

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SCHOOL FACTORS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the effect of school factors on the academic achievement of the PTSSR pupils in the 1991 UPSR examination. School factors such as teachers' professional and academic qualifications, teachers' experience, the workload of teachers and classroom instruction are discussed. Besides quantitative data from questionnaires, qualitative data was obtained by means of interviews with the headmaster, teachers and parents, and classroom observations.

#### **5.2. Teachers' Professional and Academic Qualification**

The profile of the teachers of PTSSR is given in Table 5.1. Teacher characteristics such as sex, age, academic qualifications, teaching experience and professional qualifications are discussed.

Table 5.1  
Profile of PTSSR Teachers, 1991

Teacher	Characteristics	Number of Teachers	Percentage of Teachers
Sex	Male	16	37.3
	Female	27	62.7
Age	Below 40 years	34	78.6
	Above 40 years	9	21.4
Academic Qualification	SRP	1	2.3
	SPM	37	86.1
	STPM	4	9.3
	University	1	2.3
Number of year served	Less than 3 years	18	41.9
	4 to 15 years	17	39.5
	More than 15 years	8	18.6
Professional Training	College-Trained	27	62.7
	Untrained	16	37.3

Source: Headmaster Questionnaire (Appendix D)

### **5.2.1 Teachers' Professional Qualifications**

There are 43 teachers; 16 males and 27 females. Of the 43 teachers, 27 or 62.7% are college-trained teachers and 37.3% are untrained. At the national level, 1737 or 28.6% of the 6073 Tamil teachers, are untrained (Marimuthu 1992). Thus, the PTSSR reflects the national situation as far as Tamil school teachers are concerned.

Teachers are expected to be instructional experts, classroom managers and, to some extent, educational psychologists. Many kinds of skills must be mastered to carry out these roles effectively (Moore, 1995). Without these skills, teachers are unable to maximize their teaching effectiveness.

### **5.2.2. Teachers' Academic Qualification**

A total of 86.1% of the teachers in PTSSR have SPM qualifications (37 out of 43); 4 or 9.3% have STPM qualifications and one each (2.3%) with SRP and university qualifications. Thus, on average, teachers have a minimum of Form 5 qualifications.

### 5.3 Teachers' Experience

As shown in Table 5.1, 78.6% of the teachers are below 40 years in age. Only 21.4% of them are in the 41-55 age group. From the above information, we can conclude that the PTSSR teachers are young. As for experience, 18 or 41.9% of the teachers have less than 3 years of teaching experience while 17 or 39.5% have taught between 4-15 years. Only 8 or 18.6% of the teaching staff have taught for more than 15 years. Thus, we can say that 81.4% of the teachers possess less than 15 years of teaching experience.

### 5.4 Workload

Six teachers or 14.0% of the staff who are teaching UPSR subjects have been given 26-30 periods per week. It appears that 83.3% of the teachers are of the opinion that their workload is heavy. As they are teaching UPSR examination classes, they tend to spend more time in marking pupils' exercise books. Teachers' who are teaching the Tamil Language and Bahasa Malaysia have to mark compositions which are time consuming. Besides the actual teaching periods, they have other

responsibilities such as being head of subjects, secretary and treasurer of the PTA, sports secretary, and co-curricular activity organisers. Teachers indicated that they are undergoing stress as a result of the demands made upon them. The main sources of dissatisfaction are excessive clerical work, poor teachers' salaries, poor human relations among staff, lack of buildings and equipment, and the feeling of inadequacy. Teachers' view of stress concurs with the findings of Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1977) and Kyriacou (1992). The teachers are of the opinion that teacher stress could be one of the reasons for the poor quality of teaching and is associated negatively with pupils' academic achievement.

Researchers have concluded that teacher stress is not a temporary problem that will disappear quickly but rather a profound problem that must be attended to if the quality of education is to be substantially improved. The causes of teacher stress are complex and the problems merit serious consideration.

### 5.5 Classroom Instruction

'Teaching' as practised by teachers in a school setting is a process in which the teacher establishes mediating conditions that are designed to achieve the desired learner outcomes. Learning occurs when student behaviour is changed in the direction of the stated goals and objectives. The 'mediating conditions' include the teacher's behaviour as well as the appropriate use of books and other media, the development of a nurturing classroom environment, and learning activities that provide children with a maximum opportunity to learn (Jarolimek and Foster, 1989 and Moore, 1995).

