CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The most critical challenge in the education system today, is effective schools. The traditional view in Malaysia is that education is the key to upward mobility in society. Good schools are high achieving whereby it is measured by overall student achievement in public examinations. The student performance is also associated with student discipline and school outcomes (Rahimah, Zulkifli and Shahril, 1999: 268).

The principal as the key person in school management is a prime determinant of school effectiveness. Weber (1971), Edmonds (1978), Brookover et al (1979) initiated this evidence that principals make a difference in the 1970’s with the movement of ‘effective School Movement’.

Leadership appeared to be a significant factor, school administrators set the tone for the school and assumed responsibility for instruction and allocation of resources to reach school goals. (Sweeney, 1982:346).

In the local scenario, the secondary school principal assumes the role of leadership of his school by virtue of his appointment by the Ministry of Education. As a leader he acquires the responsibilities for the operation of his school. Principals assume many roles. Sergiovanni (1987:16) listed six main leadership roles. That the school principal assumes - the state person, educational, supervisory, team administrative and organizational leader.

The first three roles refer to activities that could be subgroup under instructional leadership, which promotes the improvement of the teaching-learning environment in schools. Instructional leadership has frequently been considered as
the most important role by principals. (Acheson and Smith 1986:1)

The above sources have shown that many educators believe that instructional leadership is the school principal's most important responsibility and is the strongest determinant in bringing about an effective school. Many educators have generally supported the notion that the school principal should place the highest priority on instructional leadership.

Burr (1963:97) for example, stated:

As one reviews the areas of the principal activity—administrative management, instructional leadership, school community relations, child guidance, plant supervision, staff personnel – instructional leadership emerges as the areas which should have number one priority.

An equally emphatic statement was made by Jacobson (1973:135)

The principal is confronted with a variety of tasks. Managing a school is time consuming and demanding. Many are routine the tasks, while others require planning and expertise. Changed social conditions have resulted in conditions that make the task more difficult. In spite of all this, still and always, the principal's most important task is the improvement of instruction

The concept of leadership has been accorded a central place in the social and behavioral scientific literature on formal organizations. This focus is rooted in the basic assumption that leader behavior affects the overall performance of organization.

Therefore it can be said that good leaders produce high performance, bad leaders produce low performance.

Ogawa and Hart (1985:59) suggested that primarily the principals exert an influence on the effectiveness with which instruction occurs in schools.
Findley and Findley (1992:102) state that:

If a school is to be an effective one, it will be because of the instructional leadership of the principal.

Gordon (1999:35) felt that:

In recent years, democratic, collaboration, human resource-based, development and transformation approaches to instructional leadership, among others, have been widely advanced based on the principals of equality (not hierarchy) and reflection and growth (not compliance).

In accordance to the Cabinet Report (1979), the role of a principal is as follows:

1. To implement all the Educational Plans as planned by The Ministry of Education.

2. Guide teachers in school to guarantee the quality of the teaching-learning process.

3. Supervise students in their lessons and in matters like discipline, sports, societies and others.

4. To have good and effective relationship with parents and the public through the Parent Teacher Association (PTA).

(Cabinet Report, 1979:142)

In this study, the roles of 1,2 and 3 can be measured as dimensions on the role of the principal as an instructional leader, managing curriculum, teaching, supervising teaching and monitoring the student’s achievement. With the introduction of KBSR and eventually KBSM, the role of the principal took a 180-degree turn. The principal now takes the role of a planner, educator and supervisor.

As an instructional leader, the principal plays an important role within the school who affects the quality of individual teacher’s instruction, student
achievement and the degree of efficiency in school.

This study is an attempt to explore the perception of teachers of the role of the principal as an instructional leader in a secondary school in Petaling Jaya. Data pertinent to this study is collected through the quantitative method using the survey by distributing questionnaire. The questionnaire was adapted from the Principal’s Instructional Leadership Questionnaire (PILQ).

Thus, the instructional leadership role of the secondary school principal, as administrator and manager of the school system is one of marshalling resources, both human and material, to help classroom teachers to instruct effectively (Knezevich, 1975).

Even though the role of the principal as an instructional leader is important but studies in Malaysia show that most principals spend their time concentrating on administration work (Sulaiman, 1989 and Education, Planning, Research and Development, 1987).

1.1 Statement of Problem

Secondary schools today are larger and more complex compared to 20 years ago.

The role of the principal has changed from an autocrat to a chief executive.

Morgan and Bell (1982:399) stated that

It is our view therefore, that the headmaster tradition, which has seen the persona of headship change from autocrat to leading professional so as to view the secondary head as both the leading professional in the development of school and the chief executive of its running and accountability.
Before the 1980’s principals were trained to focus on skill like communication, decision-making, conflict management and problem solving. The heart of education: teaching-learning process was minimally attended to.

With the movement of effective school in the early 1980’s however, instructionally effective schools emerged.

Murphy and Hallinger (1992:77-78) stated,

that there was a growing recognition that administrators as skilled in curriculum and instructional leadership characterize school leaders. School leaders needed a sound base of knowledge in curriculum and instruction if they were going to be responsible for coordinating local school improvement efforts.

With this in mind the focus of training for principals focused more on the technology of education – curriculum and instruction which was the key to greater productivity and hence more effective school.

Boyer (1983) states that,

without a through grooming on the realities of the classroom, principals will continue to feel uncomfortable and inadequate in educational leadership roles.

