

Leadership Performance in Primary Schools in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Key Performance Indicators (KPI) is a tool used to measure performance. In Malaysia, the mission of the Ministry of Education is to develop a world-class quality education system which will realize the full potential of individuals and fulfill the aspiration of the Malaysian nation. In line with the aspiration, all Malaysian schools have to do their self-evaluation using Malaysian Education Quality Standards (SKPM) as the benchmarking instrument. No KPI has been developed and the purpose of the study is to develop a Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for schools in Malaysia which will help the Ministry in assessing and monitoring the schools' performance, focusing on leadership performance. Surveys and interviews were done on 70 urban government's Grade A primary schools in Selangor, Malaysia using stratified random sampling. The result showed that the overall average score in leadership performance for the schools range from 86.57% to 56.03%. Eleven schools score more than 80%. Leadership was measured using four dimensions specifically, 'vision and values', 'communication and organizational performance', 'governance and social responsibilities' and 'ethical behaviour'. Average score for Governance and social responsibility is the highest compared to other sub-dimensions. This index is a generic innovative tool and the first of its kind in Malaysia. It is about providing transparency of the education system both within the school and in the Ministry as a whole. It can be further develop to address various criteria and needs of Malaysian education system and the region. It is not a long time for it to become the core of emerging method of managing education.

Keyword: Key Performance Indicator (KPI), leadership, governance, ethical behaviour, social responsibility.

1. INTRODUCTION

The public sector is the largest service sector in most of the countries worldwide, including Malaysia. It plays a paramount role in the development of the country's economy. However, to date, not much effort has been made to develop suitable key performance indicators (KPI) to measure the performance of the public sector. The use of the public sector performance indicators will provide information on the efficiency and effectiveness of programs designed by the government to address issues of public interest such as the public safety and health, education, environmental, social and economic issues.

Education in Malaysia is an ongoing effort towards further development of the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious based on a firm belief in God. Such an effort is destined to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal well being as well as able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the nation at large (Ministry of Education, 1993)

The mission of the Ministry of Education is to develop a world-class quality education system which will realize the full potential of individuals and fulfill the aspiration of the Malaysian nation. In line with the aspiration, all Malaysian schools have to do their self-evaluation using Malaysian Education Quality Standards (SKPM) as the benchmarking instrument.

Examination results should not be the ultimate indicators for schools to be the best and not all schools are fortunate to have the facilities and allocation to excel. There should be a new performance measurement instrument that is able to measure the actual effectiveness and efficiency of the schools in delivering its stated objectives within the resources and facilities available at the schools. It is fair to evaluate the performance of the schools within their controllable variables. Thus, by developing a Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for schools in Malaysia will help the Ministry in assessing and monitoring the schools' performance as KPIs help organizations achieve organizational goals through the definition and measurement of progress (Webopedia, 2006). KPI is one of the performance measurement frameworks that has had considerable impact in the private sector and has begun to receive considerable attention of its application in the public sector.

School Performance Index (SPIn) is a measurement tool that incorporates a set of KPIs to measure four education criteria for performance excellence which include Leadership; Measurement, Analysis and Knowledge Management; Strategic Planning and *UPSR* Students' Results. SPIn is a generic innovative tool and the first of its kind in Malaysia. It is about providing transparency to the education system both within the school and in the Ministry as a whole.

Educational leadership has attracted a great deal of theoretical interest and debate. Towards the end of the 20th century there were about 30 000 research articles, magazine articles and books have been written about leadership (Abu Daud, 2009) but the only test of leadership is that somebody follows. Leadership has been defined in various ways. Some emphasize on power and see leaders as an authority figures. Others regard leadership as organising and motivating groups to set goals and accomplish them. More recently, attention has moved from focusing solely on leadership in formal organization settings and has concentrated on leaders as meaning makers and the ways they developed shared values. Leadership is found to be a key factor in the achievement of exceptional educational outcomes. Despite pressures from the subordinates, the leader had been able to lead and facilitate teams by having good personal qualities (Dinham, 2007). The importance of the right person at the correct time and position remains significant and relevant. When deciding the leadership to play its role and to execute its function effectively and efficiently this will help make the organization, particularly educational institutions, to move towards the right track (Jusoff, 2010)

The role of leaderships is an integral factors in which to ensure the success in any school, it must possessed a competent and sound leadership process (Huber, 2004; Fullan, 1993; Van Vezlen et.al, 1985, Rutter et.al, 1979). Importance of effective leadership in school has been

highlighted by Beare et.al: DfEE, 1998; Bell et.al.,2002; Leithwood & Reihl, 2003; Southworth, 2004; Rutherford, 2005. In a study by Cheng (1994), there is a strong relationship between principal's leadership and school performance. Strong leadership represents that a principal can be supportive and foster participation for teachers, can develop clear goals and policies and hold people accountable for results, can be persuasive at building alliances and solving development and teaching improvement. The finding support that principal's leadership is a critical factors for school performance at multi levels.

