

## CHAPTER 7

### DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

This qualitative multiple-case study was carried out to study in depth the process of evaluating teacher performance in four national primary schools. The data was based on multiple perspectives obtained from administrators and teachers in the selected schools. Both the school administrators and teachers had diverse views about how school-based teacher evaluation practices were implemented in their schools. Moving beyond a single case allowed the comparison of evaluation practices at multi-sites under different administrators who had a high degree of control over the implementation of the school-based teacher evaluation practices within their school systems. The analysis of data was based on a conceptual framework that encompassed the purpose of teacher evaluation, methods used to evaluate teachers, evaluation instrument and criteria, as well as the utilization of the evaluation findings.

The school-based teacher evaluation process is a comprehensive system which encompasses both the formative and summative evaluation practices in the school. It is a system to assess how well teachers perform their duties in school. It can provide administrators with data on teacher effectiveness and teacher quality, as well as reassure teachers that what they are doing in the classroom has resulted in better student learning. Most research carried out in Malaysia prior to this looked at either the formative evaluation (Chan 1994; Chan, 1997) or the summative evaluation (Abdul Aziz, 1990) as a separate entity in the school system. In this study, I examined the combination of both formative and summative teacher evaluation practices to get an overall perspective of the existing teacher evaluation system in four Malaysian national primary schools.

The overarching questions that constantly drove this inquiry include the following: Is there a well-designed, comprehensive system to evaluate teacher performance in national primary schools; do we have quality teachers in our schools; how do we measure teacher quality in schools; is teacher performance measured using valid instruments, criteria and appropriate standards; does the existing school-based teacher evaluation practices improve teacher performance; and what policies and processes are set in place to improve teacher quality in schools?

In the preceding chapters individual case analysis has provided an in-depth description of the school-based teacher evaluation process in the school. The discussion focused on seeking answers to the various overarching questions mentioned above. This was followed by a cross-case analysis to identify similarities and differences in the implementation of the school-based teacher evaluation practices in the four schools. This chapter presents the overall summary and discussion of the research findings, implications, and recommendations for further research.

### **Summary of Findings**

The overall findings indicate that there is a common thread that binds the school-based teacher evaluation practices in a centralized education system such as the one in Malaysia. The in-depth cross-case analysis of the data in the four schools disclosed several main findings.

Firstly, the findings revealed that there was no specific state or national policy on establishing a comprehensive school-based teacher evaluation system in the national primary schools. The government circular vaguely implies that teachers should be observed at least twice a year and teacher appraisal should be conducted annually to select recipients of the Excellence Service Award and for promotional purposes. There was also confusion among administrators between supervision and formative evaluation

in schools. Most of them thought that if they did the former it was sufficient to provide data for the latter. This created a situation where teacher evaluation was largely an administrative function to inspect the performance of duties assigned to teachers rather than developing teacher professionalism in schools.

Further investigation revealed that there was a very weak link between purpose, method, instrument and utilization of evaluation findings in the four cases. The main purpose of the formative evaluation practices was to improve instructional practice but the methods used to evaluate teachers did not allow the fulfillment of this purpose. There was a conflict between the administrators' and teachers' perspectives on the purpose of formative evaluation in the schools. The administrators stated that it was for improving instructional practice, whereas the teachers reiterated that it was to scrutinize if they were performing their duties efficiently in school. The lack of coherence in purpose gave rise to multiple interpretations of why teacher evaluation, especially formative evaluation, was carried out in schools.

But the rationale for conducting summative evaluation was consistent, whereby both the administrators and teachers said that it was mainly to select teachers who would receive the Excellence Service Award. The results were also sometimes used for decisions pertaining to awarding scholarship and other promotional opportunities. Most of the novice teachers in the four cases were unaware of this and they were oblivious to the missed opportunities that resulted from low ratings in the summative evaluation. This lack of knowledge among the teachers was partly due to the secrecy that prevailed in the summative teacher evaluation practices in the cases investigated.

The methods employed in the school-based teacher evaluation system were insufficient to gather adequate data on teacher performance in the four schools in this study. Lack of multiple evaluation techniques reduced the authenticity of the findings on teacher performance in schools. The formative evaluation was based solely on sporadic

classroom observations and evaluation of student work. It was not conducted on a regular basis and in some cases not all teachers were observed. The teachers also did not practice self-evaluation to reflect on their teaching practices in the classroom. They generally were ignorant on techniques of self-evaluation and had very little assistance from the administrators on developing a culture of reflection and the habit of self-criticism for further improvement.

As for summative evaluation the whole evaluation process was based on principal ratings. This qualitative rating of performance represented the administrators' perception of effective teacher behavior and teacher competence in school. The lack of transparency in the summative evaluation method further exacerbated the feeling of suspicion and discontent among teachers. This also led to teacher disillusionment with the school-based teacher evaluation system in the cases studied.

