

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background of the Study**

The profound impact of education and its crucial role in developing a nation has been recognized globally. Access, equity and quality in providing education to all those who are eligible have been the main concern in many countries. While most developing countries are striving to ensure that all children have access to education, little attention has been given to the quality of teaching and learning that is provided in their respective schools. One of the six Education For All (EFA) goals adopted in Dakar in 2000 emphasized the need to provide quality education to all children, irrespective of where they live and what backgrounds they come from (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2005).

In most countries, schools are under immense pressure to justify that they are providing quality education to their students. The provision of quality education should begin at the primary level in order to embed a culture of excellence among our future generation. Though the school improvement movement which is aggressively promoted in western countries has not been fully introduced in Malaysia, the Ministry of Education is making a conscious effort to reform the education system (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2003). Every year the Ministry of Education receives a large allocation of funds from the government to implement its various policies in developing the education system (*Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia*, 2006). The underlying purpose of these policies was the provision of quality education for every student (Ministry of Education, 2005).

The six years of primary education in national primary schools aims to bring about the overall development of the students through the mastery of basic language skills, numbers and basic mathematical operations, as well as an awareness and

understanding of social norms and values (Ministry of Education, 2001). The development of study skills and thinking skills at this stage will also ensure that the students are well prepared to undertake more challenging skills at the secondary level. However, achievement tests revealed deficient learning level among some of the students in our primary schools.

Having implemented various policies to improve the education system it was found that there were students who were illiterate and innumerate even after completing six years of primary education (New Sunday Times, February 12 2006, p.9). Some of these young children dropped out of school because they had not mastered the 3R's (Reading, wRiting and aRithmetic). Others who completed primary education and moved on to secondary schools were unable to cope with their studies due to lack of basic skills. Thus, there was a need to evaluate the teaching and learning process that took place in the primary school. The evaluation process had to provide comprehensive feedback on how teachers were improving student learning in schools. The Ministry of Education's Development Plan (from 2001 to 2010) indicates that one of the ways to improve the quality of teaching and learning is by "strengthening the monitoring and supervision mechanisms of teaching and learning" in schools (Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 2-13).

According to Darling-Hammond (1990, p.18), the public "has come to believe that the key to educational improvement lies as much in upgrading the quality of teachers as in revamping school programs and curricula." The quality of the instructional process in the classrooms and those employed to deliver it are the main determinants of the quality of education provided in most schools (Duke, 1995; Hattie, 2003). Any policy aimed at improving the quality of education in these schools cannot choose to ignore the fact that teachers play a fundamental role in improving students' cognitive development and also in promoting values and attitudes that help mould these students into

responsible human beings (Ministry of Education,1997). The policy makers in Malaysia have stressed that “teachers are the front-liners responsible for any success to be achieved and it takes quality teachers to produce quality students” (Ministry of Education, 2005, p.34).

There is a widely held belief that teacher quality plays a vital part in improving the overall quality of education. Stufflebeam (2003, p.603) asserts that the performance of teachers can “heavily influence” student learning. Chapman and Adams (2002, p.17) explain that “although the concept of quality teaching remains elusive, teachers and their behavior in the classroom are at times considered convenient indicators of school quality and very frequently are at the center of attempts at quality improvement”. Teachers must be responsible for the quality of instruction they provide to their students. Research consistently show that highly competent teachers lead to higher student achievement (Brophy & Good, 1986; Hattie, 2003; Wang, Haertal & Walberg, 1993).

Teachers need to constantly improve their instruction in the classroom because teacher quality has a greater effect on overall student achievement compared to any other school-based variable (Darling-Hammond & Loewenberg, 1998). According to Holly (1989), in order to improve the quality of schooling, there must be a conscious effort to enhance the quality of support provided to teachers. The support provided by school administrators would ensure that teacher quality was maintained and further enhanced in schools. Teachers needed continuous support through monitoring, supervision, evaluation and professional development to improve their instruction in the classroom (Glickman, Gordon & Gordon, 2004). It has been agreed that teachers’ continuing education could also be supported by supervision and evaluation (Glanz & Sullivan, 2000; Stake, 1989). There is an emergent perspective that effective implementation of the teacher evaluation process can lead to teacher growth and improved teacher practice (Pearlman & Tannenbaum, 2003). Based on this perspective, the feedback provided by

evaluators could help teachers upgrade their knowledge base, expand their teaching repertoires and develop professionally.

