further research it is recommended that data are collected from more than one sources such as students, senior assistants and clerical staffs. Perhaps with bigger samples and wider scope, future studies would give more interesting results.

Key Words: educational supervision, principals’ educational leadership, curriculum implementation, teaching material preparation, professionalism improvement.

INTRODUCTION

The changes in the educational sector in Malaysia demand that the school principals play a bigger and more important role in educational supervision. Mohd Salleh Lebar (2000), stated that educational supervision was not a new thing in Malaysia but has been in practice way back since the British colonial days. Those days schools were supervised by Visiting Teacher and School Inspectorate. Since that time, the interactions between inspectorate and teachers were already existed. The relationship was of democratic and good natured one.
As a matter of fact, in the educational administrative system in Malaysia, the supervision concept varies. The teaching colleges and university lecturers conducted the supervision in order to evaluate their trainee teachers for their practical teaching. Besides, the school inspectorate conducted the supervision for assessing teaching activities, organizing function, allocation of resources and overall management of the school. Consequently, the inspectorate offered advice and recommendations to the principal for improvement.

At the school level, supervision was normally done by either the principal, the headmaster or the senior teacher empowered by the authority. During the supervision, the principal may detect some malfunction or problems cropped-up in the school system. Generally, the supervisors’ duties are to guide, to upgrade teaching performance, as facilitators and to boost teachers’ morals.

Teachers’ supervision is a critical issue in educational leadership. It involved lots of leadership aspects, identifying, supervision, teacher’s skills, students’ performance, the effectiveness of the school types and technical skills. Therefore, the role of a school administrator or a principal is to supervise, planning, developed competitive strategies for the school. Thus, a principal duty is very challenging and should be able to differentiate between administrative duty and management task.

The Educational Improvement Committee for Schools under Malaysian Ministry of Education (1982), urged that the principal prime role of educational leadership, must be effective. Principals should be efficient and spend most of their time in organizing learning activities in schools. Maintaining an effective school supervision, acting as consultants, advisor and coordinator for teaching and learning activities in schools is one of their important job. They should spend more time in teachers and students’ professional activities, not only working in their rooms issuing memos and directive or circulars.

In relation to that, Glickman (1985), found that educational supervision is a dynamic process in education aiming at improving the quality of teaching and learning. One of the roles that principals need to play is to be able to carry out the best educational leadership possible (Abdul Shukor, 1988a).

A circular letter issued by the Ministry of Education in 1987, stated that it is a must for principals to conduct teaching supervision in their respective schools. Other than principals, the task may be delegated to senior assistants, afternoon supervisors and head of departments. According to New Ah Kow (1998), school administrators as educational supervisors’ duty encompasses three important aspects i.e. curriculum implementation, preparation of teaching materials and improving teachers professionalism in respective schools. In an effort to improve quality of education, school principals must devote special attention to teachers teaching task.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Currently most principals neglected their duty as educational supervisors but concentrated on managing and administrating schools, instead. Cawelti and Reavis (1980) found that principals spent less than a third of their time in supervision. Principals reported to have used only 20% of their time for visiting classes, curriculum related task and staff development activities.

Ministry directives (No 3/1987) clearly stated that as professional leaders, principals are responsible for successful curriculum implementation in their schools. This objective could not possibly achieve unless the principals systematically supervise and make it a top priority to do so. Although, supervision can help to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning activities in classrooms, but not without problems. There are numerous of hindrances or obstacles. According to Abdul Shukor, (1988b) some kind of conflict drifted the teacher being observed and the principals apart. Probably due to teachers attitude and perception that the principals are under qualified and from a different discipline of studies. For example an art graduate principals trying to observe a Nuffield science teacher.
Zainol Abdin Ismail (1996), found that educational leadership closely related to students achievement. Wan Mohd Zahid (1993) stressed that supervision is one of the management function and one of the most important component in curriculum process.

Mohd Kassim Jaafar (1998) explained that teaching supervision has been an important aspect in school management and administration. Its purpose is to improve teaching and learning quality among teachers and thus improving the overall quality of teaching in schools. Nevertheless, the principals faced some hindrances. These problems stemmed up not only from the teachers side but also from the principals themselves. Some of the principals were reluctant to observe on the pretext that they did not receive any instruction from the National Union of Teaching Profession (NUTP) through the Ministry of Education.

The NTUP of the opinion that teachers are professionals, therefore they have the liberty to carried out their duty and are not supposed to be observed and guided all the time. Teachers and principals agreed that the supervision will erode teachers' credibility and students' confidence in those teachers. Further more the practice will in the long run tarnish the teachers’ image in the students’ eyes. More over, teachers are skeptical of principals' ability and qualification and objectivity in teaching supervision. At the end of the day, the concerned teachers are vulnerable to principals' indiscriminate comments and personal judgment.

Mohd Salleh Lebar (2000), stated that normally principals are very busy due to tight schedule for attending meeting and briefing at department, district and national levels. Some principals delegated the supervision responsibility to senior assistants. Hence, many problems crops up and much of the problems surrounding the area of study are still unexplained. Therefore this study is relevant, timely and necessary.

In line with above problems, the objective of the study is trying to determine the relationship between the principals supervision effectiveness and curriculum implementation, teaching material preparation and upgrading of teachers professionalism.

This paper is also attempting to answer the questions: Is there any relationship between principals supervision effectiveness and curriculum implementation, teaching material preparation and upgrading of the teachers professionalism?.

**THE LITERATURE REVIEW**

As a supervisor, the principal is directly involved in matter related to learning and teaching processes in the school (Kamaruddin Kachar, 1979). According to Sweeney (1982), there are six characteristics that a principal should have related to leadership in the school , There are namely stressing on the students academic achievement, developing teaching strategies, maintaining conducive atmosphere in the school, evaluating the students achievement regularly, coordinating teaching programs and helping to boost teachers moral on the job.