The findings also indicate that the instruments and criteria used to assess teacher performance in school are inadequate. The evaluation instruments were not developed by the school authorities and they mostly used instruments given to them by other authorities such as the Head Teachers Council and the Public Service Department. The administrators did not know how the validity and reliability of the instrument were established by these authorities. The absence of a credible instrument for formative evaluation was compounded by the lack of knowledge on what aspects to evaluate in the classroom. The administrators used criteria that were derived from instruments used by external evaluators such as the Federal School Inspectors, and sometimes gave their own interpretations to the criteria. There was no adaptation of the instrument to suit the context of the school and the different categories of teachers who were evaluated. Both the novice and experienced teachers were evaluated using similar methods and criteria, signifying the underlying concept that one size fits all.

In the summative evaluation process they used the mandated instrument given by the Public Service Department for the yearly appraisal of all civil servants. The teachers felt that some of the criteria were not relevant to what they did in school, especially in the classroom. The limited criteria used sometimes did not take into consideration the teachers' out-of-school activities, which contributed to student development in other areas, as well as to the teaching profession as a whole.

Furthermore, the findings of the study also indicated that results of the evaluation were not used to achieve the intended purpose of evaluation, which was to improve teacher performance in school. The formative evaluation findings were kept as records in the school and only some administrators referred to it during summative evaluation. The summative evaluation findings were sent to the state education authorities to indicate overall appraisal of teachers and to recommend recipients of the Excellence Service Award. Generally, teachers were unaware of the utilization of the evaluation findings.

This highlights another important finding, that is, teachers in all the four schools had no sense of ownership towards the school-based teacher evaluation system in their schools. They were not consulted in the designing of the school-based teacher evaluation system and neither were they informed clearly about how administrators would evaluate their performance. This deepened the divisiveness that existed between school administrators and teachers and resulted in a 'them verses us' situation in schools.

There was also a lack of communication and mutual trust between the two groups when it came to teacher evaluation practices in the school. Administrators kept secret records on teacher performance and teachers were cynical about the methods used to measure instructional practice in the classroom and overall teacher performance in school. They were totally indifferent towards the school-based teacher evaluation system, which they generally perceived as an inspection and control mechanism.

The findings also revealed that administrative control was evident in all the four schools. The administrators, especially those who had strong personalities, exerted implicit control over the teachers and this resulted in fear among the teachers. They were afraid of the repercussions of their actions, which might jeopardize the evaluation of their performance in school. Most of the teachers stated that “the power is in their hands” and teachers had to toe the line in order to receive good appraisals. As a result there was very little communication or discussion between the administrators and teachers on matters relating to teacher evaluation in school. In this light, the evaluation process seemed more like a punitive measure than a development process. Most teachers accepted the outcome of the evaluation and rarely questioned the administrators about the final outcome of the evaluation.

The final aspect, which was evident from the findings, was that there were more impediments to effective implementation of the school-based teacher evaluation system in the local context. The challenges that the administrators faced in evaluating teacher performance in school included heavy workload, time constraints, lack of knowledge of teacher evaluation, inadequate instruments and external regulations by local education authorities. These challenges prevented the administrators from being effective evaluators in the school-based teacher evaluation system in the four national primary schools.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The underlying complexities in the performance evaluation practices in Malaysian national primary schools are discussed further based on some salient themes which were drawn from an in-depth examination of the findings of the study. The findings depicted the reality of what was happening in the four schools. The discussion of the findings is based on the following headings: i) Policy on school-based teacher

evaluation system; ii) Ambiguous purpose; iii) Multiple teacher evaluation methods; iv) Underutilization of evaluation findings; v) Power in the hands of the administrators; vi) Unheard voices; and vii) In search of a Malaysian teacher evaluation model.

### *Policy on School-based Teacher Evaluation System*

This study revealed there were no clear policy directions on establishing a comprehensive school-based teacher evaluation system to assess teacher performance in order to make decisions on improving practice, providing professional development, rewarding teachers, giving merit pay or bonus, promoting and terminating poor performers (Dwyer & Stufflebeam, 1996). The school administrators did not see the teacher evaluation system as an opportunity to move away from a rigid, centralized, bureaucratic system to a more self-managing system which can empower teachers to develop professionally in their respective schools.

As schools realize that teachers are their greatest assets, the need to evaluate teacher performance becomes more crucial. School administrators must work towards transforming teacher evaluation system to align with the goals of improving teacher quality and increasing professionalism among teachers (Marshall, 2005, Peterson, 2000). In recent years, it has become more evident that the school as an organization which is accountable for educating the future generation must ensure that they have an effective school-based performance evaluation system to upgrade teacher performance and improve the quality of teaching and learning provided to the students (Leithwood, Aitken & Jantzi, 2006).

In a centralized education system where most policy directives were given by the top management, the absence of a special circular on establishing a comprehensive school-based teacher evaluation system resulted in administrators being heavily dependent on personal judgment to determine which teachers were effective and which

were not. As might be expected, this judgmental approach evaluation resulted in dissatisfaction among teachers. Generally, most school administrators adhere strictly to policy statements by the federal authority. Therefore, it is imperative to make school-based teacher evaluation a compulsory process to ensure continuous improvement of teacher quality in schools.