Stake (1989) believed that teachers were largely accountable for the continuing improvement of instruction and administrators were supposed to encourage and assist in this improvement. The formal evaluation carried out by school administrators and other authorities can provide teachers with guidance for improvement and enhance their ability to make professional decisions and judgments (Holly, 1989; Marshall, 2005). Hence teachers must be evaluated regularly and given feedback on how they can improve their instructional practice.

Peterson (2000, p.32) asserts that “evaluation of quality teaching calls for high levels of professional judgments”. It is not just a set of procedures carried out based on standard guidelines given to evaluators. Teacher evaluation practices must be based on well-thought out rationales, which will benefit the individual and the organization. One of the reasons given for conducting teacher evaluation is “to improve the quality of teaching and learning for all learners within the education system” (Hancock & Settle, 1990, p.4). Other purposes for teacher evaluation include professional growth, merit pay, improving professionalism and accountability (Duke, 1995; Peterson, 2000). According to Barrett (1986), the teaching profession regards evaluation as an essential aspect of professional development and the administration uses evaluation results in accountability debates. Peterson (2000) suggests that teacher evaluation can also be carried out to provide reassurance to stakeholders and the public that good work is being implemented; to identify good teaching practices and to obtain credible data to plan good in-service and pre-service training.

Previously, teacher evaluation was given very little attention because enhancing teacher quality was not seen as a critical aspect of improving the overall quality of education (Darling-Hammond, 1990). But now, it is believed that when a teacher

evaluation system is well-designed and carried out systematically, it has the capacity to steer professional and personal growth, enhance professional practice, contribute towards personnel decision making and impact motivation among teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Pearlman & Tannenbaum, 2003).

An array of formative and summative evaluation can result in positive reinforcement and impact teacher practice in our schools. Teacher evaluation can also promote professional development and encourage continuous learning through reflection (Stake, 1989). When evaluation is carried out for the purpose of professional development it can lead the way for competent teachers to develop their potential in more meaningful ways (Duke, 1995). In order to be consistent with principles of professional development, the evaluation process should be made as a tool for improvement rather than just a measure of competence (Glickman et al., 2004). Therefore, an effective teacher evaluation system must be put in order for teachers to enhance their performance and promote professional practice. Furthermore, “teacher evaluation is relevant to every segment of the educational system, and society at large has an intense interest in how it is carried out and what its impact on education and on individuals’ lives will be” (Dwyer & Stufflebeam, 1996, p.768).

A review of the literature indicated that the benefits of teacher evaluation in promoting good work practices in schools have rarely been explored in Malaysia (Chan, 1994). The search for valid relationship between current teacher evaluation practices and instructional improvement in primary schools had proven to be futile too. Furthermore, little was known about how teacher evaluation practices had contributed towards promoting professional development among teachers in national primary schools.

In Malaysia supervision is conducted based on the requirements of the Professional Circular No. 3/1987 (*Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia*, 1987). The circular states that principals/headmasters, who are professional leaders in schools, must

supervise the teaching and learning process in the classroom. They are required to carry out planned, systematic supervision of all teachers to provide professional assistance to enhance teaching and learning in schools. The circular also states that the information gathered from supervision can be used for evaluating teachers for other purposes. Formative evaluation is carried out to judge teacher performance in the classroom and the data is used to supervise the teachers in school.

Besides supervision, school administrators carry out self-assessment of their schools to meet requirements stipulated by the Federal Inspectorate of Schools. The teaching and learning process is a major element in the instrument used to carry out the self-assessment. There are various elements that are evaluated in this self-assessment process and the evaluation of teaching and learning in the classroom has been given priority. The evaluation of the teaching component ensures that an adequate standard of teaching and learning is being practiced in the classroom. The self-assessment process carried out by the administrators is based on the Malaysian School Education Quality Standard, 2004 (*Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2004*). The results of the self-assessment not only provide information regarding the overall performance of the school, but also give feedback on teacher performance in the classroom.

