Leadership and Student Outcomes:

A case study of a high-performing and a low-performing secondary school in Klang Valley, Malaysia.

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Abstract

This dual-case study Malaysian research explores leadership and student outcomes in two contrasting schools in an affluent neighbourhood within Klang Valley, a highly populous and developed urban area close to the capital, Kuala Lumpur. The schools were purposively chosen because their external environments are similar. The main difference between the two schools is their student performance. School 1 is a high performing school, and has less than 5% of low SES students, while school 2, a low performing school, has more than 20% of low SES students. Using a mixed-methods approach, the schools' performance was analysed through documentary analysis, school leaders' interviews, teachers' surveys, and classroom observations. The research findings yield some important considerations for policy and practice. While an instructional leadership style, and an emphasis on academic press, promote enhanced student outcomes, maintaining academic excellence requires a team effort. Firstly, the practice of frequent rotation of principals, as seen in School 2, may not be yielding positive long-term effects, especially for low-performing schools. This study shows that a longer principal tenure is crucial for sustained improvement in academic performance. Secondly, principals should ensure succession planning or internal promotion is put in place for senior leadership positions in the school. While there may be a fear of entrenching a negative culture that is resistant to change, this could be easily mitigated by monitoring the school's performance. Thirdly, building a positive culture that is conducive to teaching and learning, helps to sustain the momentum of change in an improving or transformed school.

Keywords: *school leadership, student outcomes, instructional leadership, distributed leadership, transformational leadership, principal tenure, succession planning, school culture, Malaysia.*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

My research aim is to establish how leadership influences student learning outcomes in Malaysian secondary schools. In addition, the research seeks to ascertain how school leaders close the achievement gaps for students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. The study strives to contribute to the knowledge base concerning school leadership and student outcomes, particularly in schools with difficult or challenging circumstances.

In 2013, the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 was launched by the Ministry of Education in recognition that Malaysia will need to keep evolving to stay abreast with, if not ahead of, global trends. The three main objectives of the blueprint were, first, to understand the current challenges of the Malaysian education system, second, to establish a clear vision and aspirations for individual students and the education system as a whole and, third, to outline a comprehensive transformation programme for the system, including key changes within the Ministry. To transform Malaysia's education from the bottom third (based on the 2012 PISA ranking) to be amongst the top third of education systems in the world calls for an effective partnership with teachers and school leaders – the two important drivers having the strongest influence on student outcomes. The Blueprint quoted research stating that high-performing teachers can improve student performance by up to 50% over a 3-year period (Sanders and Rivers, 1996, in Ministry of Education, 2012). In addition, by replacing an average principal with an outstanding principal focused on instructional leadership (rather than administrative leadership), it can raise student achievement by as much as 20 percentile points (Waters et. al., 2003).

The research employs a pragmatist paradigm that is grounded in asking "what works", using a mixed methods' grounded theory approach. It utilises a dual case-study approach in an urban context. The study was implemented through a sequential mixed methods approach in four phases; beginning with documentary analysis, followed by interviews with school leaders, teachers' surveys, and finally school leaders' and classrooms' observations. A multi-stage sampling process was undertaken to identify the schools and individuals to participate in the research. Two national public secondary schools were selected as the case study schools; one high-performing and the other low-performing. Within the chosen schools, the top performing and low performing classes, along with classes with the highest and lowest percentage of low SES students, were selected.

Context of the Study

Study Context

Malaysia is a federation comprising thirteen states (Negeri) and three federal territories (Wilayah Persekutuan). The governance of the states is divided between the federal government and the state governments, while the federal territories are directly administered by the federal government. Kuala Lumpur is the national capital and Putrajaya is the administrative centre of the federal government, both situated in the state of Selangor. The population is predominantly urban, comprising 76.6% of the total population which currently stands at 32 million (2017 population estimate from Department of Statistics, Malaysia). Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya combined total about 1.9 million people, while Selangor has about 6.5 million. Together, they account for more than 26% of the total population of Malaysia (Malaysia, Department of Statistics, n.d.). This is the study context for the research.

According to the Ministry of Education (2018), there are 10,202 schools in Malaysia, with about 423,000 teachers for 4.7 million students. There are 2,439 secondary schools with 2,041 million secondary students taught by 183,465 teachers; a calculated student-to-teacher ratio of 11:1 (compared with the OECD average of 16). According to the Blueprint, only 12% of secondary schools have an average class size of more than 35 students, most of which are found in urban areas such as Selangor.

Klang Valley is situated in Selangor and is arguably the most developed area in Malaysia, with the highest concentration of urban residents. This makes it an appropriate location to study leadership in an urban context. There are 275 secondary schools in Selangor spread through 48 administrative districts or 10 educational districts. The federal territories of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya have another 112 schools, to take the total of secondary schools in the Klang Valley to 387.

Policy Context

The Malaysian education system has gone through significant changes since the country's independence in 1957. From a fragmented education system, where over half the population had never received formal schooling, it now has an almost universal enrolment rate and a 92% adult literacy rate (from a low of 52% at independence) (Ministry of Education, 2012). The Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013 – 2025) stresses the need to equip Malaysian students holistically with 21st century skills to compete effectively in the global environment. The focus is on developing higher-order thinking skills, not only on the importance of knowledge. The Blueprint outlined five system aspirations; access, quality, equity, unity and efficiency.

Out of the five system aspirations, improving the quality and equity of the Malaysian education system are arguably the most challenging. To transform Malaysia's education from the bottom third in the 2012 PISA rankings, to be in the top third of education systems in the world calls for an effective partnership with teachers and school leaders – the two important factors influencing student outcomes. Based on research quoted in the Blueprint, as indicated in the background section above, the Ministry emphasises the need for high-performing teachers and outstanding principals in order to achieve its goals.

Malaysia plans to achieve a 50% reduction in achievement gaps (urban-rural, socioeconomic and gender) by 2020. While the urban-rural gaps have narrowed, the Blueprint notes that the socio-economic equity gap remains the largest. The three proxies used to identify socio-economic status are parents' highest level of educational attainment, states' average household income, and the percentage of students receiving basic financial assistance under the Poor Students' Trust Fund, or Kumpulan Wang Amanah Pelajar Miskin (KWAPM). For all three proxies, the evidence consistently demonstrates that students from poor families perform less well than students from middle-income or high-income homes. Significant gender gaps continue to be observed, with girls consistently outperforming boys, and boys being more likely to drop out. My research focuses on two urban schools In Klang Valley and how school leaders impact on the socio-economic gap.

Instructional leadership and distributed leadership are the preferred leadership models in driving the Ministry's goal of raising the quality of education. Teachers are encouraged to customise and lead in their respective classrooms. More teaching hours are to be provided to teachers by reducing administrative duties. For principals, the prescribed move from administrative leadership to instructional leadership may seem challenging as it calls for a different set of competencies.

The challenge for the Ministry is to successfully execute the Blueprint's aspiration to have a high-performing principal in all schools, competent in instructional leadership. As 40% of principals were due to retire within five years (2013-2018), the Ministry needed to determine whether there would be sufficient time to build a pool of potential high-performing leaders, to deliver enhanced student outcomes. Leithwood et al. (2006) caution that unplanned head teacher succession is the most common source of schools' failure to progress. To this end, the Ministry plans fast-track transition options for principals, and to set in place a distributed leadership model in every school by expanding capability-building support for assistant principals and subject heads (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2012).

The Ministry seemed to acknowledge that excellent principals are required to turnaround underperforming schools. In 2013, the Education Performance and Delivery Unit (PADU) was established within the Ministry of Education, to deliver the Ministry's vision for transforming Malaysia's education system through the implementation of the Blueprint. PADU sets out to deliver strategies, oversee implementation, manage interdependencies, and introduce new approaches that aim to propel Malaysia's education system to become globally competitive. According to PADU's 2017 annual report, a pilot programme for the development of outstanding school leaders (ProPeks) has been implemented. It involves transferring outstanding principals to low-performing schools for a three-year period, and also to improve low-performing school leaders' knowledge, skills and confidence in accelerating the performance of their performing schools. However, only 20 principals were transferred in 2017 and another 40 in 2019, raising doubts about how effective this initiative would be to address low performance. Building successful principals to drive student outcomes may seem to focus on heroic leadership, by transferring successful principals to failing schools, rather than harnessing and developing internal leadership pools for key positions within schools. Young and Fuller (2009) indicated that any school reform effort is reliant on the efforts of a principal to create a common school vision and to integrate reform efforts into the culture of a school over several years. Other research suggests that principals must be in place for five years for the full implementation of a large-scale change (McAdams, 1997). Providing a short tenure of three years may just be sufficient to yield some positive results but may not be enough to sustain the initial improvement.

Aminuddin Baki Institute (IAB) is an educational leadership and management training institution to develop the capabilities of educational leaders and leaders at all levels of the Ministry of Education. According to PADU's 2017 annual report, IAB implemented The Psynnova i-BMT Programme (Psychological Innovation Module and Integrated Technical Module of Behaviour Modification) to improve the competency and performance of low-performing civil servants (including teachers) who obtained scores below 60% in the Annual Performance Assessment. However, in Malaysia's centralised education system, teachers and school leaders do not exit the system. Rather, as I show through this research, they tend to be moved to other roles or different schools or to the district or state education offices, which arguably contributes to weaknesses in the education system. 'Quick fix' solutions to school's under-performance, often involving strong managerial leadership, can produce short-term improvement, while sustainable progress is much harder to achieve (Bush and Glover, 2014).

Professional development for leadership and management at all levels of education in the Ministry is led by IAB. The Ministry has made the National Professional Qualification for Educational Leadership (NPQEL) a prerequisite for the appointment of school leaders (principals and headmasters) since 2011. Support is also provided to newly appointed school leaders under the Residency and Immersive Programme (PRIme) to enhance the readiness of newly appointed school leaders and to facilitate the transition in holding responsibilities and performing the role as school leaders for the first time. Development of middle leaders, heads of departments and heads of panels, is also conducted to develop their leadership competence, and to enhance the knowledge and skills of middle managers.

These IAB programmes suggest a clear emphasis on leadership development. However, Jones et al. (2015) found no significant difference in principal leadership practices between those who have attended professional preparatory training and those who have not, contradicting mainstream literature such as Leithwood et al., 2006, which showed that professional learning heavily influences how a principal subsequently leads and acts. Jones et al. (2015) indicated that the majority of their study principals had more than 20 years of experience as a teacher. This finding is consistent with Hargreaves and Goodson (2006) who suggest that principals need to have served in their schools for at least five years before they can become accepted by teachers and staff. Having good succession planning in place for key leadership positions in schools may provide an opportunity to plan for impending principal retirements, as stated in the Blueprint.

With the influence of international bodies such as PISA and TIMSS, governments now define the meaning of quality education globally, rather than locally or nationally (Bush et al., 2018). OECD (2014) claims that PISA rankings are the 'world's premier yardstick' for evaluating the quality, equity and efficiency of school systems. It adds that PISA allows governments and educators to identify effective policies to adapt to their own contexts (ibid). Hartong (2012) indicated that the competitive environment forces different countries to have short- and long-term plans to transform their schools and educational systems. This is also observed in Malaysia, where the educational reform agenda is informed by the PISA scores.

The 2018 PISA and TIMSS results indicated improvements in Malaysian performance and ranking. For PISA 2018, Malaysia achieved a mean score of 440 in mathematics, 438 in science, and 415 in reading, better than 2012 when Malaysia scored 421 in mathematics, 420 in science and 398 in reading (OECD, 2018). Malaysia was disqualified in 2015, with the country's results being omitted from the final PISA world rankings. Claims were made that Malaysia had rigged its sample size to improve its PISA results by sampling students from higher-performing schools (The Malay Mail, 2016). Malaysia (ranked 48 out of 77

countries in 2018) has edged out of the bottom-third, but still remained below the OECD average of 489 for both mathematics and science, and 487 for reading, despite the improvements. This seemed to put the Ministry at risk of not being able to achieve its aspiration to lift Malaysia into the top one-third of countries by 2022.

For TIMSS, Education Director-General Khair Mohamad Yusof said that Malaysia was among the 16 countries that recorded the highest score in science, at 471 points in TIMSS 2015, an increase of 45 points from the score of 426 in TIMSS 2011. For mathematics, Malaysia was among the 18 countries that recorded improvements, scoring 465 points, an increase of 25 points from the figure in TIMSS 2011. This put Malaysia at mid-point among the 39 countries participating in TIMSS in 2015. Even though Malaysia showed marked improvement, it was still below the Ministry target of 500 points in both Mathematics and Science.

Recent research from Bush et al. (2019) highlighted the importance of effective implementation of policy intentions if the bold aspirations cited in the Blueprint are to be achieved. There is emerging recognition that a 'one-size-fits-all' policy orientation is ill-suited to such a diverse country as Malaysia, and that a more customised approach may be necessary to achieve reform objectives.   Malaysia has traditionally adopted a top-down communication model, with policies and decisions being communicated to schools via states and districts, usually through Ministry of Education circulars. This 'cascade' model has several limitations with the potential for an 'implementation gap' resulting in information being 'diluted', or understood differently, from that intended by policymakers.   Understanding of policy initiatives is a key prerequisite if they are to be acceptable to stakeholders. However, Bush et al. (2019) found that there appeared to be weak understanding of policy initiatives by principals, teachers and other stakeholders, including state and district officials, due to the cascade model. National officials seemed to acknowledge the dilution of information from top-down and advocate a 'mixed economy' of cascading, showcasing, teacher development, and district support, notably through School Improvement Partners (SIP+) and School Improvement Specialist Coaches (SISC+).

Even though Malaysia has seen three changes in the Minister of Education position since the introduction of the Blueprint, with the latest (early 2020) education minister being the Prime Minister until a replacement is found, the Blueprint appears to remain relevant. The aspirations and deliverables stated in the Blueprint have remained largely unchanged, although the implementation has undergone several iterations since its launch in 2013.

Theoretical Framework

The Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013 – 2025) stressed the need for principals to move from administrative leadership to the normatively preferred styles of instructional leadership and distributed leadership. The Ministry aimed for high-quality principals, and supporting leadership teams, to provide instructional leadership and drive overall school performance. In addition, the Ministry sought for middle leaders, such as subject heads, to have a greater share in decision-making to encourage distributed leadership, rather than depending only on the principal as a "heroic" leader [p.5-12].