Qualitative data of the UPSR classroom instruction in the PTSSR were obtained by means of classroom observation and interviews with the teachers. A total of 15 classroom observations was made over a period of three weeks. The observations relate to the teaching of the Tamil Language (7 lessons), Bahasa Malaysia (2 lessons), English Language (2 lessons) and Mathematics (4 lessons). Unstructured interviews were carried out with the teachers.

Although approaches to teaching are varied (Good and Brophy, 1991; Slavin, 1991; Eggen & Kauchak, 1992 and Moore, 1995), there is general agreement among researchers and teachers as to the characteristics of effective instruction. In this study, the Faculty of Education, University Malaya teaching practice evaluation form was used to evaluate teaching learning process in the classrooms. The outcome of the classroom observations is reflected below.

#### **5.5.1 Instructional Planning Stage**

Planning is a central skill for teachers. The basic planning process involves the setting of goals, finding out where pupils are in relation to these goals; devising some instructional procedures to move pupils toward the goals, and determining whether the procedures are effective and efficient.

Although the basic planning process is followed by the teachers, yet the different components are not given equal emphasis by them. One of the main reason is that they have become so familiar with the

planning process that it does not merit too much of their attention. Research indicates that teachers stop writing objectives and detail plans once they get into the field and begin working with public school pupils (Slavin, 1991, Good and Brophy, 1991 and Eggen and Kauchak, 1992).

Nevertheless, it was noted that the choice of contents, audio-visual aids, and the sequencing of the lessons are poorly organised and rather ineffective. During the interview, the teachers indicated that their priority was to finish the syllabus so that the pupils could sit for the UPSR examination. Furthermore, all the teachers agreed that they needed more guidance in improving lesson planning so that teaching could become more effective.

#### **5.5.2 Classroom Instruction**

The principal task at the beginning of a lesson is to establish an attitude or mental set in students so that they can settle down to work. Of the teachers



observed, most of them started their lessons by asking one or two 'what' questions. Some of them used pictures to begin their lessons. On the whole, introduction to their lessons were neither very effective nor very interesting.

Careful presentation is critical to student learning and researchers have found that effective teachers are thorough, provide many examples, give additional explanations when needed, and check for students' understanding (Jarolimek and Foster, 1989 and Good and Brophy, 1991). During the period of observation, 83.3% of the teachers spent hardly any time on careful presentation. Instead they moved on very quickly to student work. Consequently, student learning was less successful and often the teachers had to help individual students to correct misconceptions.

The purpose of using multimedia and a wide range of learning activities is to enable learners to achieve the objectives of instruction more easily and effectively. Children do not learn in the same way. Some are comfortable using printed materials while other are more visual-oriented. Still, others need to

manipulate objects in order to understand relationships. The use of different media makes it possible to accommodate the various learning styles of children (Jalolimek and Foster, 1989).

It is observed that teaching aids used were mainly books, chalkboard, pictures and the radio. It should be noted that these aids are readily available and therefore do not need much preparation on the part of teachers. Thus, it can be assumed that teachers do not make much of an effort in preparing teaching aids for the UPSR subjects that they are teaching. In fact, classroom observation showed that teachers make little effort to use various teaching aids during classroom instruction. Of the 6 teachers observed, 66.7% of them did not use teaching resources effectively. As such, resources did not promote effective learning .

It appears that the teaching approaches used in the school are quite inappropriate for the needs and the capabilities of the pupils from low-income families. Classroom observation of the Bahasa Malaysia

teacher revealed that she was insensitive to pupils' needs and abilities. The same teaching material and strategies were used in two different classes although the pupils' abilities were very different. As indicated by Wringe (1994), a lesson prepared for one particular group of pupils may often be unsuccessful when offered to another groups of pupils without modifications. The teaching approach in PTSSR is examination and facts-oriented, and seldom oriented to individual needs of pupils. Such a situation can have a negative effect on pupils' academic performance.

Instructions seem to be largely through the use of the traditional 'chalk-talk' method rather than well-developed teaching aids. Also teaching approaches used in the classrooms are seldom geared towards helping the children to realise their potentials. Clearly, the potential of the children to do well academically is not perceived by the teachers themselves. This observation is similar to the findings of the Curriculum Development Centre (1991) and the Federal Inspectorate (1992) of the Ministry of Education.

