CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

5.1. SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of the study was to investigate the perceptions of the staff and students regarding the status of the school in relation to seven effective schools correlates.

The review of literature on school effectiveness and effective schools research has shown that clear school mission, frequent monitoring, safe and orderly environment, high expectations, opportunity to learn, instructional leadership, and home-school relations are prevalent characteristics as well as determinants of school effectiveness and effective schools. Therefore, it can be concluded that either, a school is effective because it possesses the seven effective correlates, or, if a school wants to improve its effectiveness, the school has to strive to see that these seven effective schools correlates are strongly present in the school.

The results of the study show the overall mean of the seven effective schools correlates as 3.69. The continuum of effectiveness indicates the value of 1 as very ineffective, the value of 2 to be ineffective, the value of 3 to be neutral or average, the value of 4 to be effective, and the value of 5 to be very effective. In terms of these
indicators along the continuum of effectiveness, the mean of 3.69 is above the value of 3 but less than the value of 4. Therefore, the status of the school in relation to the seven effective schools correlates, is above average but less than effective. This conclusion is consistent with the conclusion obtained from the analysis of the school performance in the PMR and SPM examinations, and student attendance rate, from 1995 to 1998.

The results of the study also show the ranking of the seven effective schools correlates as Clear School Mission, Frequent Monitoring, Instructional Leadership, High Expectations, Opportunity-to-Learn, Home-School Relationships, Safe and Orderly Environment. Each of the seven effective schools correlates has a mean of above 3 but less that 4. Among the seven correlates, Clear School Mission correlate has the highest mean of 3.96 and a standard deviation of 0.65, compared to Safe and Orderly Environment correlate, which has the lowest mean of 3.25 and a standard deviation of 0.68.

Results of the inter-correlation among the seven effective schools correlates have shown significant relationships among the seven correlates. Clear School Mission is highly related to Frequent Monitoring but least related to Instructional Leadership. The relationship between Frequent Monitoring and Opportunity-to-Learn is moderate. It is least related to Instructional Leadership. The relationships between Safe and Orderly Environment and Clear School Mission, High Expectations, and Opportunity-to-Learn are moderate. It is least related to Instructional Leadership. High Expectations is shown to have the highest relationship with Opportunity-to-Learn but
the lowest relationship with Home-School Relationships. Opportunity-to-Learn is shown to have moderate relationship with all the effective schools correlates with little difference in the correlation coefficient. Instructional Leadership has the lowest relationship with Home-School relationships while Home-School Relationships has the lowest relationship with High Expectations.

The results also indicate that teachers and students have different perceptions regarding the status of the school in relation to the seven effective schools correlates. The overall mean of the teachers for the seven effective schools correlates is 3.82 and the overall mean of the students for the seven effective schools correlates is 3.56. Therefore, it can be concluded that the teachers have a higher perception of their school status in relation to the seven effective schools correlates than the students. In terms of ranking of the seven effective schools correlates, on the one hand, the teachers rank Clear School Mission, Frequent Monitoring, Instructional Leadership, Opportunity-to-Learn, High Expectations, Home-School Relationships, Safe and Orderly Environment. On the other hand, students rank Instructional Leadership, High Expectations, Clear School Mission, Frequent Monitoring, Opportunity-to-Learn, Home-School relationships, Safe and Orderly Environment. The t-test comparisons show differences in the perceptions between teachers and students are significant for Clear School Mission, Frequent Monitoring, Safe and Orderly Environment, Opportunity-to-Learn, and Home-School Relationships. The differences between the perceptions of the teachers and students for High Expectations, Safe and Orderly Environment, Instructional Leadership, and Home-
School Relationships are not significant.

The results of the study also indicate perceptions regarding the status of the school in relation to the seven effective school correlates differ according to age-groups. The Above 42 age-group has a mean of 3.86, the 41-34 age-group has a mean of 3.82, the 33-26 age-group has mean of 3.78, the 25-18 age-group has a mean of 3.75, and the Below 18 age-group has a mean of 3.57. The analysis of variance shows that differences in the perceptions are only significant for the correlates of Clear School Mission and Frequent Monitoring. There are no significant differences between the perceptions of the five age-groups for the correlates of Safe and Orderly Environment, High Expectations, Opportunity-to-Learn, Instructional Leadership, and Home-School Relationships. The Scheffe Test indicates the differences in perceptions for Clear School Mission and Frequent Monitoring are only significant for three age-groups – 26-33, 34-41, and Above 42.

