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PRIMARY HEADMASTER IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MALAYSIAN
NATIONAL EDUCATION BLUEPRINT:
PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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P-12 Leadership

By

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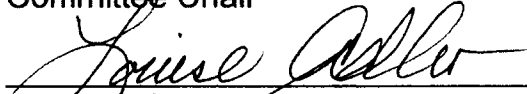
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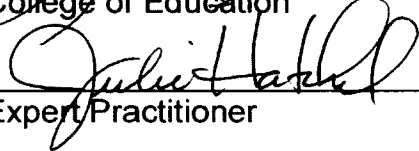
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ABSTRACT

The implementation of the Malaysian National Education Blueprint 2006-2010 (NEB) expanded headmasters' responsibilities and roles in managing schools. One of the NEB goals is to stabilize and strengthen the primary school education system, which brings tremendous pressure to bear on the headmasters charged with managing schools. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the problems and challenges confronting primary school headmasters in Selangor, Malaysia. This study is grounded in the pragmatic worldview and concerned with applications and solutions that face educational leaders today.

This study addresses the leadership of primary school headmasters. Data was collected from nine sample schools, involving nine participants in the state of Selangor, through interviews, observations and document reviews. Triangulation of data and member checks were used to establish the validity of data.

The analysis of qualitative data from nine public primary school headmasters yielded the following findings: (a) the empowerment of Malaysian education focuses on the public school and emphasis was given to the primary level of education; (b) headmasters felt prepared and able to manage their school curriculum and finances following the guidelines from the National Education Blueprint 2006–2010; (c) credibility, ability, vision and visibility were identified as the most effective leadership traits of a successful school leader and

instructional, charismatic, transactional and transformational leadership styles were identified as leadership styles that could be used in managing the school; (d) the NEB requires headmasters to follow standard guidelines and achieve the goals listed in the national plan; (e) the headmasters indicated the implementation of the NEB put pressure on their roles and responsibilities: (f) headmasters expressed their disappointment regarding the lack of training provided by the Ministry of Education to the teachers and support staffs; (g) headmasters felt that they need to allocate some time to discussing and implementing the school strategic plan, to taking a recess or break to recharge themselves, and to collaborating with teachers and students' families regarding student improvement plans.

The findings will make a significant contribution to educational leadership by providing a general understanding of headmasters' roles, leadership and challenges in managing primary schools.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Government sponsored public schools are one form of education in Malaysia (Education in Malaysia, n.d). The national education system is centralized for both primary and secondary education with the state governments having little control or say in most of the major aspects of education. The Malaysian national goal of education is to develop a world-class quality education system, that will realize the full potential of the individual and fulfill the aspirations of the Malaysian nation (Ministry of Education, 2004a). The headmaster of each school is considered the most important person needed to accomplish this educational goal. As a leader and manager, the headmaster is key for school improvement and student achievement (Bernhardt, 2004). School administration under the leadership of a headmaster requires a variety of skills and competencies related to leadership, experience teaching and administrative ability. Because the headmaster plays a vital role in fulfilling the mission of quality education in Malaysia, research needs to be done to identify what constitutes quality leadership for primary Malaysian headmasters.

This chapter begins with a review of the background of the problem, followed by the statement of the problem, the purpose statement, the research questions, a look at the significance and scope of the study, definitions of key

terms, and a discussion of the limitations of the study. The chapter concludes with an overview of the organization of the dissertation.

Background of the Problem

Education in Malaysia has undergone tremendous changes and development since the nation achieved full independence from Britain in 1957. From a diverse and fragmented system of education based upon communal needs, it has evolved into a cohesive national education system, responding to national aspirations, economic progress and technological developments by transforming its philosophy and focus over the years (Ministry of Education, 2004b).

Malaysia's major ethnic groups are the Malays, Chinese, and Indians. After the end of British colonial rule, Malaysia retained many characteristics of the British educational system including separate schools, and differing media of instruction, curriculum, methods and standards for the various ethnic groups. However, the Education Act of 1961 marked the beginning of a process of changes in the education system that gathered momentum in the 1970's. This process focused on building national identity and creating a skilled population to help promote economic development. The Act made the Malay language a compulsory subject at all levels with a passing grade necessary for the award of a school certificate.

New legislation in 1996, affecting both the public and private education systems, marked the beginning of major changes in the development of the Malaysian education system (Ahmad, Tie, & Hussein, 2008). A modern

approach to development and technology is increasingly being extended into the educational field in an attempt to meet the challenges of the 21st Century through education and training and to further ensure the quality and the consistency of education. More teachers have been recruited, new schools and better facilities have been built, the government has improved the quality of teacher training and the efficiency of the management of the education system, and headmasters leadership skills have been recognized as important elements in the drive to improve school performance and student achievement.

The Malaysian education system is fairly standardized (Ali, Isa, & Ibrahim, 2011). Education is the responsibility of the federal government and Malaysia is committed to providing education to all children. The Malaysian Education System provides 11 years of primary and secondary schooling with compulsory primary education. *The 9th Malaysia Plan* for the years 2006 to 2010 (Economic Planning Unit, 2006) placed importance on education, training and lifelong learning, investing a total of \$12.6 billion into education, about 21% of the total government allocations. While there are six legal regulatory frameworks to support the provision of education in Malaysia, only the Education Act of 1996 directly affects a headmaster's ability to fulfill the educational mission.

The recognition of the headmasters' leadership role and leadership in managing public primary schools in Malaysia was written into the Education Act of 1996. As leaders, headmasters are responsible for ensuring that all students learn (Harun, 2008; Jantan, 2004; Mahmood, 1997). They have the responsibility to lead and to work on school improvement and student achievement.

Headmasters, however do not have full autonomy in making decisions about school finances (Marzuki, 2004).

The Ministry of Education Malaysia may appoint anyone who works in the public education system or government service as headmaster. However, in most situations a teacher already employed in the school is selected based on his or her experience in teaching or in a variety of administrative capacities. Most teachers who have been appointed as school headmasters have only an educational certificate, which allows them to teach and rely on their own work experience or the government administrative handbook (Mahmood, 1997). When teachers are appointed as headmasters without professional administrative training, they often face problems trying to become effective school leaders (Alvy & Coladarci, 1985). This was reflected in The Aziz Report of 1971 that reported, that the standard of administration in schools is generally below expectations (Kuala Lumpur Educational State Department, 1982). Some head teachers have little or no training in administrative work and have to rely on their own judgment, guided perhaps by the school clerks who, in many cases, are themselves not well qualified or equipped to carry out many administrative functions (Ministry of Education, 2001b).

Problem Statement

This study focuses on headmasters' roles, responsibilities, and leadership skills in managing public primary schools in Malaysia. Public primary schools were chosen because they were the focus of the National Education Blueprint 2006-2010 (NEB). Headmasters in Malaysia have made significant efforts to

improve student achievement and school performance under the NEB.

Headmasters have important roles in leading schools and are central to student learning and success (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). The implementation of NEB resulted in the expansion of headmasters' responsibilities and roles. This study addresses the leadership of primary school headmasters as stressed in the Chapters 3 and 6 in the NEB, which emphasize the need to stabilize and strengthen the primary school education system. One of the NEB's major thrusts is:

To increase the quality of primary and secondary education by improving student performance through reading, writing, and arithmetic (3R) skills; increase the development of social skills and basic computer skills; increase the mastery of Malay language, English language, Mathematics, and Science; improve the reading and writing skills of the Jawi script and reinforce national unity by introducing Mandarin and Tamil languages as subjects in national schools. (Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 2)

Pawlas (2004) said that a major issue in school administration is the nature of leadership. According to Jantan (2004) primary school in Malaysia requires headmasters to accept a variety of roles and responsibilities in managing schools. Despite the emphasis on instructional leadership, school leaders continue to be responsible for other duties such school safety, facility management, student discipline and budgeting, never ending tasks that absorb a considerable amount of their time (Doyle & Rice, 2002). These requirements affect headmaster leadership. Mamat (1998) mentioned that headmasters lack

training in implementing their roles as instructional leaders. Most of them are preoccupied with their everyday routine as administrators rather than focused on supervision and teaching (Mamat, 1998).

Without effective leadership, there is less of a possibility that schools can improve their performance and student achievement. Headmasters need core knowledge, as well as management skills, to inform and lead change (Miller, 2003). Harun (2008) found that most headmasters in Malaysia behave less than thoughtfully and are reluctant to improve themselves in terms of professional knowledge, personnel management, and leadership style. They also display low quality leadership, which slowly impacts the learning environment and they are therefore unable to achieve the NEB goals. Fullan (1991) stated, "The role of the headmaster has become dramatically more complex, overloaded, and unclear over the past decade" (p. 144). The notion of "leadership" itself has remained a vague and imprecise concept for many school leaders. Principles of leadership remain largely theoretical and fail to provide the headmaster with practical guidance for becoming an effective leader (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003).

The Malaysian primary headmaster has a significant role to play in directing the school toward achievement; however there are many situations where the headmasters lack instructional leadership skills and must rely on the advice of others who may not be well equipped to provide assistance. In 1993, the Ministry of Education School Division reported some headmasters are still unclear about their roles and responsibilities as instructional leaders. Much has been written in the literature concerning the importance of the instructional

leadership responsibilities of the headmaster (Fullan, 1991; Mamat, 1998; Pulau Pinang State Education Department, 2006; Zain, 1991). Student performance and school improvement require headmasters to provide instructional leadership and be responsible for the supervision and evaluation of employees. The instructional leader makes instructional quality the top priority of the school and attempts to bring that vision to realization (Philips, 2004).

The problem this study addresses is the lack of Malaysian primary school headmaster leadership in implementing their roles and responsibilities as addressed in Chapters 3 and 6 of the NEB.

Purpose Statement

This study identifies headmasters' roles and responsibilities in the leadership and management of primary schools in Selangor, Malaysia. Many Malaysian primary school headmasters have very little training in managing schools and have an authoritarian perspective of leadership (Ministry of Education, 2005). The headmaster makes decisions independently with little or no input from teachers. Such authoritarian or autocratic leadership perspectives tend to create division between the leader and the followers. It is important to identify the headmasters' roles, leadership style, and problems they face. The purpose of this study is to explore the problems and challenges confronting primary school headmasters in Selangor, Malaysia as they attempt to meet the NEB goals.

Research Questions

This study raises questions about headmaster leadership in public primary schools in Malaysia. Headmaster leadership can impact school performance and student achievement. In order to determine headmasters' roles and leadership style in managing public primary schools, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How does the National Education Blueprint 2006 – 2010 define headmasters' roles, responsibilities and leadership style?
2. Do Selangor primary headmasters' perceptions of their roles, responsibilities, and leadership style align with the NEB in terms of (a) school curriculum and instruction, and (b) school finance?
3. What are the challenges and difficulties encountered by Selangor primary headmasters in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities according to the NEB?
4. How do headmasters overcome these challenges and difficulties?

Significance

This study is important and will make a significant contribution to educational leadership by providing a general understanding of headmaster's roles and responsibilities associated with leading and managing primary schools as perceived by headmasters themselves. This study will also highlight the relationship between student achievement, school performance and the roles of headmasters as a leaders. This is supported by Bernhardt (2004) who stated that an effective headmaster increases student achievement and school

performance. Cotton (2003) claimed that strong administrative leadership is a key component of schools with high student achievement.

This study is suggested as a guideline to the Malaysian students who are interested in educational leadership focusing on primary school education. It is also hoped that this study will become a guideline for other researchers who seek to probe deeper in understanding management in centralized public education and will give insight to the policy makers and educational planners.

The findings of the study may also have implications for the preservice and professional development programs for training Malaysian school administrators, as well as the content and methodology of leadership preparation programs in Malaysia. The pre-service and in-service programs need to focus on instructional leadership in order to support the leader's development. This could be done through coaching, mentoring and networking.

It is hoped that this study will give information to the School Division, Ministry of Education and State Education Department regarding the changing roles in headmaster leadership, how headmasters manage fiscal allocation to the schools and the depth of knowledge headmasters need in order to manage schools under the NEB. Through this research, Finance Division, Ministry of Education and State Education Department can develop a plan to address identified needs of headmasters.

Scope of the Study

This study is about headmasters' roles, leadership, and responsibilities in managing public primary school in Malaysia. It focuses on the problem and

challenges faced by Malaysian headmasters with respect to the implementation of the NEB. The study only considers headmasters from the government schools in the State of Selangor, Malaysia. It was conducted within a specific time period limited to three semesters after receiving approval from the CSUF Institutional Review Board. This study is a requirement for the Ed.D K-12 program and is personally funded by the researcher.

Assumptions of the Study

This study has a number of delimitations and limitations, which need to be considered when interpreting the results and making considerations based on those results. For this study, I assumed that participants would respond to the interview questions truthfully and that all the documents reviewed are accurate within the scope of study.

Study Delimitations

This study focuses on headmasters' leadership in managing public primary schools in one Malaysian state, Selangor. Even though this study involved all nine educational districts in Selangor, the researcher cannot make generalization of findings to the other states in Malaysia. This study only focuses on the impact of headmasters' leadership using headmasters' perceptions.

Study Limitations

A limitation of this study will be the use of secondary data collected by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) and the National Statistic Department. A common issue in using secondary data is its validity. For instance in the process of educational data collection, MOE, through the Statistical Department and

Information Centre gather educational data by distributing annual questionnaires to regional offices and schools across the country. The questionnaires are returned to MOE for data entry. Because MOE does not have direct control over the process of compiling questionnaires completed by schools and regional offices, human error may exist. At the data entry level at MOE, additional human error may also occur. To reduce the risk of human error, MOE reevaluates and revalidates the output of data entry before publishing into the education statistics book.

Another limitation of the study is time lag in gaining up-to-date information from the field. In this study, I attempted to obtain the most current information available. Considering the process of data collection mentioned above, a several year time lag may exist between information from the field and the data becoming available at MOE. The results of the study, therefore, may differ from the current situation in the field. Nonetheless, this study may assist in providing a better picture about headmasters' leadership and in recognizing possible problems that exist in the field.

Finally, little research has been done on the primary school leadership in Malaysia. Most research does not focus on the challenges and problems faced by primary school headmasters. Therefore, there was little information in the literature or review about the study of headmasters' leadership in primary schools in Malaysia

Definitions of Key Terms

Headmaster Leadership. For the purposed of this study, headmaster leadership is defined as those skills exercised by the primary school headmaster who is knowledgeable, skillful, and influential in leading the school to achieve specific goals and objectives related to the educational mission and the overall purpose of education for public schools.

Instructional Leader. An instructional leader makes instructional quality the top priority of the school and attempts to bring that vision to realisation (Phillips, 2002).

Instructional Leadership. Instructional leadership incorporates behaviors such as making suggestions, giving feedback, modelling effective instruction, soliciting opinions, supporting collaboration, providing professional development opportunities, and giving praise for effective teaching (Blase & Blase, 2000).

Leadership. Leadership is a process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task (Chemers, 2002).

National Education Blueprint 2006-2010. The NEB is a handbook outlining four years of educational guidelines and strategies in Malaysia.