Questioning is an important skill in effective teaching. A teacher skilled in questioning can stimulate thought, help students form relationships, reinforce basic skills, promote success, motivate shy pupils, recapture the attention of those who have drifted off, and enhance self-esteem (Jarolimek and Foster 1989, Eggen and Kauchak, 1992 and Moore, 1995)

Research indicates that generally, a large number of questions results in high levels of pupil involvement which, in turn enhances achievement (Good and Brophy 1991 and Langrehr, 1993). In the process of learning, information must be processed to move it from 'working memory' to 'long-term memory'. Processing requires active involvement which utilises elaboration, repetition, review and rehearsal. Questions promote these processes by involving pupils actively in their lessons.

Besides, questioning provides a foundation for other essential teaching skills. For example, being questioned helps pupils to maintain both sensory and academic focus. Questions communicate what is most

important through repetition and effective teachers use questions to monitor pupil progress. Questions requiring pupils to summarise what has been learnt provide effective review and closure.

It was observed that during the course of instruction, teachers in PTSSR posed few and non-challenging questions which did not help the children to think critically or creatively. About 83.3% of the teachers used questions which encourage mainly the recall and application of the contents. This shortcoming is not localised for it was cited in the Laporan Pengesanan KBSR, 1991 (Curriculum Development Centre). As indicated by Langrehr (1993), there is a need for teachers to provide pupils with visual prompts or 'scaffolds' that will enable them to ask and answer better self-questions of classroom topics which they have studied.

### 5.5.3 Evaluation

Evaluation is an essential part of teaching and learning because without it, pupils' will be unable to improve their performance. Furthermore, the more

precise the feedback, the easier it is for the learners to improve themselves (Slavin, 1991). Just as goals and objectives help teachers to move in the desired direction, evaluation informs them as to how well they are proceeding towards these objectives. Evaluation helps to clarify objectives for pupils and help them to define what the teacher believes to be important.

The relationship between learning and evaluation is strong and pupils learn more in classes that use tests than those who do not. Brief and frequent quizzes are more effective than long, infrequent tests (Good and Brophy, 1991 and Eggen and Kauchak, 1992)

Although the teachers of PTSSR provide formative and summative evaluation, they are not very effective. Despite the importance of classroom evaluation, the teachers felt that they were inadequately prepared to deal with the evaluation process. Even the experienced teachers expressed concerns about their ability to write individual test items, construct valid tests and assign grades.

During classroom instruction, feedback is consid-

ered as vital. Feedback is information concerning the accuracy or appropriateness of a response, and it has been linked consistently to pupil learning (Moore, 1995). Although responding to feedback in a learning environment is an effective way to improve instruction, 66.7% of the teachers were ineffective in using feedback as part of their teaching strategy. Nevertheless, they agreed that they need continuous feedback in order to plan, monitor and evaluate their instruction.

## **5.6 Classroom Instruction and Academic Achievement**

Teaching and learning is the heart of any educational process. It is in this situation that pupils have frequent interaction with their teachers so as to ensure that the whole process has a meaningful end (Good and Brophy, 1991 and Moore, 1995).

### **5.6.1 Classroom Instruction and Pupil Performance in Tamil (Comprehension)**

The PTSSR pupils scored 75.4% passes in Tamil

Table 5.2

Comparison of Percentage Passes in Tamil (Comprehension) of PTSSR with the National Norm of Tamil School, (UPSR Examination, 1991)

Grade	Tamil (Comprehension)	
	PTSSR Results %	National Norm %
A	26.8	20.1
B	32.4	30.0
C	16.2	23.4
D	15.5	16.1
E	9.1	10.4
Percentage of Passes (A+B+C)	75.4	73.5
Percentage of Failures (D+E)	24.6	26.5

Source: Based on records of PTSSR and Examination Syndicate UPSR results, 1991.

Note. For Tables 5.2 to 5.9 the number of pupils in the PTSSR is 142 while that for the nation is 13,635.



(Comprehension) compared to 73.5% for the national norm of Tamil schools. As can be seen in Table 5.2, the PTSSR pupils obtained 26.8% grade 'A' passes compared to the national norm which was 20.1%. Whereas the PTSSR pupils recorded 32.4% grade 'B' passes, the national norm was only 30.0% for this grade level.