Despite the inability to provide documented evidence the administrators stated that they knew that they had to perform on-going formative teacher evaluation. The school administrators referred to the Professional Circular No. 3/1987 on school supervision, which required them to carry out classroom observations at least twice a year. This document was prepared more than twenty years ago and in actual fact some of the administrators did not even have the document in their schools. This circular should be reviewed by authorities in the Ministry of Education to make it more relevant to the changes that have taken place in the education system. The issue of unclear boundaries between supervision and formative evaluation, which was discussed in the preceding chapter, was partly due to the lack of clear policy statements for supervision and evaluation in schools. On the other hand, though the summative teacher evaluation was based on the professional circular pertaining to appraisal by the Public Service Department, it was still ambiguous on the methods of rating teacher performance and thus resulted in discontent among the teachers.

Unclear policies and lack of guidelines on school-based teacher evaluation has resulted in an ineffective school-based teacher evaluation system in schools. It created a system which was used to penalize ineffective teachers rather than to improve instructional practice among teachers. Any policy on the school-based teacher evaluation system should define the requirements of the formative and summative teacher evaluation process clearly to prevent misinterpretations by administrators and teachers



who each had their own opinions of why teacher performance was evaluated within the school system.

Few administrators fully understand the complexities of designing an effective school-based teacher evaluation system that can improve teaching practices and ultimately student learning in school. Therefore, it is imperative that a policy on teacher evaluation should state the purpose of evaluation, the frequency of formative evaluation, the methods and appropriate criteria that can be used by school administrators to measure teacher performance. It should further indicate how administrators can use the findings to help improve instructional practice, make decisions on promotion and plan professional development programmes for teachers (Blase & Kirby, 2000; Peterson; Sinyolo, 2009).

The policy makers must take earnest efforts to rectify deficiencies in the current teacher evaluation practices in schools to ensure better learning opportunities for students in the twenty-first century. They have to formulate policies which can provide school leaders with clear directions on how to promote professional growth in schools. This will also include effective assessment of school leaders who must prove they are qualified to function as evaluators of teacher performance in school. There is a need to carry out proper leadership evaluation to ensure that competent administrators are leading the schools (Reeves, 2004). It is a paradox that school leaders who carry out teacher evaluation practices in school are themselves not evaluated by state and federal authorities. They must be effective instructional leaders and evaluators in order to help teachers improve their performance.

### *Ambiguous Purpose*

The point of contention in the school-based teacher evaluation system was that the purpose of evaluation was ambiguous and therefore those involved in the process had diverse views of why the evaluation process was carried out in school. There was

confusion between evaluation for instructional improvement and evaluation for identifying poor performance. Though the administrators stated they were carrying out formative evaluation for continuous instructional improvement, the teachers considered it a control mechanism to detect ineffective teachers. They strongly believed that the evaluation was an administrative function to check whether teachers were performing their duties in school. Some teachers in the four schools were unaware of the actual purpose of the evaluation process but they endured it because it was a necessary administrative process.

There are various rationales to conduct teacher evaluation in schools. Some of the rationales are for improving instructional practice, teacher accountability, personnel decision making, recognition and rewards, to provide reassurance of good teacher performance and to ensure that teacher quality is maintained in school (Duke & Stiggins, 1990; Dwyer & Stufflebeam, 1996; Millman & Darling-Hammond, 1990; Peterson, 2000). Whatever the purpose, it is important that the administrators and teachers have similar understanding of why administrators carry out teacher evaluation in their schools and how teachers can meet the administrators' expectations. A common purpose will make the evaluation process more effective and ensure that the outcome of the evaluation will be mutually beneficial to all parties concerned.

Most administrators believed student achievement was based on teacher effectiveness in the classroom and to a certain extent teachers were accountable for student learning, especially in an examination-oriented system where student achievement in national examinations was given prominence. The belief that teachers are accountable for student achievement in spite of other external factors was not accepted by most teachers. But the need to see substantial evidence of student learning has called for more evaluation based on the accountability approach in the local context.

Literature on teacher evaluation indicates that in some instances teachers cannot be held accountable for student learning (Frymier, 1998). Learning is an internalized process and students should take charge of their own learning. Furthermore, in a school system the success of a student is due to the effort of more than one teacher (Duke, 1995). This belief was also held by most of the teachers in this study. They believed that it was not fair to make the teachers accountable for student achievement in school because teachers taught students with diverse abilities. Some students came into their classroom without having mastered competencies at the foundation level, thus making it difficult for the teachers to teach the student new competencies or skills according to the student's present grade level. But administrators in Malaysian primary schools were consistent in their views that teachers played a key role in student achievement in schools. Therefore, they were accountable for providing quality teaching and learning experiences to their students in the classroom.

The current trend in teacher evaluation emphasized the developmental approach (Elliot, 1989; Glickman, Gordon & Gordon, 2004). This proponents of this approach believed that teachers should be evaluated mainly for the purpose of professional development. Professional development could help teachers acquire the necessary skills to improve their instructional practice in the classroom. It could also help teachers become more reflective and continuously improve their performance in school. But it was painstakingly clear that the teacher evaluation system in the four national primary schools hardly ever resulted in professional development programmes for the teachers. The purpose of the evaluation was mainly to ensure that teachers were performing their duties as directed by the school administrators.