Primary School. In Malaysia, primary school consists of six years of education, referred to as Standards 1through 6. Students enter primary schools at the age of 7 and leave at the age of 12. Students are promoted to the next standard regardless of their academic performance (Education in Malaysia, n.d.).

Public School. In Malaysia, public schools are government sponsored schools administrated by the Ministry of Education (federal government), with help from the State Educational Department.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. In Chapter 1, I provided a context regarding the headmasters' leadership in managing public primary school in Malaysia, defined the problem and purpose of this study, discussed the significance and scope of the study, and provided definitions for key terms.

Chapter 2 presents the framework that guides this study as well as the literature review pertaining to the research questions. Chapter 3 contains the research design, including data collection and analysis methods. Chapter 4 presents the findings from the case study, including the findings of participant demographics organized by the research questions. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the dissertation including a discussion of findings, review of the implications for practice and further research and my recommendations for further changes in educational practices.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter begins with a discussion of the theoretical foundations and conceptual framework of this study. The extensive literature review, that follows focuses on the available empirical research on headmaster leadership, leadership theory, the needs of instructional leadership, and student achievement and performance. Following is an examination of the literature on the headmaster's role in curriculum and school finance. The next chapter concludes with a brief summary.

Theoretical Foundation

This study is built upon the theoretical foundation of pragmatism. *Pragmatism* is derived from the Greek word meaning "action" and was first introduced into philosophy by Charles Peirce in 1878 (James, 2008). Pragmatism is a way "to hold on to facts and values, religion and science, nature and spirit, concrete temporality and intimacy, causation and hope" (Stuhr, 2003, p. 181). According to A. J. Ayer, "pragmatism was thought to be a distinctly American product" (as cited in Smith, 1978, p. 7). Bacon (2012) presents pragmatism as "resulting from conjunction of a particular series of events." One of the most influential philosophers in shaping this theoretical foundation was John Dewey. Dewey's early idealism gave way to an empirically based theory of knowledge or an American school of thought known as pragmatism (Dykhuizen, 1973).

Pragmatism is relevant to understanding the headmasters' leadership and roles in primary and secondary education because the theory supports the concept that the purpose of education is to enable individuals to reach their full potential as human beings, individually and as members of a society (Dewey, 1916). Based on a pragmatic view, "norms of behavior are generated within an ongoing organizational context where decision makers are coping with everyday, ordinary problems occurring as a result of organization-environment [or business and society] interactions" (Frederick, 2000, p. 469).

This dissertation pragmatically reviews education as a learning process that focuses on societal and individual purposes. Gauch (2006) mentions that this approach "constitutes an overall perspective on life that sums up what we know about the world, how we evaluate it emotionally, and how we respond to it volitionally" (p. 2)

Review of the Scholarly Empirical Literature

This review of the literature, combined with my experience and insights, has contributed to the development of the conceptual framework of this study.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is grounded in two categories (a) headmaster leadership, and (b) headmaster roles in managing schools. Figure 1 shows the roles of the headmaster as an instructional leader and school manager under the NEB. The major concepts discussed in this chapter include the role of the headmaster as a leader, leadership theory, school performance and student achievement and the needs of instructional leadership in managing a

school. In order to ensure school effectiveness, headmasters should have strong instructional skills, good instructional management, and should provide effective instructional learning.

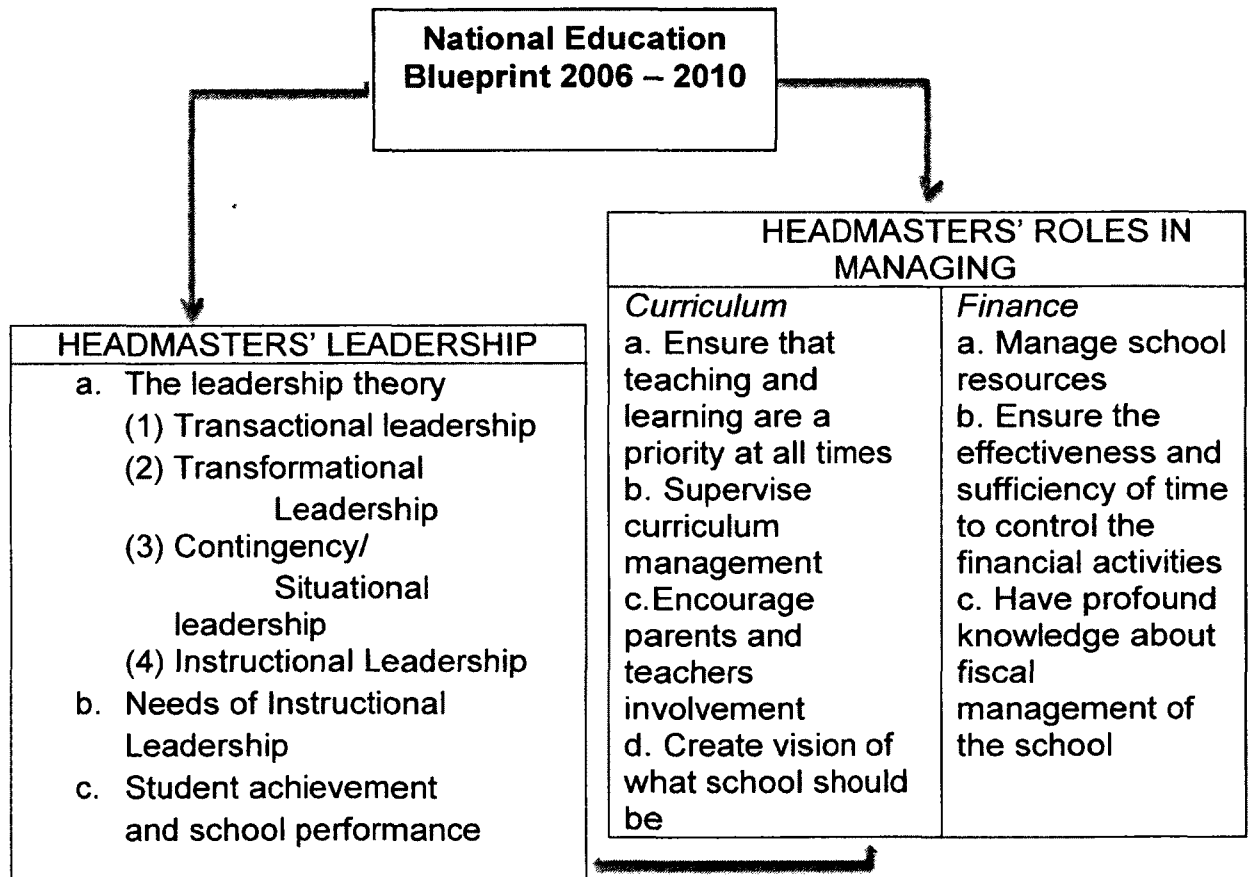


Figure 1: Conceptual framework.

Headmaster Leadership

The NEB states that the headmaster is a leader in school organization (Ramli, 2010). The blueprint was drafted to implement and to realize a holistic, progressive and world-class educational system. As mentioned in the NEB (Ministry of Education, 2006), one way to improve school performance is by

strengthening and stabilizing headmasters' leadership. Under the NEB, headmasters are expected to meet the needs and interests of many stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, district office officials, union leaders and state and federal agency officials (Ministry of Education, 2006). In order to meet the NEB's mandate, headmasters need to have strong leadership skills.

Headmasters are leaders who determine the success of a school (Leithwood et al., 2004). They are individuals who are positioned within the school to evaluate the curriculum and carry out the supervision process (Parkay, Hass, & Anctil, 2010). They play an important role in determining the standard of curriculum development, student performance and school effectiveness (Benis & Nanus, 1985). According to Fullan (1982), headmasters are the most important people making changes in the school. In some Malaysian public primary schools, headmasters are also responsible for managing school finances (Marzuki, 2004). Hoy & DiPaola (2008) concluded that headmasters are expected to set clear goals, allocate resources, manage the curriculum, monitor lesson plans and evaluate teachers. They take the lead to set and improve the school curriculum, guide teachers in determining the best objectives for the students, design high-quality learning opportunities for pupils and help select reliable assessment methods to determine whether the aims have been met (Ediger & Rao, 2003). Mahmood (1997) states that a headmaster should be a leader who leads a school to success and suggests headmasters should ensure all students receive a basic education. He also stated headmasters need to know how to divide their

time to ensure the excellence of academic achievement, although they are busy with other tasks and responsibilities. In his study, Maxwell (2014) mentioned that school leaders' time is too often strained by other requirements of the job, however most of them spent almost half of their time on instructional activities.

Headmasters are expected to manage and administrate the school curriculum, support student welfare, assist teachers, support staff, provide adequate help to improve teaching and learning, and develop the school culture and climate. In general, the headmaster makes decisions about the school, students and teachers. As an instructional leader, the headmaster has a responsibility to ensure that teachers teach and students learn effectively. They need to master the skills of planning, organizing, directing and controlling the curriculum. Focus should be on maintaining academic excellence and building student character. Developing moral character in students is in line with the National Philosophy of Education:

Education in Malaysia continues developing 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 and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal well-being, as well as being able to contribute to the betterment of the family, the society, and the nation at large. (Ministry of Education, 2004a, p. 16)

As stated in the National Education Philosophy, it is the headmaster responsibility to help students develop good moral character.

Bass (1990) has said that the headmaster responsibility and leadership are critical factors for the success of any program in the school, noting that knowledge about leadership is a prime prerequisite if an individual is to be effective in the headmaster role. Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson (2008) support the view that successful organizations have one major attribute in common: dynamic and effective leadership. Leaders' competencies and influence lead the organization toward excellence. Thus, headmaster leadership in an organization such as a school is very important in determining organizational success. Malaysian Headmaster competency standards outline the roles and responsibilities that a school leader should meet in order to ensure school success (Institut Aminuddin Baki, 2006). These roles and responsibilities have to be performed competently by all headmasters regardless of the types of schools they have to manage. In studies of leadership, Edmonds (1979) mentioned that leadership is crucial in determining the success of an organization. Influence and leadership competencies lead to the excellence of an organization. Thus, it is crucial for organizations such as schools to have effective and efficient headmasters.

The Leadership Theory

Leadership is the process of directing behavior (Hartog & Koopman, 2002) and the ability to motivate others (Fiedler, 1967) toward the accomplishment of some objective. The central theme of leadership is getting things accomplished

through working with people. Biberman and Whitty (1997) define leadership as a spiritual relational process in the postmodern workplace. Some models derived from leadership theory have been used as a tool for school improvement. For the purpose of this study, four theories were discussed: transactional leadership, transformational leadership, contingency or situational leadership and instructional leadership.

Transactional leadership. Berne (1984) discusses the effect of transactional leadership on an organization. Maslennikova (2007) says transactional leadership is primarily based on rewards for good work and punishment for mistakes. Burns (1978) gives a similar definition for transactional leadership saying that the transactional leader is given power to perform certain tasks and to reward or punish for the team's performance. In transactional leadership theory, leaders believe that their subordinates are hired to perform for organizational effectiveness. In return, they are paid for their effort and compliance. However, if they fail to perform or do something wrong they are punished (Avolio & Bass, 2008). Transactional leadership use rewards and punishments to promote performance, thereby making the leader-follower relationship an economic exchange transaction (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999; Bennett, 2003; Gellis, 2001;). Transactional leaders are considered to be those who focus on the motivation of followers through rewards or discipline. Transactional leaders clarify the kinds of rewards that should be expected for various behaviors for their followers. These leaders actively monitor deviance from standards, mistakes and errors or sometimes they may passively wait for

followers to do something wrong (Bass & Avolio, 1994). George and Sabhapathy, (2010) have said that the transactional leader does not individualize the needs of subordinates or focus on their personal development. In his research, Oluremi (2008) found no significant relationship between transactional leadership and school learning culture.

Transformational leadership. One of the most important styles that Burns (1978) identified within his leadership theory was transformational leadership. Leithwood's (1993) theory of transformational leadership explains that this style fosters the acceptance of group goals, communicates high performance expectations, and challenges people intellectually. He finds that transformational leaders pursue three fundamental goals: helping staff develop and maintain a collaborative, professional school culture; fostering teacher development; and helping teachers solve problems more effectively. He also identifies a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and school improvement. Sergiovanni (1990) also states that transformational leadership is able to improve student achievement, which will improve school performance. Transformational leadership has proven to be useful in many different cultural and organizational contexts (Bass, 1997) including educational organizations (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990). However, Poplin (1992) notes that great administrators are not always great classroom leaders and vice versa. Headmasters with transformational leadership skills often have difficulty in finding the right balance between leadership and power (Leithwood, 1992). They often

concentrate on the growth of students but rarely look at the growth of teachers (Liontos, 1992).

Contingency or situational leadership. The theory of contingency or situational leadership assumes a leader's ability to lead in various situations (Bass, 1990; Fiedler, 1967; Hartog & Koopman, 2002). This theory assumes that different situations will require different leadership characteristics (Fiedler, 1967; Hemphill, 1949). Hoy and Miskel (1987) list four areas of situational contingency leadership: "structural properties of the organization, organizational climate, role characteristics, and subordinate characteristics" (p. 273). The contingency or situational leadership is based on the idea that there is no single best way to manage (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2008); to be effective, management activities such as planning, leading and controlling must be tailored to the particular circumstances faced by an organization (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). Despite the advantages, contingency or situational leadership reveals the complexity of leadership styles (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) and remains insufficient as a theoretical guideline, because the theory cannot predict which leadership skills will be more effective in which situations (Donaldson, 2001). Another limitation of this theory is that it fails to explain what action should be taken in an organization or school when there is a mismatch between the leader and the situation in the workplace (Hoy & Miskel, 1987).

Instructional leadership. The concept of instructional leadership emerged in the 1980s, focusing on school curriculum and instruction. Recent research on school leadership has discussed the benefit of instructional

leadership for school administrators and school leaders (Ang & Ramiah, 2009). Instructional leadership is reflected in the action that a leader takes to promote growth in student learning (Debevoise, 1984) and school improvement (Smith & Andrew, 1989). An instructional leader is a headmaster who emphasizes the process of teaching and learning and facilitates the interaction of teachers, students and the curriculum (Smith & Andrew, 1989). In Malaysian instructional leadership, a school leader is a major player in determining school curriculum. The headmaster encourages educational achievement by making instructional quality a priority and works toward the realization of the school mission and vision. This responsibility is not given to the assistant headmaster or teachers, because it encroaches upon their ability to focus on school academic achievement and student-learning outcomes. Jemaah Nazir Sekolah Persekutuan (2004) lists some characteristics of being an effective instructional leaders in managing Malaysian schools such as the ability to achieve the school vision, mission, and goal; having expertise in the content, theories and teaching-learning methods; having high expectations for students' ability to learn; demonstrating the ability to inspire and stimulate students toward excellence; helping special need students; and guiding the development of effective lesson plans and good classroom management.