At the same time, the PTSSR pupils' failure rate was lower than that for the national norm of Tamil schools. The PTSSR obtained only 9.1% grade 'E' compared to 10.4% at the national level.

#### **5.6.2 Classroom Instruction and Pupil Performance in Tamil (Composition)**

In Tamil (Composition), the PTSSR pupils scored 52.8% passes compared to 53.0% which was the national norm for Tamil schools (Table 5.3). When the grades were compared, the PTSSR obtained only 3.5% grade 'A' passes compared to 7.6% at the national level.

All four teachers teaching Tamil (Composition) in PTSSR were observed. The observations indicated that

Table 5.3

Comparison of Percentage Passes in Tamil (Composition)  
Of PTSSR with the National Norm of Tamil School,  
(UPSR Examination, 1991)

Grade	Tamil (Composition)	
	PTSSR Results %	National- Norm %
A	3.5	7.6
B	21.8	20.4
C	27.5	25.0
D	27.5	18.0
E	19.7	29.0
Percentage of Passes (A+B+C)	52.8	53.0
Percentage of Failures (D+E )	47.2	47.0

their knowledge of process writing was inadequate. The overall result of the PTSSR reflected this shortcoming. Clearly, the school authority needs to take immediate steps to equip the teachers with the relevant knowledge and skills. Professional inadequacy could have contributed to the fact that the PTSSR recorded 27.5% grade 'D' failures compared to 18.0% for the national norm of Tamil schools. This is a clear indication that the pupils of the PTSSR are weak in writing - a composing process which requires the use of expressive language to construct meanings graphically. Furthermore, writing as a composing process includes pre-writing, drafting, revising and publishing. In order to develop independence in written composition, it is important that pupils develop a repertoire of strategies that facilitates the organization, elaboration, and communication of ideas. Two important strategies such as think-link and summarizing can assist in this process.

#### **5.6.3 Comparision of PTSSR Performance in Tamil (Comprehension and Composition)**

When the PTSSR pupils' performances in Tamil

Tables 5.4

Comparison of Percentage Passes in Tamil Comprehension and Composition of PTSSR with the National Norm of Tamil school. (UPSR Examination, 1991)

Grade	Tamil		Tamil	
	(Compre- hension)	(Composi- tion)	(Compre- hension)	(Composi- tion)
	PTSSR Results		National-Norm	
	%		%	
A	26.8	3.5	20.1	7.6
B	32.4	21.8	30.0	20.4
C	16.2	27.5	23.4	25.0
D	15.5	27.5	16.1	18.0
E	9.1	19.7	10.4	29.0
Percentage of Passes (A+B+C)	75.4	52.8	73.5	53.0
Percentage of Failures (D+E)	24.6	47.2	26.5	47.0

(Comprehension and Composition) were compared with the national results, an interesting pattern was observed (Table 5.4). PTSSR pupils scored 75.4% passes in Tamil (Comprehension) compared to the national norm of 73.5% passes. The PTSSR obtained slightly less in percentage passes, 52.8% passes as compared to 53.0% for the national norm in Tamil (Composition). The results clearly indicated that the overall performance of Tamil pupils in Tamil writing is weak. Given that Tamil is the medium of instruction, this poor performance is rather disappointing. To a certain extent, this could be a result of ineffective teaching strategies. As indicated in Table 5.1, 37.3% of the teachers of PTSSR were untrained. Furthermore, 41.9% of the teachers possessed less than 3 years of teaching experience. Given this profile of teachers involved, it is reasonable to attribute poor student performance in Tamil (Composition) to their lack of professional training and exposure.

During the unstructured interviews, those teachers who were teaching Tamil (Composition) indicated that the problem in writing skills was cumulative. They indicated that very little effort had been taken

to overcome the problem of poor writing skills amongst pupils in the first four years of schooling in the PTSSR. Only in Standards V and VI was more attention given to this problem. However, with limited time, and a lack of facilities, progress is likely to be unsatisfactory.