Mohd Salleh Lebar (2002) stated that to be a successful teacher, a principal should have the credibility and authority in making decision even though he is practicing democracy. Teachers’ supervision covers all kinds of activities delegated to the principal with the aim of helping and improving the quality of their teaching (Ramayah, 1995).

Studies conducted by Foo Say Fooi et al., (2000) involving 279 teachers found that the supervision carried out by the principal was not only might achieve the school goal but might also give an impact to everyone in the organization. That shows teachers satisfaction is high towards certain leadership function but low on other things. When teachers are satisfied with their job, their moral are high and productivity is optimum in term of physical, emotional, spiritual and intellect.
More over, according to Rahimah’s (1986) study found that there was a significant relationship between principal leadership style and students academic performance. According to Azali Mahbar (1982), there are a few ways supervision that a principal can do: i) examining teachers teaching plans, ii) examining students work book, iii) observing the process of teaching and learning in the classroom, iv) hoisting teachers conference. This finding was supported by The Kah Hoe (1985) who found that most principals concentrated on supervising students work book and teachers teaching plans. Very rare principals walk around the school supervising the whole school.

Principals conducting the supervision should be positive and open minded (Mohd Kassim, 1998), it is done with the objective of helping the teachers concerned in accomplishing their teaching task more effective and high quality. It is not an avenue to pinpoint ones mistake and weaknesses (Segiovanni and Starratt, 1979). From year 1959-1976 the supervision was done by School inspectorate right from peninsular to Sabah and Sarawak (Robiah Sidin, 1988).

Alfonso et al., (1984), stated that skills such as technical, human relation and management skills are important for a principal to carry out an effective supervision. In one way or other, principals also plays counselor in his supervisory task (Goldhammer, 1988). Ramaiah (1999) added that principals also should have other skills like building relationship and interactions. In line with that Grumet (1983) and Goldhammer (1988) outlined two approaches to supervisions in schools i) prescriptive and ii) collaborative.

Sharifah and Azizah (1988) found that 56% of the teachers agreed to be supervised by the principals, whereas 44% of them did not agree to be supervised. Besides that New Ah Kow (1998; Pickhardt, 1981), found that most of the teachers like to be supervised. Conversely, the principals know and clearly understand their responsibilities to supervise teachers but they seldom have time to do so due heavy work load on other matters (Ahmad Tajuddin, 1989; Stoop & Russel, 1967). Most of the principal were giving more attention to the teaching material preparation rather than other supervision task (Mohd Yaccob Ibrahim, 1990).

From the above discussion, it is found that there are gaps in the supervision literature that need to fill up in term of effectiveness of principal supervision. Not much is known how the principal supervision effectiveness correlated with curriculum implementation, teaching material preparation and improvement in term of teachers professionalism.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study employs the survey research method as it is more suitable (Sekaran, 1992). A structured three parts and 50 items questionnaires were distributed to randomly sampled respondents. The questionnaires comprises of three parts i.e. Part A (demographic variables), part B (Principals’ roles in supervision), and part C (the effectiveness of principals supervision). Part B comprises of three dimensions namely curriculum implementation (items 1-12), teaching material preparation (items 13-20), Teacher professionalism (items 21-28). Part C comprise of 12 items on the effectiveness of supervision. The instruments was adapted from the one developed by New Ah Kow (1998) with an acceptable overall reliability (Alpha = .70). The samples were randomly stratified from 4 out of eleven schools in Central Perak District and 140 teachers were involved. Out of 140 sets of questionnaires distributed, 120 were returned and analyzed which gave 85.7% respond rate. Data were analyzed using SPSS such as descriptive statistics, inferential and Pearson correlation.

**ANALYSIS AND FINDING**

The overall description of the respondents are; most of them are graduate teachers 104 (74%), and 16 (26%) of them are college trained teachers. About 61% males and 59% females. 81.7% of them are bachelor degrees holders and 6(5%) are having masters
A hundred (83.3%) of them are married and 20(16%) are singles. The Pearson product moment correlation analysis results are shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: The relationship between principal supervision and curriculum implementation, teaching material preparation and improvement of teachers’ professionalism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Effectiveness of principals supervision</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum implementation</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>.257**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Significant</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching material preparation</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>.331**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Significant</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher professionalism</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>.306**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improvement</td>
<td>Significant</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>120</td>
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** significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed)

Table 1: above shows that $r=.257$, $p<.001$, which mean that the relationship between principals supervision effectiveness and curriculum implementation is significant at 99% confident level. It also shows that $r=.331$, $p<.001$, which mean that the relationship between principals supervision effectiveness and teaching material preparation is significant at 99% confident level. The relationship between principals supervision effectiveness and teachers professionalism improvement is also significant at 95% confident level ($r=.306$, $p<.001$). Nevertheless the relationships are not very strong but just moderately significant only for all three of the independent variables.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION.

The finding revealed that the effectiveness of principals supervisions are correlated with curriculum implementation, teaching material preparation and improvement of teachers professionalism. The finding for curriculum implementation is supported by Teh Kah Hoe (1985). The finding on preparation of teaching materials is inline with that of studies conducted by Yaacob Ibrahim (1990). The third independent variables relationship with principals supervision effectiveness are supported by Mohd Kassim Jaafar (1998). For further research it is recommendation that data are collected from more than one sources such students, senior assistants and clerical staff of the schools. Research with bigger samples and wider scope i.e. data taken from schools throughout the country, perhaps may give a more interesting result.

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