Needs of Instructional Leadership

It is the role of an instructional leader to overcome school instructional problems. Charged with managing schools, headmasters often face many challenges and difficulties in their role of strengthening and stabilizing their

schools. As leaders, headmasters must develop and strengthen their instructional skills to overcome school problems or difficulties. Amalhaj (2009) mentioned that headmasters must have high instructional skills to provide effective guidance in aspects of teaching to teachers. By having a higher level of knowledge, they will gain respect and at the same time be able to improve teaching and learning practices in the classroom.

Instructional leadership matters for both the headmaster and teachers. Headmasters with good instructional skills are able to assist their teachers to deliver quality instruction to their students. Meanwhile, teachers will gain expertise in curriculum and teaching, and in mastering a substantive body of knowledge (Hoy & Hoy, 2006). In 2006, the School Division under the Ministry of Education Malaysia realized the importance of promoting instructional leadership among headmasters and implemented a program to strengthen and improve leadership skills.

Shum and Cheng (1997) noted the importance of instructional leadership that influences school effectiveness, educational performance and reform. Effective instructional leadership is an important expertise required by headmasters in order to face the challenges of increased demands in student performance and school improvement. Instructional leadership combined the knowledge and skills headmasters possess and employ in order to effectively support their academic programs (Shellard, 2003). English, Frase and Arthar (1992) note that instructional leadership involves “bringing together the best learning theory, motivational psychology, human growth and human development

principles into a work structure and culture” (p. 24). Hallinger (1989) has proposed the systematic development of an instructional leadership team to carry out the critical functions of curriculum, instructional coordination and supervision. The system consists of “a rationale, a framework, a process, a method for assessment and an approach to develop skills of team members” (p. 319). According to Acheson and Smith (1986), “an instructional leader is an administrator who emphasizes the process of instruction and facilitates the interaction of teacher, student and curriculum” (p. 20). In other words, instructional leadership encompasses anything leaders do to improve teaching and learning and overcome school problems by gathering evidence of student achievement that demonstrates improvement (King, 2002). Excellent leadership will create an excellent school. Instructional leadership can improve school performance and assure quality education (Heck, 1992), promote growth in student learning (Acheson & Smith, 1986) and solve school problems (King, 2002).

Student Achievement and School Performance

According to Cotton (2003), one of the challenges faced by headmasters is maintaining high levels of student achievement and school performance. Headmasters’ leadership affects student achievement, and student achievement determines school performance. Mahmood (1997) describes excellent schools as those able to produce high academic achievement, reduce discipline problems and build confidence among the teachers. Abdullah (1995) supports this statement by saying that excellent schools are schools that achieve the best

quality in all areas related to academics, management, communication, infrastructure and leadership.

To bring excellence to a school, headmasters should focus on student achievement, organize and manage teaching strategies, provide and maintain a positive school climate, regularly assess students' academic performance, help coordinate the teaching program, and encourage their teachers (Marzuki & Ghani, 2007). Mortimore (1991) concludes that effective and excellent schools are schools that show greater students improvement and progress more than expected. Sergiovanni (1987) defines effectiveness of an excellent school as based on school improvement and performance. He lists six criteria for measuring excellence:

1. Improvement in test scores.
2. Improvement in attendance.
3. Community and parent involvement.
4. Student involvement in curriculum activity.
5. Recognition for parents and students.
6. Full support for special need students.

It is important to have systematic management practices in order to improve student achievement and school performance. Management practices include all the school management functions, such as planning, organizing, leading, controlling human resources, and overseeing curriculum, extracurricular activities, staff development, finance, and the environment. The role also includes duties of administrators, managers, leaders, educators, and teachers.

Ghazali (2007) lists characteristics a headmaster must possess in order to improve student achievement and school performance based on the systematic management practices:

- Passion in the job.
- Vision to achieve goals.
- Focus on academic progress.
- Resiliency in facing the challenges and obstacles.

Headmasters need to use a variety of methods or programs related to current information and technology to drive school improvement. Collaboration and teamwork promote improved school performance. Such practices can lead to learning and teaching effectiveness and can have an impact on student achievement and school performance. Without the participation of all parties, planning may fail or be ineffective.

To ensure student achievement and school performance, the Ministry of Education (2006) stressed four main areas found in the NEB: (a) access to education, (b) equity in education, (c) quality in education, and (d) educational efficiency. Based on these thrusts, the Ministry of Education planned and implemented its educational development policy to achieve educational goals. By emphasizing leadership skills, the policies and objectives listed by the Ministry of Education were designed to drive school improvement and success, which in turn helps headmasters to overcome school challenges.

Headmasters' Roles in Curriculum

Based on the headmaster competency standard in Malaysia, one of the requirements for being a school leader is having knowledge and skills in managing and handling the school curriculum. Curriculum embraces every planned aspect of a school's educational program (National Middle School Association, 2010). Alias, Yusof, Mustapha, and Ibrahim (2008) state that school leaders should ensure that teaching and learning are the priority at all the time, supervise the teaching and learning process, and enhance cooperation among all parties for an effective teaching and learning process.

A school headmaster is required to think conceptually and strategically in order to achieve school goals. Four main headmaster roles that lead to school success are planning, organizing, leading, and controlling (Institut Aminuddin Baki, 2006). Headmasters need to spend time on planning and organizing school curriculum and instruction (Stronge, 2007) so they can effectively carry out the functions of curriculum leadership (Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach, 2003). Effective headmasters must understand how planning, organizing, leading and controlling are used to achieve school success (Kirk & Jones, 2004).

Headmasters have full responsibility for effective teaching and learning in their schools. In order to successfully develop an effective teaching and learning environment, headmasters must have a vision of what they want the school to become. This vision should be encapsulated within the school curriculum (Grigsby, Schumacher, Decman, & Simieou, 2010). An effective school curriculum is dependent upon headmaster leadership and the appropriate use of

multiple teaching and learning approaches at the school (Davis, Darling, LaPointe, & Mayerson, 2005; National Middle School Association, 2010). It is important that teaching and learning approaches should accommodate diverse skills (National Middle School Association, 2010), attitudes and knowledge (Dolceta, 2011) and discovery learning and just-in-time teaching (Prince & Felder, 2007) in order to meet the national goals of education based on the National Education Philosophy.

Headmasters' Roles in Managing Finance

Marzuki (2008) notes that the school leader is responsible for managing the school's financial activity. Effective financial activity impacts effective education (Burrup, Brimley, & Garfield, 1996). Davies and Ellison (1997) believe that schools should be given freedom to decide their financial activities. In Malaysia, some excellent schools or "cluster schools" have the autonomy to manage their school finance (Marzuki, 2008). In managing school finance, headmasters should have strong financial knowledge (Hallinger, 1989). Headmasters can play a crucial role in improving fiscal matters; consequently, they must have the leadership skills and fiscal knowledge to exercise autonomy and authority to pursue financial strategies effectively (Usdan, McCloud, & Podmostko, 2000). To meet this objective, Ministry of Education Malaysia is providing new headmasters with financial and administrative courses to ensure they understand funding sources and are able to manage school fiscal matters (Ministry of Education, 2006).

The effective headmaster must be knowledgeable about funding sources and the specific operational areas in which funds can be utilized (Marzuki, 2004). Pijie (2001) and Marzuki (2005a) describe the following roles in handling the school financial management:

- Preparing for yearly school budgeting and school audit.
- Managing per capita claim, allocations, expenditures, payments, staffs' salaries, students' scholarship, school funds, and bookshop and canteen financial activity.
- Coordinating the schools' account books, stock, central equipment, cashbooks for government fund, non-government allocation account, hostel account and retail cash transactions.
- Ensuring all the fees and SUWA payments together with other resources are made correctly, stock book is updated, and all the procedures work well
- Ratifying all the payment made for examinations, overtime allowance, retail cash and trips.
- Serving as chairperson for every tenders and schools' quotation.
- Serving as financial board secretary and school management board.
- Complying with the procedures and needs as set by the school audit.

The Malaysian Federal Department of Education (Jabatan Pendidikan Wilayah Persekutuan, 1982) suggest that the role of school headmasters related to school finance should be centered on managing and supervising school facilities and supplies. The headmaster should focus on preparing the school

budgeting, purchasing school equipment, banking, and monitoring and coordinating school accounts.

The Malaysian Federal School Inspector (Jemaah Nazir Sekolah Persekutuan, 1993) describes the roles of the headmaster as that of financial administrator. As financial administrator, the headmaster should ensure the school has a systematic financial system and that the allocations are accurate and prepared in time. It is the headmaster's responsibility to establish the school financial committee in order to help them manage school financial activity. The effective financial administrator must be knowledgeable of the funding sources and specific operational areas in which the funds can be utilized. The headmaster must educate the staff and community representatives on various aspects of school finance such as funding and financial operations.

The headmaster must periodically monitor expenditures and gather information on encumbered funds and fund balances and have a plan to assist the school staff in addressing emergency situations that may arise during the school year. Such a plan requires that the headmaster be fully aware of which funds can be transferred from one function or operational code to another. It requires the headmaster, whenever possible to have contingency funds available or to be knowledgeable about potential sources of contingency funds. Establishing contingency fund balances, particularly at the beginning of the budget development year, requires the headmaster to understand the rationale for creating the contingency funds balance and to be skilled in articulating that

rationale to the school decision makers in the budget development process (Marzuki, 2004).

Finally, headmasters are responsible for the wise, prudent, and effective use of financial resources allocated to the school. Inherent in this responsibility is providing skilled leadership and direction to the school planning team's assessment of the degree to which the financial resources allocated to the achievement of the school goals were effectively used. The resource allocation and reallocation process is driven by the goals that the headmaster and school planning team establish to meet the learning needs of students and the degree to which those goals are met each year (Harun, 2008).

Chapter Summary

The purpose of the current study was to identify perceptions about headmasters' roles and leadership in managing public schools in Selangor Malaysia. This research filled gaps in the literature and contributes to the understanding of headmasters' roles in managing Malaysian primary schools as perceived by the headmasters themselves. This research identified the relationship between student achievement, school performance, and the roles of headmasters as leaders. The following chapter provides a description of the methodology that was used in the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The problem this study addresses is the lack of leadership by Malaysian primary school headmasters in implementing the NEB. This chapter addresses the qualitative methodology used in this study. The chapter covers the following aspects of the research: the broad inquiry strategy and rationale for selecting the approach, setting, population, data collection methods, sampling and data analysis procedures.

Qualitative Methods Research

Qualitative research methodology is well suited to studying an issue in its natural settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Hatch, 2002). There is a need to explore the topic with a relatively small number of people to get accurate information about the topic (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative studies suggest the use of multiple sources of data, therefore triangulation of data will be used in this study (Creswell, 2013; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999) to validate findings. This case study focused on participants' perspectives (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Hatch, 2002). A case study is based on real life context (Creswell, 1994) and focuses on understanding the dynamics present within a single setting (Eisenhardt, 1989). By conducting a case study, I sought to investigate the headmasters' roles in leading and managing public primary schools in Malaysia

at a deep level and to obtain information regarding headmasters' beliefs, feelings, needs, responsibilities, and abilities in managing school.

Research Design

In Malaysia, primary schooling is compulsory beginning at age 7 and is completed by the age of 12 (grade 1–grade 6). The Ministry of Education stated:

Sensitive to the multi ethnic nature of its population, Malaysia has set up two categories of school: the National and National-type schools. National schools use Malay language as the medium of instruction and English is a compulsory subject, whereas National type schools use Mandarin or Tamil as the medium of instruction and Malay and English language are compulsory subjects. (Ministry of Education, 2001a, p. 27)

This study took place in all districts in Selangor. There are 635 schools in nine districts in the state of Selangor Malaysia, 429 National schools, 205 National-type schools, and one special education school. Selangor is Malaysia's most populous state, is located in the center of East Malaysia and had a population of almost six million people in 2011 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2012). It is the wealthiest state in Malaysia in terms of gross domestic product (GDP).

This study involved public primary schools in Selangor, Malaysia. Primary schools were chosen because of the focus mentioned in the NEB, which emphasized strengthening primary school education. Selangor was chosen for this study based on its reputation as a well-known education tourism destination

in Malaysia. Selangor also offers various quality educational services in a safe, cosmopolitan and convenient environment.

Selangor is divided into nine school administrative districts: Gombak, Hulu Langat, Hulu Selangor, Klang, Kuala Langat, Kuala Selangor, Petaling, Sabak Bernam and Sepang. This study involved headmasters and teachers in Malaysian National primary schools. One headmaster was randomly selected to represent each district.

Research Methods

This section describes the specific research methods that were utilized to apply the case study design in this study. Specifically discussed are the setting, sample, data collection, data analysis, and steps taken to ensure validity or trustworthiness of the data.

Setting

This study took place in the state of Selangor, Malaysia. Selangor has 635 schools in nine educational districts with 429 National schools, 205 National-type schools and one special education school. Selangor is Malaysia's most populous state and is located in the center of East Malaysia with a population of almost six million (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2012). It is the wealthiest state in Malaysia in terms of GDP.

Sample

Nine primary school [elementary school] headmasters one from each district were selected as participants. Participants selected for this study were the school leaders who have direct control in managing schools. Based on the *Lists*

of schools in Selangor retrieved from the Selangor State Education Department website, nine schools that have the same resources and received government allocation were selected for this study. The participants were drawn based on a convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling, in which the sample is drawn from that part of the population which is close at hand (Patton, 2002). That sample is called a convenience sample because the population selected is readily available and convenient to the researcher. The nine primary headmasters selected are all principals of fully aided government schools and the schools have similar characteristics in regard to their resources, sources of funding, curriculum and administration.

Data Collection and Management

This section consists of three sub sections addressing (a) instrumentation, (b) procedures for data collection, and (c) data management strategies. Data collection for qualitative research is based on written images and findings are reported as words (Creswell, 2009). It is focused on the collection and analysis of the words collected as evidence to build convincing findings for the study. For this study data collection started with the interview session with principals, which were approximately 45 minutes in length. All the data received through the interview session will be transcribed. Observations of the headmasters' roles were conducted in order to support the interview results. Documents related to headmasters' leadership, school performance and academic achievement together with the NEB report were also reviewed to support the validity of data.

Instrumentation. Merriam (1998) states that interactive methods of data collection are frequently used in qualitative case studies. This study relied on semi-structured interviews, observations and document reviews. I conducted interviews with participants based on structured questions. Participants were invited to participate in the study and were asked to confirm their interest by email (see Appendix E). The primary focus was on headmasters' roles as instructional leaders. To strengthen this case study, I used the observation and review of school documents related to headmasters' routines and responsibilities.

Interviews. To obtain information regarding the headmasters' role in leading and managing Malaysian public schools, I developed a set of interview questions related to the topic (see Appendix F). In qualitative research, researchers are seen as the "key instruments" because they are the ones that are conducting the interviews and documenting the spoken word (Creswell, 2009). The researcher sought opinions and suggestions from my advisor and colleagues about questions to ask prior to conducting interviews and followed nine steps in interviews as outlined by Creswell (2013, p. 166):

1. the researcher decided on the research questions,
2. identified interviewees,
3. what type of interview was practical,
4. used adequate recording procedures when conducting interviews,
5. designed and used an interview guide,
6. refined the interview questions and procedures through pilot testing,
7. determined the place for conducting the interview,

8. obtained consent from the interviewee to participate in the study, and
9. used good interview procedures during the interview.