Most schools carry out teacher evaluation practices just to meet the mandated requirement, resulting in teachers having very little faith in the feedback for teacher improvement (Chan, 1994). In Malaysian primary schools, summative teacher evaluation practices are carried out by school authorities based on directives from the Ministry of Education. Teachers are appraised by school administrators at the end of every year to make decisions about merit pay and promotion (Abdul Aziz, 1990; Mohd Zakaria, 2002). The summative evaluation consists of an administrator ratings system, which involves two evaluators. The senior assistant is the first evaluator and the head teacher the second.

The evaluation is based on teacher competence, behavior and attitude and the ratings given indicate the teacher's overall performance for the whole year.

Another form of performance evaluation requires teachers to sit for tests or courses to determine their level of competency. The results of these tests or courses are used to determine promotion to the next level in the administrative structure of the government system. This evaluation is not part of the school-based teacher evaluation system and it is carried out by the Competency Division in the Ministry of Education.

Even though there were various methods of evaluating teachers within the school system in Malaysia, there was very little evidence to indicate a clearly defined school-based teacher evaluation system which was comprehensive, as well as effective in improving teacher performance in schools. There was still a lack of knowledge on the rationale for teacher evaluation, the appropriate methods and criteria used for collecting data on teacher performance and finally, whether the intended purpose of the evaluation process was achieved. There was also very little information on how teachers felt about being evaluated and their overall perspective of the performance evaluation practices in schools.

The search for a valid relationship between current school-based teacher evaluation practices and instructional improvement in primary schools had proven to be futile. Therefore it was timely to conduct a study of the teacher evaluation practices in schools to further understand the complexities involved in assessing teacher performance and promoting teacher development in schools. The ultimate aim of improving student learning can only be achieved by addressing the need for quality improvement in the teaching and learning process in school. This study examined how the desired results of the teacher evaluation process were achieved in Malaysian primary schools. As Darling-Hammond (1990, p.17) said, it is time for educators to "consider how evaluation affects teaching performance, rather than whether or not evaluation will affect it."

### **Statement of the Problem**

The evaluation and improvement of teaching has become a major issue in many countries. Medley (1987, p.169) stated that any attempts to enhance the quality of teaching will depend "... on the availability of accurate, detailed, and objective evaluations of teaching". In the local context the teacher evaluation practices were not explicitly displayed in most schools. In certain situations only summative teacher evaluation was carried out formally and formative evaluation consisted of a few brief visits to the classroom. The question that remained at the back of everyone's mind was how accurately these brief observations represented teacher competency in the classroom.

There was a need to evaluate how teachers improved instructional practice in order to bring about positive impact in their classrooms. The inability to cope with the ever-changing scenario in the school system could result in teachers who are ineffective and unable to bring about instructional improvement. Therefore, it is imperative that the school administrators ensure that there is a proper mechanism to evaluate teacher performance and provide feedback to institute change in teacher competence, behavior and attitude according to the needs of the education system.

Peterson (2000, p.36) explains that teachers, compared to other professionals, need to be evaluated more frequently because their "clients are young and non-voluntary" and teachers do not have what other professionals have, that is, "a strong evaluation mechanism in return clientele". Teachers are given new groups of students to teach every year regardless of how well they have taught the previous year. The teacher evaluation system should provide an insight on how teachers, as professionals, can take note of their shortcomings and find ways to improve them. The evaluation practice should also focus on organizing development activities to help teachers improve their performance (Goe & Little, 2008; Natriello, 1990; Peterson, 2000). Teachers need to



reflect upon their teaching, find areas they need to improve in and take the appropriate steps to bring about changes in their classroom.