Moreover they will continue to lack credibility in instructional matters.

Principals today need to be an instructional leader, to fulfil the pressures of education with their teachers. The main priority of an effective school is student achievement and a positive climate. The principal will need to collaborate with teachers, parents and students to produce a healthy school climate.
Ubben and Hughes (1987:19) says,

creating a motivating work environment all within a context of collaboration, so that a high-performance learning community exists - these are manifest in instructional leadership above all else.

In Malaysia, the most critical challenge in the education system is towards effective schools. The school is an important place as it is where the young minds are developed and educated. Therefore an effective principal and an effective school is the main agenda in the education system whereby both principal and schools reciprocal. If the principal fails in the management of an effective school, then the school will not be effective. (Shukor, 1998).

Studies have proven that most principals spent their time managing the school. A study done by National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP), 1998, on schools in The Federal Territory showed that 65% of the principals are hardly in schools. 70% of the principals do not fulfill the requirements of the Education Ministry of teaching five hours a week. Principals are burdened with all kinds of tasks. Studies have shown that principals who take the role of an effective instructional leader would find their schools and students progressing.

Lezotte, Edmonds and Ratner (1985) stated:

The principal-as-instructional leader as one ‘characteristic of an effective school’.

Like any other secondary school in Petaling Jaya, S.M.K. Sultan Abdul Samad, also faces the usual discipline problems. The school, once an all boys’ school, has now become a co-ed school. This has caused different types of discipline problems to emerge. Besides this, the school had a change headship from
a male principal (ever since it was built) to a lady principal.

With this in mind, the new principal has a major role to play. The role of the principal has been given prominence and it has been stressed that the principal has an important role to play in ensuring the success of the school.

We need to know the perception of teachers of their principal as an instructional leader. Teacher's perception is important for a principal, as they are the key element in the teaching-learning process. With teachers view at hand principal can improve on their instructional leadership and become more efficient and effective leader in bringing about an effective school. As the demand for better school, principals need to be an instructional leader.

1.2 Significance of Study

The significance of this study is that the results from the research will assist educators in future to bring about effective school in line with the National Education Policy. This study will also help to train future principals towards having clear goals and incentives and appropriate skills to be a better instructional leader. Currently there is not enough information and study done locally on the role of the principal as an instructional leader.

Besides this study can be used to help the Education Department and Bodies like Institute Aminuddin Baki, INTAN to conduct appropriate courses, forums and seminars for future principals.
1.3 **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent of teacher participation in the role of the principal as an instructional leader. Subsequently this study also identifies the area or aspects, which the principal can improve as an instructional leader.

1.4 **Rationale of Study**

The rationale of the study is to ascertain perception of teachers on the role of the principal as an instructional leader towards an effective school. Furthermore it can be used to expand on previous research in this area.

The findings from this study will provide valuable input to the (Ministry of Education) and future school administrators in these efforts to bring about school effectiveness through instructional leadership.

This study should provide additional information on the secondary school principalship in Malaysia with regard to the role of the principal as an instructional leader towards an effective school.

This study will provide additional information for officials of the Ministry of Education, particularly those involved in the training of school leaders. There is a need for empirical data based on local conditions as well as a need to build a body of knowledge in educational administration practice in Malaysia.

In addition, this study should stimulate further research in the field of instructional leadership in Malaysia.
1.5 Research Questions

i. How effective is the principal in defining the mission and vision of the school based on teacher’s perception?

ii. How effective is the principal in managing the curriculum based on the teacher’s perception?

iii. How effective is the principal in supervising the teaching and learning process based on teacher’s perception?

iv. How effective is the principal in monitoring student achievement based on teacher’s perception?

v. How effective is the principal in promoting a conducive climate based on teacher’s perception?

vi. Is there any significant relation between age of teachers and the role of the principal as an instructional leader?

vii. Is there any significant relation between the years of service of teachers in the school and the role of the principal as an instructional leader?

1.6 Limitation of Study

This study is restricted to Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Sultan Abdul Samad, Petaling Jaya, an urban school, which was, established in 1963. Therefore the findings of this study on the role of the principal, as an instructional leader towards an effective school cannot be generalized on other schools.
1.7 Definition of Terms

1.7.1 Role

Set of behaviors expected (and to a major extent required) of the incumbent of a specific social or organizational position. (Jacobs, 1974:184)

1.7.2 Principal

Is a leader appointed by the Ministry of Education to help manage and run a school. A principal sets the bearing and the tone of the school. The principal as the leader of the school can influence the very essence of its junctions with his attitudes, biases and personal characteristics. (Rahimah, 1981:8)

1.7.3 Instructional Leadership

The assertion of influence, through the cooperation of others, to improve the quality of the experiences provided for the children in the school. This encompasses the functions of instructional supervision and curriculum development. (Burr, 1963:97)

1.7.4 Perception

The Oxford Dictionary (1994:507) defines perceive as to become aware of, to see or notice. Perception is the ability to perceive. Based on knowledge and experience, an individual is able to perceive towards an object, things or incidents. The acquired knowledge would influence ones perception on certain things. In this context, perception is the justification or view of teachers.
1.7.5 Effective School

A school may be said to be effective to the extent that there is congruence between its objectives and its achievements. In other words, it is effective to the extent that it accomplishes what it sets out to do. (Getzel, 1969:22)