### *Multiple Teacher Evaluation Methods*

Most research indicates that a systematic evaluation of teachers can only be carried out using a variety of methods to collect data (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Holland, 2005; Marshall, 2005, Peterson, 2000; Stakes, 1989; Toch & Rothman, 2008). The school-based teacher evaluation system employed several methods to evaluate teacher performance. There were various methods of evaluation which provided data on how teachers performed their duties in the classroom, as well as outside the classroom. But generally, classroom observation was used as the main method for formative teacher evaluation and principal rating for summative teacher evaluation. These methods were insufficient to provide accurate data on how teachers were performing their duties in school (Marshall, 2005; Peterson, 2000)

The methods used in the school-based teacher evaluation system lacked thoroughness and did not indicate the inter-relationship between teachers' content knowledge, instructional practice in the classroom and the outcome of the teaching process. It was more focused on meeting mandated requirements than on improving teacher competencies, behavior and attitude in school. Other methods such as peer evaluation, teacher portfolio, self-evaluation, student survey and parent survey were hardly used to substantiate data obtained from classroom observations. The teachers were also not comfortable being evaluated by their peers, students or parents. Some of them believed it was not appropriate in the Malaysian context. This was mainly due to the teachers' lack of self-confidence and the inability to accept the concept of being open. Teachers who had worked in the private sector prior to their appointment as teachers were more open to the concept of being evaluated by their peers or students.

Self-evaluation was another method that was rarely explored by teachers in the four selected schools. This method of evaluation can help teachers to reflect critically on the effectiveness of personal and professional practice (Airasian & Gullickson, 1997;

Darling-Hammond, 1990; Smith, 2001). Furthermore, teacher learning can be developed through reflection on individual practices in the classroom. Out of the 16 teachers who participated in this study only one teacher had tried to carry out self-evaluation based on student feedback. The rest of the teachers had not tried this reflective process in their classroom and the administrators had not encouraged self-evaluation as a prerequisite process of performance evaluation in school.

The teachers also did not keep a teacher portfolio to compile evidence of their achievement in school. They were not aware of the benefits of the portfolio in providing evidence of their performance in school (Bird, 1990; Wolf, 1991). Due to this, most of the teachers could not remember or provide adequate information pertaining to their duties in the summative evaluation instrument.

Principal ratings used for summative evaluation were based on the administrators' personal judgment and the findings of the evaluation were seldom revealed to the teachers. Research indicates that evaluation based solely based on personal judgment of the evaluator can reduce the validity of the evaluation findings (Peterson, 2000; Toch & Rothman, 2008). A narrow range of methods used to measure teacher performance and the lack of a framework to guide the measurement of teacher behavior and competencies had accounted for the lack of validity of the results obtained in the summative evaluation process. Furthermore, the results of the evaluation did not indicate whether the teacher behaviour measured related to student achievement in schools. Furthermore the distrust of the summative evaluation method created ill feeling and unhealthy rivalry among teachers in the school.

The use of credible methods and reliable instruments to obtain data on teacher performance is of utmost importance to make the school-based teacher evaluation system effective and trustworthy (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Holland, 2005; Stakes, 1989). Limited use of data sources only provided a restricted notion of teacher behavior and

capabilities in school. The use of multiple data source could provide multiple perspectives of how teachers perform their teaching tasks, manage their classroom, assess their students, carry out co-curricular activities, assist school administrators and communicate with parents and the community. A concerted effort should be made to replace non-systematic methods of teacher evaluation and hearsay evidence of teacher quality with reliable input from multiple data sources to prove teacher quality and improvement in performance (Holland, 2005; Peterson, 2000).

### *Underutilization of Evaluation Findings*

The findings of the formative evaluation are usually kept in school files and only in some cases sent up to state education authorities. Some of the administrators used it to support their summative evaluation findings while others just ignored it. In some cases where not all teachers were evaluated formatively, it was not appropriate to refer to the formative evaluation results. Most of the teachers were unaware of the utilization of the results of teacher evaluation in school. Teacher disillusionment and distrust in the evaluation process was partly due to the ineffective use of the results of evaluation (Peterson, 2000; Stake, 1989).

In most instances, the information gathered during the evaluation process was hardly ever used in helping these teachers improve teaching in the classroom (Peterson, 2000). Professional development programs in the school had very little link to findings of the school-based teacher evaluation process in all the four cases. The sporadic professional development programs were based on the availability of funds and focused on general aspects such as increasing teacher motivation, introducing new teaching methodology and increasing ICT skills among teachers.

The findings of the evaluation should be utilized appropriately to improve teacher performance, motivate teachers and establish professional learning communities in

schools (Marshall, 2005; Peterson, 2000; Sinyolo, 2009). Only then will the school-based teacher evaluation process be meaningful for the teachers. They will participate in the teacher evaluation process enthusiastically and appreciate the feedback given to improve their performances. In order for teachers to be actively involved in the school-based teacher evaluation system they need to be reassured that there are benefits to be accrued from the evaluation process and that the findings will be utilized appropriately and not just kept in school files as record.