Robinson's (2007) analysis of published empirical research shows that the impact of instructional leadership on student outcomes is considerably greater than that of transformational leadership. She found that instructional leadership makes an impact on students because it has a strong focus on the quality of teachers and teaching. The meta-analysis conducted by Robinson et al. (2007) identified that, out of the many school leadership models widely used, "the closer educational leaders get to the core business of teaching and learning, the more likely they are to have a positive impact on students' outcomes" (Robinson et al. 2008, p. 664). Principals can affect student achievement indirectly by using their leadership to develop an organisational climate in which academic and intellectual pursuits are central to the school. Alig-Mielcarek (2003) identified that, controlling for socioeconomic status, the principal's instructional leadership and the academic press of the school, are the two main school properties that can explain student achievement. The author defined academic press in terms of the extent to which the school climate emphasizes high student expectations and intellectual accomplishments.

Transformational leadership theory is more generic in nature, focusing on leader–follower relations, and this may be responsible for its weaker effect on student outcomes. Leithwood et al. (2006) claimed that the influence of transformational leadership is in improving teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions. Transformational leadership theory predicts teacher attitudes and satisfaction, but this positive impact on staff does not necessarily flow through to students.

Distributed leadership has become the normatively preferred leadership model in the twenty-first century (Bush and Glover, 2014). Combined leadership practices from principals, and senior and middle leaders, showed much stronger influence on teachers' capacity than principal leadership alone. Total leadership accounts for 27% variation in student achievement across schools (against the impact of head teacher

leadership alone at around 5 – 7%) (Leithwood et al., 2006b).   Bush and Glover (2012) argue that the increase in principal accountabilities has created a need for distributed or shared leadership.

Horng and Loeb (2010) found that growth in valued school outcomes comes more from organizational management for instructional improvement than it does from principals observing classrooms or directly coaching teachers. School leaders influence classroom teaching, and consequently student learning, by staffing schools with highly effective teachers and supporting those teachers with effective teaching and learning environments, rather than by focusing too narrowly on their own contributions to classroom instruction. Jensen, Hunter, Sonneman, & Burns (2012) suggest that the principal's role is essential for creating effective collaborative working conditions. Other writers have suggested a broader set of responsibilities for school leaders, where they create professional learning communities, where teachers collaborate to improve their practices and to improve student learning outcomes (Jones & Harris, 2014, Louis et al., 2010).

According to Ahmad (2008), the past model of school leadership and administration in Malaysia has been based on a hierarchical, conservative, bureaucratic system of administration and governance. A shift from administrative leadership to instructional or transformational leadership requires different skill sets and competencies that may not be easily replicated. Putting in place a merit-based transparent performance management framework, based on the current pool of school principals, as proposed in the Malaysian Education Blueprint, may not be effective, as the pool was based on previous competencies. Moreover, the bureaucratic top-down management style leaders expect respect when leading their organisations (Mohd Rozi Ismail, 2012), using their legitimate power.   A merit-based transparent performance management framework may go against the established chain-of-command, resulting in resistance.

In addition, the Blueprint's ambitious goal of reaching the top third from the current low position in the PISA rankings seems to be based on the results of the balanced leadership framework from Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2003), where a 10 percent increase in student test scores was achieved for an average principal who improved their demonstrated abilities in all the 21 leadership responsibilities by one standard deviation. Leithwood et al. (2004) challenged the viability of a leader improving their capacities across all 21 practices at the same time, as some of the practices are dispositional in nature (e.g., flexibility), or rooted in deeply held beliefs unlikely to change much, if at all, within adult populations (e.g. ideals). These authors noted that increasing "the extent to which the principal is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction and assessment practices" [p. 24] is a major professional development challenge by itself.

Besides the leadership capabilities of the principals, different contexts may require a different set of leadership attributes. Leithwood et al. (2006) claimed that low performing schools need open minded, flexible and optimistic leaders. As greater attention and effort is required to establish, maintain and sustain school-wide policies for pupil behaviour, Leithwood et al. (2004) found that contingent leaders are successful leaders in such contexts. These leaders behave quite differently (and productively), depending on the circumstances they are facing and the people with whom they are working. Higher demands are made on the improvement of the physical environment, and in the quality of teaching and learning, in low performing schools, compared to other schools. Hallinger (2018) discusses the "school improvement context", including the historical context of a particular school. This can be broadly characterised in four different ways; effective, improving, coasting and ineffective. By understanding the school's improvement trajectory and culture, the principal could better define the nature of the leadership challenge, leading to an informed choice of leadership practices to enhance student outcomes.

The theoretical framework provides the background for the challenges faced for a centralised administration like Malaysia to move from a hierarchical, bureaucratic system of governance to a merit-based transparent performance management framework that enhances student outcomes. This study on how school leaders influence student outcomes in different school contexts in Malaysia provides evidence on the issues and challenges faced in transforming Malaysian education to the top third of education systems in the world, as foreshadowed in the Malaysia Education Blueprint.

Research Objectives

Contemporary perceptions are that Malaysian schools are inadequately preparing students for the 21st century (Partnership for 21st Century Skills 2011, People for Education 2013). According to a survey conducted by a popular Malaysian online job portal, employers reported that the top reasons for Malaysian fresh graduates' unemployment was their poor character or attitude, being choosy, lacking in communication skills and with low English proficiency (Jobstreet Survey 2018). Meanwhile, schools are increasingly placing the emphasis on the academic performance of the students, over the holistic education approach, with standardised tests such as PISA and TIMSS driving the national educational agenda and policy for many countries (OECD 2009).

Problem Statement

In Malaysia, the largest achievement gaps are still those driven by socio-economic status, with most high performing schools having less than a third of their students on financial aid (Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013). While the Blueprint acknowledged that principals in under-performing and rapidly growing or good schools reacted differently to the implementation of potential programmes for their respective schools (Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013, p. 4-20), there is a lack of understanding on how leadership influences student outcomes, especially for low SES students in an urban setting, in Malaysia. Since policies have been focused mainly on rural poverty, urban poverty has been under-studied (Mok, 2009). In addition, there is a lack of comparative study between high-performing and low-performing schools in Malaysia. Most research on school leadership in Malaysia focus on successful principals or high performing schools to learn their leadership practices (Waheed et al., 2018; Fook and Sidhu,2009) or to collect surveys only from teachers to learn how a certain leadership style, such as the instructional leadership style is being practised by their principals (Quah, 2011). There is a general lack of understanding on how and which leadership style enhances student outcomes. Local literature seemed to indicate the importance of the three leadership styles emphasised in the Blueprint, namely instructional leadership, distributed leadership and transformational leadership, in increasing teachers' self-efficacy and competencies rather than its impact on student outcomes (Abdul Halim, 2015; Hashim and Abd Shukor, 2017; Ibrahim & Amin, 2014; Sharma et al., 2018).

Aims and Objectives

My research aims to establish how school leadership influences student learning outcomes in the Malaysian education system. In addition, the research seeks to find out how school leaders close the achievement gaps for students from different socioeconomic backgrounds, as Malaysia has a goal for a 50% reduction in achievement gaps, based on socioeconomic differences, by 2020 (Malaysia. Ministry of Education, 2012). The research objectives are to determine the relationship between leadership and student outcomes and, more specifically, how leaders exert their influence to promote enhanced student outcomes in the Malaysian context. Furthermore, the research strives to understand which leadership styles are most effective in promoting these outcomes, with a special focus on low socio-economic students. A comparative study is performed to better understand how school context may influence

student outcomes, if any. It helps to ascertain how leadership and leadership styles influence student outcomes in the different school contexts.

Research Questions

The specific research questions are:

1. What is the relationship between leadership and student outcomes in a high-performing and a low-performing secondary school in the Klang Valley?
2. How do leaders exert their influence to promote enhanced student outcomes, particularly for students from low socio-economic contexts?
3. Which leadership styles are most effective in promoting enhanced student outcomes in the case study schools?
4. How do leadership approaches differ between higher and lower performing schools in the Klang Valley?

RQ1: What is the relationship between leadership and student outcomes in a high-performing and a low-performing secondary school in the Klang Valley?

The largest achievement gaps in Malaysia are still those driven by socio-economic status. The first research question seeks to establish the influence of school leadership on student outcomes in urban secondary schools with a significant proportion of low socio-economic status (SES) students in Klang Valley. According to the Blueprint, high-performing schools in Malaysia generally have a much lower proportion of low SES students compared to low-performing schools. Many researchers have established that school leaders can have significant positive effects on student learning and other important outcomes (e.g. Robinson et al., 2008; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003).   Leithwood et al. (2004) found that leaders have a greater impact on under-performing schools and that building leadership capacity in these schools should be part of any school improvement efforts.

However, schools facing challenging contexts are constantly managing tensions and problems stemming from the particular circumstances and context of the school, with most of these problems beyond their control and often dependent on situational factors that can be both internal and external to the organisation (Chapman, 2004). External factors play a large part in influencing a school's ability to improve and to sustain improvement (Harris et al., 2006). Against this backdrop, this study aims to determine the

relationship, if any, between school leadership and student outcomes for schools serving low SES contexts.

RQ2: How do leaders exert their influence to promote enhanced student outcomes, particularly for students from low socio-economic contexts?

The second research question seeks to further examine the specific practices that school leaders employ to increase the performance of low SES students in their schools. Home background, rather than what school a child attends, is by far the most important factor in predicting how well a child will do at school (Allen et al., 2014). However, school leaders can still promote enhanced student outcomes by creating conditions in the school that would have a positive impact on teacher practice and student learning (Leithwood et al., 2006; Robinson et al., 2008).

Leithwood, Patten and Jantzi (2010) utilized the four-path model (rational, emotional, organizational and family paths), which incorporated findings from previous leadership research. Leithwood et al. (2010) claim that "leadership influence flows toward students' experiences and learning along the four paths. The task for leaders is to identify the variables on each path most likely to improve their students' learning if the status or condition of those variables is improved and then to engage in that improvement work over time" (p. 696). The model explains 43% of the variation in student achievement, with SES explaining more variation in student achievement across schools than any other single variable or individual path. However, variations in performance over time are more likely to be expected than a steady, upward trajectory of improvement for these schools facing challenging contexts (Chapman, 2004).

In addition, providing socially, economically or culturally disadvantaged children with a "rich curriculum" that focuses beyond the basic skills and knowledge, and reducing segregation to ensure an even spread of disadvantaged pupils in classrooms, are known to be beneficial (Allen et al., 2014; Leithwood et al., 2006). Beyond teacher quality and school leadership, fostering individual student's development and sense of belonging to the school is also important to improve student outcomes (Fredricks, 2011; Knifsend and Graham, 2011; Marsh and Kleitman, 2002). Establishing a working alliance with students seems to contribute to an environment that is conducive for learning, promoting a sense of trust, and repairing relationships when conflict might occur (Meyers, 2008).

Finally, low SES students may face greater challenges in their pursuit of learning. According to Bowles, Gintis and Osborne (2001)'s capitalist view, the poor are encouraged to underperform to keep them

within their working class. This view supports Bourdieu's (1984) theory of cultural capital and habitus where education is found to be biased towards the middle class as the cultural capital and navigations or network in society favours them over the poor. The odds, it would seem, are ''still stacked against schools in poorer areas'' and the social class differential remains a powerful indicator of subsequent educational achievement (Gray, 2001, p. 23). In the light of all these challenges, this study seeks insights into how school leaders enhance low SES students' outcomes.

RQ3: Which leadership styles are most effective in promoting enhanced student outcomes in the case study schools?

The third research question explores leaders' influence by narrowing down the leadership styles that are most effective in promoting enhanced student outcomes in the case study schools, which consist of a high-performing and a low-performing school.

Malaysia has a centralised education system, and principals have long been administrative leaders, supported by a hierarchical structure – which gives limited autonomy and authority for principals to intervene in instructional aspects of schooling - and top-down decision-making. The Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013 – 2025) exhorts school principals to move away from the current administrative leadership practices to an emphasis on instructional leadership in order to raise student achievement (pp. 5-12). Much international research has expounded the virtue of instructional leadership, transformational leadership and distributed leadership styles (Harris, 2002; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson et al., 2008). However, Bush et al's (2018) systematic review of the Malaysian literature indicated that instructional leadership is conceptualised primarily as a hierarchical activity, focused largely on the principal. In addition, distributed leadership appears to be allocative, consistent with the hierarchy, rather than emergent (Bush and Ng, 2019). This view is confirmed by Hallinger and Walker (2017), whose synthesis of studies of principal instructional leadership, in five East Asian societies, found that, in Malaysia, the instructional leadership role of principals is highly prescriptive, based on policy imperatives. The review suggests a gap between leadership theory, developed in Western contexts with high degrees of decentralisation, and leadership practice in centralised contexts such as Malaysia, where even a limited degree of autonomy will not be granted to most schools until 2021. A contingent approach to leadership may be the most appropriate way to draw on theory while ensuring that it is adapted to fit the specific school and country contexts (Bush and Glover 2014). Hence, this study aims to establish which leadership

styles are most effective in promoting enhanced student outcomes in the high-performing and low performing schools.

RQ4: How do leadership approaches differ between higher and lower performing schools in the Klang Valley?

The fourth research question focuses specifically on the leadership approaches employed in higher and lower band schools in urban Klang Valley in Malaysia, and to identify the similarities and differences. Schools with greater proportions of disadvantaged students face extra teaching and behavioural challenges and less advantageous peer effects, leading to unequal educational quality between schools. These 'school effects' are known to account for 8-15 percent of variance in student academic achievement (Reynolds et al., 1993). High performing schools in Malaysia are also provided with greater autonomy than low performing schools, although this is still modest by international standards. Harris (2004) found that leaders in schools facing challenging contexts tend to practice a shared or distributed model of leadership and are fundamentally concerned with building positive relationships and empowering others to lead. As the challenges faced by school leaders differ between the higher and lower band schools, this research question aims to establish the differences and how it impacts on the performance of students, particularly disadvantaged students. Shatzer et al's (2014) research in the US showed that "neither instructional nor transformational leadership predicted a statistically significant amount of variance in measures of student achievement without controlling for school context and principal demographics" (p. 452). As noted by Hallinger (2018), the principal could better define the nature of the leadership challenge once they could understand the school's improvement trajectory and culture or the "school improvement context", as discussed in the theoretical context above.

