INVESTIGATING TEACHERS' READINESS, UNDERSTANDING AND WORKLOAD IN IMPLEMENTING SCHOOL BASED ASSESSMENT (SBA)

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ABSTRACT

Education is a major catalyst in the development of the country. School Based Assessment (SBA) is a new transformation in Malaysian education that required subject teachers to conduct formative assessment during teaching and learning process according to the procedures by Malaysian Examination Syndicate (MES). Thus, teachers play an important role in the implementation of the national education policy in order to develop students' potential and achievement in physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual. This requires teachers' contributions of effort, involvement, and overall professionalization. This study aims to investigate teachers' readiness, understanding, and workload in implementing SBA. Further, this study also seeks to determine the relationship between teachers' understanding and workload, as well as between teachers' readiness and workload. Participants were comprised of 260 teachers from primary schools in the district of Kerian. The results showed that the level of teachers' understanding and readiness towards implementing SBA is high. However, the workload level among teachers was also high. Correlation analysis indicated that there is a significant negative relationship between teachers' understanding and readiness with the level of workload.

KEYWORDS

School Based Assessment (SBA), readiness, understanding, workload

1. INTRODUCTION

The success of an education system is determined by students' learning and performance. Ministry of Education (MOE) in Malaysia realized that the education system needs to go through a comprehensive and systematic transformation if Malaysia aspires to produce quality individuals who are able to compete in a global market (Preliminary Report of Malaysian Education Development Plan 2013-2025, September 2012). In line with the National Education Philosophy, MOE focuses on the holistic development of students that emphasizes the development of intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical.

Malaysia has undergone few educational policies in order to improve students' development and performance. The country has implemented New Primary School Curriculum in 1983. However, the policy name has changed to Primary School Integrated Curriculum (KBSR) in 1993 (KPM, 2014). The assessment in KBSR was more on examination oriented instead of holistic education (Lembaga Peperiksaan Malaysia, 2012). Therefore, the policy has been reviewed and new educational policy, Primary School Standards Curriculum (KSSR) was introduced in 2012. KSSR emphasized on holistic education including reading, writing, counting, reasoning, ICT, development of socio-emotion, spiritual, physical, cognitive, behavior and value (KPM, 2014). In line with KSSR, government announced National Education Assessment System (SPPK) and under this system, School Based Assessment (SBA) was introduced (JPN Perak, 2013). The main objectives of SPPK are to reduce focus on examination, strengthen SBA, improve students' learning, continuous holistic assessment, and develop better human capital (Lembaga Peperiksaan Malaysia KPM, 2012).

There are five components of SPPK including the assessment of physical activities (sports and co-curriculum activities), psychometric assessment, school assessment, centre assessment, and centre examination. School assessment is divided into two parts: formative and summative (Lembaga Peperiksaan Malaysia KPM, 2012). For school assessment, each school is responsible for implementing their own

assessment, which requires teachers to design, construct items and instruments, manage, mark the scores, record and report the assessment for every subject they teach. The aims of school assessment are to enhance students learning and improve teaching effectiveness (Lembaga Peperiksaan Malaysia KPM, 2012). Furthermore, a few characteristics of the SBA including: (a) able to provide a holistic overview of the knowledge and skills attained by students, (b) continuous assessment of teaching and learning, (c) flexible assessment methods according to students' ability and readiness, and (d) view students' achievement based on performance standards. The performance standard is a set of statements describing the achievement and mastery of an individual student within a certain discipline, in a specific period of study based on an identified benchmark. The performance standard will help inform teachers the most suitable way to assess individual student fairly in a focused manner based on the predetermined set of standards.

The evolution of national education system requires a paradigm shift among teachers. Drastic changes need to be made by the teachers to adopt the new education system. They must change the way they think and practice (Zaidatun & Lim, 2010). In every education plan, teachers play very important roles and they must fully understand on the implementation of the new system (Nor Hasnida, Baharim & Afian, 2012; Sanitah & Norsiwati, 2012).