In the Malaysian education system, most primary school teachers attend a three-year teacher training program and obtain a teaching diploma before being placed in schools all over the country to educate students. Previously, some of the teachers had undergone a three-year certificate program before being placed in schools. The latest trend is to hire graduate teachers in primary schools and the policy states that by the year 2010 fifty per cent of the teachers will be degree holders. Hence, the primary schools have a mixture of teachers with diverse entry qualifications. These teachers are entrusted with the responsibility of providing a quality education to students in primary schools. It is quite clear that there is a need for proper mechanisms to ensure that these different groups of teachers meet basic performance standards, which will ultimately result in better learning for students in school.

There is a need for an evaluation system which can provide feedback to help teachers enhance their performance in schools. Teachers, especially beginners, need regular feedback about their performance to rectify their weaknesses and enhance their strengths in order to provide the best education possible for their students. But in some schools, beginners are not evaluated by their school administrators and thus they have no chance of knowing how well they are performing and how they can improve their performance. These teachers need reassurance that they are performing their jobs well and that they are able to meet the needs of their students (Natriello, 1990; Peterson, 1990). Hence, the teacher evaluation system plays a crucial role in providing detailed information on how a teacher is performing his or her duties.

However, most current teacher evaluation practices in schools have created a situation in which teachers become more defensive about their weaknesses (Haefele, 1992), and have very little faith in the evaluation process (Gitlin & Smyth, 1990).

Research indicates that teachers in Malaysia are dissatisfied with both the formative and summative evaluation by administrators in their respective schools (Abdul Aziz, 1990; Chan, 1994; Chan, 1997; Mohd Zakaria, 2002). There is much discontent with the methods and criteria used for evaluation (Chan, 1994). However, the reasons for this discontent have not been explored in depth over the years. The validity and reliability of the methods and criteria used has also been a matter of concern among educators.

Generally, teachers consider evaluation an intrusion and believe that they do not gain anything from the process (Smith, 2001). The current teacher evaluation system is based heavily on a single administrator report and not on decisions based on variable data sources (Peterson, 2000). This can lead to distorted perceptions and bias on the part of the evaluator. Such a situation increases frustration among teachers and eventually removes the desire to improve practice (Chan, 1994).

If it is agreed that teachers are dissatisfied with the teacher evaluation process, then it is necessary to understand why they have developed such beliefs. There is still a lack of information on why administrators and teachers in Malaysia do not give priority to teacher evaluation practices and what aspects of the process need to be changed for it to be more beneficial to the individuals and the school as a learning organization.

Little is known about how teachers in Malaysian national primary schools would like to modify the current system of evaluating their performance in school. Hence, it was necessary to investigate how teachers could be an important part of the developmental process that affects their work performance. Teachers should be considered the main focus of the evaluation process and given an opportunity to be involved in their own evaluation and also in the evaluation of their peers (Peterson, 2000).

School-based teacher evaluation practices usually reflect both formative evaluation, which assists teachers to improve, and summative evaluation, which

determines competence, promotion and salary benefits. Teacher evaluation carried out in the national primary schools should provide feedback to help teachers upgrade their content knowledge, pedagogical skills, as well as classroom management practices, and not just point out their weaknesses. However, the usual practice has been to focus on what is wrong without asking what is right. It is important to remember that evaluators in schools should look at the overall performance of the teacher and seek ways to improve the quality of instructional practice in schools. As Rogers and Freiberg (1994, p.4) point out, "... by looking for the pathologies in our world, we miss the opportunities to look and learn from our successes".