Limitations of the study

As the study only focuses on two case study schools, it cannot lead to generalisations about whether and how leadership styles or influences can impact on student outcomes in other schools in Malaysia. In addition, as the study focuses on one location, Klang Valley which is an urban area, it cannot be generalised beyond this setting. Furthermore, this study only applies to public secondary schools utilising the national curriculum and cannot be generalised to other school types, e.g. primary schools or religious schools. However, being an in-depth dual case study, it can provide insights that further enhance the body of knowledge on leadership and student outcomes in the Malaysian context.

Structure of the Thesis

This chapter comprises an introduction to the thesis, providing an overview of the study context, the political context and the theoretical context. The aims of the research are discussed, followed by an explanation of the research questions.

Chapter two is the literature review on school leadership and student outcomes, and how leaders addressed the challenges faced by low SES students. Both international and Malaysian sources are reviewed to establish the main concepts relevant to the study, to present the findings of empirical research on the topic, and to establish how this research contributes to the body of knowledge on school leadership and student outcomes.

Chapter three discusses the research methodology, including the research approach, the research methods, sampling, data collection, data analysis, validity and ethical principles and procedures. The approach is justified through links to the research questions, and by utilising the research methods literature.

Chapter four presents the findings for school 1, a high-performing band 2 school, and the relationship between leadership and student outcomes. The first section covers the school context. This is followed by a section that identifies the relationship between leadership and student outcomes. The next section displays the results of the leadership influence on student outcomes. The final section shares the results of the preferred leadership styles employed in the school.

Chapter five discusses the findings from school 2, a low-performing band 6 school, and the relationship between leadership and student outcomes. The first section covers the school context. This is followed by a section that identifies the relationship between leadership and student outcomes. The next section displays the results of the leadership influence on student outcomes. The final section shares the results of the preferred leadership styles employed in the school.

Chapter six provides a comparative analysis between the two schools. The school contexts are compared in the introduction, followed by cross-case analysis of the two schools. The leadership influences at both schools are compared, to identify how school leadership impacts on student outcomes. Finally, the leadership practices and styles of the two principals are discussed.

Chapter seven, the conclusion, shows how the research questions were addressed and discusses the contribution of the research, exploring contextual, methodological and theoretical significance. It also discusses the implications of the research for policy and practice.

The scope of the research relates to the relationship between leadership and student outcomes in the two contrasting case study schools located within the urban Klang Valley in Malaysia. Specifically, the research aims to determine how the observed student outcomes are influenced by the leadership practices enacted at the respective schools. A comparative study between the two case study schools is included to further understand how the school context influence the student outcomes, if any. The research is significant due to its contribution to the leadership and student outcomes discourse in Malaysia with the rich analysis obtained from the two dissimilar case study schools. This contributes to the body of knowledge on how Malaysia can transform its education system from the bottom third to the top third in the world.

Overview

This chapter provides the background and context for the research, along with the rationale for the aims and research questions. The Malaysian government strives to reform its education system and aspires to be in the top-third of countries in the PISA and TIMSS international assessment, as outlined in the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2012-2015). This research provides a comparative analysis of how school leadership influences student outcomes in two schools that differ significantly, with one a high-performing school and the other a low-performing school. It also provides insights into the leadership styles and practices in the two case study schools, linked to consideration of the three leadership styles emphasised by the Ministry of Education.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews past research studies and examines literature on educational leadership as well as school-based articles on school leadership, principal leadership practices, and student outcomes. In establishing the theoretical framework for this study, this chapter is divided into several sections. The first section, General Leadership Theories, discusses the general leadership theories and traces the evolution of the leadership concepts and how they influence educational leadership. The next section, Educational Leadership Models, reviews the key concepts of school leadership and presents the international and local Malaysian empirical research on these various models. In the School Leadership and Student Outcomes section, Leithwood and Levin's (2005) general framework for guiding leadership effects research framework is used to guide the review of variables that impact on student outcomes.

General Leadership Theories

Leadership theories can be traced back to the 1920s "trait" phase (Cowley, 1928), the 1950s "behavioural" phase (Bennis, 1959) and the 1970s "contingency" phase (Fiedler, 1997). This section will provide a brief discussion on general leadership theories, including leader-oriented theory, situational-oriented theory and follower-oriented theory, before addressing educational leadership concepts. Educational leadership became more prominent in the late 20th century following calls for accountability at the school level due to demands for higher levels of student achievement and expectations for schools to improve and reform.

Leader-oriented theory

During the 1920s to the 1970s, leadership concepts were focused mainly on the individual leader. From the Great Man theory to the traits and behavioural theories, leaders were assumed to be born with innate qualities, making them destined to lead. Trait theory defined leadership through a natural selection that stemmed from the belief that true leaders possessed traits or characteristics, that had to do with natural heritage, birth order and age (Bass and Avolio, 1994). As such, leaders are looked upon as exceptional people, and the study of these leaders' exceptional traits or qualities and patterns of behaviour dominated leadership theory during that era (McGregor, 1960; Stogdill, 1982). The early theories often assumed that leaders would be men, as in the 'Great Man' theory. This early development of the theory focused on comparing leaders to non-leaders and continued to dominate the research until Stogdill's review of the leadership research conducted between 1904-1947. Stogdill (1982)'s review demonstrated that certain personal traits were associated with leadership, with five general categories. These are capacity,

achievement, responsibility, participation and status, which includes socioeconomic position and popularity (ibid). However, the early trait studies were deemed to be unsuccessful, because they failed to identify leadership traits that could distinguish a leader from a non-leader and ignored the leader-follower interaction (Dawson & Andriopoulos, 2014, p. 294).

Situational-oriented theory

However, beginning in the 1960s, the supremacy of the individual leader began to make way for the acknowledgement that different situations may require different leadership styles; for example, autocratic and democratic styles or the task-oriented and relationship-oriented styles (Yukl, 1999). Situational leadership was developed by Hersey and Blanchard in the late 1960s (Hersey and Blanchard, 1977). According to Bolden (2011), a situational approach to leadership is based on task and relationship behaviours, which are influenced by subordinate maturity and development. The effectiveness of a situational leader depends on their flexibility and adaptive behaviour to effectively assess the situation. Yukl (1999, p. 61) provides a brief description of each factor: Task-oriented behaviour means doing things that are primarily concerned with accomplishing the task, utilizing personnel and resources efficiently, maintaining stable and reliable operations, and making incremental improvements in quality and productivity. Key component behaviours include clarifying roles, planning and organizing operations, and monitoring operations. Relationship-oriented behaviour means doing things that are primarily concerned with improving relationships and helping people, increasing cooperation and teamwork, increasing subordinate job satisfaction, and building identification with the organization. Key component behaviours include supporting, developing, recognizing, consulting, and managing conflict. The situational leadership theories suggest that leadership style should be adopted according to the situation (Bolden, 2011). In the changing face of leadership, the leader is increasingly required to become more flexible and to adapt their leadership style, to suit the situation. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to leadership.

Follower-oriented theory

Contemporary leadership concepts tend to favour a follower-oriented model, whereby the importance of the relationship between leaders and followers is emphasised. The leader is no longer the hero or solo leader as described in the leader-oriented theory but the team leader who has the capacity to follow. The earliest concept of follower-oriented leadership relates to the transactional and transformational leadership, where the role of the leaders to lead is still distinct and formal. In the later years, a more

follower empowered concept began to emerge, with leaders sharing their leadership role and providing service to their followers. Transactional leadership is defined by Bass and Avolio (1994) as a style of leadership that focuses on the transactions between leaders and their followers, while transformational leadership, on the other hand, is a leadership approach that causes change in individuals. The concept of shared leadership first emerged with Gibb (1954), who suggested that leadership should be taken as shared functions among individuals, instead of being the monopoly of individuals. Concepts of servant leadership, where the main purpose of the leader is to provide service to others, was originally coined by Greenleaf (1970).

Transactional political leaders motivate followers by exchanging services or rewards for certain acts of behaviour. They extend the definition to supervisory-subordinate relations in general (Bass, 1985). Bass (1997) identifies four dimensions of transactional leadership; contingent reward, active management by exception, passive management by exception, and laissez-faire leadership. Contingent reward behaviours include the leader specifying what needs to be accomplished for the follower to obtain the reward (Bass, 1996). It can lead to increased productivity, because of contingent rewards based upon effort expended and performance level achieved (Yukl, 2006).

In comparison, transformational leadership is a process in which "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation" (Burns, 1978, p.20). According to Burns (1978), the transformational leadership model calls for the leader to be morally uplifting, by seeking to satisfy followers fundamental needs, aspirations and values, with the purpose of transforming followers' self-interests into collective concerns. The underlying influence process is described in terms of motivating followers by making them more aware of the importance of task outcomes and inducing them to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the organization (Bass and Avolio, 1994). Stewart (2006) describes Burns conception of transformational leadership as a "reciprocal relationship between leader and follower, who share the commitment to realize a common ethical purpose" [p.5]. According to Dawson & Andriopoulos (2014), transformational leadership is a leadership model that surfaced from transactional leadership. Yukl (2006) observed that, since "transformational leadership focuses on change, followers feel trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect towards the leader. As a result, they are inspired to perform more duties than they are expected to do" [p. 262].

Gibb (1954) first suggested the idea of two forms of team leadership, distributed and focused. Focused leadership occurs when leadership resides within a single individual, whereas distributed leadership occurs when two or more individuals share the roles, responsibilities, and functions of leadership. This

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form of shared leadership occurs when individual members of a team engage in activities that influence the team and other team members (Yukl, 1989). Pearce and Sims (2001) identify it as leadership that emanates from members of teams, and not simply from the appointed leader. The questions of whether, why and how to share leadership have been central in discussions of leadership for centuries (Bass and Avolio, 1994). Hallinger (2011) points out that "shared leadership is not, therefore, a unitary construct, but rather is comprised of a range of different behaviours or strategies for involving others in decision-making (e.g. consensus decision making, voting, input, delegation, etc.)" (p. 136) which paves the way for recent conceptualizations of distributed leadership.

Greenleaf (1970) defines servant leadership as a leadership philosophy in which the main goal of the leader is to serve, rather than the success of their company or organizations. A servant-leader focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong. In 1998, writer and philosopher Larry Spears distilled Greenleaf's servant leadership ideas into ten key servant leadership traits: listening, empathy, stewardship, foresight, persuasion, conceptualization, awareness, healing, commitment to the growth and development of people, and building community. While traditional leadership generally involves the accumulation and exercise of power by one at the "top of the pyramid," servant leadership shares power, puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible.

Educational Leadership Concepts

Van de Grift and Houtveen (1999, p.373) states that "educational leadership can be defined as the ability of a principal to initiate school improvement, to create a learning-oriented educational climate, and to stimulate and supervise teachers in such a way that the latter may execute their tasks as effectively as possible". Bush and Middlewood (2013) argue that educational management should be centrally concerned with the purpose or aims of education, as "these purposes or goals provide the crucial sense of direction to underpin school management" [p.3]. Unless this link between purpose and management is clear and close, there is a danger of 'managerialism', "a stress on procedures at the expense of educational purpose and values" (Bush, 1999, p.240).

The early leader-oriented theories ignored the leader-follower interaction (Dawson & Andriopoulos, 2014), which is common in educational settings. As suggested by situational leadership theories, Watts (2009) notes that there is no single leadership style that is fitting for all school settings. Keeley (1998) notes that transactional leadership has characterised typical leadership in schools, whereby "the object

of such leadership is an agreement on a course of action that satisfies the immediate, separate purposes of both leaders and followers" [p.113].   Shared leadership moves away from the bureaucratic formalities, due to formal leadership roles, to one that relinquishes authority and power in order to broker, facilitate and support the leadership of others (Harris, 2013).   Gronn's (2008) understanding of distributed leadership shifts away from the traditional dependence of followers on leaders and is instead grounded in a theory of action, involving the dynamic working relations of leadership teams, viewed as a division of labour.

While all the leadership theories, except shared leadership, discussed above are rooted from the leaders' or followers' perspective, there is another perspective to be considered in educational leadership. As early as the 1900s, John Dewey, a progressive US education reformer and philosopher, was a proponent of educating the "whole child" and student-centred learning. He argued that students should be engaged in meaningful activity, invested in what they are learning, participating in classroom democracy, and that curricula should be relevant to their lives. "Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself" (Dewey 1916, p.239). Progressive education was widely repudiated and disintegrated as an identifiable movement in the 1950's during the Cold War era of anxiety and conservatism. Meanwhile, Carnine (2000) positions the student-centered constructivism and teacher-centered instructivism as non-principal or leader centric view at the opposing sides of the ideological and pedagogical arguments. The student-centered constructivism has its foundation based on the belief that students construct their own knowledge while teachers serve a role as facilitator, and generally places academic achievement secondary or equal to other desired goals, which are intended to develop the whole child. The teacher-centered instructivism, on the other hand, has the basic premise that intellectual knowledge is passed from teacher to student.   Advocates of the whole child aims of public education desire to move past subject-centered curriculum and address the moral, social, emotional, and aesthetic needs of students (Noddings, 2005). In more recent times, Viviane Robinson links student-centric leadership to student outcomes and stresses that "student-centered leadership sets clear goals for student learning, provides resources for those goals, and works closely with teachers to plan, coordinate, and monitor how they are achieved' [Robinson, 2011, p.10].

As most theories of educational leadership refer to the type of leader or style of leader, based on essential elements such as capabilities, practices, and approaches, the next section discusses the main educational leadership models emphasised in the Blueprint, namely administrative, transformational, distributed and instructional leadership.

Educational Leadership Models

Leadership is "the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives" (Yukl, 2006, p.8). Mulford and Halia (2003) suggests that an essential function of school leadership is to foster "organisational learning", that is to build the capacity of the school for high performance and continuous improvement through the development of staff, creating the climate and conditions for collective learning and thoughtful use of data to improve curriculum and instruction. Effective educational leadership makes a difference in improving learning and is critical to school reform as it guides leaders with what they should do, the attributes they should focus on and their combination of skills to be applied when the situation warrants (Bolden, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2006a).