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The education sector in Malaysia demands high commitment among teachers to plan lessons, teach in the classroom, prepare students' report card, conduct co-curriculum activities, attending professional development courses, and collaborate with parents and the community. This is supported by Lemaire (2009) who found that teachers are burdened with tasks that unrelated to teaching and learning, extra-curricular activities, attending meetings, conducting student programs, and managerial duties. Furthermore, various reforms of education system contribute to teachers' stress as they are facing challenges and pressures to fulfill the requirements of the new system (Tajulashikin, Fazura & Mohd Burhan, 2013).

In 2011, a survey by the MOE found that teachers work 40 to 80 hours per week, with an average of 57 hours (Preliminary Report of Malaysian Education Development Plan 2013-2025, September 2012). In addition, National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) has complained about teachers' workload to the Education Minister on 30 March 2010 (Berita Harian, 1 April 2010). As SBA announced in 2012, teachers' workload increases as they have to conduct the assessment process from beginning. They have to key in the marks online in the School Based Assessment Management System (SPPBS). This means that teachers' understanding and commitment is crucial as they are empowered to assess their students (Md Noor & Sahip, 2010). Moreover, the large numbers of students in one class contributes to the difficulty in assessing every student (Harakah, 15 July 2013; Berita Harian, 15 Disember 2010).

According to Maizura (2010), readiness is an important aspect in determining the success and failure in implementing changes in the curriculum. For instance, Malaysian has implemented PPSMI policy in 2003. The policy required teachers to conduct Sciences and Mathematics in English language. This has raised objections from various parties. Finally, PPSMI policy was announced to be discontinued in 2012 and replaced by the policy of upholding the Malay language and strengthening the English language (MBMMBI). The implementation of PPSMI was considered unsuccessful because most of the teachers were not fully equipped with English language skills (Nor Safiza, 2011). Students also not ready to learn science and mathematics in English. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the level of teachers' understanding, readiness and workload in implementing the SBA among primary school teachers in one district. The present study also seeks to determine the relationship between understanding, readiness and workload.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study involved 260 teachers from 67 primary schools in Kerian district. A stratified sampling technique was used, where the researcher divided the schools into National Primary School (SK) and National-type School (Chinese and Tamil). Participants were randomly selected from each school. The instrument used in this study was adapted from previous research conducted by Kalawathi (2013), Nesan (2012), Fazura (2011) and NUTP Survey. The questionnaire is divided into three parts: demographic factors, teachers' understanding and readiness, and teachers' workload in implementing SBA. The questions are 5-point Likert scales ranging from disagree very much to agree very much. The reliability of the instrument has been verified by Cronbach's Alpha, in which alpha value for understanding is 0.893, readiness is 0.831, and workload is 0.792.

The data gathered from the participants was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were used to discuss the participants' demographic information and participants' level of understanding, readiness, and workload. The differences between participants' level of workload and gender and school category was analysed using Independent-samples *t* test. One-way ANOVA was utilized to determine the differences between participants' level of workload and school type. The relationship between participants' understanding and workload, as well as the relationship between participants' readiness and workload were measured by correlation analysis.

4. RESULT

This section will discuss about the demographic factors of the participants, the level of understanding, readiness and workload in implementing SBA. The result of the differences between level of workload and gender, school category and school type will be discussed too. Further, this section will reveal the findings on the relationship between level of understanding and workload, and relationship between level of readiness and workload among teachers in implementing SBA at school.

Table 1. Demographic factors of the participants.

		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	75	28.8
	Female	185	71.2
	Total	260	100
School category	Rural area	159	61.2
	Urban area	101	38.8
	Total	260	100
School type	National (SK)	164	63.1
	National type-Chinese (SJKC)	40	21.5
	National type- Tamil (SJKT)	56	15.4
	Total	260	100

As refer to Table 1, majority of the participants are female (71.2%). Male teachers are only 28.8% of the the total participants. According to school category, most of the participants are working at schools in rural area (61.2%). Those working at the urban area is only 38.8%. There are 63.1% of the participants working at SK, 21.5% at SJKC, and 15.4% at SJKT.