Those involved in teacher evaluation should strive to use the latest techniques that are both reliable and valid to assess teacher performance, as well as document good teacher practices in schools (Peterson, 2000; Toch & Rothman, 2008). There is a need to discover the attributes of good teacher evaluation practices, especially appropriate methods that provide reliable and valid data. Furthermore, in order to develop an effective teacher evaluation system that works, it is essential to analyze current issues and challenges in the existing system and understand how it affects teacher performance in school. This could eventually help policy makers and school authorities improve the school-based teacher evaluation practices and monitor teacher performance in schools.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate how administrators in national primary schools carried out teacher evaluation practices and to ascertain the influence of the evaluation process on teacher performance. The process of inquiry was aimed at unearthing the underlying reasons for evaluating teachers in the local context and to examine in depth the methods employed to evaluate teacher performance during the formative and summative evaluation process. The concern was whether teachers were

evaluated on the basis of data obtained from various sources, or solely one source. There was a need to identify the methods used in the school-based teacher evaluation system to determine if the intended purpose of the evaluation process was achieved. The instruments and criteria used in each method were also investigated thoroughly to determine if they were reliable and valid in measuring teacher performance in the national primary schools. The study also aspired to discover how school administrators utilized the evaluation findings to promote teacher development in schools. Finally, the study explored the contextual factors that affected the implementation of the school-based teacher evaluation practices to provide recommendations for further improvement of teacher evaluation practices in Malaysian national primary schools.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions provided a framework to conduct the inquiry in this study.

The three main research questions are:

1. What is the purpose of teacher evaluation in national primary schools?
2. How is school-based teacher evaluation carried out in national primary schools?
  - a. What are the administrators' perspectives on the implementation of the school-based teacher evaluation practices?
  - b. What are the teachers' perspectives on the implementation of the school-based teacher evaluation practices?
3. What are the contextual factors that affect the implementation of the school-based teacher evaluation practices in national primary schools?

### **Conceptual Framework of the Study**

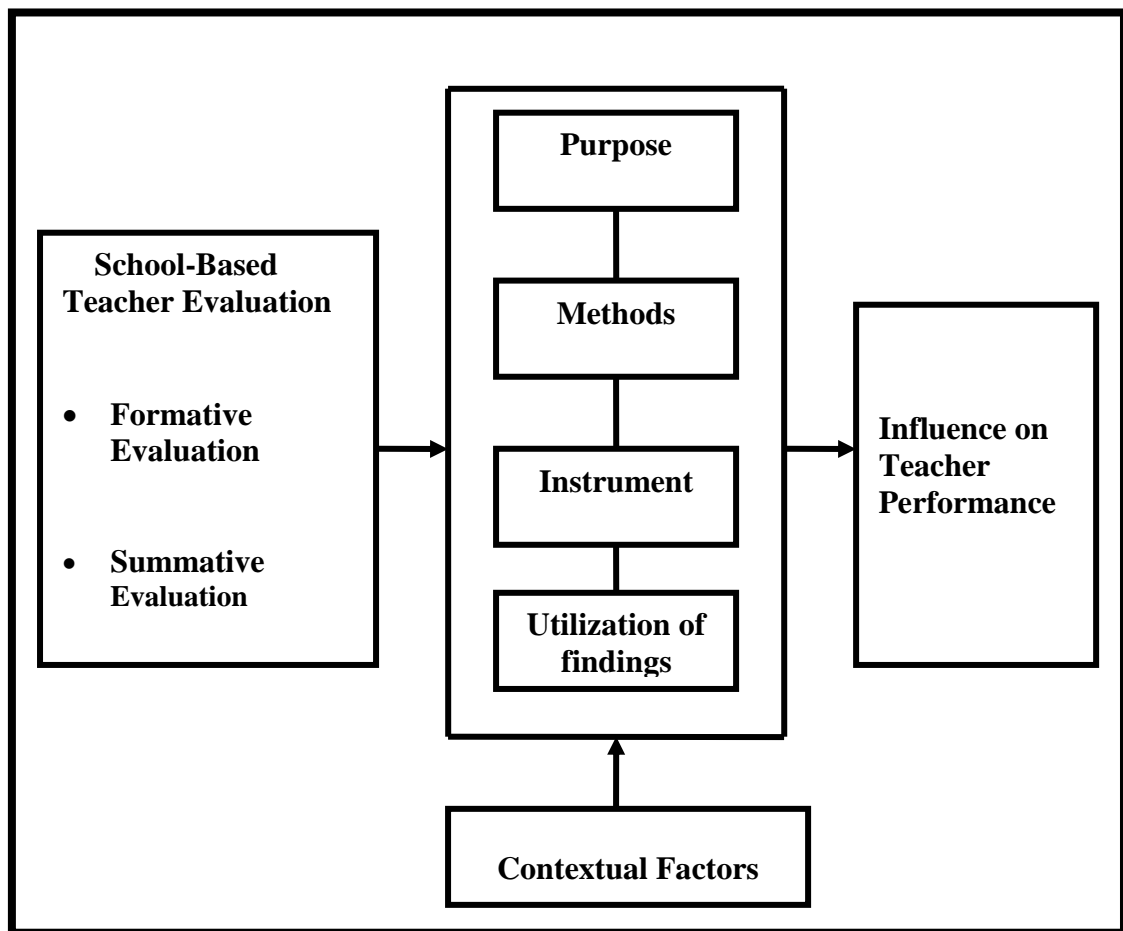
Teacher evaluation is carried out at various stages in a teacher's career. A framework described by Dwyer and Stufflebeam (1996) gives an overview of teacher evaluation practices and decisions made at various stages such as, teacher preparation, licensing, employment and for professional development. However, the conceptual framework for this study only examined teacher evaluation carried out at the employment and professional development stages in the local context. Teacher evaluation carried out at the employment stage refers to evaluation activities carried out from the time a teacher had been appointed till he or she left the profession. This included evaluation for the purpose of making personnel decisions. The professional development stage covered the evaluation of teachers to determine the provision of continuous education opportunities (Dwyer & Stufflebeam, 1996).