### *Power in the Hands of the Administrators*

The school-based teacher evaluation system was controlled by the administrators, especially the head teachers in all four schools. It was clear that the centralized system encouraged bureaucratic control and reduced professional autonomy. The implementation of the teacher evaluation process was a top-down management process with obvious issues of control and power. The power was generally in the hands of the head teacher who made the main decisions about recognizing good performance and penalizing ineffectiveness (Marshall, 2005). The administrators never obtained insights from teachers in conducting the teacher evaluation process in school. There was a lack of communication between teachers and administrators in the four schools and this had resulted in teacher isolation in the schools.

The administrators in these schools exerted implicit control over teachers and this created a sense of fear among teachers, especially those who had just begun their career. The novice teachers were afraid of the repercussions of going against the administrators. They feared that their evaluation results would be affected if they questioned the authority of the administrators because the administrators were also the evaluators of teacher performance in school. School administrators should develop a culture of having more classroom walkthrough and open communication to help teachers improve

instructional practice in the classroom (Barnes & Miller, 2001; Marshall, 2005). This will reduce the tension created between the administrators and teachers.

The administrators did not have adequate knowledge about the teacher evaluation process. They carried out the evaluation based on experience over the years. Some administrators were not even aware of how the teacher evaluation instruments were developed. Due to high personal standards, the administrators were strict in evaluating their teachers and did not give very high scores. The administrators had very high expectations from their teachers and these expectations were not communicated to teachers who usually performed their duties according to their abilities. This created a dissonance between administrator expectations and teacher performance. Eventually it resulted in teacher dissatisfaction and lack of motivation to perform better in an environment where deficiencies were highlighted and good performance not recognized.

Administrators must be trained in the use of valid instruments and proper standards in order to evaluate teachers effectively in school. Only well-trained evaluators can produce reliable evaluation reports of what is happening in the school (Toch & Rothman, 2008). Administrators should also realize that differentiated evaluations can yield more accurate results on teacher performance (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). They can't use one set of methods and criteria for all teachers in the school.

Teachers saw the school-based teacher evaluation system as a mechanism to search for faults rather than reward good work. There was a lack of praise and administrators spoke more of teacher weakness than strength. The teachers felt that they were hardly ever congratulated on good performance. Personal compliments were generally absent and this created dissatisfaction among teachers. Teachers needed constant praise and encouragement to improve performance (Blase & Kirby, 2000; Marshall, 2005). Furthermore, school administrators who practiced instructional leadership worked together with teachers to create a professional learning community



which helped to improve student learning in schools (Blase & Blase, 1999; Glanz & Sullivan, 2000; Glatthorn, 2000; Leithwood, Aitken & Jantzi, 2006)

The extent of administrative control should be reduced and more teacher participation should be encouraged to design an effective school-based teacher evaluation system in the national primary schools. There is a need for more collaboration between administrators and teachers to promote teacher growth and student learning (Leithwood, Aitken & Jantzi, 2006). Administrators need to communicate to teachers expectations about student achievement and provide resource materials and finances to achieve common goals in school (Blase & Blase, 1999; Glatthorn, 2000; Leithwood, Aitken, & Jantzi, 2006).

### *Unheard Voices*

The teachers played a very restricted role in the whole school-based teacher evaluation system. They were participants in the school-based teacher evaluation process but did not have any participatory role in the decision-making process. Their voices were not heard in matters pertaining to teacher evaluation in school. The teachers were not really aware of how the teacher evaluation process was planned and executed in school. They had not even been trained to be reflective and carry out self-evaluation to improve their instructional practice in the classroom. The teacher evaluation system in school had caused some teachers to be unduly worried and stressed in their classroom (Hamdiah, 1996). This had affected instructional practice in the classroom and ultimately reduced teacher effectiveness in the school (Peterson, 2000).

The administrators planned the formative and summative evaluation in school and carried it out without consulting the teachers. It was a process 'done on to teachers' and not something planned based on mutual agreement. The teachers hardly understood the purpose and some were not even aware of the methods used in their schools. They

were also unsure of the findings of the evaluation due to lack of transparency and the insistence of confidentiality by the administrators.

The lack of teacher involvement in the planning of the school-based teacher evaluation system sometimes resulted in mistrust and unhappiness among the teachers. They suspected that administrators practiced unfairness and this perpetuated teacher indifference towards the evaluation process. The absence of teacher input on how they would want their performance to be evaluated, has devalued the role they play in their professional development. When teachers are involved in the development of a school-based teacher evaluation system there are more opportunities for discussions on developing an effective system which can promote teacher growth and improve instructional practice in school (Glatthorn, 2000; Leithwood, Aitken, & Jantzi, 2006; Natriello, 1990). But research shows that teachers are usually not involved in the design and implementation of the teacher evaluation systems in most schools (Stronge & Tucker, 2000).