The leadership category will examine the organization's senior leaders' methods of guidance and governance in the school. Leadership was measured using four dimensions specifically, 'vision and values', 'communication and organizational performance', 'governance and social responsibilities' and 'ethical behaviour' based on the Baldrige National Quality Program – Education Criteria for Performance Excellence.

1.1 Vision and values

Vision and values refer to the vision, mission and values statements that were publicized to everyone at the school. Normally those statements are placed explicitly at the main office, meeting room, hall, school wall and others. The basic ingredient of a leadership philosophy should be grounded by the vision (Lewis & Caldwell, 2005). Souba *et.al* (2007) looked at 38 positive leadership values indicated that integrity, trust and vision were considered the most important core values for effective leadership.

1.2 Communication and organizational performance

The second dimension of leadership is communication and organizational performance. This will reflect the obligation of the school to display the organization chart, frequency of meetings held among management, teachers, and *PIBG* committee. Again, the documents were reviewed to confirm that meetings were held as stated. Budget is an important criterion that needs to be looked into. The level of openness of information will be evident in the variable of parties that are involved in monitoring and reviewing the school's budget. The parties that were involved in monitoring and reviewing the budget were interviewed and the frequency of meetings with *Jawatankuasa Kewangan* was examined.

Communication will reflect the responsibility of the school to communicate the school performance to stakeholders. The methods of communication will be assessed by reviewing the relevant documents and interviewing the staff. It is essential to inform the teachers and staff performance regarding their performance. Thus, the schools were evaluated on methods of informing the individual's performance. In fact, the schools mid term results were also examined to determine how the student's performance was communicated to their parents or caretakers.

1.3 Governance and social responsibilities

The availability of conducive and 'safe' environment to students and staff, were measured under governance and social responsibilities dimension. Span of control describes the number of subordinates that report to each manager. In the study conducted by Raiford (2004) on the relationship between span of control and school performance revealed that high achieving

elementary schools, school performance improved as the span of control become narrower, and the relationship between span of control and schools' performance was statically significant.

Social responsibilities is also associated with the various aspects of school performance (Lambert & Nicoll, 1977; Mischel, 1961; Parker & Asher, 1987; Wentzel , Weinberger, Ford, & Feldman, 1990 ; Wentzel, 1986).

1.4 Ethical behaviour

In addition, the 'ethical behavior' gave an indication whether the school had provided enough mechanisms of handling student's disciplinary problem or mechanism of handling problematic teacher. This study focuses on the leadership performance as one of the indicators in measuring the schools' performances.

2. METHODS AND MATERIALS

This project adopted a quantitative and qualitative approach using survey and interviews. Surveys enable the researchers to obtain 'snapshots' of practices, situations and views at a particular point of time via scorecard and/or interviews from which inferences may be made via quantitative techniques regarding the relationships of variables in the past, present and/or the future. The strengths using survey and interview methods are that greater numbers of variables may be studied and real-world situations in the schools can be described.

This section describes the research methods used to attain the objectives of the study. In particular, this section covers on research setting, sample, design, data collection methods, and instruments deployed to analyze and discuss the results.

2.1 The Research Setting

This study was carried out in Selangor where the focus was on urban government primary schools Grade A. The state of Selangor has been chosen because it represents the most advanced state in Malaysia. The research specifically analyzes factors that determine the school performance.

2.2 Sample

The sample for this study comprised of Grade A government national primary schools in the urban area of Selangor. The data was obtained from *Jabatan Pelajaran Negeri* Selangor. These schools were chosen based on stratified random sampling technique. National primary schools in Selangor are classified as urban schools grade A or B and rural area schools grade A or B. Grading for schools is based on population of students. Schools with more than 500 students are classified as grade A school and vice versa. The total number of national primary schools in Selangor is 423 schools which is divided into rural area schools (240 schools) and urban area schools (183 schools).

Urban school is group into Grade A and Grade B School. Urban school Grade A can further be grouped into government school and government support school. Sample selection for this study focused on urban government school grade A. Out of the one hundred and twenty grade A's government schools, 50% sample (60 schools) is chosen.