The review of the literature indicates that there are several models that can be used to evaluate teachers in schools. The models referred to in this framework include models oriented to "instructional improvement", "professional accountability and development" and "administrative supervision" (Dwyer & Stufflebeam, 1996, p.774). The instructional improvement model explains that regular classroom observation with constructive feedback can help teachers improve teaching and learning in the classroom. The purpose of the evaluation is to ensure that administrators can help teachers improve their teaching practice by reflecting on what they do in the classroom. Professional development programmes based on the findings of the classroom observation can impact professional practice in school. Teacher evaluation models based on professional accountability require teachers to improve instructional practice continuously so that they can provide better service to students. Teachers are held accountable for the quality of instruction provided and therefore they have to provide evidence of their competency in the classroom. The administrative supervision model indicates that supervision can be

used as a strategy to improve teacher performance in school. School administrators must guide teachers on meeting the expectations of the curriculum and provide the necessary support system to develop teacher professionalism (Dwyer & Stufflebeam, 1996). This study examined how the school-based teacher evaluation practices in Malaysian primary schools incorporated the models discussed above.

The main concepts that outlined the conceptual framework were based on the amalgamation of important aspects of teacher evaluation obtained from the models in the literature and current practices in the local context. The conceptual framework describes the interactions of various factors that could affect the effective implementation of a school-based teacher evaluation system. The intent of this qualitative multiple case study was to carry out an in-depth investigation of the implementation of the school-based teacher evaluation practices and determine how the evaluation process influenced teacher performance in schools. The influence on teacher performance refers to how teacher evaluation practices improved instructional practice, rectified deficiencies in performance, identified areas of growth and affected personnel decisions making.

Several key concepts which were incorporated into the conceptual framework include the purpose of evaluation, methods of evaluation, instruments used and the utilization of evaluation findings. The contextual factors that affect the implementation of teacher evaluation practices were also given due consideration when implementing the evaluation system. The main concepts have been noted as important factors that determine the outcome of the teacher evaluation process. But so far, very little attention has been given to the combined outcomes of their interaction as part of a system which evaluates teachers in schools (Darling-Hammond, 1990). The core concepts of the teacher evaluation process are interconnected and they must synchronize in order to produce an effective teacher evaluation system in school. Figure 1.1 indicates the main concepts in the conceptual framework of this study.



*Figure 1.1.* Conceptual Framework of the Study

The key concepts, that is, the purpose of evaluation, methods of evaluation, instruments used and the utilization of evaluation findings are explained further to provide a clear understanding of the conceptual framework.