Participants were asked a few purposeful questions to demonstrate their understanding in terms of their roles and the implementation of school procedure. There were six questions related to headmasters' leadership, 11 questions related to school curriculum, 11 questions related to school finances, and five questions related to the NEB. The questions were asked and recorded with audio recorder.

Observation. Observation is one of the key tools for collecting data in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). For this study, I used the non-participant observation procedure (See Appendix G). By choosing a non-participant observation, a researcher can record the information as it occurs without having a direct involvement with people or activity (Creswell, 2013). The primary reason for using observation was to check whether what participants actually do matches what they disclose during the interview. Another reason is to help the researcher illustrate a more holistic picture of what is going on within the school and capture the context or process in more natural circumstances. My observations documented headmasters' daily routines and roles in managing their schools and ensured alignment with the data collected through the interview. By directly observing the participants activities, I was able to develop a holistic perspective and understanding of the context within school setting. Observation protocols can take a variety of forms however for this study I used the observational protocol as guided by Frechtling and Sharp (1997): (a) describe

the setting, (b) identify the people, (c) describe the content of the intervention, (d) document the interactions, (e) describe and assess the quality of delivery of the intervention, and (f) be alert to unanticipated events that might require refocusing.

Document Analysis. I also reviewed the NEB Policy and school documents such as the prescribed preparation of expenditures budgets, school financial statements, and other documents related to curriculum and finance. Throughout this research, I focused on headmasters' role and leadership in managing the schools in terms of curriculum and finance in an attempt to determine the impact of leadership on school effectiveness.

Document analysis enables a researcher to obtain thoughts of participants in their own language (Creswell, 2013). It is important to review these documents to achieve research objectives. It also helps the researcher to assure accurate findings because what is said by headmasters may be different from what is seen during observation and what has been enumerated in National Education policy regarding headmaster's daily routines, schedules, and responsibilities.

Procedures. I obtained verbal consent from the Selangor State Educational Department and the Educational Planning and Research Division Malaysia in the initial stages of the study in order to avoid any restrictions or conflicts of interest. Written consent was obtained from the Ministry of Education Malaysia to conduct research in the state of Selangor (Appendix B). I then completed the NIH training course "Protecting Human Research Participants" and the CSUF Human Research Tutorial prior to conducting data analysis.

Finally, the IRB application was submitted and approved by the CSUF IRB board prior to any additional data collection or analysis for the purpose of this study (Appendix C)

Nine public primary schools in nine districts were chosen randomly from a list of primary schools in Selangor. Data collection started with the interview sessions with headmasters, which were held at a time based on headmasters' availability. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and took place at the headmaster's office. All recordings of interviews were transcribed. Observation and documents related to NEB were reviewed in order to make comparisons to the interview data.

Observations provided the opportunity to examine specific activities and explore the topic in detail. Nine observations were conducted in nine different schools within two months. Observations were held one week after the interviews took place at the participating school. I acted as a non-participant observer of the participant's daily roles as a school leader. The observations lasted approximately two to four hours and field notes were taken during the observations.

Meanwhile, reviewing school documents and literature helped me to develop an understanding of current knowledge and ideas on a topic. Document reviews helped familiarize me with any contrasting perspectives and viewpoints on the topic. Documents reviewed were related to the headmasters' role, challenges, problems, and issues in managing schools, as identified by the NEB. Reviewing these documents allowed the researcher to determine the relationship

that exists between interviews and observations. The information obtained from observation and documents reviewed are considered as supportive data and were used to compare with interview data.

Data management. Data management for qualitative research is the ways one stores, stocks, categorizes and makes sense of the data (Creswell, 2009). Agar (1980) mentions that it is important to review the data from instruments used, such as interviews for incomplete or missing data. He also suggests reading the interview transcription several times (Agar, 1980). Creswell (2009) recommends that the researcher draft an analysis plan and establish reliable coding as one of the methods in data management. For this study, I organized all the data into computer files that have a backup copy in a Dropbox folder. High quality tapes were used for audio recording during the interviews. All data including observer notes will have back-up copies (Davidson, 1996). I also developed a master list of types of information gathered as suggested by Creswell (2013). The data are stored in my private laptop and protected with a password.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

This section will address the steps in data analysis including preliminary data analysis; describing, classifying, and interpreting the data using codes and research questions to analyze the data; and displaying, explaining, and using graphs in an easy-to-understand format. This section also addresses the validity of the study and the role of the researcher and discloses potential biases in the study.

The data analysis was conducted in three steps. First, a preliminary data analysis was conducted on the interview transcriptions and field notes from observation. Undoubtedly there were some variations in conducting the process of preliminary data analysis (Creswell, 2013). Grbich (2007) states that the preliminary data analysis is an idiosyncratic process and each researcher must decide what works best for the study at hand. Yin (2004) calls this process explanation building. For this process, data collected through structured interview were audio recorded and transcribed, and the field notes taken during the observation were preserved in an observation book. All data were then analyzed by building a case explanation and interpretation. After an additional backup of the interview transcription and observation results, a marginal note was created with a list of emerging issues to be coded. The purpose of preliminary data analysis is to provide a description of the key features of the data and to summarize the content of the data in an easily understood format (Blischke, 2011). The ultimate goal of the preliminary data analysis is “to establish a process of checking and tracking the data to see what is coming out of them, identifying areas which require follow up and actively questioning where the information collected is leading or should lead the researcher” (Grbich, 2007, p. 25).

The process of preliminary data analysis led to the second step; describing, classifying and interpreting the data using codes and research questions analysis. Creswell (2013) states that “here researchers build detailed descriptions, analyze the research questions and provide interpretation in light of

their own views or views of perspectives in the literature” (p. 184). Wolcott (1994) mentions this process as relating categories to the analytic framework in literature. For this process, the information gathered from interviews, observation and documents reviewed was contextualized and compared with the framework from the literature reviewed in chapter 2. I first described the case study and its context before using the categorical aggregations to establish codes and patterns. Interpretation took place when I developed naturalistic generalizations of what was learned making sense of the data (Creswell, 2013). This helped link my interpretation to the larger research literature developed by others.

Finally, data received from the interviews, observations and documents reviewed were displayed, explained and compared in the data graphs in an easy-to-understand format (Creswell, 2013; Madison, 2005). I presented an in-depth picture of the case using narratives, tables, and figures. Miles and Huberman (1984) believe that data displays are designed “to assemble and organize information in an immediately accessible, compact form, so that the analyst can see what is happening and draw justified conclusions which the display suggests may be useful” (p. 21)

Procedures to ensure validity or trustworthiness. Triangulation of data from various sources was used for this study. Creswell (2009) mentions that collecting information using a variety of sources and methods is one aspect of what is called triangulation. Because a variety of sources lead to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), I used multiple sources of data collection. Multiple sources of data help in developing

“converging lines of inquiry” which are more accurate if data emanate from different sources of information (Yin, 2004). Additionally, employing triangulation as a part of the research methods allows for a broader understanding of the issues investigated and provides improved creditability for the findings.

Member checking was used to enhance validity (Creswell, 2009). In member checking, the researcher solicits participants’ views of interpretations and credibility of the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Lincoln and Guba (1985) considered the member checking technique to be “the most critical technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). This approach involves taking data, analyses, interpretations and conclusions back to the participants in order for them to judge the accuracy and credibility of the information.

Finally, to enhance the validity of this study, rich, thick description was provided for all interviews, observations and documents reviewed in order to help place the participants in the context and let participants determine if the situation described in the study applied to their situation. Creswell (2013) states that, “thick description means that the researcher provides detail when describing a case or when writing the research” (p. 252).

Role of the researcher. In qualitative research, the “researcher is the instrument” who interacts and collaborates with the participants (Klenke, 2008). As an interviewer I adhered to the eight protocols in conducting interviews as guided by Creswell (2013, p. 165):

1. decide on the research questions that will be answered by the interviewee;

2. identify the interviewee who can best answer her question;
3. determine what type of interview is practical such as telephone interview, one-on-one;
4. use adequate recording procedures;
5. design and use an interview protocol or interview guide;
6. refine the interview questions and procedures;
7. determine the place for conducting the interview; and
8. obtain consent from interviewee to participate in the study (p. 165)

I adhered to the interview questions and completed the interview within the time specified (Creswell, 2009). This study also involved the non-participant observations as a follow-up instrument to establish validity, as well as member checks and thick narrative. I acted as an outsider who watched, took field notes and recorded data from a distance without having direct involvement in the school (Creswell, 2013).

Disclosure of biases. For this study, the researcher conducted research in the state of Selangor. Malaysia consists of 14 states, however I decided that Selangor was the best place to conduct the study, because this research relied on personal expertise and firsthand knowledge to define the questions asked, and the manner of asking. The questions asked and the interpretation of the findings may have been influenced by my biases, including personal judgments about the significance of the data. Completely eliminating the influence of the researcher was not possible; however, I was careful and tried to avoid making

generalizations about Selangor. My bias was shaped by the fact that I was raised and went to school in this state.

I also dealt with a gender bias issue related to headmaster leadership behavior and self-perceptions. I believe that there is a significant difference in leadership styles between male and female headmasters however, I tried to avoid allowing any genders bias differences in term of skills and abilities among the headmasters.

Finally, I also anticipated that the headmasters' leadership skills and behavior were the same before and after the implementation of the NEB even though the headmasters' roles were expected change. This conclusion is based on reading literature and research pertaining to the headmastership and school improvement reform topics. I overcame my biases by being open minded to all evidence about headmaster leadership that might surface during my fieldwork.

Chapter Summary

This research explored the perceptions of nine public primary school headmasters who were serving in Selangor, Malaysia. Selangor is the most populous and rich state in Malaysia (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2012). This state is reflective of other states in Malaysia based on the fact that the enrollment rate of students for primary school is similar to that of Malaysian schools overall (Ministry of Education, 2004a). Participants involved in this research were people who directly lead and manage school instruction, curriculum and finances.

A qualitative case study design helped me obtain information regarding headmasters' leadership in managing primary schools in Malaysia. Interviews were used in order to seek participants' opinions and perceptions (Creswell, 2013). The interview format also allowed me to pursue a more in-depth discussion in a certain areas (Creswell, 1994). In addition to the interview method, I used the document analysis to collect comprehensive and historical information of participants' activities and policies and used this information as an evidence of findings. The data and information received from interviews and document analysis provided a context for the discussions in chapters 4 and 5.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore the problems and challenges confronting primary school headmasters in Selangor, Malaysia as they attempt to meet the NEB 2006-2010 goals. Interviews, observations, and document analyses were used for data collection. Data were reviewed and organized to identify codes. Categories were constructed using coded data from interviews, observations and document analyses. Findings were organized within identified categories to create figures and tables.

Findings are reported according to each of the research questions and organized into seven sections: an introduction, demographic data, sections for each of the four research questions, and a summary of the findings. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings from the data analysis.

Introduction

This study attempted to identify the required roles and responsibilities of primary headmasters in Malaysia. In addition, the research sought to identify problems and challenges headmasters experience with the goal of providing guidance for effective school management. In the preliminary data analysis, the terms *headmasters' leadership*, *headmasters' roles and responsibility*, and *instructional leadership* were defined and examples were provided to assure a commonality of language and consistency within the study. Findings revealed

that the headmaster's roles and leadership in managing schools to meet the goals of the NEB are challenging and require strong leadership skills.

Additionally, findings show a difference between headmasters' expectations and the reality of managing a school.

This study relied on interviews, observations and data collection methods. The interviews were conducted with nine headmasters of public, primary school in Selangor, Malaysia. Data were reviewed and organized, and categories were identified within the data (Lichtman, 2010). Four research questions guided this study:

1. How does the National Education Blueprint 2006–2010 define headmasters' roles, responsibilities, and leadership style?
2. Do Selangor primary headmasters' perceptions of their roles, responsibilities, and leadership style align with the NEB in terms of (a) school curriculum and instruction and (b) school finance?
3. What are the challenges and difficulties encountered by Selangor primary headmasters in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities according to the NEB?
4. How do headmasters overcome these challenges and difficulties?

Demographic Data

Demographic data collected as part of the interview included age, academic qualification, years worked in the field of education and total years as headmaster at the current site (Table 1). Additional information about the school

sites served by participants, including student population and numbers of teachers, is also provided.

Table 1 shows the number of participants ranging in age from 45 – 55 years. Four participants were male and five were female. All of the participants reported that they have worked in the field of education for 21 or more years, with one third indicating they had been in a position as a headmaster for more than 10 years. Only one reported experience as a headmaster for less than five years.

All participants reported having earned at minimum, a bachelor's degree, administrative credential and teaching credential. Two-thirds of the headmasters reported that they had a master's degree and teaching certificate, while the remaining one third of the participants reported having earned a bachelor's degree and a doctorate.

Table 1

Headmaster Demographic Data

Age		Gender		Years in Education			Years as Headmaster			Highest Degree		
45-50	51-55	F	M	21-25	26-30	31-35	4-7	8-11	12-15	BA	MA	Doc
4	5	5	4	2	3	4	4	2	3	2	6	1

Over three-fourths reported serving at their current sites for less than five years, indicating high transiency levels for Selangor primary school headmaster (Table 2). One of the headmasters believed that it is thought to be good practice to give a principal or headmaster term limits and move them every three to five

years to keep the school moving forward and help them develop new skill and experiences.

Table 2

Participant Experience in Current Site

Year	> 1 Year	1-3 years	3-5 years	5+ years
N	1	6	1	1

Note. N = Number of respondents.

Also included in the demographic section of the interview question was the information concerning school sites (Table 3). The size of the teaching staff, administrative staff and student population of each of the schools varied, with the majority of the headmasters having between 25 and 70 teachers and eight to 15 administrative staff members and serving between 600 and 1500 students. One school served a student population below 700 students compared to the rest of the schools in Selangor however, the percentages overall were comparable.

Table 3

School Site Information

Number of Teachers				Number of Students				Number of Administrative Staff members	
20-29	30-39	40-49	50+	600-799	800-999	1000-1199	1200+	5-10	11+
1	2	4	2	1	2	4	2	5	4

First Research Question

How does the National Education Blueprint 2006 – 2010 define headmasters' roles, responsibilities and leadership style? The NEB required the headmasters to prepare themselves to manage schools and overcome school challenges. It recognizes headmasters, assume a variety of roles and responsibilities in order to achieve these goals. Headmasters must be effective school leader and be able to deal with school curriculum and finances. They should have a clear and deep understanding of the policies, goals and objectives to be achieved as well as the strategies and action plans to be implemented. In terms of school curriculum, the NEB revealed that headmasters are responsible for establishing an effective school program by developing and implementing curriculum and professional development for teachers, encouraging good teaching and ensuring the effectiveness of teacher's instructional delivery. The NEB also requires school leadership to have a school mission, vision, and strategic plan. The objective of these NEB requirements is to increase student academic achievement and school performance.