A successful teacher evaluation system would require more meaningful collaboration with teachers, where their views and suggestions are given due consideration in creating a suitable evaluation model. What is happening at the moment is that teacher evaluation is implemented inconsistently among the various schools in a state. This was seen in the schools in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and in the state of Selangor. Implementation depended on the management styles of the administrators in school and they hardly got the teachers involved in the evaluation process except for encouraging subject panel heads to do peer evaluation. Teachers must be given an opportunity to present their perspectives on how to evaluate instructional practices in the classroom to create a sense of ownership over the process of teacher evaluation (Peterson, 2000).

Teacher passiveness and indifference has resulted in the ineffectiveness of the evaluation process in Malaysian primary schools. The passive characteristics of the teachers are due to the feeling of powerlessness in a highly bureaucratic system. But the administrators take teacher passiveness to be teacher cooperation. In reality teachers have lots of unexpressed dissatisfaction over the evaluation practices in their schools. The teachers' mental framework is based on a concept that prefers to concur rather than oppose authority in a school system where power is in the hands of the head teacher.

The teachers who participated in this study had a lot of ideas on how they wanted the teacher evaluation process to be conducted but these ideas had not been conveyed to the administrators. This was because the administrators never asked teachers to express their opinions about teacher evaluation practices, which they considered as their domain of control. Unlike teacher evaluation practices in more developed countries, the school-based teacher evaluation practices in Malaysia does not include the 'voices of the teachers', which is an integral component in making the evaluation process more meaningful and effective.

In order for the school-based teacher evaluation system to be successful and meet its goal of improving teacher performance, it must have the support of the teachers. The designing of the system should be a collaborative effort between administrators and teachers. The teachers who are the recipients of the benefits of the evaluation process should be involved in setting the purpose, planning the methods and instruments and implementing the teacher evaluation system in school (Glanz & Sullivan, 2000; Peterson, 2000). This will increase the credibility of the school-based teacher evaluation system as a tool to improve teacher performance and enhance the quality of educational practices in school.

### *In Search of a Malaysian Teacher Evaluation Model*

An effective school-based teacher evaluation system based on a developmental teacher evaluation model can provide feedback to increase knowledge, motivate teachers, raise the standards of teaching, promote teacher growth and achieve common organizational goals pertaining to student learning (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Duke, 1995; Pearlman & Tannenbaum, 2003; Peterson, 2000).

The findings of this study indicate that there is no specific teacher evaluation model in the four national primary schools. There is a combination of elements from different models such as, the improvement of the classroom teaching model, administrative supervision model, remediation plan model and merit pay model (Dwyer & Stufflebeam, 1996). But the elements are not explicitly exhibited in the school-based teacher evaluation system in the four schools. Therefore it is not possible to define the teacher evaluation model in the Malaysian context. There is a need to develop a local teacher evaluation model that will suit the education system in the country.

Most of the administrators in the schools used a model similar to the administrative supervision teacher evaluation model (Dwyer & Stufflebeam, 1996). They mainly evaluated teachers to ensure that they had carried out the duties assigned to them both inside and outside the classroom. The administrative supervision model was not clearly recognized in the schools because the administrators were not sure whether they were performing supervisory duties or conducting formative evaluation.

The administrators in the four schools insisted that theirs was an improvement of the classroom teaching model but there was no clear indication of professional development based on teacher evaluation in the selected schools. In an improvement model, the administrators had to conduct frequent observation of classroom practices to provide constructive feedback to help the teachers improve their practice (Dwyer & Stufflebeam, 1996). The data gathered during the evaluation must be used to plan

professional development programs for the teachers (Glanz & Sullivan, 2000). But the reality in the four national primary schools was that teachers were evaluated based on infrequent classroom observations, indirect evaluations and a final summative appraisal at the end of the year. These methods of evaluation were limited and produced insufficient data to plan remediation programs to promote high performance among teachers and improve the quality of instruction in schools. In order to develop a Malaysian teacher evaluation model, the education authorities at the state and district level should take into considerations the needs of the teachers and the personnel decision making policy by the Public Service Department.

### **Conclusion**

The main conclusion that can be derived from the findings of the study is that the present school-based teacher evaluation practices have very little influence on teacher performance in the selected schools. This is due to the absence of a strong, valid and credible system of measuring teacher performance in school. The present teacher evaluation system is vague and does not directly measure teacher quality in school. There is an urgent need to transform the existing teacher evaluation system to ensure its effectiveness in improving teacher performance in school. Various issues plague the school-based teacher evaluation system in the four schools. This includes evaluation of instructional practice based on short visits to the classrooms; limited methods to gather data on teacher knowledge, behaviour, and competencies; inadequate instruments and criteria to measure performance; minimum feedback for improvement; administrator bias based on personal judgment; practice of rewarding teachers based on seniority and not merit; evaluator's limited knowledge of evaluation, the absence of teacher involvement in designing the evaluation system; and lack of transparency in the evaluation practices in school. If the Malaysian educational policy makers are earnest in their efforts to

improve the quality of teachers in schools, then all issues related to evaluating teacher performance and improving instruction must be addressed promptly.