Reasons for choosing urban school are that urban schools have more facilities and performance of students is generally better than school of the rural area. It is hoped that the performance of these schools could be a benchmark for other Grade A schools in Selangor.

2.3 Design

The research design for this research must satisfy these objectives. Firstly, it must be able to test between variables using statistical methods. Secondly, the results of the findings should be generalizable to all schools in Selangor. The school performance index (SPI_n) was developed through six related phases.

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5	Phase 6
Exploratory study was conducted to study the qualitative component	Focused group interviews and discussion was held to get an important input to the study's subsequent phase	Brainstorming session was done by the researchers to develop the scorecard	Scorecard developed was further discussed	Pilot test of developed scorecard was done	Research conducted on sixty schools which were selected based on stratified random sampling

Phase Six

Visits were made to the selected schools during school sessions. Survey forms were filled up based on observations, enquiries from the staffs and students, including interviews with the headmaster/mistress of the schools.

Phase Seven

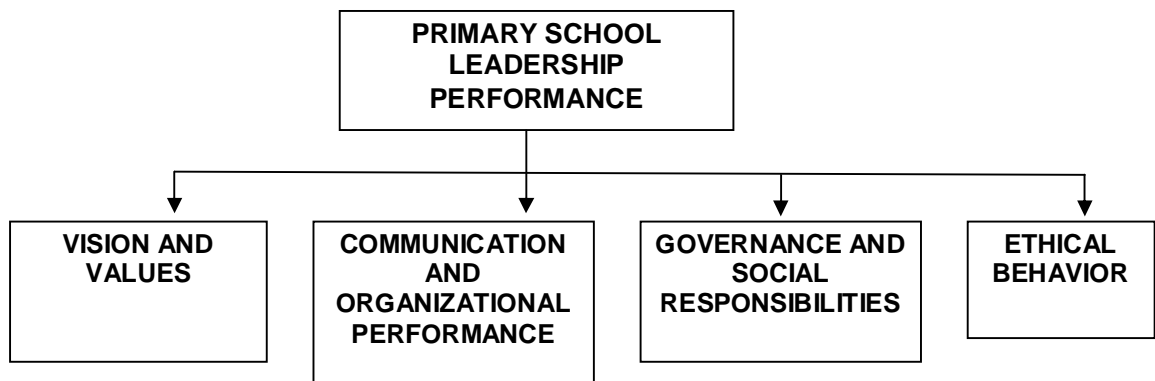
This study was extended to the national type schools that are the Chinese and Tamil schools. The total number of Chinese and Tamil schools is 13 schools for government Chinese schools and 6 for government Tamil schools.

From the total 13 government Chinese schools grade A in the urban area, 7 schools were selected as sample and from the total of 6 Tamil government schools grade A in the urban area, 3 schools were taken as sample.

2.4 Measurement procedures

The School Leadership performance is being measured based on 4 main dimensions. The leadership dimension will examine the organization's senior leaders' methods of guidance and governance in the school. Leadership was measured using four dimensions specifically, 'vision

and values’, ‘communication and organizational performance’, ‘governance and social responsibilities’ and ‘ethical behaviour’.



Vision and values’ refer to the vision, mission and values statements that were publicized to everyone at the school. Questions relating to parties involved in setting the school’s vision, mission, and values statements were asked.

The second dimension of leadership is communication and organizational performance. This will reflect the obligation of the school to display the organization chart, frequency of meetings held among management, teachers, and Parents, Teachers Association.

Communication will reflect the responsibility of the school to communicate the school performance to stakeholders. The methods of communication will be assessed by reviewing the relevant documents and interviewing the staff. The availability of conducive and ‘safe’ environment to students and staff, were measured under governance and social responsibilities dimension.

3. RESULTS

The assessment of School Leadership Performance is based on 70 schools. Data was analyzed using quantitative analysis. The result showed that, overall average score in leadership performance for the schools range from 86.57% to 56.03%. Eleven schools score more than 80%. The following table 1 shows the number of schools based on four ranges of total average score in leadership performance.