Administrative or managerial leadership

Concept

For more than two decades, there has been a debate about whether administrative management can be distinguished from educational leadership. An educational leader is someone whose actions (both in relation to administrative and educational tasks) are intentionally geared to influencing the school's primary processes and, therefore, ultimately students' achievement levels (Witziers, Bosker and Krüger, 2003). One of the earliest types of school leadership discussed in the literature, managerial leadership assumes that the focus of leaders ought to be on functions, tasks and behaviours and that, if these functions are carried out competently, the work of others in the organisation will be facilitated (Leithwood and Jantzi, 1999). It is task-related and tends to rely on positional power to motivate staff. This form of leadership tends to be static, and for more established, stable organisations, as it focuses on managing existing activities successfully to facilitate the work of others rather than visioning a better future for the school (Bush, 2007). Bureaucracy, and by implication managerial leadership, is the preferred model for many education systems (Bush, 2003). However, Bush cautions that "If principals and educators do not 'own' innovations but are simply required to implement externally imposed changes, they are likely to do so without enthusiasm, leading to possible failure" (Bush, 2003, p. 46).

International empirical research

Most approaches to managerial leadership also assume that the behaviour of organisational members is largely rational, with authority and influence allocated to formal positions in proportion to the status of those positions in the organisational hierarchy (Bush & Glover, 2014). This approach is very suitable for school leaders working in centralised systems as it prioritises the efficient implementation of external

imperatives, as prescribed by higher levels within the bureaucratic hierarchy. Current trends argue that, to meet the educational needs of the 21st century, school principals must play a more dynamic role and become far more than an administrator of top-down rules and regulations (OECD, 2009). This led to a growing call for principals to embrace instructional leadership and to focus on the instructional and learning processes and outcomes of their schools (Pont, Nusche and Moorman, 2008).

Malaysian empirical research

There are two types of educational leadership in Malaysia; one involving the school leaders and the other educational leaders who are often members of the national and educational policy-making community. Educational leaders, within educational bureaus in political parties, have vested political or professional interests and yield strong influences on educational policies in Malaysia (Bajunid et al., 2008). In general, the educational leaders are involved in macro dimensions of leadership while school leaders are involved in the educational practices and leadership within their schools, though these two roles can overlap. Public school principals are typically seen as positional leaders, with legitimate power due to their position, as they are hired and selected by the Ministry (Bajunid et al., 2008).

According to Ahmad (2008), the past model of school leadership and administration in Malaysia has been based on a hierarchical, conservative, bureaucratic system of administration and governance. Rahimah and Ghavifekr (2014, p. 51) view Malaysian public school governance as bureaucratic and hierarchical, and seen to operate under a cloud of accountability mandates. According to Kim (2010), the bureaucratic top-down management style is regarded as transactional leadership. These leaders expect respect when leading their organisations (Mohd Rozi Ismail, 2012), using their legitimate power. Decision-making at the schools is based on policy directives, sent via "circulars" from the central education agencies, which promoted a reactive response by school officials and leaders in the school system. "All activities at the level of the school were designed, organised, and tailored to fulfil the requirements of the education laws, rules, and regulations as prescribed by the central organisations" (p. 80). "Based on local empirical research, most Malaysian principals have the propensity to do administrative duties until it evokes insufficient time to provide innovation to the school." (Quah 2011, p. 1788). The Blueprint claimed that principals in Malaysia split their time fairly evenly across instructional and administrative activities but noted "that instructional activities that directly raise the quality of teaching and learning in the school such as lesson observations and curriculum planning, have more of an impact on student outcomes than administrative activities like completing paperwork" (p. 5-14). In the drive to improve student outcomes,

the Ministry strongly encouraged principals to move away from administrative leadership and to focus more on instructional leadership.

Transformational leadership

Concept

Transformational leadership's primary characteristic is evidence of a common goal or shared vision. Jantzi and Leithwood (1996) explored transformational leadership practices which became the subject of systematic empirical inquiry in the context of schools. They identified six dimensions that make up their transformational leadership model, namely building school vision and goals, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individualized support, symbolizing professional practices and values, demonstrating high performance expectations and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions (Leithwood and Jantzi, 1999). Witziers et al. (2003) note that principals, as change agents, should not only perform tasks related to coordination and evaluation of the educational system but also in relation to developing the educational system via transformation of the school culture, which may block educational reforms. Transformational leaders are expected to engage with staff and other stakeholders to produce higher levels of commitment to achieve the goals of the organisation which, in turn, are linked to the vision (Bush & Glover, 2014).

International empirical research

Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) note that transformational leadership practices have contributed significantly towards the reforms of school restructuring initiatives as transformational leadership aims to "foster higher levels of personal commitment to organizational goals" on the part of the followers (p. 453). A transformational school leadership study for large-scale reform, conducted by Leithwood and Jantzi (2006), indicated significant effects of leadership on teachers' classroom practices but not on student achievement. Leithwood and Sun (2012) reinforce that transformational leadership practices are crucial, within an educational setting, to secure better performance and outcomes. Bush and Glover (2014) note that, even though governments used transformational language to encourage, or require practitioners to adopt and implement centrally determined policies, the process becomes political in nature rather than being genuinely transformational. Overall, the transformational model stresses the importance of values but, in a centralised administration, critics argue that the decisive values are often those of government or of the school principal, who may be acting on behalf of government.

Malaklolunthu and Shamsudin (2011), and Tie (2011), argue that Malaysian principals can be perceived as transformational leaders because bringing about change and improving school examination results are both aligned to their role. This is supported by Jones et al's (2015) study of principals' leadership practices in Malaysia as the authors found evidence of principals' transformational practices linked to their emerging accountability for school outcomes. They conclude that secondary school principals are 'increasingly seeing themselves as leaders who are responsible for change and empowering others' (ibid: 362).

Distributed leadership

Concept

Robinson (2008) proposed two main concepts of distributed leadership; as task distribution" and distributed leadership as distributed influence processes" [p 242]. "Distributed leadership as task distribution" is an intentional or deliberate distribution of resources and responsibilities through actions or tasks to accomplish functions for the organisation both formally and informally (Harris 2004; Leithwood et al. 2006; Spillane et al. 2005). Gronn (2008) viewed distributed leadership as concertive action, involving the spontaneous working relations of a group of interacting individuals. Harris (2004) conceptualised distributed leadership within the context of effective school leadership, as a series of tasks among various leaders, who are seen to be empowering others to lead, building positive relationships and promoting collaboration among colleagues. Spillane (2005) points out that "expecting one person to single handedly lead efforts to improve instruction in a complex organization such as a school is impractical" (p. 26). According to Spillane, with the distributed perspective there is a focus on other school leaders and working together. He stresses that it is critical "to look at how leadership practice takes shape in the interactions between leaders and followers" (p.57). According to Harris (2004), any form of collaborative activity or shared leadership may be defined under the category of distributed leadership. However, Bush and Glover (2012) caution that distributed leadership is not to be confused with delegation, whereby tasks are merely imposed upon people in the organisation.

International empirical research

Many countries have moved towards decentralisation, making schools more autonomous in their decision making and holding them more accountable for student outcomes. This encourages the distribution of school leadership, especially to accompany school autonomy OECD (2011). In 2008, an OECD study on

improving school leadership, highlighted the need to distribute school leadership by engaging broader participation of leadership teams (OECD, 2009). Distributing leadership is essential, not only to ensure that all leadership activities are handled competently (as it is no longer possible for heads to lead all aspects of their schools alone), but also to harness the competencies of collective talents and experience of all SLT members effectively (Bush & Glover, 2012). This can be done in formal ways through team structures and other bodies, or more informally by developing ad hoc groups based on expertise and current needs (Harris, 2004; Leithwood et al., 2006; Spillane et al., 2005). Leithwood et al. (2006) claim that the collective impact of total leadership in student achievement is 27%, compared with the impact of head teacher leadership, at 5 – 7%. This provides strong empirical support for the notion of distributed leadership. Day et al. (2010) reported that leadership distribution is common in schools but that distribution of leadership responsibility and power varies according to local context. Trust is essential for the progressive and effective distribution of leadership.

Leithwood and Sun (2012, p. 401) held clear and strong beliefs that leaders should "distribute leadership broadly among staff" and establish working conditions that facilitate staff participation in decision-making. Jones and Harris (2014) asserted that effective principals draw upon "collective talent and ability within the organisation" [p. 475].

Malaysian empirical research

Bush and Ng (2019) claimed that the Ministry of Education prescribes distributed leadership as part of a strategy to move principals and headteachers away from their traditional administrative leadership styles. However, the authors found that most schools adopted a modified distributed leadership approach that appears to be an allocative model consistent with the hierarchy, with principals sharing responsibilities with senior leaders in a manner that was often indistinguishable from delegation. Fook and Sidhu's (2009) research showed evidence of 'distributing leadership...through the development of macro and micro management teams', to contribute to the management of change' (p.111). Bush et al. (2018), in their review of local literature, found some evidence of the emergence of distributed leadership in some Malaysian schools through teamwork, which appears to have enhanced teacher self-efficacy and reduced teacher stress. Jones et al's (2015) study of principals' leadership practices in Malaysia provides evidence of principals' distributed practices attributed to their emerging accountability for school outcomes and the need to empower others.

Abdul Halim's (2015) correlational study, involving 831 teachers in 17 Malaysian residential and national secondary schools, found a moderately high, positive, correlation, and a significant relationship between

distributed leadership and teachers' self-efficacy. The author reported that teachers' self-efficacy is relatively high in residential schools compared to national secondary schools. Bajunid et al. (2008) adds that other teachers, in particular those teaching sports and religious subjects, could make strong informal leaders if they have a following in the school (Bajunid et al., 2008).

Instructional leadership or learning-centred leadership

Concept

Instructional leadership, and leadership for learning, focus primarily on the direction and purpose of leaders' influence; targeted at student learning via teachers. Instructional leadership is different to the other models in focusing mainly on the direction rather than the process of leadership (Bush and Glover, 2014). Hallinger & Murphy (1985) introduced the first widely used instructional leadership model based on three main tasks that instructional leaders need to focus on; defining the school's mission, managing the instructional programme and promoting the school climate.   Hallinger and Murphy (1985) used the eleven job descriptors from the three dimensions of instructional management to create an appraisal instrument of principal instructional management behaviour, The Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS). This is the single most widely used scale to measure principal instructional leadership in 500+ studies conducted in more than 35 countries (Hallinger and Wang, 2015). Murphy (1990) expanded the Hallinger and Murphy's 1985 model by separating the school climate dimension into two, namely promoting an academic learning climate and developing a supportive work environment. Murphy's instructional leadership comprehensive framework provides an extensive examination of an instructional leader. However, the framework has not been empirically tested (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003). Weber, however, addressed the need for instructional leadership regardless of the school's organizational structure. Weber concludes that "The research suggests that, even if an instructional leader were not packaged as a principal, it would still be necessary to designate such a leader. The leaderless-team approach to a school's instructional program has powerful appeal, but a large group of professionals still needs a single point of contact and an active advocate for teaching and learning" (1996, p.254). Weber's (1996) model of instructional leadership incorporates research about shared leadership and empowerment of informal leaders to create a school that underscores the emphasis of academics and student achievement for all students.

The percentage of instructional leadership responsibilities delegated to others is another variable worth consideration. Principal-centred instructional leadership has been strongly influenced by transformational leadership that focuses on empowering others (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). With the increasing focus on individualisation and personalisation of learning and instruction ,by providing more inclusive and multicultural instruction, Hallinger and Heck (2010) note that, in the twenty-first century, instructional leadership has morphed to a form of 'leadership for learning'. The focus has also now moved to shared or distributed leadership and learning, where instructional leadership is delegated to others, provides an added level of depth in understanding how successful principals practice their instructional leadership in today's accountability era (Hallinger, 2011). It is a powerful tool for expanding the school's capacity to achieve its vision and create its own desired future. "While the term "instructional leadership" originally focused on the role of the principal, "leadership for learning" suggests a broader conceptualization that incorporates both a wider range of leadership sources as well as additional foci for action" (ibid, p.126). Leadership for learning describes approaches that school leaders employ to achieve important school outcomes, with a particular focus on student learning (Day et al., 2010; Leithwood, Patten and Jantzi., 2010; Robinson et al., 2008).

International empirical research

Alig-Mielcarek's (2003) review of the three instructional leadership models, discussed above, found three general measures of instructional leadership, namely in developing and communicating shared goals, monitoring and providing feedback on the teaching and learning process, and promoting school-wide professional development. Using these three dimensions, she tested it empirically with instructional leadership, academic press, and socioeconomic status as the key variables. Socioeconomic status was found to have both a direct and indirect effect, through academic press, on student achievement. Principals can affect the student achievement of their students indirectly using their leadership to develop an organizational climate in which academic and intellectual pursuits are central to the school (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003). OECD (2009) argues that, "to meet the educational needs of the 21st century, the principals in primary and secondary schools must play a more dynamic role and become far more than an administrator of top-down rules and regulations. Schools and their governing structures must let school leaders lead in a systematic fashion and focus on the instructional and learning processes and outcomes of their schools" [p. 191]. On the other hand, Bush and Glover (2014) note that instructional leadership tends to underplay the role of school leadership teams as the principal is perceived to be the centre of expertise, power and authority. The authors also claim that it emphasises teaching rather than learning.

Leithwood et al. (2004) have also inferred, through a review of literature, that to enhance academic achievement, an instructional leader must adopt the following goals: create and sustain a competitive school, empower others to make significant decisions, provide instructional guidance, and develop and implement strategic and school improvement plans. Robinson (2011) added that the more leaders focus their relationships, their work and their learning, on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their influence will be on student outcomes. However, Owens' (2015) research on principals' and teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership in the US showed that principals rated their own instructional leadership highest for Hallinger's PIMRS subscale of framing school goals and lowest on supervising and evaluating instruction, while teachers rated their principal's instructional leadership highest in framing school goals, and lowest on maintaining high visibility. Hallinger (2011) stresses that there is no one best leadership style for fostering learning in schools. It is the capacity of principals to read their context correctly and adapt their leadership to the needs of the school, that largely determine their success (p. 137). As such, future research will need to focus on contextualising the types of leadership strategies and practices, to obtain better information not just about "what works" but "what works" in different settings.

