

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This study attempts to understand the level of awareness among principals on legal issues in order to manage schools more effectively in the 21st century. The legal awareness in this study takes into account principals' legal awareness in dealing with issues on negligence, students and teachers, as well as managing school discipline and the prevention programs that are installed in schools in order to minimize litigation. The objective of the study is to determine the level of legal awareness among principals in secondary schools and the application of this legal knowledge in their daily school administration.

3.1 RESEARCH LOCATION

The study is conducted in Kuala Lumpur where six secondary school principals in the Sentul Zone were identified as research respondents. The six schools in Kuala Lumpur consists of two coeducational schools, two secondary girls school and two secondary boys school. These schools were chosen in order to provide a diverse range of problems that are faced by these schools as the problems differ from each school in terms of management and handling of the students of different gender and thus providing a wider perspective on the level of legal awareness among these principals.

Of these six schools four are fully aided government schools while the remaining two fall under the category of missionary schools which receive aid from the government. All these schools fall under the category of urban schools and have a

student population ranging between 1000 students to approximately 2100 students. These schools are also classified as Grade A schools. All these schools chosen are located in non residential areas with the exception of one school and the students that have enrolled in these schools largely come from working class families.

School A is an all boys' school established in 1924 by the British to serve the needs of the community in Sentul. Its students are from Form One to Form Six. Located along Jalan Tun Ismail in Kuala Lumpur, the school has about 60 teaching staff and about 1100 students

School B, a missionary boys school set up in the early 1930 has about 65 teaching staff and 1200 students. This school is located along Jalan Sentul.

As a co-educational school set up in the 1970s by the government, school C has around 2044 students and is located along Jalan Ipoh. The school has around 113 teaching staff

Being the only school located in a residential area, School D has around 2168 students with a teaching staff of 130 teachers and is located in Bandar Baru Sentul. It is also a co-educational school

Next, (School E) the all girls' school located along Jalan Ipoh has around 2109 students. The teaching staff is around 110 teachers and was established in the 1950s.

School F was classified as a grant in aid school when it was started in 1940 as a missionary school set up for girls in the Sentul area. In the present day the school has around 1051 girls and a teaching staff comprising 59 teachers is a prominent school located along Jalan Sentul. The demography of each school is illustrated in Table A below.

Table A. Demography of the schools

School	Year Established	No. of Teachers	No. of Students
A (Boy School)	1924	60	1100
B (Missionary Boys School)	1930's	65	1200
C (Co-Educational School)	1970's	113	2044
D (Co-Educational School)	1980's	130	2168
E (Girl School)	1955	110	2109
F (Missionary Girl School)	1940	59	1051

3.2 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

To achieve the objective of the study, the survey was conducted using a qualitative approach to obtain the necessary information. The study involved six principals from various secondary schools.

Interviews were set up between the researcher and principals with a focus on the legal awareness in the daily management of schools especially in the areas of negligence, teachers' rights, students' legal rights, school discipline and prevention programs in schools. A set of 42 open-ended questions (refer to Appendix 1) was formed based on the various studies that took place in the US and in Europe (Stewart, 1998; Ogaltree 1985, Glenoch 1997, Howard, 1997, Hillman, 1988). The questions were structured around five parameters: negligence; rights of teachers; school discipline; legal rights of students; and prevention.

The first six questions focused on demographic questions such as the gender of the interviewees, their teaching and administrative experiences. Information on student population and their socio economic background were also the focus of the questions in this section.

The issue of negligence formed the next six open-ended questions. The next parameter focused on rights of teacher consist of five questions. Under school discipline were six items while legal rights of students consisted of thirteen open-ended questions. The final parameter focused on prevention and was based on seven questions.

3.3 METHOD

The data was collected through structured interviews with the six principals, which were identified for the study and through the reading of documents to study the way the school presented itself.

The interview for each subject took approximately between one to two hours. A set of questions was handed to each participant approximately a week before the interview took place.

The data was collected through interviews and observation. The interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the subject. The interviewer jotted down the points of the interview when the subject disagreed with tape recording. The study will be a descriptive study based on the information that has been gathered.

3.4 SAMPLING

Even though the Ministry of Education appoints the principal and sets the directives in managing schools so that whatever problems faced will be handled

according to the same procedure, the problems faced in schools differ from one to another. So, although it is not possible to select a random sample of principals, care was taken to select schools with a diverse population in order to get a better picture.

The principals were not selected in an independent manner; the data collected was diverse and different from one school to another. The schools were selected based on the gender of the schools' population.

3.5 RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

In order to carry out the research in government schools in Malaysia, the researcher had to obtain permission from the Education Planning and Research Department of the Ministry of Education of Malaysia through the dean of the Faculty of Education, University of Malaya. The researcher also had to seek the permission of the Director of Education in the Federal Territory as the research was focused on secondary schools in Kuala Lumpur. Permission was also obtained from the principals to be interviewed.

Once this was done the researcher was able to put forward the application to set the dates for the interview. Of all the interviews only one of the subjects gave permission to tape record the interview while the rest denied the researcher permission to tape-record the interview. With the analysis of documents complete and the structured interviews completed only then was the written report undertaken.