Table 2. Level of understanding, readiness, and workload

	Level	Mean	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Understanding	Low	1.00 – 2.33	14	5.4
	Moderate	2.34 – 3.66	62	23.8
	High	3.67 – 5.00	184	70.8
	Total		260	100
Readiness	Low	1.00 – 2.33	6	2.3
	Moderate	2.34 – 3.66	69	26.5
	High	3.67 – 5.00	185	71.2
	Total		260	100
Workload	Low	1.00 – 2.33	0	0
	Moderate	2.34 – 3.66	71	27.3
	High	3.67 – 5.00	189	72.7
	Total		260	100

Table 2 describes the level of understanding, readiness, and workload in implementing SBA among primary school teachers. The majority of the participants has a high understanding about the SBA (70.8%) and only 5.4% of them have low understanding. For readiness aspect, most of the participants have a high level of readiness (71.2%). However, there are 26.5% of them have a moderate level of readiness. Most of the participants respond that they have a high level of workload (72.7%). This is followed by 27.3% of them that reported moderate levels of workload. However, none of the participant rated low level of workload.

One way ANOVA found that there is a significant difference between the level of workload and school type, F (2, p=0.000) = 40.260. Post-hoc test indicated that significant differences exist between SJKC, SJKT and SK. Participants at SJKC reported the highest level of workload (M=4. 3708, SD=0. 3954).

As displays in Table 3 below, there is a significant difference between the participants' level of workload and gender, t (258, p=0. 000) = -4.032, $p<0.05$. Both male and female teachers reported high level of workload. However, female teachers reported higher workload level (M=3.92, SD=.4344) than their male counterpart (M=3.68, SD=.4703). The result also shows that there is a significant difference between the participants' level of workload and school category, at (258, p=0.024) = -2.278, $p<0.05$. Although teachers in rural and urban area reported high level of workload, teachers in rural area rated higher level of workload (M=3.90, SD=.4479) than those in urban area (M=3.77, SD=.4640).

Table 3. Differences between participants' level of workload and gender and school category

	N	Mean	SD	t value	Df	p
Gender						
Male	75	3.68	.4703			
Female	185	3.92	.4344	-4.032	258	**.000
School Category						
Rural area	159	3.90	.4479			
Urban area	101	3.77	.4640	-2.278	258	**.024

** Significant at 0.05

Pearson correlation analysis revealed that there is a significant negative relationship between the participants' level of understanding about the SBA and their workload ($r = -.216$, $p < 0.01$). The result also found that there is a significant negative relationship between the participants' level of readiness for implementing SBA and their workload (r=.266, $p<0.01$). These indicate that the higher perceived level of participants' understanding and readiness about the SBA, the lower they would perceive of their workload.

5. DISCUSSION

Overall results indicated that the majority of the teachers at the particular district understand about the implementation of the SBA. They were also ready in implementing the system. However, as the SBA is a new assessment system introduced by the Malaysian government, majority of the teachers reported high level of workload in implementing it. Teachers at SJKC perceived highest level of workload as compared to teachers in other school types. In addidition, teachers in rural area experienced higher level of workload than those in urban area. This may due to the lack of the facilities and internet coverage at the rural area. In terms of gender, female teachers percieved higher level of workload in implementing the SBA as compared to their male counterpart.

Findings showed that teachers in primary schools have a high level of understanding in implementing the SBA. Items analysis indicates that most teachers are benefited from attending training sessions organized by MOE in which it managed to increase their understanding about SBA. In addition, support services and online mentoring by the Malaysian Examination Syndicate is also helpful in improving their understanding about SBA. Besides, their readiness level is high in implementing SBA at school. Other research conducted by Ruhila (2012) and Ismadiah (2012) also found that the level of understanding is high among teachers in Johor. However, teachers' readiness in implementing SBA is only at a moderate level (Ismadiah, 2012; Nor Hasnida et al., 2013). Items analysis shows that teachers make a good preparation before teaching the KSSR subjects and always implement innovations in teaching and learning. However, teachers are not highly ready to try new strategies in implementing SBA. Furthermore, their level of readiness to go for more training about SBA was moderate.