Table 1: Overall score in leadership performance

Average score range (%)	No. of schools
80 – 100	11
70 – 79	34
60 – 69	21
Less than 60	4

Average scores for each of the variables sub-dimensions for each of the national and national type schools are shown in Fig.1, Fig. 2 and Fig. 3 below:

Fig. 1: Average Scores for National Primary Schools

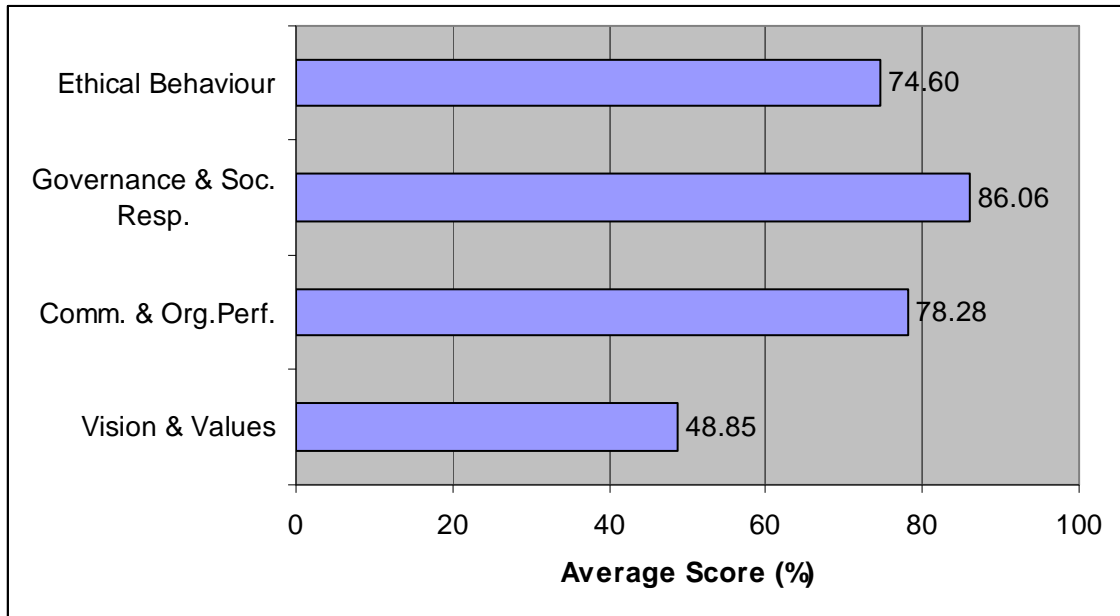


Fig. 2: Average Scores for National Type Primary Schools (Chinese)

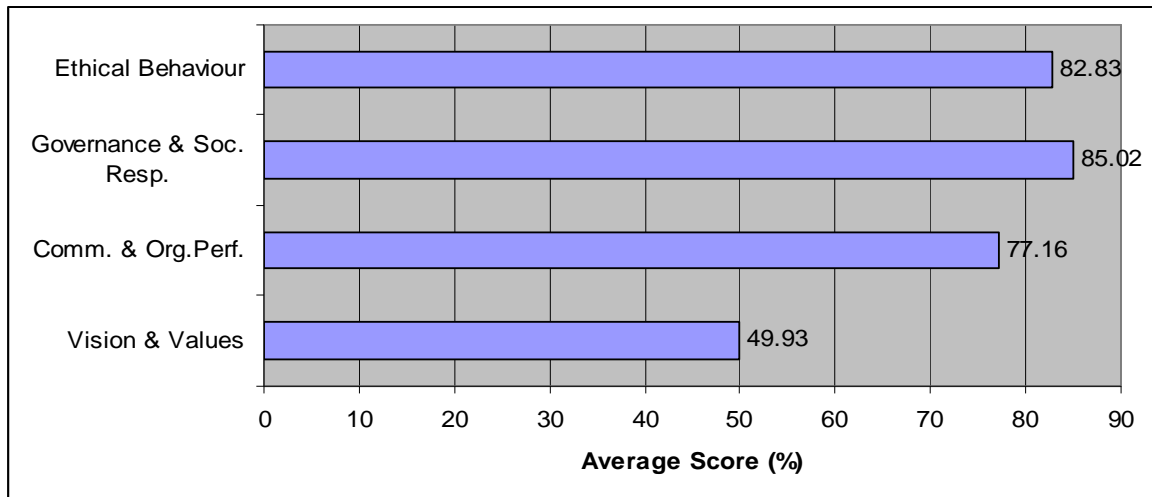
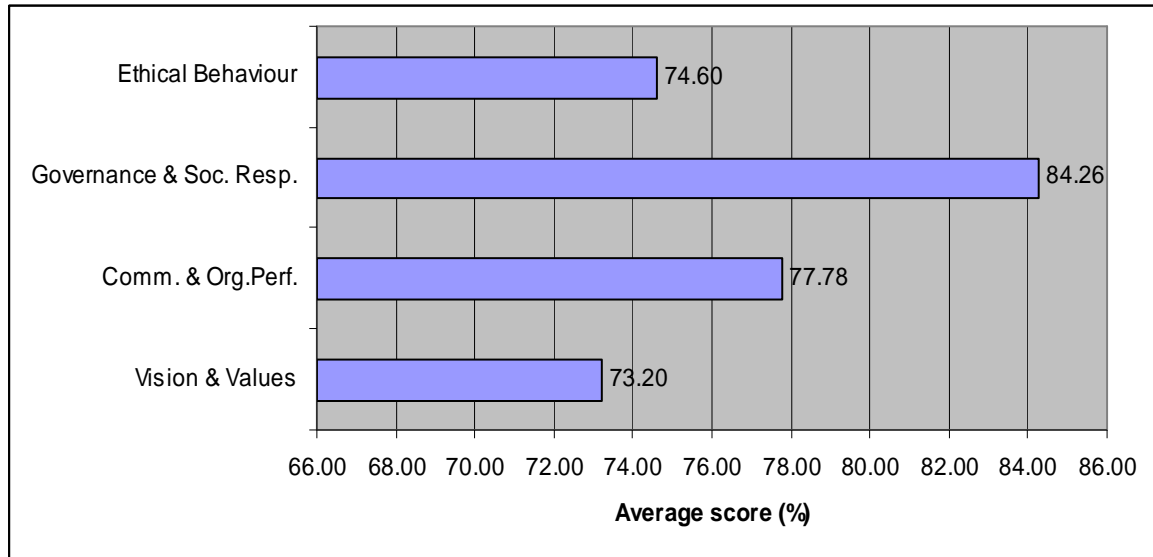