The NEB gives headmasters autonomy to pick their administrative staff and teachers, as well as more autonomy to manage school finances. According to the NEB, headmasters have the support to generate and manage school finances. To accomplish this, every year the Ministry of Education provides training and workshops related to school finance. Headmasters and finance staff are required to attend these workshops in order to strengthen their knowledge and skills related to school fiscal matters. The NEB also requires headmasters to

effectively prepare the school budget, monitor expenditures and wisely spend their allocations.

The document review of the NEB (2006) revealed Malaysian education empowers the national school. Emphasis is given to the primary level of education since it is the earliest stage in helping students learn. Based on the NEB, primary school serves as a basis to inculcate and foster unity among the races in Malaysia. The fundamental goals of the NEB include

- Expanding the pre-school and primary school program under the Ministry of Education;
- Improving the provision of basic amenities such electricity and water supply;
- Improving the classroom and school facilities especially for schools in a rural areas;
- Providing new infrastructures for boarding school and improving the existing infrastructures;
- Increasing the number of transition classes and after-school program for schools in a rural area;
- Providing additional fund for free and reduced-price lunch programs; and
- Providing incentives for headmasters and teachers serving in rural areas.

To achieve these goals, the NEB emphasizes the primary school as an educational institution for all communities without interrupting the development of

Chinese and Indian medium schools (vernacular schools). To accomplish this, the NEB provides for:

- Monitoring the headmaster leadership,
- Developing the school infrastructures, and
- Having an additional preschool program.

The importance of primary education is also emphasized in the 9th Malaysian Plan and the Vision 2020 plan.

The interviews with nine headmasters provided evidence of their leadership in effectively creating and empowering their school communities. Findings from interviews confirmed one of the important factors in determining school success is leadership. This is aligned with the NEB's emphasis on headmaster leadership and skills as critical factors in improving the effectiveness of primary school education. Review of the documents indicated that the school leaders were asked to spend their time on the administrative work and managerial finance. As stated in the NEB, a headmaster

- Is an instructional leader,
- must effectively deal with any schools-related problem, and
- should develop a positive and direct relationship with teachers and students.

Second Research Question

Do Selangor primary headmasters' perceptions of their roles, responsibilities, and leadership style align with the NEB in terms of (a) school curriculum and instruction, and (b) school finance? The NEB describes the

headmaster as an instructional leader who is responsible to effectively overcome school problems, is able to develop a positive and direct relationship with teachers and students, and manages the school curriculum and finances. When asked about headmasters' roles and responsibilities, all participants agreed that the headmaster is an instructional leader who is responsible to provide guidelines for the best methodology in terms of school curriculum and finance. One of the participants stated "The headmaster sets the tone of everything from the academic goals to the discipline problem." Another participant said that "the headmaster manages the school curriculum, budget, students, teachers and respond to parent or community concerns."

Participants were asked about their leadership style and the traits of an effective school leader. One participant said, "The style is different depending on the person. It is the ways in which leaders see the leadership and carry it out to achieve the school's vision or goals." Another participant mentioned that headmaster leadership style influences every area and action taken and impacts a school's academic performance. One participant stated, "I develop strong and positive relationships with all of the people in my school, teachers, students, administrative staffs, and custodians, and use this relationship to motivate and to guide them in particular direction or to achieve the goals." Another participant said, "I think I am charismatic enough to pull people in my school along by the power of my personality. I always accomplish and advocate for wonderful things and I never forget to bring the people in my organization." Based on interviews, four out of nine participants stressed the importance of combining transactional

leadership with transformational leadership for school improvement. One participant said, "Transformational leadership is working toward a school vision and emphasis on task orientation, care and empowerment. Meanwhile, transactional leadership uses rewards as the basis of leadership. In my school, we empower our teachers and reward them for making a difference in children's lives."

Headmasters were asked to identify what they consider to be the most effective leadership traits of a successful school leader, and six participants identified credibility and the ability to develop leadership skills in others as their first choice. One participant stated that the most effective leadership trait of a successful school leader is having a vision for the school and a plan to achieve that vision and said, "If you do not know where you are going, how can you get there successfully?" The remaining participants mentioned visibility as the most effective leadership trait. All participants believed that headmasters must get out of their office as frequently as possible to be seen in the school.

School Curriculum and Instruction

As mentioned by one headmaster, "Schools need effective leaders to develop and plan the school curriculum and instruction. In the effective school, the headmaster acts as a curriculum leader and effectively manages the school operation." All of the participants indicated that major responsibilities of the headmaster were to a) develop the school program b) develop curriculum planning c) develop and create the school mission and vision, and d) develop the school strategic plan.

Develop the school program. When the participants were asked about the school curriculum and instruction, all participants mentioned that they believed headmasters are responsible for an effective school program. One of the participants said that “Unique characteristics of the effective school programs are correlated with student success and their academic achievement.” All participants agreed headmasters should ensure the development of the following aspects of a school program:

- After-school program.
- Reading library program.
- Antibullying program.
- Free breakfast and lunch program.
- Community involvement program.
- Information technology program.
- Integrated study program.
- Cooperative learning program.
- Mentor and mentee program.

Develop curriculum planning. Seven out of nine participants in this study mentioned curriculum planning for students as an important component of leadership because it encourages teachers to think about their teaching and reflect on their own practice and what they offer to students. All participants felt curriculum planning helped to promote student learning and development. One of the participants stated that “Good curriculum planning should include consistency of approach from all teachers, documentation of students’ learning and

development and careful analyses and interpretation that clearly shows how students are progressing toward the learning outcomes.”

One of the participants admitted a strong developmental perspective and believed that theoretical perspective and leadership style influence the way a headmaster plans curriculum. The respondent added, “curriculum planning should be based on individual development, and this development is determined by genetic and environmental influences.” This was different from the response of another headmaster who said, “In planning the curriculum, children have a right to be consulted and heard. That means curriculum planning considers learning from the student's perspective and teachers have to use critical reflection to make curriculum decisions.” This participant believed that having a critical perspective is important and influences the way a curriculum leader plans and develops their curriculum. Another participant mentioned that her school is using a professional curriculum planning module to better assist her to develop program plans for students that will best support their learning. That module helps her develop a whole school program and curriculum plans for students that reflect a strong understanding of the NEB's goals and standards.

Develop and create the school mission and vision. One of the participants said that school leaders must be able to inspire others to reach for ambitious goals. A shared vision should be recognized as a common direction of growth and help the school to be better. Another headmaster proposed that in effective schools “school leaders should clearly articulate the school mission and vision and help teachers and staff share an understanding of instructional goals,

accountability, and assessment and most importantly high expectations for the school." To be an effective curriculum leader, another headmaster suggested a principal should create common goals, build effective terms to implement goals, and engender commitment to accomplish the goals. Overall, headmasters in this study agreed that one of the important roles curriculum leaders possess is to plan and develop the school mission and vision.

Develop the school strategic plan. When asked about the school strategic plan, one out of nine participants was not able to show or discuss his school strategic plan. That participant was a newly appointed headmaster and had less than one year of experience in a school site. He was drafting a new school strategic plan and said, "It is not like we do not have a school strategic plan, currently we are using the old plan developed by previous headmaster."

One participant said one of the most important things in managing a school is having the school's strategic plan. He believed the purpose of developing a strategic plan was to refocus and engage the teachers and community to think, to act strategically, and to help the school continue to grow. Three participants mentioned the main purpose of having a school strategic plan is to educate students to be responsible and successful, and the aim is to improve student academic achievement. One headmaster said "The strategic plan made clear how we will use effective strategies to help students learn, and one key to successful planning is having a realistic, approachable and comprehensive assessment of the school strengths and weakness."

The participants in this study were aware of their roles and responsibilities in managing curriculum and instructions. All of participants were aware of their responsibility to (a) encourage good teaching, (b) increase student academic achievement, (c) ensure effective teaching and learning, and, (d) supervise curriculum management. All of the participants recognized their responsibility to improve student academic achievement by encouraging effective teaching. All headmasters agreed that in order to achieve these goals supervision plays an important role and that headmasters need to carefully supervise curriculum management. They all agreed headmasters continuously review the implementation of the written curriculum and teaching objectives. One of participants stated that the headmaster "shall educate teachers on the importance of instructional practice and effective curriculum by monitoring curriculum delivery." Another said, "It is headmasters' roles to review student academic achievement data and identify their learning needs. This can be done by supervising curriculum management". The participant added, "curriculum management plans include expectations and procedures for delivery of teaching and learning." One participant stated he conducted annual reviews of the curriculum and programs as outlined in his curriculum management plan, and he believed it was his responsibility to ensure his curriculum management plan included a complete list of teacher evaluation and student assessments.

School Finance

The headmasters in this study were spending a considerable amount of time helping to empower, train, inform and reward their teachers and staff to

ensure the effectiveness of school financial activities. All headmasters agreed that time was one of the most important factors in their roles in managing school finance. All of the participants agreed that school leaders needed to balance tasks and responsibilities effectively. They all said they allocated at least one to two hours daily to work on school financial matters. This included activities such as meeting with the school financial committee members, monitoring the cashbook, signing checks or vouchers, and/or revising stock books and receipts.

Eight of the participants mentioned that they are comfortable with the role of financial leader. One of the participants said, "Being a financial leader at school is never a burden, it is a gift." He added "It will be a burden if the administrators do not have knowledge and skills in that field." Eight participants reported feeling comfortable with the roles of financial leadership stating that the implementation of the NEB impacted the way they managed their school resources. Five participants pointed out that "the implementation of NEB required a lot of improvement, training, software, and hardware, however the amount of money needed versus the amount of money received was not adequate because it was based on the number of students enrolled." One participant felt less confident than the others with his role as a financial leader. He stressed the lack of training provided by the Ministry of Education for novice principals and their increased workload in achieving the NEB goals. He added, "Managing a *low enrollment* status school is different than regular school. Schools with *low enrollment* receive less money for activities and sports since the allocation given is based on the total number of students enrolled."

Five participants shared that a huge difference in managing school finance before and after the implementation of NEB was the headmasters' ability to spend money, while following the procedures and achieving the goals. Prior to implementation of the NEB, schools had more flexibility in spending their money the way headmasters thought was good for school improvement. After the implementation, each headmaster needed to follow the standard guidelines and achieve the goals listed in the NEB.

School finance training. In order to ensure the effectiveness in managing school finance, the Ministry of Education requires every school leader and financial committee member to attend finance workshops regularly at the district, national, or international level. Participants were asked, how often the Ministry of Education conducts workshops on school finance and when was their last training in school financial management. Four headmasters responded that they have a managerial finance workshop every four months. One said, "Training conducted either at the district level or the state level gives exposure on managing school finance and how to spend it wisely. It is not only for a headmaster but also for the school assistants, finance committee members and teachers." One participant voiced his disappointment with the lack of training provided by his district. He felt left behind in comparison to other districts when they only have one training a year related to the school managerial finance. He added, "I have brought this matter to the State Educational Department for further action. I believe that training once a year is not sufficient to provide

knowledge and experience especially toward novice teachers and school leaders.”

When asked about recent financial training, three participants stated they had training within the previous three months. Another four participants attended training within the previous six months and were scheduled to have another one soon. Only one participant had had his training approximately nine months previously. They all felt that the more training they received, the more skills and knowledge they gained.

All nine participants had basic knowledge in managing school finance, however, only one participant felt a lack of exposure and less confidence in managing the school finance in respect to the implementation of the NEB.

Preparing the school budgets and expenditures. As stated in the NEB, headmasters are responsible to prepare their schools' yearly budgets, ensure the effectiveness of curriculum methods, and to provide supervise the curriculum management. One of the participants said, “I do not prepare the school budgets and expenditures myself. The school is under a six-month improvement plan, and I was assigned a financial consultant by the State Educational Department.” The headmaster, however, stated that he was responsible to work with the financial consultant and ensure that expenditures conform to the budget and money is spent wisely.

When asked about headmasters' daily routines in managing school finance, most of the participants stated that it is the second thing they do after

classroom supervision or observations. All participants mentioned that the routines in managing school finance includes

- Preparing the school yearly budgets and expenditures,
- Overseeing the requisition and allocation of supplies,
- Managing school fees, collections, earnings and payments,
- Managing the cash book, and
- Managing government and non-subject per capita grant allocation.

All the headmasters also signed checks and reviewed all financial documents prior to approval. Based on observations and documents reviewed, the study revealed that all participants complied with the procedures for earning which include

- recording every transaction in a local order,
- recording every transaction in a book stock,
- making a quotation for the expenditure exceeding RM50,000 (\$18,000),
- applying for additional fund for expenditure exceeding RM10,000 (\$3000), and
- ensuring order received with receipt,

The participants also complied with the procedures for collection, which include

- issuing a receipt for every transaction,
- providing a registered stock for receipt book,

- issuing an authority letter to teacher in order to collect money from students and parents,
- preparing a quotation form for any collection, and
- all payment and collection is deposit into the school account on the same day it receives.

When asked about the procedure in making payments, all participants indicated they made payment within 30 days of a purchase, signing the check after all of the paper work had been revised, using the local order form for local purchasing, revising the balance in a school fund before making additional purchases, and getting an approval letter from the district office for any expenditure that exceeded their budget.

In managing their cash books, headmasters do a monthly check on the cash book, and close it by the end of the month. Headmasters prepare monthly bank statements and ask the internal auditors to revise the cashbook and record the business-related matter within the stipulated time frame.

The NEB requires every school leader to be knowledgeable regarding the procedures for managing school finance and involve others. This includes forming a school finance committee and the working collaboratively with the committee. All participants in this study were familiar with the internal control procedures and have the expenditure-planning book. These procedures are mentioned in the official Malaysian Treasury Instruction and School Financial Rules. Failure to comply with these procedures would result in a compliance audit report. If this occurred, an audit team would come to the school and

determine if the school is following the rules and regulations applicable to an activity prescribed by the Ministry of Education.

Based on the data, administrators and school leaders in selected schools have knowledge in managing school finance. All headmasters implement the Internal Control Procedures to ensure allocations received are correctly spent. All nine schools have an Internal Audit Division, consisting of teachers and senior teachers, to help the finance committee review school financial operations. All of the headmasters agreed that communication with teachers and administrative staff is very important to ensure an understanding of school finance. One participant said, "This knowledge and skills is important for school leaders and teachers in all types of school: primary, secondary, national-type, and Independent schools. School leaders must familiarize their teachers and staffs regarding the procedures in managing school finances to make the process effective." This statement was supported by the school documents; the financial document revealed that all nine headmasters conducted meetings with teachers that related to procedures for managing school financial issues at least once a month.