This study found that the level of teachers' workload is high in implementing SBA. Factors that contribute to their high level of workload are SPPBS is difficult to access, delay databases due to poor internet coverage in rural schools, and they need to print a lot of instruments for evaluation purposes. In addition, the evaluation of ICT elements is difficult due to lack of computer facilities in schools. Furthermore, teachers face difficulties in evaluating weak students and those who always absent from school.

The results indicated that there are negative relationship between the levels of understanding and workload, and between the level of readiness and workload. Teachers who have low understanding and readiness about the SBA tend to have higher level of workload. According to Mahamod, Yusoff and Ibrahim (2009), teachers are the driving force and the main impetus to the process of teaching and learning in the classroom. Therefore, a teacher must be equipped with all related knowledge of the SBA. Implementation of formative assessment in the SBA requires serious changes among teachers. They need to change the perception of their role in improving student achievement and classroom practice (Nesan, 2012; Hamzah & Sinnasamy, 2009).

SBA as a new reform in the Malaysian education system requires educational leaders to take proper approaches in managing the changes. Kurt Lewin proposed that successful change should follow three steps: unfreezing the status quo, movement to the desired end state, and refreezing the new change to make it permanent (Robbins & Judge, 2013). According to Osland, Kolb, Rubin, and Turner (2007), *resistance to change is a natural reaction to change and part of the process of adaptation* (p. 643). Hence, unfreezing the status quo refers to *overcome the pressures of both individual resistance and group conformity* (Robbins & Judge, 2013, p.619). This could make the transformation process from status quo to desired aims. The restraining forces that hinder movement from the existing equilibrium should be decreased. Management should focus on how to increase driving forces that direct behavior away from the status quo (Robins & Judge, 2013). Thus, refreezing step stabilizes a change intervention by balancing driving and restraining forces (Robbins & Judge, 2013). In implementing the SBA in schools, the educational leaders should understand factors that affecting teachers' understanding, readiness and workload. Highly understanding and readiness among teachers will decrease their perceive workload in implementing the new system.

6. CONCLUSION

The SBA was introduced in 2011 to be implemented in all primary schools in Malaysia. Over the years, it is still early to evaluate the progress and success of the new system. The attitude of teachers who are not comfortable with the reform needs to be addressed. Exam-oriented emphasis needs to be changed to the

assessment of individual student's skills and achievement. Implementation of formative assessment in SBA requires a serious shift in mindset among teachers. Furthermore, teachers will be burdened and distressed in implementing the SBA if they do not understand about the system and if they are not ready to fulfill it. Teachers need to be more skilled in time management. Among the challenges in implementing the SBA is the use of on-line reporting system, management of document files, assessment of students who have different competencies in the classroom, teaching and learning strategies, and allocation of time for the implementation of activities in the classroom. Therefore, support from principals is crucial in implementing the SBA in schools. According to Muzammil and Kamariah (2011), good interaction between the school principals and teachers will contribute to higher level of job satisfaction and better performance among teachers. In addition, the management of the school should provide great assistance and adequate facilities for teachers in order to implement this new system.

As a conclusion, teachers in primary schools in the district of Kerian have a high level of understanding and readiness in fulfilling the SBA. However, they are burdened with high workload in implementing it. Since the significant negative relationship exists between level of understanding, readiness and workload, possible way to reduce the workload is to ensure that teachers highly understand the requirements of the SBA and are always ready to implement it. Consequently, they will also change their perception to a more positive view of the SBA.

Findings from this study would be able to provide important information to MOE, schools and teachers concerning the implementation of SBA in schools. Revealed aspects such as the level of teachers' understanding, readiness, workload, and the relationship between understanding and readiness to workload, provide better insights on how to effectively and efficiently implement this new assessment system. However, as the findings of this study cannot be generalized, more study is needed in order to contribute to the existing knowledge relating to SBA implementation in Malaysia. As the Malaysian government continuously makes an improvement of this new assessment, research on the level of parents' acceptance and the effectiveness of the system in students' performance should be conducted.

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