### *Purpose of Evaluation*

The purpose of teacher evaluation in schools must be defined clearly prior to establishing a comprehensive school-based teacher evaluation system. The purpose, which indicates the reasons for carrying out teacher evaluation, is an integral part of the evaluation process. It determines the overall effects of the evaluation process (Dwyer & Stufflebeam, 1996; Natriello, 1990) Teacher evaluation serves many purposes in the

school system. It can help teachers enhance their performance or maintain good performance. Traditional teacher evaluation is carried out as an accountability measure. Within this general purposes lies several specific purposes such as assisting beginning teachers; providing teacher reassurance; monitoring teacher performance; improving instructional practice; promoting professionalism of teachers and planning professional development (Duke & Stiggins, 1990; Natriello, 1990; Duke, 1995; Dwyer & Stufflebeam, 1996; Peterson, 2000). New teacher evaluation systems connect teacher performance to student learning and administrators focus on improving the various domains of teaching (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Generally, the rationale for carrying out the teacher evaluation practice has linkages with the methods used and the effects on teachers in the local context. The extent to which the intended purposes are achieved depends on the school administrators. They must use appropriate methods which match the purpose of the evaluation process.

### *Methods of Evaluation*

The body of research about methods of evaluation indicates that the types of methods used to evaluate teachers have increased over the years (Glanz & Sullivan, 2000; Glass, 1990; Peterson, 2000; Stodolsky, 1990). The various methods include classroom observation, peer review, self-evaluation, teacher competence test, student rating, student achievement tests, teacher portfolio and principal ratings. All these methods have their strengths and limitations (Glanz & Sullivan 2000; Stodolsky, 1990). The use of a set of methods that blend with each other provides the best data on teacher performance and will result in more positive outcomes for the evaluation process (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Peterson, 2000; Stodolsky, 1990; Toch & Rothman, 2008). The sparse information on the methods of teacher evaluation in the local context called for an in-depth investigation into the current methods used for teacher evaluation in



schools. Other interacting factors such as the validity of the instruments and the criteria used to determine teacher competency also affect the final outcome of the teacher evaluation process in school. The instruments and criteria used must tie in with the purpose and method of evaluation.

### ***Evaluation Instruments***

The instrument and criteria used for formative teacher evaluation have been a matter of contention because it is not easy to agree upon the concept of what represents good or effective teaching (Stodolsky, 1990). The appropriateness of the instrument and criteria used for classroom performance is always questionable if they fail to measure the various aspects of teaching. Besides this, the controversy over the use of instruments and criteria for the annual teacher appraisals has resulted in divergent views about the assessment of teacher performance in schools. Some instruments have rating scales or checklists, while others have sections for more narrative comments about the teachers' achievements. It is imperative that the instruments for teacher evaluation must be selected with care and they should possess high levels of reliability and validity.

### ***Utilization of Evaluation Findings***

How administrators utilize the evaluation findings in school is important because it determines whether the evaluation process was carried out to promote teacher development, identify teacher deficiencies or merely an administrative process. General disenchantment with teacher evaluation system was due to the inappropriate use of the findings, which affected teacher morale and motivation to work. Teacher evaluation practices can produce wide-ranging effects, which may or may not reflect the purpose they were intended for (Marshall, 2005; Natriello, 1990). Evaluation findings can provide positive feedback on teaching strategies in the classroom and reassure these

teachers that they are meeting the requirements of their profession (Peterson, 1990). Teachers and evaluators can identify areas that need strengthening and plan strategies to yield desired outcomes. Teacher evaluation will yield more positive effects if it results in teachers having an opportunity to plan their career development and be part of a system that facilitates professional growth.

The main concepts discussed above must be given due considerations when implementing a school-based teacher evaluation system. If all the key concepts complement each other then the teacher evaluation process in schools will positively influence teacher performance. It will encourage instructional improvement, professional growth and develop professionalism among the teachers.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study fulfilled the need to gather substantial empirical data for the purpose of building knowledge on school-based teacher evaluation practices in the Malaysian national primary schools. The findings of this study offered evidence of how teacher evaluation was implemented and its influence on teacher performance in school. The information gathered from this study provides a comprehensive view of the existing formative and summative teacher evaluation practices in selected national primary schools.