The results also indicate perceptions regarding the status of the school in relation to the seven effective correlates are not influenced by sex. The mean for the male respondents is 3.68 and the mean for female respondents is 3.69. The t-test shows the differences for the seven correlates is not significant.
5.2. CONCLUSIONS

An effective school is a school that has achieved outcomes that are in congruent with its predetermined goals. The goals may be academic, social, economic, or political. Ultimately, its goals must satisfy its customers’ requirements. The internal customers of a school are the students whose goals are to learn, and the teachers whose goals are to teach. The outcomes expected are knowledge, skills, attitudes, and generic competence for effective communication, problem-solving, critical and creative thinking. These outcomes must be relevant for the use by employers in providing services and generating wealth to support the economy of the country. Malaysia’s Vision 2020 envisions Malaysia as a highly developed industrial nation based on science and technology. Its National Philosophy of Education is to provide for the development of the individual to meet the challenges of Vision 2020. Therefore, outcomes of schools should also encompass non-academic aspects, such as high moral values and sportsmanship.

Indicators of school effectiveness and effective schools are usually high achievement in public examinations (Hussein Mahmood,1991; A.L.Ramaiah, 1992), good student discipline, high student attendance, low staff turnover, and organizational health. There is empirical support for the notion that healthy interpersonal relations and student achievement are related (Corwin & Borman, 1988; Hoy et al., 1990). There is also empirical support for the notion that teachers’ and students’ social and emotional needs must be satisfied before teachers could teach
well and students could learn well (Phillips, M., 1997).

To be effective, schools need to have effective schools correlates. The various research or studies on school effectiveness and effective schools conducted either in the United States, United Kingdom, or other parts of the world, have identified many factors. In general, all these factors could be broadly classified as clear school mission, frequent monitoring of student progress, safe and orderly environment, high expectations, opportunity-to-learn, instructional leadership, and home-school relationships.

A school must have a clear vision of what it wants to accomplish and how to accomplish it. This vision has to be communicated clearly to all its members so that it is clearly understood, supported, and shared by all its members. Effective schools have missions with an academic emphasis and priority. In this school, objectives in each subject area are the focal point of instruction. The curriculum, instruction, and assessment are aligned with teaching objectives. Teachers in all subjects require students to be effective in reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills because the acquisition of basic academic skills is one of the school goals. Teachers feel they have provided their students with activities that develop critical thinking skills. They also feel that the materials and supplies they have provided to their students for the teaching and learning process are adequate for their students' abilities.

Frequent monitoring requires students to work on assignments, tests, and other forms of assessments, and teachers to give prompt feedback on the performance of students. In this way, teachers are able to address whatever weaknesses in the
teaching-learning process before proceeding to the next level. In this school, teachers apply consistent criteria to assess students' strengths and weaknesses, give specific feedback on homework and class assignments. Assessment based on students performance occurs regularly in the form of formative and summative tests. The test results are thoroughly reviewed by the teachers and the principal, at least annually, to plan instructional program modifications. The progress of the students, measured in terms of school objectives and mastery of course content, is informed to the parents.

A school is only effective if teaching and learning takes place. This is only possible if the school has a safe and orderly environment that is conducive to learning, where both the teachers and the students feel secure and the overall culture exudes the idea that learning is the most important enterprise. In this school, both the teachers and students concur that the physical condition of the school buildings is generally less than pleasant and much in need of repair. They also concur that vandalism of school properties is the biggest problem despite the fact that administrators support teachers in dealing with student discipline, and school rules are enforced consistently and equitably. Rahimah and Zulkifli (1994) assert that teachers and students in effective schools have a more positive attitudes towards their schools. They view their schools' physical facilities as pleasant, adequate, and well-maintained. They also view the school environment as conducive for teaching and learning where teachers and students feel safe, confident, and satisfied. Therefore, the findings of the present study is consistent with the findings of Rahimah and Zulkifli (1994) in that being a less than effective school, the perceptions of the teachers and students
regarding the correlate of Safe and Orderly Environment are not so positive.

High expectations for students by teachers are necessary to boast the morale of the students. It is an incentive for students to strive for the best. Although teachers seldom express their high expectations for their students explicitly, they are able to communicate their expectations for the students through their actions, such as giving them responsibilities for self-study and high-level thinking tasks. In this school, teachers believe that they are responsible for helping their students achieve identified standards, and they also believe that all their students can achieve in each subject area. The teachers also give low-achieving students the same opportunities to answer questions as the other more able students in class. The students are also frequently encouraged to work cooperatively in small heterogeneous groups.