Malaysian empirical research

Bush et al. (2018) argue that instructional leadership practice in some Malaysian schools is conceptualised primarily as a hierarchical activity, focused largely on the principal. While there is some evidence of mentoring, the main focus is on monitoring, but with little sign of classroom observation. Monitoring and evaluating teachers are among the leadership practices which are 'taken very seriously by principals in Malaysia' (Harris et al. 2017, p. 213), and principals also enact instructional leadership practices through promoting teachers' professional learning and development. Sharma et al.'s (2018) review of instructional leadership practices in Malaysia revealed that interest in principal instructional leadership in Malaysia began in the 1990s and the first published study on principal instructional leadership in Malaysia was conducted in 1995. The authors found that, although principals in Malaysian schools are expected to play the role of an instructional leader, they spent more of their time on other administrative duties. However, their systematic review process found discrepancies and inconsistencies in instructional leadership practices in Malaysia due to the methodology used in collecting data. The limitations in using PIMRS as the primary source of data collection in the studies reviewed may be due to the choice of using English, rather than the native Malay language, in the survey, and through collecting data via the principals, who are in full control of the responses (ibid, p.10).   Nevertheless, teachers seemed to have a positive perception of their principals' instructional leadership (Quah, 2011 and Mat Ali et al., 2015).

However, there is no single model of leadership that could be easily transferred across different school-level and system-level contexts. The specific contexts in which schools operate may limit school leaders' room for manoeuvre or provide opportunities for different types of leadership. Depending on the contexts in which they work, school leaders face very different sets of challenges. The following section explores the various variables that impact on school leadership and student outcomes.

School Leadership and Student Outcomes

OECD (2009) reports that many governments give school leaders more responsibility for implementing and managing significantly more demanding education programmes, to improve student outcomes. This new public management model in 'public services – flatter management structures, market-like mechanisms, decentralisation, customer orientation and evidence-based improvement of services – have significantly changed the approach to organisational management' (ibid, p. 192). The general perception among politicians, policy makers and the public, is that school leaders can make a difference to the progress their students make at school. Leithwood, Patten, and Jantzi (2010) claim that "school leaders are capable of having significant positive effects on student learning and other important outcomes...Indeed, enough evidence is now at hand to justify claims about significant leadership effects on students that the focus of attention for many leadership researchers has moved on to include questions about how those effects occur" [p.1].

Leadership effects model

There has been growing interest in the effects of school leadership on student learning during the past three decades. Most of this research has framed leadership as an independent variable, or driver for change, in relation to school effectiveness and school improvement. Yet, observations had also been made that leadership is also influenced by features of the organisational setting in which it is enacted.

Leadership influences can be further classified as direct or indirect effects. According to Hallinger and Heck (1998), direct effects refer to the principal's actions that directly influence school outcomes while indirect effects consist of mediated effects and reciprocal effects. Mediated effects refer to principal actions that affect outcomes indirectly through other variables (a unidirectional relationship from the principal towards the variable), while the reciprocal effects refer to how the principal's actions affect the variable and how those variables in turn affect the principal's actions (bi-directional relationship between the variables), and through these processes outcomes are affected.

Leadership effects tend to be indirect as leaders contribute to student learning indirectly through their influence on other people or features of their organizations (Leithwood et al., 2004). Mulford and Silins (2009) also note that "successful school principalship is an interactive, reciprocal and evolving process that involved many players, which is influenced by, and in turn, influences the context in which it occurs" (p.2). The mediated effects model seems to be the preferred model observed in published literature (Leithwood et al., 2006; Robinson et al.,2008). However, Hallinger and Heck (2011) asserted that framing leadership as a ''heroic'' agent of change as recommended in the mediated-effects model fails to take into account the systemic forces and constraints under which they operate. They believed that the reciprocal effects perspective offers a path towards the study of leadership as both a cause and effect of school improvement processes, involving a bi-directional relationship between the variables that influence the outcomes. However, they also pointed out that most scholars have framed leadership, sometimes explicitly but more often implicitly, as an independent variable that drives school change and effectiveness. Hallinger and Heck (2011) conceded that, while they were able to provide illustrations suggesting that reciprocal-effects modelling does have the potential to reveal additional information about the nature of relationships among relevant variables in models of leadership for learning, the information is essentially ignored due to widely accepted, unidirectional, mediated-effects analyses. The authors suggested that the analysis of longitudinal data within a reciprocal-effects framework may provide a complementary and, perhaps more comprehensive, picture of the processes at work in leadership for learning.

Leithwood and Levin (2005) developed a general framework for guiding leadership effects research to systematically describe how leaders successfully influence the condition of variables mediating their effects on students by clearly identifying the leadership practices (the independent variables) and the mediating variables such as the school and classroom conditions along with the teachers, that may impact on the student outcomes (which serve as the dependent variable). The framework also recommends the systematic analysis of the moderating variables that may enhance or reduce the leadership effects, such as the family background and culture. Leadership or leadership practices are framed as independent variables that drive school change and effectiveness. The model did not address the reciprocal influence of leadership effects on student outcomes (see figure 2.1).
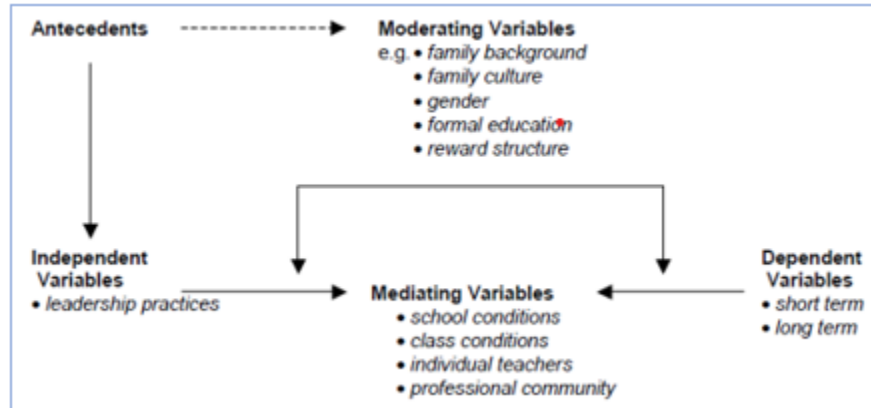
Figure 2.1: Leithwood and Levin's (2005) general framework for guiding leadership effects research

Teacher quality and school leadership are generally accepted to be two key influences on student learning (Hallinger and Heck 2010). However, teachers have more direct influence on student learning, with school leadership a close second (Leithwood et al., 2004). Some researchers have found that school leaders have small and indirect effects on student outcomes that are essentially mediated by teachers (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Principals appear to impact student learning by creating conditions in the school that would have a positive impact on teacher practice and student learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). The leadership effects model will be used as a guide for the empirical review on leadership and student outcomes discussed below, and how school leaders influence the various mediating and moderating variables to enhance student outcomes.

Dependent variable: Student outcomes

Most research on school leadership and students' outcomes emphasises academic outcomes over non-academic outcomes (Robinson, 2007). According to Boris-Schacter & Langer (2006), it is important to retrace and examine the direct and indirect influences that these leadership theories have on student academic achievement.

Education is about learning how to navigate the world, how to live together and how to take care of the world and each other in the best way possible. Beyond maximising a student's academic potential, school provides a good place for students to develop social skills in their interactions with peers and teachers, and to discover their self-identity and confidence, while exploring the multitude of opportunities around them. Numerous global educational initiatives have called for the inclusion of 21st century skill sets into

the curriculum, beyond just academic achievement, to better prepare students for the future (Partnership for 21st Century Skills 2011, People for Education 2013).

Academic achievement

Over the last 20 years, achievement in two main areas — literacy and numeracy — has become the focus for measuring the success of the education system. The rise of international assessments, such as the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment *(*PISA), and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) assessments, coincides with demands from countries to assess themselves academically against their neighbours in a global competition for profit and resources. Education is often seen as the leverage to a country's prosperity and international assessments such as PISA are presented as a tool that governments can (and must) use to optimize their educational policies to respond to global competition. Policymakers and researchers have argued that test scores in a limited number of subjects are a reasonable proxy for the type of achievement they want schools to foster (People for Education, 2013).

According to Wilson (2010), a major mistake is made when the score of the student attaches great importance, not only to the student but also, by extension, to the teacher, school and district. Any description of a testing event is only a description of an interaction between the student and the testing device at a given time and place. Inferring more may harm lower performing students as the social rewards would not be made available to them. The exam-centric East Asian economies of Singapore, Korea, Taiwan, and Japan are among the best PISA performers but their scores on the measure of perceived capabilities, or confidence in their ability to start a new business, are the lowest (Zhao Yong, 2012). These economies emphasise compliance enforcement and the homogenisation of individuals, with little room for creative and unorthodox individuals to pursue their passion, question authority, and develop their strengths (Swacker, 2014).

Non-academic skills

There is a strong emphasis on students to achieve beyond just academic ability and to embrace the 4Cs of communication, creativity, collaboration and critical thinking, to develop competitive 21st century skill sets (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011. However, assessment of 21st century skills would require different approaches from those that have dominated assessment systems until now. For example, multiple-choice; short, constructed-response; or essay tests may not prove sufficient for measuring many of the 21st century skills, such as the interpersonal skills of teamwork, collaboration, leadership, and communication, or some of the hard-to-measure cognitive skills, such as creativity, or some of the intra-

personal skills, such as self-regulation, time management, and adaptability (Kyllonen, 2012). The capability to measure such skills in a reliable and valid way may help to ease some of the reluctance in embracing the 21st century skills-related education goals.

Employability

Educational attainment often determines labour market participation and employment. Degrees and qualifications provide employers with an indication of the level of skills a recent graduate will bring to a job. However, employers frequently cite soft skills as key factors in hiring entry-level graduates. Van Velsor et al. (2012) identified effective communication as one of the top five most important competencies for employers today compared to 20 years ago, in addition to self-motivation or discipline. In addition, Casner-Lotto and Benner (2006) found that the top three skills rated as very important by employers, for high-school graduates and 2-year college graduates, are oral communication, teamwork or collaboration, and professionalism or work ethic. The only hard skill deemed important, in the top 10, is the English language. Science and Mathematics skill sets are ranked very lowly.

Graduates from Malaysian universities seem to be lacking in soft skills. In a 2014 study conducted by TalentCorp, in collaboration with the World Bank, covering 200 companies that employ around 245,000 workers, 81% of employers identified communication skills as the major deficit for graduates from Malaysian universities (Mystarjob.com, 2014). Most studies showed that the highest ranking of employability skills from the employers' perspective was communication skills (Azian & Mun, 2011). The general consensus among Malaysian employers is that Malaysian graduates are well trained in their areas of specialization but lack the 'soft skills' (Rasul et al., 2010).

According to Heckman and Kautz (2013), schooling ought not to be assessed solely on the basis of the production of reading and mathematics ability, as lack of social and emotional skills creates barriers to employment. This suggests that non-academic behaviour and development of children, as a means of identifying future difficulties and labour market opportunities, need more attention (Van Velsor et al., 2012).

Antecedents: Background and tenure

Antecedents may be internal (such as leaders' traits, values, cognitions, and emotions) or external to the leader, and these two sets of antecedents are interdependent (Leithwood and Levin, 2005). The influence

of external antecedents is "constructed" from the internal cognitive and emotional resources of the individual leader, meaning, what leaders depend on what they think and how they feel (ibid, p. 34). These would include leadership programmes, government educational policies, and leader family and socialisation experiences.

Principal's background

International research has indicated that the principals' academic background and instructional experience have a positive effect on student achievement. These antecedents, according to Leithwood and Levin (2005), should be considered in leadership effects research as they influence the leadership practices that impact on student outcomes. LaPointe and Davis (2006) found that successful principals tended to have strong backgrounds as literacy or math coaches, curriculum specialists, or in special education, and are less likely to have backgrounds in physical education, health education, or athletics (coaching or directing). Williams et al. (2005) found that schools having teachers with at least five years of teaching experience have a positive correlation with high student achievement. The authors also found that principals' length of experience correlates with high student achievement. Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2010) concur that principals with strong academic backgrounds have an indirect positive effect on student outcomes as they were 3.3 times more likely to recruit, select, and retain teachers with similar academic attributes. Clark, Martorell, and Rockoff (2009) reinforced the positive relationship between principal experience and school performance, particularly for maths test scores and student absences. Hargreaves and Goodson (2006) suggested that principals need to have served in their schools for at least five years before they can become accepted leaders. Leithwood et al. (2006) emphasise the importance of professional preparatory training and development for head teachers, principals and senior staff in their distinctive role as educational leaders.

There is limited research on the principal's background and its impact in Malaysia. However, principals' training has become a priority in recent years. Educational management and leadership in Malaysia rose to prominence only in the late 1970s with the establishment of the Malaysian Education Staff Training Institute (MESTI). It was renamed as the National Institute of Educational Management & Leadership (NIEM) in 1984, and finally designated as Institut Aminuddin Baki (IAB) in 1988. IAB is the think tank for the education sector in Malaysia and is the training and management institute for the development of teachers and school heads. Professional learning is a priority in Malaysia, as a new mandatory qualification, the National Professional Qualification for Educational Leaders (NPQEL), has recently been introduced for all new school principals (IAB, 2014). However, Jones et al. (2015) found no significant

difference in principal leadership practices between those who have attended professional preparatory training and those who have not.

International research findings on principal tenure are mixed. West et al. (2000) argue that school leaders become less effective after five to eight years in a school, and most schools in North America regularly rotate principals and assistant principals as a matter of policy (Fink and Brayman, 2004). However, regularly scheduled principal rotation in turbulent times appears to create more problems than it solves (Fink and Brayman, 2004). Fernandez (2007) found that principal tenure on the job was the variable that most significantly affected academic gains, standardized test accountability scores, teacher turnover, and student attendance rates. Clark, Martorell, and Rockoff (2009) also found that policies which cause principals to leave their jobs early (early retirement or move into district administration) are harmful to school performance.

Malaysia is starting to acknowledge the impact of principal tenure. According to the Blueprint, the tenure-based appointment of principals has resulted in an aging cohort, with 40% of principals due to retire within the next five years (by 2018). This bias has led to the inability of the education system in Malaysia in "securing the best talent available in the entire teaching body for its leadership positions" and "talented principals will serve in their role for a shorter time than would otherwise be the case" [p.5-12]. The Ministry also seemed to practice a short-term rotation of 3 years, for their high-performing principals to turnaround lower performing schools (The Star, Oct 21 2018), which contradicts international research suggesting that principals must be in place for five years for the full implementation of large scale change (Fullan, 2003). There is little empirical research on principal rotation and tenure in Malaysia.