#### **5.6.4 Classroom Instruction and Pupil Performance in Bahasa Malaysia (Comprehension)**

As shown in Table 5.5, 40.9% Tamil school pupils obtained passes in Bahasa Malaysia at the national level. In comparison, 44.3% of the PTSSR pupils scored passes in the subject in the UPSR Examination, 1991. As can be seen in Table 5.5, the PTSSR performance was better than the national norm. However, only 2.1% recorded grade 'A' in Bahasa Malaysia (Comprehension) as compared to the national norm 2.8%. A similar pattern was observed for grade 'B' where PTSSR obtained 10.0% passes as compared to 11.7%, the national norm for Tamil Schools.

Table 5.5

Comparison of Percentage Passes in Bahasa Malaysia (Comprehension) of PTSSR with the National Norm of Tamil school. (UPSR Examination, 1991)

Grade	Bahasa Malaysia (Comprehension)	
	PTSSR Results	National Norm
	%	%
A	2.1	2.8
B	10.0	11.7
C	32.2	26.4
D	24.3	33.6
E	31.4	25.5
Percentage of Passes (A+B+C)	44.3	40.9
Percentage of Failures (D+E )	55.7	59.1

#### **5.6.5 Classroom Instruction and Pupil Performance in Bahasa Malaysia (Composition)**

The performance of the PTSSR pupils in Bahasa Malaysia (Composition) was better than the national norm for Tamil schools by 9.8%. The PTSSR scored 28.6% passes compared to the national norm of 18.8% (Table 5.6). At the national level, 68.5% of the candidates obtained Grade 'E'. In contrast, only 20.7% of the PTSSR pupils obtained this grade.

Greater efforts have to be made by the school to improve its performance in Bahasa Malaysia (Composition). Pupils will have to use Bahasa Malaysia more frequently in the classroom, school and home. Furthermore, the 200 minutes per week allocated by the Ministry of Education, does not facilitate an adequate usage of Bahasa Malaysia, be it in oral or written form.



Table 5.6

Comparison of Percentage Passes in Bahasa Malaysia  
(Composition) of PTSSR with the National Norm of  
Tamil school (UPSR Examination, 1991)

Grade	Bahasa Malaysia (Composition)	
	PTSSR Results	National Norm
	%	%
A	0.7	0.4
B	4.3	4.7
C	23.6	13.7
D	50.7	12.7
E	20.7	68.5
Percentage of Passes (A+B+C)	28.6	18.8
Percentage of Failures (D+E )	71.4	81.2

#### **5.6.6 Comparison of PTSSR Performance in Bahasa Malaysia (Comprehension and Composition)**

Based on the data from Table 5.7, performance in Bahasa Malaysia has been poor. The poor performance of the PTSSR pupils in writing skill could be due to insufficient activities related to the writing process. Writing activities in the classroom are insufficient in number and intensity. The inadequate usage of Bahasa Malaysia in and outside the classroom, will result in poor performance. The pupils' school and home environment do not encourage an adequate usage of Bahasa Malaysia, both to think and communicate in different situations. This state of affairs hinders the pupils from expressing their ideas effectively in Bahasa Malaysia (Composition). In the case of the PTSSR, it is noted that irrespective of the language, be it Tamil (the medium of instruction) or Bahasa Malaysia, pupil performance in composition is far from encouraging. As such, the school authority should conduct diagnostic tests to ascertain the weakness of pupils in composition before remedial measures can be taken to improve their performance.

Tables 5.7

Comparison of Percentage Passes in Bahasa Malaysia  
Comprehension and Composition of PTSSR with the  
National Norm of Tamil school, (UPSR Examination, 1991)

Grade	Bahasa Malaysia		Bahasa Malaysia	
	(Compre- hension)	(Composi- tion)	(Compre- hension)	(Composi- tion)
	PTSSR Results		National-Norm	
	%		%	
A	2.1	0.7	2.8	0.4
B	10.0	4.3	11.7	4.7
C	32.2	23.6	26.4	13.7
D	24.3	50.7	33.6	12.7
E	31.4	20.7	25.5	68.5
<b>Percentage of Passes (A+B+C)</b>	44.3	28.6	40.9	18.8
<b>Percentage of Failures (D+E)</b>	55.7	71.4	59.1	81.2

Reflections based on classroom observations and information from interviews reveal that the teachers lacked the skills and knowledge to teach effectively the writing process and to monitor pupils' performance. This is an indication that some form of staff development programme needs to be introduced for the teachers.