The findings of the study can create awareness among policy makers on the need for clear policy statements on designing effective school-based teacher evaluation systems which can enhance teacher performance and improve student achievement in schools. Furthermore, the findings have indicated that the ineffective use of the evaluation findings have resulted in deficiency in developing teacher professionalism in schools. The findings also showed that administrators have a crucial role to play in ensuring the effective implementation of teacher evaluation practices in schools. The

policy makers are provided with recommendations on how to promote teacher growth which can eventually improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools. The study also provided information on areas of concern in summative teacher evaluation practices and what should be done to make it more effective for personnel decision-making.

The case-study approach used to gain a thorough understanding of teachers' perspectives on evaluation practices provided an opportunity to learn from those directly involved in and affected by the evaluation process. This is a significant contribution of this study because it has highlighted the need for more teacher involvement in developing teacher evaluation systems in schools. Lastly, most of the current literature on teacher evaluation gave the Western perspective of this phenomenon and very little was known of what was happening in the Malaysian context. It is believed that the findings of this study can provide a Malaysian perspective on how school-based teacher evaluation practices are implemented in a highly centralized education system. The insights from this study can contribute towards developing a Malaysian teacher evaluation model that can assess the abilities of teachers and provide accurate data that can be used for professional development and personnel decision making in schools. This will eventually pave the way towards improving teacher quality in Malaysian schools.

### **Definition of Terms**

The definition of terms used in this study is given below to avoid any confusion concerning the terminology used and to explain what the researcher means by these terms. These definitions have been adapted from various other sources.

#### **School-based Teacher Evaluation**

School-based teacher evaluation refers to the formal, systematic evaluation of a teacher's performance in relation to his/her defined professional role and responsibilities in a

school. It includes both formative and summative evaluation and it is an internal practice carried out by evaluators who are usually the school administrators or persons authorized by the head teacher (Chan, 1994). It does not include performance evaluation carried out by external agencies such as, the Competency Division, Federal Inspectorate of Schools, State Education Department or the District Education Office.

### **Teacher Evaluation Practices**

In this study teacher evaluation practices encompass the purpose of evaluation, the methods used to evaluate the teachers, the instrument used in the evaluation process and the utilization of evaluation findings.

### **Formative Teacher Evaluation**

Evaluation carried out throughout the year for the purpose of improving performance and planning appropriate professional development activities (Scriven, 1981).

### **Summative Teacher Evaluation**

Evaluation conducted once a year for the purpose of making decisions about promotion, merit pay, rewards and financial inducements for teachers (Scriven, 1981). In the Malaysian context the summative evaluation refers to the mandated performance appraisal carried out by school authorities at the end of every year. It is based on the circular issued by the Public Service Department.

### **Instructional Practice**

The act of teaching which is carried out in the classroom with the intention of bringing about the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and other abilities. It covers various aspects of teaching, such as, planning, delivery and assessment in the classroom.

**Teacher Performance**

It refers to how a teacher uses his/her competence, abilities and talents to perform work in schools. It is also a product of the interaction between certain teacher characteristics and the teaching situation (Medley, 1987).

**Teacher Competence**

A set of knowledge, skill, ability, personal quality, experience, beliefs and other characteristics that a teacher possesses and brings to the teaching situation (Medley, 1987).

**National Primary School**

Public primary school that provides six years of education to children who start schooling at seven years old. The Malay language is the main medium of instruction and English language is taught as a second language in this school.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter examined the background of the study and the problem that was addressed in the inquiry. It also discussed the purpose of the study, research questions, conceptual framework, significance of the study and definition of terms used in the study. The following chapter will concentrate on the review of literature pertaining to the study. It will discuss the main concepts of the study and the findings of other researchers in the area of teacher evaluation.