Independent variable: Leadership practices

Many international researchers have established that school leaders can have significant positive effects on student learning and other important outcomes (Robinson et al., 2008; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) identified 21 principal leadership responsibilities and found that the average correlation between principal leadership (independent variable) and student achievement (dependent variable) is .025. In other words, increasing leadership effectiveness one standard deviation is associated with a 10-percentile point gain in student achievement, implying that if a talented school leader is provided with meaningful staff development, over time, this would result in

improved student achievement (ibid, p. 3). However, it may be difficult or too idealistic for principals to improve their demonstrated abilities in all 21 responsibilities as the average principal may not have the capability to do so. Leithwood, Patten and Jantzi (2010) state that leadership influence is conceptualized as flowing along four paths (Rational, Emotions, Organizational, and Family) toward student learning. This "Four Paths" model provides a framework on how leadership practices impact on student learning given a certain context, whereby each path is populated by multiple variables with powerful effects on student learning, determined based on existing empirical research. Overall, Leithwood, Patten and Jantzi's (2010) findings reveal that the Four Paths model explains 43% of the variation in student learning, with leadership having its greatest influence on the organisational path (which includes features of schools that frame the relationships and interactions among organizational members including), followed by the rational path (which includes both classroom- and school-level variables). However, the authors also found that the variables measured in the organisational path, the instructional time and professional learning community, have the least or unrelated influence on student outcomes, while variables on the three other paths explain similarly significant amounts of the variation on student learning (about one-third each). This seemed to contradict the meta-analysis conducted by Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008), which found that the leadership dimension of promoting and participating in teacher learning and development, or professional learning community, has the largest effect size at 0.84, on student outcomes. According to Guskey (2002), professional development aims to bring changes in the classroom practice of teachers, changes in their attitudes and beliefs, and changes in the learning outcome of students. Professional development activities develop an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher, which modify teacher practices and improve student learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

One of the claims made by Leithwood et al. (2006) is that almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices. The authors claimed that "the central task for leadership is to help improve employee performance; and such performance is a function of employees' beliefs, values, motivations, skills and knowledge and the conditions in which they work. Successful school leadership, therefore, will include practices helpful in addressing each of these inner and observable dimensions of performance – particularly in relation to teachers, whose performance is central to what pupils learn" (ibid, p.6). Leithwood et al.'s (ibid) teacher-focused conclusion seemed to align with the main conclusion drawn from the meta-analysis conducted by Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008) that the more leaders focus their influence, their learning, and their relationships with teachers on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their likely influence on student outcomes. Hattie's (2009) synthesis of evidence also

seemed to support this conclusion for school leaders to carefully consider the value of focusing their efforts on improving student outcomes.

Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) introduced a different perspective by emphasising the importance of a leader's focus on change and the magnitude or 'order' of change, the two variables that determine whether leadership will have a positive or a negative impact on achievement. Leaders need to properly identify and focus on improving the school and classroom practices that are most likely to have a positive impact on student achievement in their school while, at the same time, they need to properly understand the magnitude or 'order' of change they are leading as different perceptions about the implications of change can lead to one person's solution becoming someone else's problem (ibid, p. 6-7).

Instructional leadership, as suggested by the international research discussed above, makes an impact on students because it has a strong focus on the quality of teachers and teaching, and these variables explain more of the within school residual variance in student achievement than any other school variable (Darling-Hammond, 2007). Robinson (2007) noted that "the more generic nature of transformational leadership theory, with its focus on leader–follower relations, rather than on the work of improving learning and teaching, may be responsible for its weaker effect on student outcomes. Transformational leadership theory predicts teacher attitudes and satisfaction, but, overall, its positive impacts on staff do not flow through to students" (p. 15).

In Malaysia, the Blueprint has emphasised instructional leadership to improve student outcomes. According to COMCEC'S (2018) report on educational quality in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC's) member countries, the top three most important features of an effective principal in Malaysia are "focused on improving teaching and learning practices", followed by "promoting learning opportunities" and "nurturing healthy student-teacher and parent-teacher relationship" (p.125). Abdul Ghani (2012)'s research on excellence practices in two types of high achieving schools in Malaysia, boarding schools and religious schools, concur with the findings from COMCEC. He found that professional leadership, conducive school environment, concentrating on teaching and learning, setting high expectations, continuous assessment, collaboration and cooperation between school and home, and the school as a learning organisation, are deemed to be important leadership practices in his case schools. However, the study found significant differences in practice between boarding schools and religious schools, in terms of head teacher leadership and school environment. Abdullah and Wahan (2007) noted the significant impact of principals' instructional leadership behaviour on teachers' instructional techniques, especially supervising and evaluating instruction and providing incentives for teachers, contributing indirectly to

students' academic achievement. Similarly, they found that teachers' use of instructional tools was strongly influenced by the principals' ability to protect their instructional time and promote their professional development, which ultimately contributes to students' academic achievement. these observations seem to concur with findings from Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008), and Guskey (2002), on teachers' professional development.

Mediating variables: Teacher efficacy, internal promotion and school climate

Baron and Kenny (1986) explain that mediating variables "…represent the generative mechanisms through which the focal independent variable [e.g., leadership practices] is able to influence the dependent variable of interest [e.g. student outcomes]" [p.1173].   Leaders would need to exercise some form of positive influence on the work of other colleagues, such as teachers, as well as the status of key conditions or characteristics of the organisation (e.g. school culture) that have a direct influence on students (Leithwood and Levin, 2005, p. 24).

Teacher efficacy

Much international research has espoused the importance of teacher efficacy on student outcomes. One of the claims made by Leithwood et al. (2006) is that school leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions. However, Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008) urged that, in order to learn more about how leadership supports teachers in improving student outcomes, there is a "need to measure how leaders attempt to influence the teaching practices that matter. The source of our leadership indicators should be our knowledge of how teachers make a difference to students rather than various theories of leader– follower relations. The latter reference point has generated much more payoff in terms of our knowledge of the impact of leaders on staff than on students." (ibid, p.669).   Collective teachers' efficacy and academic press are the two variables identified as having the most impact on student achievement (Leithwood, Patten and Jantzi, 2010, p.690). Hoy and Hoy (2006, p.146) add that "teaching efficacy, a teacher's belief that he or she can reach even difficult students to help them learn, appears to be one of the few personal characteristics of teachers that is correlated with student achievement". It is important to note that "teacher efficacy is context specific; teachers do not feel equally efficacious for all teaching situations" (ibid, p.147). Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) found that teacher efficacy was enhanced by the influence of the principal and Fuller and Izu (1986) noted that, when organisational beliefs, as outlined by the principal, matched the beliefs of teachers, this led to higher teacher efficacy.

Leithwood et al. (2006) presented evidence suggesting that teachers perceive others, whether administrators or teacher-peers, to have a significant influence on their practices, depending on the extent to which they are perceived to be in possession of four forms of "capital", namely human, cultural social and economic capital. Human capital refers to job related capacities, expertise or knowledge and skills, as leaders possessing the expert knowledge yield significant influence when they have it (ibid, p.90). Secondly, cultural capital relates to the leader's social intelligence and emotional understanding (Zaccaro, Kemp & Bader, 2004). Spillane (2005, P.49) indicates that "principals who engage in practices such as soliciting advice and opinions while also praising teachers better motivate teachers to improve instruction". Thirdly, social capital refers to the social networks or connections, along with the prevalence of norms of trust, collaboration and a sense of obligation among individuals in the organization. Lastly, economic capital alludes to the access to money and other resources which may then be available to the organisation (Leithwood et al. 2006, p.90).

Malaysian literature also indicated the importance of teacher efficacy, particularly on teachers' motivation. COMCEC (2018) highlights the need to improve school leadership and teacher motivation in Malaysia as their survey respondents identified "being motivated" as the second most important feature of an effective teacher (p.130). Abdullah's (2005) research indicated that Malaysian school leader's transformational leadership affects the responsibility of the teachers to the school, while others found that transformational leadership appears to increase teachers' motivation (Abdul Rahman and Hashim, 2017; Hashim and Abd Shukor, 2017). Teh et al's (2015) research on transformational leadership in Malaysia concurs with the studies done by Leithwood (1994) that there is a significant relationship between the dimensions of transformational school leadership practices and teacher efficacy. Significantly, but unsurprisingly, A moderate level of transformational leadership seemed unable to raise low performance.

Internal promotion for sustained work conditions

International research has indicated the importance of internal promotion or succession planning of key leadership positions for successful schools. Caldwell and Spinks (2008) highlighted that one of the main reasons for the success of Finland schools is the attraction and retention of competent teachers. Wood et al. (2013) investigated recruitment and retention of school administrators by surveying a sample of superintendents from the Midwestern region of the USA. A major finding from their open-ended survey was that superintendents felt that "growing their own administrators" was the most effective means of recruiting assistant principals. From this study, the researchers provide evidence specifying that

midwestern superintendents preferred internal promotion as a means of recruitment. According to internal human capital theory (Lazear, 1992; Lazear and Rosen, 1981), internal applicants may have received opportunities from their employers to develop the necessary leadership skills adapted to serve their specific environment. Buckman et al. (2018) also contend that their internal experiences with the development of the school's culture, vision, and goals gave them an added advantage over external candidates.

In addition, Crippen (2012) believe that positive relationships between head teachers and teachers are critical for they contribute to developing teacher capabilities. According to Louis et al. (2010), such relations create a climate that sustains the sense of openness, trust, collaboration and belonging to the school. This bond is enhanced as teachers play their part as executors of the school's mission and vision. In contrast, low levels of trust count for less interaction between teachers and head teachers (Soukainen, 2013). Teacher performance decreases as teachers have less trust in the leadership capabilities of headteachers. The higher the trust between two parties, the higher the cooperation, making for improved work-related outcomes (Kim Liu and Diefendorff, 2015).

In a centralised administration, such as that of Malaysia, principals do not actively manage the development and succession planning of their senior leaders. Any retirements, vacancies and needs are usually reported to the district education office, who then appoint or assign the relevant individuals to assume the vacant positions at the school. Schools have very little autonomy in selecting their principal, senior leaders or teachers (Bajunid et al., 2008). In Malaysia, apart from the principal, the other formal leadership roles in schools include vice principals, senior assistants, senior subject teachers, heads of subject and administrative staff holding positions of responsibility (Bajunid, 2007). While the headteacher or principal is ultimately responsible to the District and the Ministry for the school's performance, there is a clear expectation that they are accountable for the performance of those in other formal leadership roles in the school. School leaders also have to ensure that those with a teaching responsibility comply with their particular set of roles, responsibilities, and KPIs. COMCEC notes that the lack of effective school leadership, the lack of motivated teachers, and lack of good and well-qualified teachers, are the top three main barriers to quality education in Malaysia (2018, p.126).

School climate

The concept of school climate or school culture seems to be used interchangeably with organisational climate or academic learning climate. Halpin & Croft described organisational climate "as the organisational 'personality' of a school; whereby, 'personality' is to the individual what climate is to the

organisation" (1962, p. 1). Alig-Mielcarek (2003) describes academic press as a way of conceptualising the academic learning climate of a school that influences administrative, teacher, and student behaviour and refers to the extent to which the school is driven by a quest for academic excellence.

International research has acknowledged the impact of school climate on student outcomes, especially the role that school leaders play in providing a conducive school learning climate. Promoting an academic learning climate refers to the behaviours of the principal that influences the norms, beliefs, and attitudes of the teachers, students, and parents of a school (Murphy, 1990). "Principals foster the development of a school learning climate conducive to teaching and learning by establishing positive expectations and standards, by maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers and students, and promoting professional development" (p.174). This dimension deals directly with the teaching and learning process in classrooms. Principals can affect student achievement indirectly by using their leadership to develop an organisational climate in which academic and intellectual pursuits are central to the school. Hoy and Miskel (2000) contend that "the atmosphere of a school has a major impact on the organisational behaviour, and because administrators can have a significant, positive influence of the development of the 'personality' of the school, it is important to describe and analyse school climates" (p.190). instructional leaders develop a school academic learning climate by defining and communicating shared goals that assert high expectations of students, monitoring and providing feedback on the teaching and learning process, and promoting professional development aligned with the faculty's needs and school goals (Robinson et al., 2008). "The principal is the most potent factor in determining school climate" and that "a direct relationship between visionary leadership and school climate and culture is imperative to support teacher efforts that lead to the success of the instructional program" (Benda, 2002, p. 5).

However, there is also a need to look beyond teacher quality and school leadership to the individual student's development in order to discover alternative ways to improve student outcomes. Students, especially adolescents, who felt a sense of belonging at school and among their peers, are reported to obtain higher academic achievement and had fewer problems at school (e.g. relating to teachers or other students), relative to those with a lower sense of belonging (Anderman, 2002; Knifsend and Graham, 2012). One of the key factors in promoting feelings of belonging at school is adolescents' participation in extracurricular activities (Brown and Evans, 2002). These positive school-related effects relate to a number of adaptive academic outcomes (Anderman, 2002), whereby academic engagement is an important indicator of students' commitment to school that may buffer against early dropout (Fredricks et al., 2004). The pioneering schools featured in Covey's 'Leader in Me' emphasise the sense of belonging

at school by maintaining a caring learning community that supports effective teaching and rich curricula via the integration of the leadership theme into the school's DNA. The vision that every child is a leader promotes heterogeneous and inclusivity for all, which led to improved student outcomes (Covey, 2009). In a study of 880 schools in the state of Illinois in US, there was evidence indicating that the psychological environment of the school increases in importance at the upper grade levels in place of the role that the family may play at earlier grade levels. The study also found that the influence of the school's psychological environment appears to be most important for students from ethnic and lower SES backgrounds (Maehr and Midgley, 1991).

There is not much literature on school climate in Malaysia and how it impacts on student outcomes. Available research seemed to focus on system issues and the challenges Malaysia faced in its aspiration to rise from the bottom third in international assessments, such as PISA and TIMSS, to the top-third. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) has influenced many countries, including Malaysia, to transform their educational systems (Hartong, 2012). Through PISA, comparing the educational systems of different countries with one another is now possible. Consequently, a competitive environment has been developed where every country wants the schools to perform well, with different countries having short- and long-term plans to transform their schools and educational systems (Hartong, 2012; Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). A focus on academic press is stressed as it has a strong influence on student outcomes. However, principals do not have much autonomy in the hiring of their staff in Malaysia, as teachers are hired and assigned to schools by the Ministry (Bajunid et al., 2008). Hence, it is often difficult for principals to create an engaging school culture if they do not have the support of their staff.