Third Research Question

What are the challenges and difficulties encountered by Selangor primary headmasters in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities according to the NEB? Although all of the participants seemed able to manage their school curriculum and finances following NEB 2006 – 2010, they still encountered challenges and difficulties. The implementation of NEB 2006 -2010 put pressure on the State

Education Department, school leaders and administrators. Implementation forced the State Education Department to raise expectations for school performance and academic achievement, which put pressure on headmasters. Most of the participants agreed that they experienced pressure to meet the expectations to improve student achievement and school performance particularly since students represent diverse social backgrounds and educational needs. One participant said, "Schools with less enrollment status or in a rural areas probably have much more pressure to achieve the goals and I believe that is a big challenge for them."

The NEB increased the workloads and expectations of headmasters. Lack of time was frequently mentioned as the major problem. Seven of the nine participants stated that they did not have enough time to deal with school curriculum and finance everyday. Three reported that sometimes they do not even have time to take a break. One headmaster stated, "The time is there, we just do not use it wisely, not creatively enough and we are stuck with other things." Another participant reported that time is a barrier to parent involvement; "Teachers, the headmasters and parents could not find ways to make time to work together to achieve the NEB goals and increase student academic achievement." Participants reported bringing home school-related paperwork and documents to finish. Another participant explained that "It is difficult to manage your time when the NEB has certain expectations, meantime you have to deal with paperwork, revise the school documents, approve the financial activities, visit the classrooms, supervise the teachers and attend meetings in one day.

Time is flying so fast and you still have a lot of unfinished business by the end of the day.”

When asked about other difficult things they have to deal with in respect to the implementation of NEB, all the participants indicated that they have limited financial capacity to develop the school infrastructure such as the classroom, library, reading room, and science laboratory. The allocation given by the government is based on the number of students and all of the participants mentioned that the per-capita allocation given by the government is not enough for the schools to use through the end of the year for student activities, software, and teaching aids. Additional allocations from non per-capita allocation were used to pay utility bills such telephone, electricity and water. Participants felt schools did not have enough funds to develop these infrastructures or spend on other things. They felt this happened because the price of goods and services has risen every year whereas provisions and government grants are based on a fixed rate. The impact is greater for schools in rural areas or schools with smaller enrollment status. One headmaster stated, “It is true that schools can apply for extra allocations, however it involves a lot of procedures and takes up to six months to get approval.” He added, “In certain conditions, especially after the mid-year, we have to cancel or reduced some expenses on certain things, such as software or teaching aids, due to lack of funding.”

Two participants mentioned that headmasters face the challenge of getting the curriculum implemented. According to one, “This happens when we have so many tasks to accomplish, goals to achieve and at the same time

manage students with different needs and background.” Based on the NEB, the system of education in primary schools in Malaysia has been established with a national curriculum to be used in all schools. Common central examinations at the end of school year for all grade levels are also being practiced to measure student academic achievement. One participant said, “The school curriculum is expected to contribute to individual student development and improve the quality of education, however, having this standardized curriculum is a big challenge for headmasters when we have to deal with cultural and social economic diversity of different ethnic groups in Malaysia.” Another participant said, “Writing the curriculum is much easier than implementing the curriculum. Its a challenge to implement a truly effective curriculum that will improve student learning when it was written by someone else and not the implementer.”

Four headmasters expressed concern about the lack of skill among teachers and other staff members. One headmaster stated that he noticed that many of his teachers lack training in school finance and are not able to effectively contribute or collaborate during meetings. Another headmaster mentioned that “sometimes I needed to answer simple curriculum or finance questions asked by teachers and administrative staff.” Another headmaster shared that she previously assumed that all of her teachers had the skill to effectively implement the curriculum and deliver effective teaching; “I made a mistake, I thought if I tell them what to teach, they know how to teach it, but they didn’t.”

One headmaster expressed his disappointment in the State Education Department and District office for the lack of training provided to the

headmasters, support staff and teachers. The interview data regarding the difficulties in managing school were consistent with the observation data, which revealed the lack of skill in the staff members and teachers of four selected schools. In two out of nine schools observed, headmasters reported that their staff members or teachers frequently bothered their headmaster every 30 minutes to 60 minutes with questions of *“how to or what do you think.”* The documents reviewed at three schools revealed the last training attend by headmasters was four to eight months, for administrative staff it was 11 to 12 months prior, and for the teachers it was about eight to 12 months prior.

Fourth Research Question

How do headmasters overcome these challenges and difficulties?

Participants interviewed were asked to identify the strategies or supports used to overcome challenges and difficulties in managing schools. Participants identified lack of time as the greatest challenge. Revising time allocation was also a means to overcome this challenge:

- “The priority is time. You need time to organize things accordingly.”
- “The headmaster needs time to sit down and look at the procedures in managing school finance, see what are the concerns and work collaboratively to address the concern.”
- “Allocate some time to collaboratively discuss and implement the school strategic plan”
- “*Quiet or recess time program* is a must”

- “Families, teachers and school staff members need time to get to know and learn from each other, and plan how to work together to improve students’ learning.”
- “Provide time during the school day for headmaster and teachers to meet with parents to discuss about student needs and achievement.”

All of the participants were asked how they addressed challenges related with school finance. A headmaster shared her disappointment with the late response from that district offices and State Education Department in processing additional or extra allocation funds, “For the last couple years, it took up to six months to process our application for additional funding, and six months was a long wait time.” To deal with this, participant reports, “We submitted the application on the first week of the school year, wrote an urgency letter and followed up with the district office every week. Consistently, we received the allocation two months after that.” Other responses to overcome the challenges related to managing school finance included

- “Since our school is a representatives for lower social economic status (SES) students, we get assistance from the Teachers Parents Association (TPA) to help with the school fees.”
- “We will write letters or call the parents to discuss the issues regarding lack of funding and determine what parents can do to help.”
- “We apply for additional allocation to overcome the shortage of non-subject per capita allocation for utilities and others bill, in advance.”

- “I use my authority to negotiate with the supplier to make a late payment.”
- “If the district is not offering managerial finance trainings or courses for staff and teachers within three months, I look for an expert to come and educate my teachers and staff, to make sure they are all equipped with school financial knowledge and procedure.”

Five out of nine participants said when they face the challenge related to curriculum and instruction; differentiated instruction worked best to overcome this problem. They agreed that this approach allows teachers to consider diverse student factors when planning the lesson plan. One headmaster said, “Having a standardized national curriculum can be a big problem for some schools. To overcome it, we need to tailor instruction to meet each student’s needs.” Another mentioned, “National curriculum is the same for every student, but not all students are alike.” Applying differentiated instruction can help address the needs and maximize student learning.

A solution mentioned to overcome school challenges and difficulties associated with lack of skills was to increase headmaster, teacher and administrative staff training. One participant stated, “Lack of training is the issue; providing extra training is the solution.” All participants agreed that headmaster leadership is very important in achieving NEB goals. Therefore, the headmaster must be eager to learn and be willing to attend leadership training conducted by the Ministry of Education or training institute such Aminuddin Baki Institute or Principal Academy. One participant suggested that headmasters should

regularly attend any leadership conferences or symposiums to expand their knowledge and skills, then share with teachers and staffs. Besides headmaster training, teachers and staff play important roles in determining the school success. The State Education Department, district office, and headmasters are responsible to provide training or programs to help teachers and staff improve their skills and knowledge. A headmaster stated, "It is important to conduct a valuable program or seminar for teachers and staff every three months. If the district is not offering any, we will apply for extra funding and fund our own training or workshop." Two of nine participants stated that some teachers are able to provide extraordinarily high-quality instruction, while other teachers with less skills and knowledge do the job just for pay. One headmaster mentioned some teachers came late to the classroom and left early before the class ended. When it comes to support staff, interviews revealed that some staff members were hired without having administrative knowledge.

Chapter Summary

The findings from the document review revealed that the empowerment of Malaysian education focuses on the public school and emphasis is given to the primary level of education. Headmasters are the instructional leaders who are responsible to develop a good relationship with their students, staff and parents and to be able to effectively overcome school challenges.

Participants confirmed that one of the important factors in determining school success is leadership. Credibility, ability, vision and visibility were identified as the most effective leadership traits of a successful school leader.

Instructional, charismatic, transactional and transformational leadership styles were identified as leadership styles that could be used in managing the school. Interviews with nine headmasters of public primary schools in Selangor, Malaysia, revealed they all felt prepared and able to manage their school curriculum and finances following the guidelines from the NEB 2006 – 2010. Participants reported they were responsible for instruction and providing for school improvement.

Participants most often mentioned the difference in managing school finance before and after the implementation of NEB, and their ability to spend money wisely to achieve the education goals. Participants explained that prior to implementation of the NEB, they had more flexibility in spending their money in a way they thought was appropriate for the school. However, since the NEB, each headmaster needs to follow standard guidelines and achieve the goals listed in the national plan. Participants shared the routines in managing school finances which include, (a) preparing the school yearly budgets and expenditures; (b) overseeing the requisition and allocation supplies; (c) managing school fees, collections, earnings and payments; (d) managing cash book and; (e) managing school allocations. All of the headmasters agreed that communication with teachers and administration staff is very important to ensure the effective management of school finance. All of the headmasters said they attended financial courses and training in order to help them manage the school finances efficiently. They also agreed that they spend a great amount of time helping

empower, train and inform their teachers and staff about the school financial activities.

In terms of school curriculum, all of the participants reported that headmasters are responsible for developing the school program, curriculum planning, mission, vision and strategic planning. The participants also mentioned that every school leader is responsible for managing curriculum and instruction by encouraging good teaching practices, increasing student academic achievement, ensuring the effectiveness of teaching and learning and supervising the curriculum management.

When asked about the most important aspect of managing a school, all headmasters indicated time was the most important factor. They reported that school leaders should be able to balance tasks and responsibilities effectively and that they allocate about one to two hours daily to school curricular and financial matters. Although participants indicated their concern for not being able to spend their time wisely, the observation data indicates that all headmasters were spending more than 60 minutes a day in their offices working on financial matters.

The headmasters indicated the implementation of the NEB put pressure on their roles and responsibilities. This happened when the State Education Department raised school performance and academic standards, thus expanding the headmasters' roles and responsibilities. When asked about the most difficult things headmasters have to deal with in respect to the implementation of the NEB, the participants felt that NEB implementation increased their workloads and

public expectations and they did not have enough time to deal with school administration and operation on a daily basis. All participants indicated that they have limited financial capacity to develop school infrastructure because the allocation given by the government was not enough for the schools to use until the end of the year. Participants also expressed their disappointment in the lack of training provided by the Ministry of Education to the teachers and support staff. They felt this lack of training leads to the lack of skills among teachers and administrative staff.

When asked about their action to overcome the problems and challenges, time was seen as the most important element for overcoming challenges. Participants felt that they need to allocate some time to collaboratively discuss and implement the school strategic plan, to have a recess or break time to recharge themselves, and to spend some time with teachers and students' families talking about student improvement plans. The majority of participants reported that differentiated instruction and leadership training could be used to help overcome the school curricular and teaching problems and increase student academic achievement. They felt that differentiated instruction allows teachers to consider students' needs when planning for instruction. Participants agreed that the headmasters must be able to be eager to learn and be willing to attend leadership training no matter how busy they are.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter provides a summary of the dissertation and presents a discussion of its findings. The chapter begins with a summary of the entire study followed by conclusions drawn from the findings, as well as the implications for practice and further research. The chapter concludes with recommendations for further research into educational practices. The results of this study demonstrate that an emphasis is placed on the importance of headmasters' roles and leadership skills in managing primary schools in Selangor, Malaysia. Although headmasters have made a significant impact in managing school curriculum and finance in recent years, this research calls attention to the importance of headmasters' leadership skills and their roles impacted by the implementation of the Malaysian NEB 2006 – 2010, as well as solutions headmasters have employed to overcome school challenges and difficulties.

The problem this study addresses is the lack of Malaysian primary school headmaster leadership in implementing their roles and responsibilities as addressed in the Malaysian NEB 2006 – 2010. The purpose of this study was to explore the problems and challenges confronting primary school headmasters in Selangor as they attempt to meet the NEB 2006-2010 goals. The context of school leadership and headmasters' roles drove this study. Since the

implementation of NEB, it has been the responsibility of school leaders to meet the NEB goals and the needs of their stakeholders.

The literature showed that, while fulfilling the responsibilities of school administrators, headmasters are struggling to meet the expectations of the NEB. Primary schools in Malaysia require headmasters to accept a variety of roles and responsibilities in managing schools, and these requirements affect headmaster leadership (Jantan, 2004). Many headmasters lack sufficient training to implement their roles as instructional leaders (Mamat, 1998) and display low-quality leadership, which impacts the learning environment and their schools' ability to achieve the NEB goals (Harun, 2008). The literature indicates that leadership is crucial in determining the success of school organization and school leaders play an important role in determining the standard of curriculum development, student performance and school effectiveness (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). A headmaster with strong instructional skills provides effective guidance and is able to improve teaching and learning practices in the classroom (Amalhaj, 2009).

This study was a qualitative case study. Pragmatism served as the underlying worldview for the dissertation, and guided the study of headmasters' leadership and roles in primary education in Malaysia. This qualitative case analyzed data derived from interviews, observations and documents. These methods were selected in order to get accurate information regarding the topic and involved a relatively small number of people (Creswell, 2009).

Conclusions

Headmasters' Roles Defined

The findings revealed that empowerment of Malaysian education at the primary level focused on a national school orientation. It was evident from the findings that one of the goals of the NEB was to expand the preschool and primary school program. The data revealed that the headmaster is the leader in primary schools and their leadership skills are crucial to providing effective primary school education. The headmaster is an instructional leader, who is responsible for effectively dealing with school-related problems and developing positive and direct relationships with teachers and students. The data revealed that the NEB requires school leaders to prepare themselves to manage schools, while overcoming challenges, and dealing with school curricular and finance issues. A critical review of the literature highlighted that the headmaster is the leader in the school organization and indicated they needed to have strong leadership skills (Ramli, 2010). According to Leithwood et al., (2004); Parkay, et al, (2010); and Bennis & Nanus, (1985) school leaders are positioned within the school to evaluate the curriculum, carry out the supervision process implement the standard curriculum development, oversee student performance and school effectiveness, and take responsibility for the success of a school.

The data revealed that the NEB gives the headmaster autonomy to choose their administrative and teaching staff and manage their school finances. It also showed that headmasters needed to effectively prepare the school budget and wisely spend funds allocated to schools. These findings are consistent with

Marzuki (2004) and Hallinger (1989) who state that school leaders have the autonomy in managing their school finances, and they should possess strong financial knowledge about funding sources and the specific operational areas in which funds can be utilized.

Although the review of the NEB suggests that headmasters must effectively deal with any school-related problems, this suggestion did not align with existing conditions. The literature highlighted that headmasters often lack leadership skills in dealing with school problems. Mamat (1998) and Zain (1991) found that some headmasters are unclear about their roles and responsibilities as school leaders, which can lead to a variety of school problems. This discrepancy between the literature and the findings of this study may be due to other factors such as individual headmaster's experiences, the school's geographical area, the number of students enrolled, teacher and staff skills, and funding issues.