Opportunity-to-learn is a natural consequence of a clear school mission which is focussed on academic excellence. When there is plenty of opportunity to learn, there is also frequent monitoring and therefore less opportunity for misbehavior. Hence, the environment is safe and orderly. Opportunity-to-learn is also related to high expectations. Teachers who have high expectations for their students will provide more opportunity to learn for their students. In this school, instruction time is free from interruptions, and students are engaged in learning activities from the beginning until the end of the instructional period. Teachers plan practice work which is given to the students after direct instruction. The reading program expects students to frequently predict, sample, confirm, and self-correct during reading. The students are also encouraged to express themselves through questioning and class discussion.
They are also given multiple opportunities to practise new skills in both group and individual settings.

All effective schools have principals who are strong instructional leaders with clear goals and directions. Besides having the necessary technical knowledge, skills, and competence for management, effective principals must possess the interpersonal skills to inspire teachers to perform as knowledge workers. Therefore, to be effective, a school must have strong instructional leadership to ensure that the school mission is clear, there is frequent monitoring of student progress, a safe and orderly environment that is conducive to learning, teachers have high expectations for their students, opportunity-to-learn is aplenty, and there are good relationships between the home and school. In this school, the teachers and the students view their principal as open and approachable. The principal is said to make frequent informal contact with students and teachers. He seeks ideas and suggestions from the teachers and jointly plan staff development programs based on school goals. He also conducts classroom instructions and regularly gives feedback to teachers regarding their instructional techniques.

Good home-school relationships is a must to ensure the effectiveness of school. Parental participation and involvement in school activities, support for school policies, and contributions in school-wide decision-making will greatly enhance the effectiveness of the school. In this school, the teachers and students view the Parent-Teacher Association as important. The school encourages parents to share ideas for school improvement but most of the parents are not actively involved in school activities. Although most parents support disciplinary actions taken by school
personnel, cooperate with teachers in monitoring homework, many of the parents do not have a clear understanding of the school’s goals.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The school under study is above average and less than effective school. Since all the seven effective schools correlates are present in the school, it is recommended that steps be taken to improve the existing school situation by using an appropriate model of school effectiveness.

A communitarian model of school effectiveness emphasizes the satisfaction of teachers’ and students’ social and emotional needs before teachers could teach well and students could learn well. But there are empirical studies that have shown that communitarian schooling may be detrimental to attendance and achievement (Battistich et al., 1995; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992). A study by Phillips, M.(1997) suggests that improving a school’s academic climate may be a more promising way to enhance students, attachment to school and their academic achievement.

Therefore, which one model of school effectiveness to use for this school will depend on the leadership of the principal. It is said that a school climate that is conducive for learning does not happen by chance. Purkey and Novak (1984; 1992) suggest that the school’s people, place, policies, programs and processes must be inviting so that students want to be in school and succeed. Perhaps, the principal of this school could start with a check on the school’s invitingness. The principal can set
up work committees comprising teachers, students, and parents, to analyze, review, and make recommendations to ensure that the school's people, place, policies, programs and processes are inviting. A school is inviting where policies and rules are fair, encouraging, helpful, and supportive. The principal and teachers act like they enjoy themselves, each other, their work, and their students.

Finally, it is the principal that set the tone. Effective schools exist, but each effective school may be one of a kind (D'Amico, J., 1982). Therefore to improve school effectiveness by replicating the characteristics of established effective schools may not be the most suitable strategy to adopt and could be futile.

Schools are not static. By using two continua, one of effectiveness and ineffectiveness in terms of outcomes, and another which represents the degree of dynamism of improvement process from dynamic to static, Hopkins and colleagues(1994) describe four types of school culture. First, a moving school which is a school that is getting better in terms of value added. Second, a cruising school which is a school where pupils achieve in spite of less than favorable teaching qualities of its staff who has a marking time attitude. Third, a strolling school which is neither effective nor ineffective, and has ill-defined and conflicting aims. Fourth, a struggling school which is an ineffective school with a staff who wants to change but does not have the skills to improve. Lastly, sandwiched among the four expressions is the sinking school. It is a school which is ineffective and has a staff who is not prepared to change. Such a school is normally found in a low socioeconomic status area, where parents are undemanding and the teachers explain failures by blaming inadequate parenting or unprepared children.
5.4. FURTHER RESEARCH

This study undertakes to investigate the perceptions of teachers and students regarding the status of the school in relation to seven effective schools correlates. It has revealed that of all the seven effective schools correlates, the least prevalent correlate is Safe and Orderly Environment. It is recommended that further research to investigate the types of disciplinary problems and its causes will be conducted. It is also recommended that a case study on home-school relationships and its effects on the student academic achievements be conducted. Lastly, a further research on the school climate and its impact on school effectiveness can also be conducted.