Moderating variables: Parental expectations and socio-economic status

Baron & Kenny (1986) state that "moderator variables are typically introduced into a study when…a relation holds in one setting but not another, or for one subpopulation but not another" [p. 1173]. "Moderating variables help explain how or why certain effects will hold, and the careful selection of moderating variables is a key step in designing leadership effects research and one that has been badly neglected in educational leadership research to date" [Leithwood and Levin, 2005, p.30].

Parental expectations

International research has indicated how parental expectations influence the choices made by parents for their children's education, which impact on the success of their children's education. In the 2015 OECD Education Policy Outlook, the highest performing education systems are found to be those that combine equity with quality. Equity in education is achieved when personal or social circumstances, such as gender, ethnic origin or family background, do not hinder achieving educational potential and all individuals reach at least a basic minimum level of skills. Allen et al. (2014) found that middle classes tend to value performance and peer groups while lower SES groups may look for accessibility, friendliness of staff, and support for those of lower ability. This may lead lower SES groups to select themselves out of high performing schools either by prioritising school aspects other than academic performance, or to avoid possible rejection or failure. This parental choice of school plays a role in determining the success of low SES students. However, Bridgeland et al.'s (2008) survey showed that parents of all backgrounds, and with children in both high-performing and low-performing schools, had remarkably similar views about what schools could do to help them more effectively support the education of their children. High performing schools are found to do a better job of communicating with parents, regardless of SES.

Hattie (2009) reported an effect size of 0.58 for parent expectations, which was far greater than parental involvement at the school. Middle-class parents made a better decision based on the important concerns, regardless of their differences in education (Glascoe, 2000). Most of these parents understood their children and were prepared to sacrifice for their children's education (ibid). Furthermore, they understand a specific detachment of responsibility and work, between school and parents (Lee and Hallinger, 2012). They are also involved in the student's learning process and have a significant impact on the student's development (Okagaki & Sternberg, 1993). While the principal has the least influence on the family path, Leithwood and Levin (2005) note that principal skills, including the ability to make parents feel welcome in the school, and strong structural leadership (such as being analytic; having technical expertise; attending to detail; making good decisions; and being a clear, logical thinker) were associated with a sense of community shared by staff and parents.

There are few studies in Malaysia on parental expectations, although there is some research on low SES students' parental background. In a 2014 survey conducted by IDEAS, to give voice to a group of parents from low SES backgrounds in Malaysia, it was found that the top reasons cited by parents for children who dropped out of school are lack of interest in school (72%), followed by high school fees (23%), poor academic performance (23%) and needing to work or take care of family members (20%). However, the

same study also noted that low SES parents ranked having academic skills as the most important skills their child should have upon leaving school, followed by a good command of English and being well-mannered. These parents usually have few communications with the school, with most only speaking to teachers about their children's performance once a year. Patel (2014) reported that almost 52,000 students dropped out during the transition year from Standard 6 to Form 1 and from Form 3 to Form 4 in 2012. These dropouts would earn on average 50 to 100 percent less than their counterparts who graduated from high school (Patel, 2014).

Low socio-economic status (SES)

Bourdieu states that poor students are already socially disadvantaged in terms of accessing and securing a good education (Sullivan, 2002). The education system assumes that students are in possession of cultural capital which consists of familiarity with the dominant culture in a society, and especially the ability to understand educated language. However, the possession of this cultural capital varies with social class and is biased towards the higher class. Within the context of the community and society, researchers have explored how a history of racial prejudice, and daily experiences of discrimination, cause many disadvantaged adolescents to believe that hard work in school is irrelevant and that academic endeavours will have relatively little economic payoff (Becker and Luthar, 2002).

International research has affirmed how school leaders face different challenges in influencing the learning and student outcomes for low SES students. Schools with greater proportions of disadvantaged students face extra teaching and behavioural challenges and less advantageous peer effects, leading to unequal educational quality between schools. Schools facing challenging contexts are constantly managing tensions and problems stemming from the circumstances and context of the school, with most of these problems beyond their control and often dependent on situational factors that can be both internal and external to the organisation (Muijs and Harris, 2006).   These 'school effects' are known to account for 8-15 percent of variance in student academic achievement (Reynolds, 1992).   Reducing segregation to ensure an even spread of disadvantaged pupils across schools could be beneficial as the findings show average gains of between 10% and 20% of a pupil-level standard deviation of GCSE points score in England, if students chose to attend a higher-performing school (Allen et al., 2014).

External factors play a large part in influencing a school's ability to improve, and to sustain improvement (Harris, 2005). In order to be successful principals in inner-city schools, it is often necessary to engage in more direct and top-down forms of leadership than in suburban settings (Leithwood et al., 2004). In addition, a considerable amount of evidence suggests that the best curriculum for socially, economically

or culturally disadvantaged children is often the "rich curriculum" that focuses beyond the basic skills and knowledge to one that is clearly aligned and aimed at accomplishing the full array of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions valued by society (Leithwood et al., 2004). Disadvantaged students benefited more from learning in heterogeneous rather than in homogeneous ability groups as the "relatively high expectations for learning, a faster pace of instruction, peer models of effective learning, and a more challenging curriculum, are among the reasons offered for this advantage" (Leithwood et al., 2006b, p. 95). School leaders can make a difference in how low SES students learn within their schools and can implement practices that could improve student outcomes, as discussed above, taking into consideration the unique context of this socially disadvantaged group. Mulford et al. (2008) found that school transformation and success in high-poverty communities were the results of high-performing leadership. Building leadership capacity in these schools should be part of any school improvement effort since leaders have greater impact on under-performing schools (Leithwood et al., 2004).

In Malaysia, the largest achievement gaps are still those driven by socio-economic status. Schools with higher concentrations of low-income students are more likely to fall in the lowest performing Band 6 or 7 on the NKRA scale, with about 69% of the students receiving KWAPM financial aid (a fund for disadvantaged students) from the government. Conversely, most high performing schools have less than a third of their students on financial aid (Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013, p. 91). According to the Blueprint, principals in under-performing schools generally felt stretched and overwhelmed with the number of potential programmes they were expected to implement. In rapidly improving or good schools, on the other hand, principals had a strong understanding of what was critical for their schools and acted decisively to focus their teachers and school community on a core set of practices (Malaysia. Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 4-20). In order to close the achievement gaps driven by socio-economic status, the challenge remains on how to distribute low SES students among high performing schools in Malaysia or to appoint high-performing principals to turnaround low performing schools that have many low SES students.

Poverty in Malaysia is predominantly a rural phenomenon. Since policies have been focused mainly on rural poverty, urban poverty has been under-studied (Mok, 2009). The urban population in Malaysia is about 73% of the total population, based on 2011 data extracted from the 2014 Malaysia demographics profile. According to Patel (2014), there are different levels of household income to indicate poverty in Malaysia. In Klang Valley, a household earning less than RM2300 per month in an urban area is considered

poor even though it is double the poverty indicator of other states, which is less than RM1000. As such, the plight of the urban poor, especially within Klang Valley, may not be adequately addressed.

Overview

This chapter examines the evolution of leadership and discusses the various educational models. It also focuses on how school leadership influences student outcomes. Using the leadership effects framework developed by Leithwood and Levin (2005), the impact of school leadership (the independent variable) on student outcomes (the dependent variable), through its influence and interaction with various mediating and moderating variables, are reviewed through existing empirical research, setting a baseline on how my research contributes to this body of knowledge. However, there is little Malaysian research on how principals improve student outcomes, particularly in under-performing schools with a high percentage of low SES students. This provides the warrant for deeper understanding and research, as the largest achievement gaps in Malaysia are still those driven by socio-economic status. My research provides insights into how school leaders in my case study schools strive to bridge the gap. The following chapter presents the research methodology and methods adopted to conduct my enquiry on school leadership and student outcomes in two contrasting urban schools.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

This study aimed to contribute to the knowledge base concerning school leadership and student outcomes, particularly in schools with difficult or challenging circumstances. The focus was on urban schools located within the Klang Valley in Malaysia and differing in their school performance.

Research Design

In this study, an exploratory sequential mixed-methods research design (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011) was selected in order to broadly explore and understand school leadership practices, behaviours, and student outcomes. This study was guided by the four research questions below:

RQ1: What is the relationship between leadership and student outcomes in a high-performing and a low-performing secondary school in the Klang Valley?

RQ2: How do leaders exert their influence to promote enhanced student outcomes, particularly for students from low socio-economic contexts?

RQ3: Which leadership styles are most effective in promoting enhanced student outcomes in the case study schools?

RQ4: How do leadership approaches differ between higher and lower performing schools in the Klang Valley?

In this exploratory design, qualitative data were collected and analysed first, and themes were used to drive the development of a quantitative instrument to further explore the research problem (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011). The qualitative part of this study included documentary analysis, which provided data about student results and about the socio-economic status of the case study schools. This guided the design of the qualitative interviews with school leaders (see appendix). The qualitative analysis of this first phase guided the development of the quantitative phase, the teachers' survey, to identify questions related to the themes arising from the interviews. The interview and survey data informed the final phase of data collection, the qualitative classroom observation. In mixed-methods studies, quantitative and qualitative data were intentionally integrated or combined rather than keeping them separate. The basic concept was that integration of quantitative and qualitative data maximizes the strengths, and minimizes the weaknesses, of each type of data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The same process was applied for

both the case study schools. Yin (2014) elaborated that the case study must have a logical design, pre-described data collection techniques, and predetermined data-analysis methods.

Research Paradigms and Approach

The theoretical framework, as distinct from a theory, is sometimes referred to as the paradigm (Mertens, 2003) and influences the way knowledge is studied and interpreted. It is the choice of paradigm that sets down the intent, motivation and expectations for the research. This research employed a pragmatist paradigm that was focused on the 'what' and 'how' of the research problem (Creswell, 2003, p.11). Pragmatism is seen as the paradigm that provides the underlying philosophical framework for mixed-methods research (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). It emphasises that the best method is the one that solves problems and focuses on the process that influences the outcome (Morgan, 2007). "To a pragmatist, the mandate of science is not to find truth or reality, the existence of which are perpetually in dispute, but to facilitate human problem-solving" (Powell, 2001, p. 884). Mixed-methods are one of the consequences of a pragmatic approach to educational research (Morgan, 2007).   The pragmatic paradigm places "the research problem" as central and applies all approaches to understanding the problem (Creswell, 2003, p.11). With the research question 'central', data collection and analysis methods are chosen as those most likely to provide insights into the question with no philosophical loyalty to any alternative paradigm.

In designing the study, consideration was given to "concepts pertaining to a given phenomenon that have not been identified, or aren't fully developed, or are fully understood and further explanation on a topic is necessary to increase understanding" (Corbin and Strauss, 2008: 25). This study primarily sought to understand whether and how low SES students' outcomes were enhanced by school leaders. As such, an interpretivist or constructivist paradigm was also employed to gain knowledge based on specific social and contextual understanding. It assumed that reality as we knew it was constructed subjectively through the meanings and understandings developed socially and experientially (Creswell, 2008; Mertens 2003).

Quantitative research methods emphasised a deductive-objective-generalisation approach and were important for measuring educational phenomena with precision, such as evaluating the value of educational programmes and public financial investments. Qualitative research emphasised an inductive-subjective-contextual approach and was important for capturing the context of educational phenomena and the human and social aspects of education (Greene, 2007; Morgan, 2007).

This study employed a mixed-methods approach. As the research questions indicated, this study sought to understand the process by which school leadership influenced student learning outcomes, especially for students from low socio-economic backgrounds. A mixed-methods approach was more able to answer the deeper, more process-oriented, and more complex question of "what works, for whom, in what contexts? How does it work? And how can it continually adjust to changing conditions and be improved?" (Johnson, 2009, p. 455).

Research Methods

Mixed-methods research places emphasis on the research questions being the focus of all methodological decisions. The strategy for mixing methods must be explicit and justified in terms of the sequence of methods (concurrent, qualitative first, or quantitative first), the priority among methods (equal, or either method prioritised), and the nature and timing of integration (full or partial, during data collection, analysis, or interpretation) (Creswell, 2008).   Plano-Clark and Ivankova (2015) indicated that researchers should clearly articulate a defensible rationale to justify mixing methods as it heavily influenced the quality in mixed methods research.   Mixed-methods research, frequently referred to as the 'third methodological orientation' (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2008), drew on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research. Its core characteristics include both qualitative and quantitative strands of data, collected and analysed separately, and integrated to address the research questions in a single research study (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). Onwuegbuzie and Combs (2010) concurred, arguing that "mixed analyses involve the use of at least one qualitative analysis and at least one quantitative analysis – meaning that both analysis types are needed to conduct a mixed analysis" (p.414). This research followed a sequential mixed methods approach, beginning with qualitative documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews before the quantitative teachers' survey. The findings from the qualitative methods informed the design of the teachers' survey to establish the preferred leadership practices and their influences on student outcomes.

Instead of approaching a research question using either quantitative or qualitative research, the mixed methods research approach advanced the scholarly conversation by drawing on the strengths of both methodologies. "What is most fundamental is the research question—research methods should follow research questions in a way that offers the best chance to obtain useful answers" (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, pp. 16–17).   The first research question sought to understand the relationship between leadership and student outcomes, while the second and third research questions addressed how leaders exerted their leadership influence and the leadership practices that enhanced student outcomes.

Both the qualitative semi-structured interviews, and the quantitative teachers' survey, were needed to facilitate the gathering of consistent and tangible evidence about the leadership influences and the preferred leadership practices. Qualitative (mainly inductive) methods allowed for identification of previously unknown processes, explanations of why and how phenomena occur, and the range of their effects. Quantitative (mainly deductive) methods were ideal for measuring pervasiveness of "known" phenomena and central patterns of association, including inferences of causality (Creswell et al., 2011). Mixed-methods research, then, was more than simply collecting qualitative data from interviews, or collecting multiple forms of qualitative evidence (e.g., observations and interviews) or multiple types of quantitative evidence (e.g., surveys and diagnostic tests). It involved the intentional collection of both quantitative and qualitative data and the combination of the strengths of each, to answer research questions. By fully integrating the qualitative and the quantitative data strands of the study, a more thorough and deeper analysis and interpretation of the leadership influences on student outcomes was made possible.

Case study

This qualitative dual-case study utilised a mixed-methods approach that was qualitative dominant with a constructivist philosophy. The interpretivist/constructivist researcher tended to rely upon the 'participants' views of the situation being studied" (Creswell, 2003, p.8) and recognised the impact on the research of their own background and experiences. Constructivists did not generally begin with a theory but "generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meanings" (ibid, p.9) throughout the research process.