Fig. 3: Average Scores for National Type Primary Schools (Tamil)



3.1 Ranking of the variables sub-dimension

Based on the average scores of the sub-dimension variables, Table 3A, 3B and 3c below present the ranking of school performance sub-dimensions for each type of school. Average score for governance and social responsibility is the highest compared to other sub-dimensions in the National, Tamil or Chinese type primary schools. Communication and organization performance ranked second for National and Tamil type primary school, while Ethical behavior ranked second for Chinese type primary school. Vision and values was ranked last by all the 3 types of primary schools.

Table 3A: Ranking of National Primary School's Performance Sub-Dimensions

SUB-DIMENSION	AVERAGE SCORES	RANK
Ethical Behavior	74.60	3
Governance and Social Responsibility	86.06	1
Communication and Organization Performance	78.28	2
Vision and Values	48.85	4

Table 3B: Ranking of National Type Primary School's Performance Sub-Dimensions (Chinese)

SUB-DIMENSION	AVERAGE SCORES	RANK
Ethical Behavior	82.83	2
Governance and Social Responsibility	85.02	1
Communication and Organization Performance	77.16	3
Vision and Values	49.93	4

Table 3C: Ranking of National Primary School's Performance Sub-Dimensions (Tamil)

SUB-DIMENSION	AVERAGE SCORES	RANK
Ethical Behavior	74.60	3
Governance and Social Responsibility	84.26	1
Communication and Organization Performance	77.78	2
Vision and Values	73.20	4

4. CONCLUSION

The study found that out of 70 schools surveyed, 49% schools scored an average range of 70% to 79% and 16% scored a range of above 80% in leadership performance. This showed that leadership performance is an important factor in the primary schools.

Under the four dimensions of leadership performance, it can be seen that governance and social responsibility is the most important dimension from the perspective of all types of schools surveyed, whether the National, Tamil or Chinese type primary schools. As government sponsored schools it is expected that the schools have the same degree of conducive and safety environment for the students. And this is reflective in the study carried out. The difference came in the second dimension ranked by the schools. The National and Tamil type primary schools ranked communication and organization performance as the second important dimension but the Chinese type primary schools ranked ethical behavior as the second important dimension in leadership performance. The difference could be due to the different culture background of the schools.

The school leadership performance index can be used as a tool to measure education criteria for performance excellence. This instrument can also be used to rank Malaysian primary schools.

As a mechanism for monitoring and supervision of efficient allocation of resources, this index can also provide data to the Ministry in identifying struggling schools in various districts so that achievement of government policies can be assessed. This index is a generic innovative tool and the first of its kind in Malaysia. It is about providing transparency of the education system both within the school and in the Ministry as a whole. It can be further develop to address various criteria and needs of Malaysian education system and the region. It is not a long time for it to become the core of emerging method of managing education.

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