Headmasters' Perceptions

The findings indicated that participating headmasters believed that a school leader is an instructional leader who is responsible to guide and supervise the school curriculum and finance. In managing the school curriculum and instruction, the headmaster acts as a curriculum leader and has to effectively manage the school operation. Headmasters are responsible for developing a school program, including planning and implementing the curriculum, and the school mission, vision, and strategic plan. Developing a strong school mission and vision helps schools reach a common understanding of how to improve

student achievement and overall school performance. Effective school leaders should be able to help their schools to develop visions that ensure the best thinking about curriculum development. The data from findings revealed that headmasters are aware of these responsibilities and believe that they are responsible to encourage good teaching, increase student academic achievement, ensure the effectiveness of teaching and learning, and supervise the curriculum management. These findings support the literature that highlighted headmasters' knowledge and skills in managing and handling school curriculum. Alias, et al. (2008) state that school leaders should ensure that teaching and learning are the priority at all the time. School leaders need to supervise the teaching and learning process, and enhance cooperation among all parties to create effective teaching and learning environment. Others stated that school leaders need to spend time on planning and organizing school curriculum and instruction in order to effectively carry out the functions of curriculum leadership (Portin et al., 2003; Stronge, 2007).

Most of the participants mentioned that they are comfortable with the role of financial leader. However, many of the participants in this study stated that they are spending considerable amounts of time trying to help, empower, train, inform, and reward their staff to ensure the effectiveness of school financial activities. One participant complained about the lack of financial training provided by the Ministry of Education for novice headmasters and the increased workload associated with achieving the NEB goals. This finding was similar to that of Waters, et al. (2003) regarding the lack of practical guidance and training to

assist principals (and headmaster) to become effective leaders. The interview data regarding school finance also revealed that before the implementation of NEB schools had more flexibility in spending their money and spending was based on what headmaster thought was best for his or her school's improvement. This changed with the new NEB standards, Ramli (2010) pointed out the NEB standard guidelines were required to be followed by every school leader in managing school finance. Participants mentioned that headmasters are responsible for preparing the school yearly budgets; overseeing the requisition and allocation of supplies; managing school fees; collections and payments; and managing cash books and government allocations. According to NEB rules and regulations. The findings also revealed that headmasters are responsible for following the NEB procedures in earnings, collection, payment and cash book. These findings aligned with Marzuki (2005a) and Pijjie (2001) regarding the role of school leaders in handling school financial management. Although the overall findings of this research revealed that all participants have a basic knowledge in managing school finance, one headmaster interviewed indicated lack of involvement with financial matters. Although they are required to address financial matters, it appears that not all headmasters were involved in managing finance to the same degree.

Identifying the Challenges

Identifying and providing information about the challenges and difficulties faced by headmasters will help focus on school problems and provide recommendations to assist headmasters become more effective school leaders.

The findings of this study were consistent with the literature related to this area. Most headmasters mentioned that they felt the implementation of NEB put pressure on the school leaders due to challenges such as lack of time, limited financial capacity to develop school infrastructure, increasing workloads and tasks, and lack of skills among teachers and staff members (Alvy & Coladarci, 1985, Jantan, 2004, Mahmood, 1997, Mamat, 1998, Ministry of Education 2001b).

Interviews with headmasters identified lack of time as the greatest challenge to effectively managing the school. Most of participants during the interview said that they did not have enough time to deal with school curriculum and finance because of to the increased workload. This finding was revealed during observations when the researcher noticed headmasters' hectic and bustling day during school time. This finding stood in contrast to that of Mohmood (1997) who did not seem to consider time as a barrier or challenge to headmasters, but, instead, stated that a wise headmaster should know how to spend his or hertime wisely. It seems the complexity and more centralized approach of the NEB has seen the problem of time evolve over the last two decades. This finding aligns with that of Maxwell (2014) who found that school leaders spent half of their time on classroom walkthroughs and instructional activities which gave them less time to deal with other matters.

Another challenge identified by headmasters was the limited financial capacity to develop school infrastructures. They shared that the government allocation received was not enough for the schools to use for the entire school

year. One headmaster noted that this happens because the price of goods and services rise every year while provisions and government funding of schools is based on a fixed rate. Inadequate allocation affects the overall operation of the schools and leads to problems such as

- inadequate of classroom materials, such as tables and chairs, teaching aids, reference books and stationary supplies;
- Insufficient teachers and support staffs;
- Poor facilities and infrastructures; and
- Lack of technical equipment and technology aids..

Malaysia has a centralized educational system and a national curriculum to be used in all schools and common national examinations at the end of school years are being used to measure student academic achievement (Ali, et al, 2011). Findings revealed that headmasters feel the increase in workload and responsibilities in implementing a truly effective curriculum when at the same time they have to follow the national curriculum standards and feel pressure to succeed on the national assessments.

Another challenge faced by headmasters was the lack of headmaster and teacher training. Both teachers and educational leaders have a need for professional training; however, the Ministry of Education did not provide consistent training for teachers and educational leaders to enhance their skills to meet the needs of their students. The lack of knowledge, skills, information, and resources among teachers, staff members, and educational leaders must be addressed if they are expected to be effective in today's ever-changing society

and policy. According to the literature, most headmasters stop receiving training and support after they are hired. Their roles as school leaders sometimes put them under pressure when they have to prioritize problems and develop plans for fast results. With the frequently changing educational policy, and without continuous training, support, encouragement and guidance, headmasters, especially those newly hired can easily fail to fulfill their roles and responsibilities. This can also create stress and add to the attrition of educational leaders. To enable headmasters to overcome school problems and difficulties, additional preparation and training needs to be provided. Headmasters should be equipped with knowledge and skills to assist teachers and help students improve their performance.

Overcoming the Challenges

To overcome problems and challenges, associated with lack of time, headmasters need to learn how to manage their time more effectively. The literature recommends that school leaders need to effectively manage their time (Mahmood, 1997; Maxwell, 2014). Research also revealed that headmasters lacked sufficient recess or quiet time to recharge themselves and reflect. Families, teachers and school staff members also need time to get to know and learn from each other and plan how to work together to improve students' learning. The conclusion is that this responsibility should not be left entirely to the school headmaster.

Insufficient funding was considered a strong challenge for headmasters. The interview data regarding strategies for overcoming school financial problems

revealed that current approaches such as applying for additional allocation in advance, seeking assistance from the TPA, negotiating with the suppliers to make a late payment and discussing the lack of funding issue with teachers, parents and community did not effectively solve this problem. Marzuki (2004) mentioned that the headmasters must educate the staff and community on various aspects of school finance and discuss the ways to get additional funds; however, much more needs to be done in this area.

Participants indicated that differentiated instruction worked best to overcome issues related to curriculum and instruction. This approach allowed teachers to consider diverse student factors and tailor the instruction when planning lessons. To be successful, the implementation of differentiated instruction demands ongoing training and supervision.

Findings indicated that there is inadequate training for teachers, staff and headmasters. All participants agreed that headmaster leadership is crucial in achieving NEB goals. To accomplish this they must attend leadership training and be given time to implement the skills and knowledge they gain from training. Headmasters must also provide training to assist teachers and staff members to improve their skills and knowledge. The literature agreed that instructional leadership matters for both the school leaders and teachers (Acheson & Smith, 1986; Hallinger, 1989; Heck, 1992; King, 2002; Shellard, 2003; Shum & Cheng, 1997). Headmasters with good instructional skills are able to assist their teachers to deliver quality instruction to their students. It is crucial that headmasters acquire these skills and be given time to provide training for their teachers in

order to ensure effective teaching and student performance. Additional training for teachers will enable them to develop diverse perspectives and alternative points of view, to improve their teaching skills, and to better provide for diverse student populations.

High-quality professional development and mentoring tailored to school needs, fosters lifelong habits of teamwork; and collaboration and collegial learning foster a positive experience. The headmaster is the most important determinant of whether or not a school will be able to overcome its problems and challenges, which suggests that enhancing headmaster leadership skills and knowledge may be a cost-effective way to improve school curriculum and finances. At the same time, teachers have the most immediate in-school effect on student success through teaching and learning so an emphasis their enhancing the skills and knowledge is equally important. The literature indicated that investing in better leadership training for headmasters and teachers can pay off in higher student performance. Therefore, investment in quality and frequency of training and support for headmasters and teachers deserves serious attention.

Implications

Implications for Policy

As discussed in the literature review, the education system in Malaysia is centralized and controlled by the federal government; a national curriculum is used in all government schools. Each year, Malaysia spends considerable amounts of money to improve Malaysian education, yet the education is still far behind any other developing country. Since the educational system is centralized

and controlled by the central government, the headmasters in Malaysian primary schools do not have much power to manage the school according to what they think best meets the needs of their respective schools. The centralized system typically gives headmaster less authority than they need to manage the school and improve student performance, especially when it comes to school staffing, curriculum, and budgeting. Due to this lack of autonomy, the headmasters are sometimes unable to make effective school-related decisions. This centralized system also accounts for a predominantly centralized arrangement for headmaster's professional development. This means schools have a standardized program that is closely monitored and the central government has a close involvement in school operations and quality assurance processes.

One of the fundamental goals of the NEB is improving the classroom and school infrastructure. However, it does not give schools additional funding to implement this goal. This study found that the government allocation of funds for assets such as libraries, school activities, guidance and counseling activities, and educational resource centers is insufficient. Similarly, for low-enrollment school, grants allocated for each subject were also insufficient and were spent before the end of school year. This problem occurred because of rising prices in goods and services, economic imbalances and educational policy based on per capita school allocations. The headmasters indicated that the allocation given by the Ministry of Education is not enough. This creates a lot of problems for headmasters trying to manage the school finances, especially for schools with low enrollment numbers or schools located in rural areas.

Implications for Practice

This study has many implications for practicing and aspiring headmasters of Malaysian primary schools but the most important implications are the importance of identifying and developing effective school leadership skills for headmasters and acquiring more training and mentoring for headmasters, teachers, and staff.

Effective school leadership skills. Effective school leadership is a key factor in improving school performance and student achievement. Effective school leadership skills can be identified and developed when headmasters acquire the skills and knowledge to answer the following questions:

1. What kind of leadership skills work best to solve school problems?
2. What experiences can be provided to support the development of these skills?
3. What trainings best support the delivery of these experiences?
4. What practices are best to support these trainings?

By answering these key questions, headmasters can help identify, develop and strengthen the leadership skills that contribute to improving student and school performance. Headmasters will be able to enhance the strategic curriculum area and financial management. When headmasters are able to enhance their leadership skills, they will be able to promote collaborative problem solving and expand communication with teachers and staff regarding school problems. They will be more successful in effectively monitoring the school improvement plans and will have a clearer focus on attaining academic goals.

Training and mentoring. School leaders need knowledge and skills to provide effective leadership in diverse school environments. Essential knowledge and skills are necessary salient for school improvement and student academic achievement. Fundamental to building a strong knowledge and skills base is the training and mentoring program for headmasters and teachers.

Headmasters need training to be able to effectively perform the roles of a school leader. To improve the school curriculum and meet financial responsibilities, the headmaster must have the knowledge, understanding, and skills to deal with the

- school financial management,
- school improvement planning processes
- effective communication strategies,
- curriculum management,
- collaborative problem solving,
- assessment and evaluation strategies,
- instructional practices, and
- school operation and systems thinking.

Headmasters in rural and low-enrollment schools have more extreme challenges and responsibilities in these areas to sustain and increase effective leadership practices for headmasters.

Novice teachers and headmasters have many challenges that they face everyday as they implement school programs. It is evident they need continuous training to prepare them to meet these challenges. Continuous training will

prepare these teachers and headmasters for every issue they will face and will help them feel more confident about many common problems that arise each day. Additionally, it provides a better understanding of student academic achievement and school performance. Without adequate training, teachers and headmasters might eventually leave the profession.

Implications for Further Research

The findings of this study related to only one of nine Malaysian states; however, it provides important information regarding headmasters' roles and leadership in managing public primary schools in Malaysia. The findings of this study suggest questions and areas to guide. The findings of this study suggest questions and areas to guide further research:

- What kind of headmaster preparation program can support instructional leaders in effectively managing the school curriculum and finance?
- What support can be provided at the district or national level, in terms of headmaster and teacher training, to enhance effective teaching and learning?
- What are some differences in managing different types of schools under the NEB mandates?
- What is the best model to support headmaster leadership in respect to the changing educational policy?

Further research is needed to help Malaysian headmasters meet the challenge they face in managing primary schools. The use of quantitative tools,

such as questionnaires can be expanded to elicit perceptions identified by headmasters in other Malaysian states. This can identify their concerns and input related to the NEB itself identify specific needs for effective training for school leaders and teachers to improve student achievement and identify barriers and problems associated with managing school curriculum and finance.

Recommendations

Three major recommendations were developed from the findings together with researcher's reflections on the current study. The first recommendation is for changes in Malaysian educational policy. The second recommendation is for changes in educational practice, and the final recommendation is for further research related to the headmasters' roles and responsibilities in managing primary school.

Recommendations for Policy

The Ministry of Education should transfer more school autonomy to the headmasters to enhance school-level decision making and encourage strong local involvement. Creating policies that give headmasters more control and autonomy over school curriculum and finances will allow headmasters to make the best decisions for their schools and help them become effective school leaders. This will enable headmasters to make informed decisions with input from local stakeholders, rather than rely solely on the national level to determine school plans and objectives that may not relate to local needs. Headmasters should be given greater autonomy to:

- emphasize the development of the school, teachers and students as well as their own instructional leadership;
- determine the best methods to enhance learning outcomes;
- tackle the convergence of curriculum content in relation to teaching and learning issues;
- move beyond management to relationships-based leadership;
- give a greater professional autonomy to teachers;
- find more way to improve the professional development programs for teachers and themselves; and,
- manage the school finances.

Schools should be given greater autonomy to make decisions related to curriculum and fiscal matters and the decision making should be divided between schools and central government. Giving headmasters autonomy to manage the school is one way to strengthen teachers' development and leadership.

Headmasters can extend the autonomy to their teachers which helps the teachers to foster a sense of ownership and purpose in the way that they approach their jobs. It will also improve the quality of the classroom teaching practice. Teachers with more autonomy are more likely to be able to find the path that works best for them and their students. Decision making should be divided between school and central government.

Improving the quality of education requires teachers, headmasters, and communities to develop greater autonomy, rather than be told what to implement by the Ministry of Education. An inclusive model of shared governance that

brings teachers and the local school community together needs to be drafted and developed. Establishing shared governance will enhance decision making and increase commitment to the schools.

In terms of school finance, school allocations should be based on the school needs and not on the number of students enrolled. It is recommended that the Ministry of Education revise existing school allocations to include school needs and format a new policy to provide for adequate funding for school infrastructures and activities.

The Ministry of Education should collaborate and establish partnerships with various training providers, such as the universities or leadership institutes in the area, and create training programs that more closely tie to school leadership and management. They should enact stronger policies and incentives to reinforce reform efforts by training providers to train the headmaster and support program that are falling short. The Ministry of Education should mandate mentoring and training for all public school headmasters especially for newly appointed headmasters. It is recommended that the Ministry of Education plan ongoing and differentiated professional development opportunities for headmasters and teachers that model the skills necessary for developing the knowledge and dispositions needed for proficient teaching and learning. Proficiencies will vary for every teacher and teachers will need various levels of support. Support should include guided practice to encourage teachers to implement best methods to meet student needs and equip them with a higher

level of understanding of their school's progress and student academic achievement.