The Educational Development Master Plan 2006-2010 developed by the Ministry of Education has several thrusts to improve the overall quality of education in the country. One of the main thrusts is to develop teacher professionalism (*Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia*, 2006). Thus, in order to achieve the goals set in this thrust the authorities have to reform processes related to teacher training, selection, placement, evaluation and human resource development in school. Though several changes have been made to teacher selection, training and placement aspects, teacher evaluation practices have barely improved over the years. How is it possible to improve quality and develop professionalism if there are no valid systems of evaluating teacher performance in our schools?

Teacher evaluation should be included as an integral part of a comprehensive human resource development system in schools. There is an urgent need to develop policies on establishing school-based performance evaluation systems which can identify effective teaching and rectify deficiencies in instructional practice in the classroom. We need to recognize excellent teachers and reward their performance through specially planned remuneration systems such as monetary rewards and special bonus.

The underperformers must be identified and given opportunities for improvement. Administrators need to investigate the reasons for their low performance and help them succeed in meeting their challenges in school. If they continue to underperform, then they cannot be allowed to remain in the rapidly changing school environment. They must be made accountable for their performance in school and asked to either improve practice or make different career choices. The Malaysian education system does not allow the termination of teachers who perform poorly in school. It is

paradoxical that our education system expects nothing but excellence from the students but does very little to rectify deficiencies in teacher performance.

It is time for policy makers to think out of the box and design performance evaluation systems that are more suitable to the teaching profession in Malaysia. They have to move away from the traditional mode of evaluating all government employees, including teachers, using the same summative evaluation process. Teaching is a unique profession and its contributions towards the development of young minds in the schools are not explicit and cannot be measured easily. There are so many complexities that have to be resolved to determine whether teachers are providing the best learning opportunities to students in our schools. Therefore, the data gathered to measure teacher performance must be derived from various sources and must be based on evidence accrued from performance evaluation carried out throughout the year. There must also be differentiated evaluation for novice and experienced teachers to ensure fair judgment of teacher performance in school (Holland, 2005).

There is a need to design a more authentic school-based teacher evaluation system that not only evaluates performance but also has an in-built remediation plan to help teachers overcome their challenges in the classroom. It must include a plan to acknowledge teacher success in the classroom and reward deserving teachers to motivate high performing teachers in our school system. Furthermore, the absence of a teacher evaluation system based on proper standards can be rectified by aligning the teacher evaluation criteria in the present instruments to the newly formed Malaysian Teacher Standards by the Ministry of Education (*Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia*, 2009) This can help to identify pertinent teacher behaviour and competencies essential to promote quality teaching and learning in the classrooms.

Administrators should be given the authority to design appropriate teacher evaluation system to promote professionalism in their school. They can collaborate with

their teachers to develop a school-based teacher evaluation system that is meaningful and effective. The issue of decentralizing teacher evaluation practices from the Federal and state levels should be given due consideration to establish autonomous teacher evaluation systems in schools. This will make the present system less rigid, more transparent and provide opportunities for more innovative methods of teacher evaluation.

Before moving from a centralized to a decentralized system we must first ensure that the selection of administrators, especially the head teachers in schools is carried out carefully. It must be based on merit and their knowledge of administration rather than seniority or number of years they have been in government service. Upon selection, these administrators should be given adequate understanding of and training in performance evaluation so that the findings from their evaluation can be used for important personnel decision-making and to develop teacher professionalism in school. It is time for policy makers to realize that only the key players, that is, the administrators and teachers can develop an effective school-based teacher evaluation system. Therefore, more autonomy should be given to them to establish a system which is appropriate for their context.

### **Implications**

The findings of this study have implications in the area of policy and practice pertaining to school-based teacher evaluation in national primary schools. If the policy makers are sincere about improving the quality of teachers, then there must be proper policy guidelines on teacher evaluation in the school system. This will ensure a systematic evaluation system which will specify expectations, judge good teaching and assess overall quality of teacher performance in school. Policy makers should establish valid performance standards to ensure that teachers meet professional goals and strive to improve their performance in schools. Furthermore, policy formulations must be evidence-based and suit the local context where teachers are government employees who



have to abide by the regulations stated by the Public Service Department. Summative evaluation or performance appraisal for teachers must be designed to suit their role and responsibilities in school. Any policy formulated to establish a school-based teacher evaluation system should provide administrators the opportunity to design varied teacher evaluation systems at the school level to suit the needs of the teachers and students.

The implication for practice indicates that school administrators and teachers should play a more prominent role in performance evaluation in schools. Administrators must be consistent in their evaluation practice and measure teacher performance based on well-established standards. It is important that they as leaders should guide teachers to become effective individuals in schools. Teacher effectiveness will eventually have a significant effect on student achievement. The effective monitoring and evaluation of teacher quality can be carried out through well-planned school-based teacher evaluation system which encompass both formative and summative evaluation. It should be linked to overall performance management in the school. The teacher evaluation process in school should involve all teachers and not just selected teachers identified as not performing to expectations. The teachers will have more faith in the evaluation system only if all teachers are evaluated and given feedback to improve their performance.