#### 5.6.7 Classroom Instruction and Pupil Performance in English Language.

For the UPSR English Language paper, the school recorded 50.0% passes. This is marginally lower than the national average for Tamil schools which is 50.5% (Table 5.8).

Since the use of English is confined mainly to the duration of the period in which the language is taught in the classroom, it does not permit an adequate usage of the English Language.

The interview with the English teacher revealed low expectations of pupil ability and a

Table 5.8

Comparison of Percentage Passes in English Language  
of PTSSR with the National Norm of Tamil School,  
(UPSR Examination, 1991)

Grade	English Language	
	PTSSR Results %	National- Norm %
A	6.3	6.0
B	12.0	17.1
C	31.7	27.4
D	23.9	21.9
E	26.1	27.6
Percentage of Passes (A+B+C)	50.0	50.5
Percentage of Failures (D+E )	50.0	49.5

general negative attitude towards parents. As indicated by Good & Brophy (1991), and Moore (1995), pupils tend to perform at a level consistent with teacher expectations. Furthermore, the pupils tend to perform poorly and feel less competent when teachers establish low expectations and hold them to these expectations.

To a considerable extent, pupils' aspirations and self-concept will be affected when teachers hold low expectations for their pupils. Normally, teachers with such attitudes may give unconsciously less encouragement to pupils, less time to answer questions and less attention. This pattern of 'low' teacher expectation could be the reason for the decline in performance of PTSSR pupils in the English Language. This assumption is in accordance to a study conducted by the Federal Inspectorate of School (1992). The findings indicated that in the learning of English Language, the teachers' personality traits affected significantly pupils' learning.

#### **5.6.8 Classroom Instruction and Pupil Performance in Mathematics**

In the Mathematics paper, the PTSSR recorded better results than the national norm. As indicated in Table 5.9, the PTSSR obtained 51.4% passes whereas the national norm for the subject in Tamil schools stood at 50.1%.

Based on three classroom observations of Mathematics lessons, some assumptions can be made. The teachers of PTSSR spent little time in explaining abstract concepts such as the value of money. Using only one or two examples, they moved on to provide independent practice. At the same time, the exercises set are less challenging if compared to the UPSR Mathematics paper.

Significantly, there is a pattern in the performance of the PTSSR pupils in three subjects, i.e., Tamil (Composition), English and Mathematics. In Tamil (Composition) PTSSR pupils scored 52.8% passes, in

Table 5.9

Comparison of Percentage Passes in Mathematics of PTSSR with the National Norm of Tamil School, (UPSR Examination, 1991)

Grade	Mathematics	
	PTSSR Results %	National-Norm %
A	4.3	4.3
B	11.4	13.4
C	35.7	32.2
D	34.3	32.4
E	14.3	17.7
Percentage of Passes (A+B+C)	51.4	49.9
Percentage of Failures (D+E)	48.6	50.1



English Language 50.0% passes, and in Mathematics 51.4% passes. The three subjects are cognitive in nature.

### 5.7 Perception of Teachers

Most teachers expressed that the pupils are not fully committed to their studies. According to them, only a few of the pupils show some interest in their work. Remedial classes which are conducted to guide and increase their level of understanding are not well received or appreciated by the pupils. Pupils who face problems in their studies are those who are always absent from these remedial classes. This category of pupils (the low achievers) do not complete the given tasks set as homework and come up usually with a variety of excuses.

The teachers were asked to comment on the parents. Most of the teachers felt that parents, on the whole, showed a negative attitude towards the school and the teachers. The parents discuss political issues at the Parent Teacher's Association (PTA) meetings. This situation affects the good relationship between teachers and parents.

When pupils experience problems, parents concerned are invited to meet and discuss with the teachers involved. Unfortunately, very few parents attempt to do so. Thus, teachers feel very disappointed as their initiative and efforts are not fully appreciated by parents.

Many of the teachers are college-trained and the opportunities to attend in-service courses to upgrade their knowledge are almost negligible. It can be said that the opportunity to increase knowledge and professional experience is limited. Although 'clinical supervision' is carried out by the school administrators, the input to upgrade teaching is not very satisfactory. Moreover, the school facilities are unsatisfactory. Basic needs like chairs and desks, and teaching-aids are insufficient in number. The teacher's room does not look like a staff room. Without the basic facilities, it is difficult to create an environment conducive for effective teaching and learning. These are all demotivating factors that need to be addressed urgently.