Recommendations for Educational Practices

In order to deal with challenges, headmasters also need support and training from various organizations. The government, leadership institutions, district offices and other educators need to provide continuous commitment and support. This will require more leadership institutes, universities, and districts to collaborate in adopting practices that better prepare school leaders, especially in primary schools, for their changed roles and responsibilities. Training can be provided by the Ministry of Education; District education departments; principal specialized institutions such as the Institute of Aminuddin Baki or Principal Institute; and university training institutions such the University of Malaya or National University of Malaya. These providers need to ensure a variety of effective training and to consider mentoring, coaching, hands-on experience, curricular coherence, cohort grouping, and peer learning. Headmasters should also be exposed to collaborative activity between the program developers and the schools when establishing and designing the content of programs.

Training programs must mandate that headmasters attend and share best practices related to leadership content, instruction, and finances. This will allow headmasters to know what they do not know and give them a chance to learn from each other and apply the best practices in their schools. Both the Ministry of Education and partnership institutions should ensure that headmasters receive a high-quality training program. Training programs should have standards that

focus on policy changes and effective headmaster leadership. These standards must then drive all aspects of the training process, from program content to pedagogy. Training programs should go beyond the headmasters' knowledge merely managing a school and include

- instructional supervision;
- goals and vision for training;
- cultural practice and context;
- school culture;
- educational policy; and
- ethical, social, economic and political issues

Headmasters should be trained to plan appropriate professional development, coach teachers, and deal with rapid educational policy change. Training should also prepare the headmaster to communicate effectively within and beyond the school, develop high expectations for teachers and students, diagnose school-related problems and find workable solutions.

Headmasters must acquire the skills and knowledge to provide opportunities for staff to engage in continuous training and professional growth. To provide teachers with the best knowledge and skills, headmaster should ensure teachers are equipped with knowledge, and experience and have completed the teacher preparation program training before hiring them. Additional and continuous training is required to ensure effective delivery of teaching and learning. Lack of training not only brings disadvantages to teachers,

but also puts at risk the education of students and may lead to school academic problems.

Headmasters must have experiences that help them to make correct decisions when managing the curriculum or finances. The high-quality leadership and the need to provide principals with more appropriate training are important to the success of any school improvement strategy. The headmaster needs to ensure that teaching and learning are as good as they can be throughout the entire schools especially for schools in rural areas or with low enrollment. To accomplish this, headmasters should be trained to lead school change, improve school performance, and effectively overcome school problems.

Recommendation for Further Research

The study on headmaster' roles and leadership in managing primary schools in Malaysia should be expanded to different states in Malaysia especially in rural areas. It is important to look at the similarity, differences, difficulties and problems of headmasters in this study and see if they reflect conditions in other Malaysian states. This will enable policymakers to provide solutions that are focused on local needs. This in turn will enhance the education of Malaysian students.

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APPENDIX A

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION MALAYSIA APPROVAL



UNIT PERANCANG EKONOMI
Economic Planning Unit
 Jabatan Perdana Menteri
Prime Minister's Department
 Block B5 & B6
 Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan
62502 PUTRAJAYA
MALAYSIA



Telefon : 603-8000 8000

AZURAIDA SHAHADAN

2594 Batu 19
 48050, Rawang
 Selangor
 Email: miss.asz@gmail.com

Ruj. Tuan:
 Your Ref.:

Ruj. Kami: UPE: 40/200/19/3061
 Our Ref.:

Tarikh: 24 January 2014
 Date:

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN MALAYSIA

With reference to your application, I am pleased to inform you that your application to conduct research in Malaysia has been *approved* by the **Research Promotion and Co-Ordination Committee, Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department**. The details of the approval are as follows:

Researcher's name	:	AZURAIDA SHAHADAN
Passport No./ I.C No	:	840806-14-5666
Nationality	:	MALAYSIA
Title of Research	:	"PRIMARY PRINCIPAL IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL EDUCATION BLUEPRINT : PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES" .
Period of Research Approved	:	1 YEAR

2. Please collect your Research Pass in person from the Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department, Parcel B, Level 4 Block B5, Federal Government Administrative Centre, 62502 Putrajaya, Malaysia and bring along two (2) colour passport size photographs.

3. I would like to draw your attention to the undertaking signed by you that you will submit without cost to the Economic Planning Unit the following documents:

- a) A brief summary of your research findings on completion of your research and before you leave Malaysia; and
- b) Three (3) copies of your final dissertation/publication.

4. Lastly, please submit a copy of your preliminary and final report directly to the State Government where you carried out your research. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

(MUNIRAH BT. ABD MANAN)

For Director General,

Economic Planning Unit.

E-mail: munirah@epu.gov.my

Tel: 88882809

Fax: 88883798

ATTENTION

This letter is only to inform you the status of your application and **cannot be used as a research pass.**

APPENDIX B

IRB APPROVAL



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Graduate Programs and Services

700 N. State College Blvd., Fullerton, California, CA 92831 | (714) 773-7000 | Fax: (714) 773-7100

APPROVAL NOTICE

*From the Institutional Review Board
California State University Fullerton*

Date: **June 24, 2013**

From: **Matt Engler-Ostson, PhD, Chairperson** *MCC*
CSUF Institutional Review Board

To: **Azuzaida Shahidan**
Department: **Education Leadership, CP-520**

Re: **Use of Human Subjects in Research Project entitled:
Primary Principal Implementation of National Education Blueprint: Problems and Challenges**

The forms you submitted to this office regarding the use of human subjects in the above-referenced proposal have been reviewed by the Regulatory Compliance Coordinator and the Chair of the California State University Fullerton Institutional Review Board ("CSUF IRB"). Your proposal is determined to be exempt per 45 CFR § 46.103(b)(2). Once you receive the approval letter from the school, submit a copy to us for our records.

The CSUF IRB has not evaluated your proposal for identifiable harm, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required.

If the above-referenced project has not been completed by **June 23, 2014** you must request renewed approval for continuation of the proposal.

It is of utmost importance that you strictly adhere to the guidelines for human participation and that you follow the primary methodology/procedures described in your research proposal. Any change in protocol or departure from procedure requires re-submission to the CSUF IRB for approval prior to implementation. Additionally, the principal investigator must promptly report, in writing, any unanticipated or adverse events causing risk to research participants or others.

Please be advised that if you are seeking external funding for this proposal, the above-referenced title should match exactly with the title submitted to the funding sponsor. Any change in project title should be submitted to the CSUF IRB prior to implementation.

In reply of this notice, the chairperson of your department (and/or an investigator) is reminded that she is responsible for being fully informed concerning research projects involving human participants in the department and should review the protocols of such investigations as often as needed to ensure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institutional policies and with OERI regulations.

The attachment to an Azuzaida on file with the Office for Human Research Protection
The Assurance Number is IR4500015384

Contact: Ken Fisher
Application No. IR-13-0097

APPENDIX C
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant,

My name is Azuraida Shahadan. I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr Ron Oliver at California State University, Fullerton. You have been selected to participate in the qualitative case study entitled "Primary Principal Implementation of National Education Blueprint: Problems and Challenges. The data collected in this study will be used toward a research study to fulfill the requirements for a doctoral dissertation in the Department of Educational Leadership at California State University, Fullerton. The purpose of this study was to explore the problems and challenges confronting primary school principals in Selangor, Malaysia, as they try to meet the National Education Blueprint 2006-2010 goals. The study addresses the leadership of primary school principals, their roles, responsibilities, the problems they face in managing schools. Hopefully the findings will contribute to educational leadership by providing general understanding of principal's roles and leadership and the challenges in managing primary school, so that the Finance Division, Ministry of Education and State Education Department could develop a new plan or strategies to overcome these concerns.

Your participation will involve an individual interview lasting approximately 40 minutes. You will find the interview questions attached to this document for your review. During this session, I will use the audio recorder to ensure that all communications are accurately documented, and a copy of transcription will be sent to you electronically for your examination and records. Two hours of non-participant observation will be conducted two days after the interview in which I will be acting as an observer without having direct involvement. This observation will focus on the principal's behavior, action and reaction in managing the school. The observation will not involve any video camera recording however the researcher will sit passively and records as accurately as possible in her journal book.

The study will use interview and observation as instruments. You may choose not to collaborate or answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable during the interview. It is hoped that your input and participation will contribute to the field of educational research and inform the professional practices of instructional leaders in Malaysia.

Results of this study may be published but no names or identifying information will be included for publication. Research records will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law. Data collected will be kept in researcher's private computer and drop box with password protected security, and the hard copy of it will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher office. However, the result might be use for future educational research, publication or conference.

This research will be personally funded and will be a part of the fulfillment for my Ed.D Dissertation project. There will not be any conflict of interest relating to the result of this study. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from participation at any time without suffering penalty or loss of benefits. If you have additional questions please contact me at miss.asz@gmail.com / azzu@csu.fullerton.edu or my advisor at roliver@exchange.fullerton.edu or if you have questions about the rights of human research participants contact the CSUF IRB Office at (657) 278-7640 or irb@fullerton.edu.

Please indicate that you have carefully read and understand the terms used in this consent form and their significance explained to you. By signing below, you agree that you are at least 18 years of age and agree to participate in this project.

Signed consent:

I, _____ have read the information and have been informed of the nature of the study; I consent to participating in individual interviews for this research study.

Participant signature _____ Date _____

Thank you for your support.

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX E: EMAILS USED TO RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS

Template

PRIMARY HEADMASTER IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL EDUCATION BLUEPRINT: PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

EMAIL INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Dear Headmaster,

My name is Azuraida Shahadan. I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Ron Oliver at California State University, Fullerton, California. I am writing to tell you about a research that I will be conducting regarding the Primary Headmaster Implementation of National Education Blueprint: Problem and Challenges.

The purpose of this study was to explore the problems and challenges confronting primary school headmasters in Selangor, Malaysia, as they try to meet the National Education Blueprint 2006-2010 goals. The study addresses the leadership of primary school headmasters, their roles, responsibilities, the problems they face in managing schools. Hopefully, the findings will contribute to educational leadership by providing general understanding of headmaster's roles and leadership and the challenges in managing primary school, so that the Finance Division, Ministry of Education and State Education Department could develop a new plan or strategies to overcome these concerns.

It is important to know that this email is not to tell you to join this study. It is your decision. Your participation is voluntary. Whether or not you participate in this study will have no effect on Ministry of Education or the District office.

If you are interested in learning more about this study, please review the enclosed information and complete the **consent form**, and email it back to me. You can also contact me at +14122513453

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Azuraida Shahadan
EdD Cohort 5
California State University Fullerton

APPENDIX E
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND PROTOCOLS

**Primary Headmaster Implementation Of National Education Blueprint:
Problems And Challenges**

- Specify rules
 - I will be using the voice recorder
 - Confidentiality and consent
 - Length of session
 - No right or wrong answer

Name of participant:

Date/Time of interview:

Location of interview:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me and to answer these interview questions. My area of research concerns on the primary principal roles and responsibilities in respect to the National Education Blueprint 2006-2010 (NEB).

I am interested in your own experience in managing the school curriculum and finance after the implementation of the NEB, the problems or challenges you face and what you do to overcome problems or challenges.

The following questions were designed to further determine emergent themes. The interview will be informal and conversational, and any additional thoughts or concerns related to your experiences in using assessment data are welcome.

Thank you for your time and expertise.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Background

1. Can you tell me about your background, : Age, academic qualification, years of experience in current position, and years of experience as a teacher?
2. How many teachers and students do you have at your school site?

Principal as a Leader

3. How do you define instructional leadership?
4. How would you describe your leadership style?
5. What are the traits of an effective principal?
6. Besides your own leadership style, what are other leadership styles do you believe could be used in managing the school?
7. How important do you think instructional leadership is in managing the school? Why?
8. In what way does principal leadership influence student performance?

School Curriculum

9. One of the goals in NEB is to strengthen and to stabilize the primary school education. How do you think this goal has influenced your roles in managing the school curriculum?
10. How does these goals narrow or expand your roles and responsibility as a school leader?
11. How can the community know you have an effective school program?
12. How often do you meet with parents to discuss student progress and school performance?
13. How do you encourage good teaching?
14. How would you manage your school, curriculum-wise, so that you can guarantee student academic improvement?
15. What are some elements of effective curriculum planning?
16. How much time do you spent in monitoring the teacher effectiveness and student learning?
17. What are some of the techniques you use to supervise curriculum management?
18. What is the school vision? What steps do you take to achieve the vision?
19. Have you developed a School Improvement Plan or a Strategic Plan? If yes, please explain.

School Finances

20. Does the implementation of NEB impact the way you manage your school finances or resources?
21. What is the difference in managing school finances before and after the

implementation of the NEB?

22. What are your daily routines in managing school finances?
23. How do you prepare the budget for your school?
24. How do you determine budget priorities?
25. In a week, how much time do you spend in managing school resources and doing the school budget?
26. What are some of the difficulties you have dealing with school finances?
27. How often does the Ministry of Education conduct workshops on school finance? When was your last training in school financial management?
28. How often do you communicate with teachers about the procedures in managing school finances?
29. How do you handle the internal audit? School allocation? And cash book?
30. Have you had experience in investing school funds?

NEB

31. Describe a day in your current position as a school administrator.
32. Do you feel more prepared to manage the school curriculum and finances after three years implementation of NEB?
33. As a school principal, what are the most difficult things you have to deal with in NEB? How do you deal with it?
34. What are the differences before and after implementing NEB?
35. How does this policy help to improve school / student achievement?

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

The researcher decided on the research questions	
Identified interviewees	
What type of interview was practical	
Used adequate recording procedures when conducting interviews	
Designed and used an interview guide	
Refined the interview questions and procedures	
Determined the place for conducting the interview	
Obtained consent from the interviewee to participate in the study	
Used good interview procedures during the interview	

APPENDIX F

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Primary Headmaster Implementation Of National Education Blueprint:

Problems And Challenges

OBSERVATION PROTOCOLS

Describe the setting	
identify the people	
describe the content of the intervention	
document the interactions	
describe and asses the quality of delivery of the intervention	
be alert to unanticipated events that might require refocusing.	

Note. Adapted from *User friendly handbook for mixed method evaluations*, by J. Frechtling, & L.W. Sharp (Eds.), 1997, retrieved May 22, 2013, from <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/1997/nsf97153/>

PARTICIPANTS OBSERVATION

**Primary Headmaster Implementation Of National Education Blueprint:
Problems And Challenges**

By

Azuraida Shahadan


Location:

Date/ Day:

Time:

Headmaster's Name:

Physical Setting

A large empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the researcher to describe the physical setting of the observation.

Time	Descriptive notes	Reflective notes on observation

1. What to investigate further and why more observation might be relevant

2. Problems encountered during observation

3. Questions to clarify the observation