There should be congruence in the purpose and methods of evaluation and the evaluation process should be transparent. The criteria used for evaluation should not be the same for all teachers. The criteria should not only encompass the teaching process in the classroom but also overall teacher behavior and competency. Multiple data sources should be used to obtain authentic information about how a teacher performs his or her duties in a school. Several other methods of evaluation besides classroom observation can be used for formative teacher evaluation in Malaysian national primary schools. The results of the evaluation must be made available to all parties concerned, especially the teachers who need to know how they can improve their performance. Effective

utilization of the evaluation findings is important to ensure that the school-based teacher evaluation system has an impact on teacher performance.

The design and development of a school-based teacher evaluation system should involve both administrators and teachers. Teachers must be part of the committee that decides on the method of evaluation, the frequency of evaluation and the utilization of evaluation findings for personnel decision-making and improving instructional practice. Otherwise the teacher evaluation system in school will be less effective. Teachers should play a crucial role in deciding how they should be evaluated in school. They can also keep records of their contributions in school in the form of a portfolio.

Teachers should also be encouraged to carry out self-evaluation to identify their weaknesses and strength in the classroom. They must be more reflective and try to solve problems within their classrooms. Reflection taught in teacher education programs can be emphasized further to produce reflective teachers who can meet challenges in their classroom. Teachers need to change from within to improve performance and provide better learning experiences for their students.

The recurrent theme throughout this study was the need to reengineer the whole school-based teacher evaluation system to meet the current challenges in improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools. This can only be done with the cooperation from the Ministry and state education authorities, administrators and teachers. There are many areas that need to be reorganized to improve the school-based teacher evaluation system in Malaysian national primary schools.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There were several limitations in conducting this study. This multiple case study only involved four national primary schools. There was no comparison of teacher evaluation practices between the different types of schools in Malaysia. The descriptions

of the teacher evaluation practices only depict what is happening in the national schools. Therefore it is not possible to generalize the findings of this study to all primary schools in Malaysia. This qualitative study only concentrated on the implementation process of the teacher evaluation system in the selected schools and it did not investigate the effects of the evaluation process on student outcome. The findings of the study cannot determine if the current teacher evaluation practices are affecting student learning in the primary schools. It is therefore recommended that further research be conducted in the area of teacher evaluation practices in Malaysia.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

There are several recommendations for further research in this section. This include a comparative study of teacher evaluation practices in the national, national-type and private schools to further understand the process of evaluating teacher performance in the local context. The study can investigate whether other types of schools have effective school-based teacher evaluation systems that contribute towards improved teacher performance and better student achievement in their schools. A comparative study of teacher evaluation practices in primary and secondary schools can also provide input for formulating policies on teacher evaluation in the local context. It can look at how principals in secondary schools deal with issues pertaining to measuring teacher quality in their schools.

An in-depth research could also be carried out to identify how school administrators can contribute towards promoting teacher professionalism in schools. Their roles as evaluators and supervisors in school must be thoroughly investigated to determine how they as instructional leaders can improve teacher performance in schools. Some of them lack knowledge on teacher evaluation practices in schools. Therefore the

research can also probe on how to improve administrators' role as evaluators in the school-based teacher evaluation system.

Teacher evaluation is linked to student achievement in schools, but there has been very little research on this aspect. Therefore a research to identify the effects of teacher evaluation practices on student achievement in Malaysian schools can yield results that can be used to promote student learning in schools. The research could explore the extent good practices in teacher evaluation can lead to better student achievement in public and private schools.

Evaluation instruments that are valid and reliable are prerequisite for the effective evaluation of teacher performance in schools. Therefore a study can be carried out to develop suitable criteria that can be used in instruments that measure teacher performance in schools. The Malaysian teacher standards have been recently introduced in the country and a study on how these standards contribute towards improving teacher performance in Malaysian schools.

There is also a need to carry out a study on developing a Malaysian teacher evaluation model that suits the current educational context. The current teacher evaluation system in most schools indicates that there is no appropriate teacher evaluation model that can combine the individual teacher's professional development goals together with the schools' goal as an educational organization. A study on this area can yield useful information on designing and implementing a Malaysian teacher evaluation model in schools.

### **Summary**

Teacher evaluation systems are perceived to have a strong impact on improving instructional practice and promote teacher quality in schools. But the effectiveness of the evaluation process is dependent on many factors. This includes clearly stated rationales

for evaluation; use of suitable evaluation methods; valid instruments with appropriate criteria; proper feedback for improvement; utilization of findings to foster teacher development; and the school administrator's commitment in implementing the evaluation process. If these factors are not given due consideration then the teacher evaluation system in schools become ineffective state mandated administrative function which creates dissent among teachers and does nothing to improve teacher quality in schools. It is time to restructure teacher evaluation practices and formulate policies that can help improve teacher quality in schools. It is hoped that the findings of this study will provoke serious thought on how policy makers and school authorities can collaborate to improve teacher evaluation practices and provide high quality education in Malaysian schools.