The teachers feel that the poor performance of

the pupils in the UPSR is the accumulation of issues that were ignored from the first year in school. As such, they feel that there should be a carefully planned, long-term programme to overcome pupils' poor performances. They also indicated that in the short term, ad hoc efforts to overcome poor performance are ineffective. There should be more monitoring of pupils' progress from the first year of school.

As for Bahasa Malaysia, the teachers expressed that efforts should be made from an early stage to give pupils more opportunities to use the language orally and in the written form. Likewise, opportunities should be provided for the reading of different materials. On the whole, teachers expressed that the quality of school has to be improved in order to increase pupil performance in the UPSR examination.

#### **5.8 Perception of the Headmaster**

When the headmaster was asked to list down factors leading to the poor performance of the pupils, he cited four factors, namely, facilities, pupils, parents and teachers.

The school was shifted to the present location in 1983. Then, the school had only two blocks of temporary wooden buildings with six classrooms. Today, it has undergone very few changes. With the efforts of the Parent Teacher Association, additional wooden buildings have been built. Given the rapid increase in enrolment, from 141 pupils in 1982 to 1090 pupils in 1991, the headmaster faces difficulties in providing basic facilities for its population. The headmaster indicated that he needs at least 12 classrooms to accommodate the increasing enrolment. In fact, he has converted the school library into classrooms. This means the pupils are not able to use the library facilities at all.

The allocated 'teacher's room' lacks facilities. It is congested and stuffy and is obviously unsuitable for teachers. Although attempts have been made by the school administration and the Parent Teacher Association to build permanent buildings, these have not borne fruit yet. The lack of facilities is a hindrance to effective instructional functioning and the facilitating of educational achievement.

The headmaster feels that most pupils show little interest in their lessons. They seldom finish their homework. Furthermore, they are absent from school frequently. Faced with problems such as absenteeism, it is not possible for the school to help its pupils to overcome academic weaknesses.

The headmaster is of the opinion that the parents' interest in education is low and many do not realize the importance of educating their children. Most of the time, parents are trying hard to make ends meet. Though there are parents who understand the importance of education, they are unable to give guidance or coach their children in their school work. Moreover, many of the parents work long hours to earn an extra income and as such, may not have the time to motivate their children. At times, they have to send their children to work to supplement the family income.

When the headmaster was asked whether his teachers were concerned about their teaching responsibilities, he responded positively, saying that most of the teachers are hardworking. He added that the teachers always gave homework and they did not neglect their

pupils . However, he felt that education is much more than the teaching-learning process. For instance, there must be a school climate conducive to learning. It must be effective in terms of invoking interest in the subjects taught. The headmaster agreed that there was a small number of teachers who lacked this ability. Furthermore, he stressed that as 16 of the 43 teachers remained untrained, they were unable to perform their professional duties effectively.

Besides, the headmaster stressed that there were other teachers whose attitude towards the profession was negative. Although the number is small, nevertheless, the negative attitude affects the performance of pupils.

### **5.9 School Factors and Achievement**

From the interviews with the headmaster, teachers and parents, and classroom observations, it is only possible to draw some observations regarding school factors that influence the academic achievement of PTSSR pupils in the UPSR examination.

The teachers' age, qualifications and experience could probably be one of the school factors influencing the academic achievement of pupils. Teachers teaching the UPSR pupils were professionally qualified, young, and showed positive attitudes toward the children and their progress. However, teacher stress could be one of the factors attributable to the poor quality of teaching leading to the poor performance of pupils.

Research has identified some of the teacher behaviors affecting the performance of pupils. In particular, direct instructional approaches in which the teacher focuses instruction on specific goals and uses sequences and structured materials have been found to correlate with relatively high pupil achievement.

Based on the classroom observations, some reflections could be made. Although most of the teachers were trained, they lacked the qualities of effective teachers. They were inefficient in choosing appropriate set induction to lessons, audio-visual aids, and teaching materials. As the teaching approaches used in the classroom were seldom targeted towards

helping children realise their potentials, it could lead to poor pupil performances . Since the teachers used few challenging questions, this could also lead to the unsatisfactory performances of pupils. Basic training has somehow been insufficient to equip these teachers with the necessary skills or the effort to be efficient and effective in teaching.