Yin (2014) described case study research as a "linear, but iterative process" (p.22) and defined it as "an empirical inquiry that investigated a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in depth and within its real-world context" (p. 16). By addressing the "how" or "why" questions concerning the phenomenon of interest, case study drew from manifold lines of evidence for triangulating purposes and availed itself of prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (Yin, 2014).

For this study, a dual-case approach was chosen, with two dissimilar schools, one a high-performing school and the other a low-performing school, to examine the leadership practices that impacted on student outcomes. The reason for the selection of a multiple case study design was replication, or for understanding the factors that allowed for successful outcomes in one case, but less successful outcomes in another (Yin 2014). The researcher could analyse the data both within each situation and across

situations (ibid). This enabled the researcher to understand the differences and the similarities between the cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Hence, by choosing a dual-case study with two dissimilar schools, a cross-case analysis could be performed to better understand "how" and "why" leadership practices influenced the observed student outcomes in the respective schools.   Within each school, a comparison of performance between the low SES students and the higher SES students was made to determine any differences in leadership practices and student outcomes.

Figure 3.1 shows the sequential mixed-methods approach in four phases and the overall qualitative and quantitative procedures used in the research. This approach was used in both the case study schools to analyse the data within each school and across both schools. Brannen (2005) noted that a mixed-methods researcher did not always have to treat qualitative and quantitative studies equally. This research was a qualitative dominant mixed-methods study, which began with the qualitative phase of documentary analysis to establish the level of student outcomes, followed by the structured interviews of the school leaders and the identified subject leaders. The findings from these two phases informed the design of the quantitative teachers' survey in the third phase. The interviews and surveys provided insights into leadership influences and practices.   The final fourth phase, classroom observations, provided a qualitative input on how school leadership may have influenced the actual classroom practices.
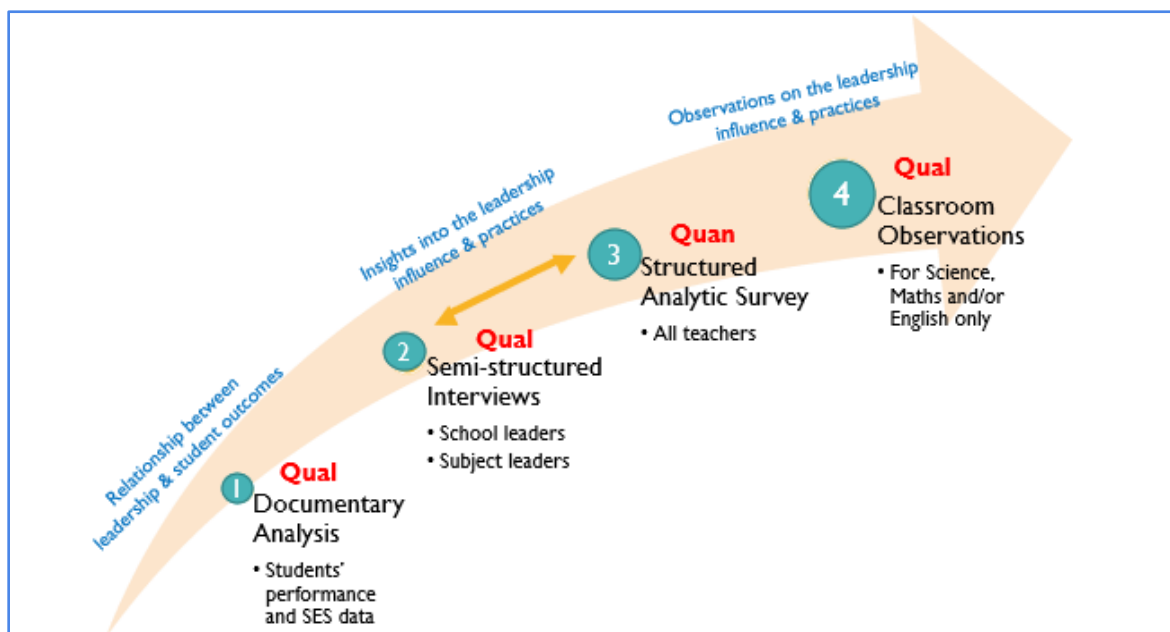
Figure 3.1 Sequential mixed-methods approach in four phases

<u>Documentary analysis</u>

In the initial phase, documentary analysis was carried out on the respective schools' students' performance data. Documentary analysis was a form of qualitative research in which documents were interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic (Bowen, 2009). Cohen et al (2011, p. 249) stated that "a document may be defined briefly as a record of an event or process", with a distinction drawn between documents that are based on written text and other forms produced through other means. There was also an established difference between primary documents (which were produced as a direct record of an event or process by a witness or subject involved in it) and secondary documents (formed through an analysis of primary documents to provide an account of the event or process in question, often in relation to others) (ibid, p.249). While virtual documents or primary documents, stored electronically for access through the internet were easily accessible, Cohen et al. (2011) argued that government and other organisational websites that stored documents in this way may sought to cast the government or organisation in a favourable light. Documentary research typically made use of documents produced previously and by others, including published reports. It was useful as documents could provide background information and broad coverage of data and were therefore helpful in contextualising research within its subject or field (Bowen, 2009). He summed up the overall concept of document analysis as a process of "evaluating documents in such a way that empirical knowledge is produced and understanding is developed" (ibid, p. 33).

There are three primary types of documents, public records, personal documents and physical evidence (O'Leary, 2014). Public records consisted of the official, ongoing records of an organisation's activities. Personal documents are first-person accounts of an individual's actions, experiences, and beliefs. Physical evidence comprised physical objects found within the study setting (often called artifacts). Most of the documents analysed in this research were public records that included the schools' mission statements and academic performance records, students' demographics and socioeconomic status records, students' attendance records, minutes of key leadership meetings, annual reports to the district educational office, student handbooks, policy manuals and syllabi. Physical evidence captured included the schools' flyers, posters, organisation charts, and training materials.

<u>Interviews</u>

Interviews were ideal when used to document participants' accounts, perceptions of, or stories about, attitudes toward, and responses to, certain situations or phenomena. Interview data were often used to

generate themes, theories, and models as interviews generally yielded richer, more in-depth data than surveys (Paradis et al., 2016).   Interviewing had a variety of forms, including individual, face-to-face interviews and face-to-face group interviewing, or mediated by the telephone or other electronic devices (e.g. computers). It could be structured, semi-structured or unstructured (Kabir, 2011).   The nature of face-to-face interviews offered an advantage of social cues such as voice, intonation, facial expression and body language, that provided extra information to supplement the verbal answers given by the interviewee (Opdenakker, 2006).

The second phase of the present research comprised the qualitative approach using semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the school principal, assistant school principal(s) and subject heads from the focus subjects of Science, English and Mathematics, to yield insights on the leadership practices at both the school-level and the student-level, in both school contexts. Findings from the documentary analysis were used to guide the selection of interview questions. Semi-structured interviews were preferred as they allowed informants the freedom to express their views in their own terms, while still providing reliable, comparable qualitative data. Structured interviews required a clear topical focus and well-developed understanding of the topic at hand (Kabir, 2011), which were not appropriate for this exploratory study. Miles & Huberman (1994) also noted that highly structured interviews led to an expected outcome or to settling upon an explanation too early.

Questionnaires

Quantifiable results, as they pertained to opinions, attitudes, or trends, were one of the goals of conducting a survey (Creswell, 2003). "Typically, surveys gather data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions, or identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared, or determining the relationships that exist between specific events (Cohen et al., 2011, p.256). Data collected, often through surveys administered to a sample or subset of the entire population, allowed the researcher to generalize or make inferences, with conclusions often derived from data collected and measures of statistical analysis (Creswell,2003).

The third phase of the present study involved a quantitative approach utilising an analytic survey with survey items drawn from the qualitative findings and the literature review, for example to collect more details on the leadership practices identified from the interviews. The survey was administered online to encourage more candid responses, as it provided teachers with the flexibility to complete the survey in the privacy of their homes, with anonymity assured. In addition, online surveys guaranteed a rather short

time frame for the collection of responses and were time and cost saving (Devers and Frankel, 2000). They encouraged higher response rates, and provided ease of editing and analysis (Kabir, 2011). Online data collection also protected against the loss of data and simplified the transfer of data into a database for analysis (Ilieva, Baron & Healey, 2002). The survey link (administered using an online survey application, Qualtrics) was sent to all the teachers in the case study schools to determine which leadership practices were perceived to be most effective, and why, in order to provide evidence linked to student outcomes as much as possible. As surveys could have a low response rate arising from refusals, non-contact and language difficulties (Kabir, 2011), standard procedures in terms of advance notice of the survey and timely reminders were used to maximize the response rate. The survey also utilised a dual language approach, using both the native Malay language and English, to mitigate any language difficulties for most teachers, who are Malays.

Observations

Observations were used to gather information in situ using the senses: vision, hearing, touch, and smell; and are ideal when used to document, explore, and understand, as they occur, activities, actions, relationships, culture, or taken-for-granted ways of doing things (Paradis et al., 2016). Observation was a fundamental way of finding out about the world around us. In the final phase of the present research, non-participant classroom observations were performed for the focus subjects (namely Science, English or Mathematics) within the schools to gain a better understanding of the leadership practices and their influence on teachers' efficacy and student learning. A non-participant observation method, in which the researcher did not participate in the activities being observed and was new to the situation and unaware of what to expect, reduced the observer effect that could lead to observer bias. Observer bias could lead to observers determining which behaviours they choose to observe and may lead to systematic errors in identifying and recording behaviour (Kabir, 2011). However, the presence of the observers could still cause individuals to change their behaviour when they knew that they are being observed (reactivity), and their behaviour would not be representative of their normal behaviour. To mitigate the observer's influence, the researcher sat unobtrusively at the back of the class and arrived before the class commenced. Also, at least two classroom observations were made for each case study school to minimise the observer's bias and the influence of the observer. Observational data were integrated and triangulated with the findings from the other methods, in the interpretation phase of the study.

Sampling

In this mixed-methods research, a sample was first defined from the schools in Klang Valley. Schools in Malaysia are clustered from Band 1 (for the highest top performing schools) to Band 7 (lowest banding for low performance schools). The scores are determined based on a maximum value of a composite score of 100%; of which 70% is from the Public Examination performance and 30% from the school's self-assessment (MoE website). A multi-stage sampling process, as described below, was undertaken to identify the schools and the individuals to participate in the research. Multi-stage sampling is a process of moving from a broad to a narrow sample, using a step by step process, to select samples which are concentrated in a few geographical regions (Taherdoost, 2016).

First, cluster sampling was employed to identify the sample schools. Cluster sampling was where the whole population was divided into clusters or groups, with a random sample subsequently taken to be used in the final sample (Wilson, 2010). The national secondary school population was divided into two clusters within the urban areas of Selangor or Klang Valley in Malaysia. One cluster represented the high-performing (Band 1-2) national public schools and the other cluster the low-performing (Band 5-7) national public schools. The national public schools followed the national curriculum and practiced co-education. They were not specialised schools such as religious schools, science schools, hostel schools or vocational schools that had specialised curriculum or structure.

According to data obtained from the Education Performance and Delivery Unit (PADU), there were 266 secondary schools listed in Selangor. Using banding data from 2014, three high-performing (Band 1 and 2) national co-education public schools were identified (from a list of 18 schools that comprised all school types). There were 118 low-performing (Band 5 and 6) national public schools identified (see figure 3.2 below).
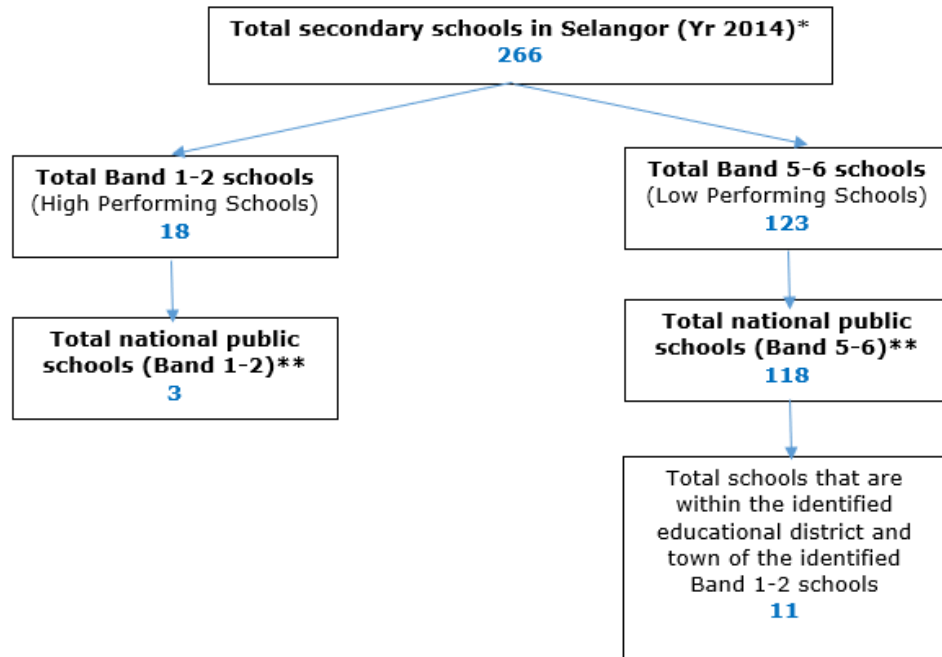
Source: MoE Education Performance and Delivery Unit (PADU)

Figure 3.2 Sampling of case-study schools based on 2014 data

The banding distribution of the schools did not follow a bell-curve and skewed towards the low-performing end. Only co-educational national public schools (SMKs) were considered for inclusion in the research (see figure 3.2). These schools followed the national curriculum. They were not specialised schools such as religious schools, science schools, boarding schools or vocational schools that had specialised curriculum or structure. The list was further shortlisted to match high-performing and low-performing schools that were located within the same educational district. This helped to minimise any inter-district practices and influences. Only two high-performing schools and two low-performing schools met these criteria. Preference was given to the low-performing and high-performing school that were located closest to one another (within a 5 km radius) so that the community and environmental setting would be similar, to reduce community variables.

Within the chosen schools, a request was made to perform classroom observations for Form 4 students in the following subjects, namely Mathematics, Science and English. These subjects were chosen as they are assessed in PISA and TIMSS. There were less than ten Form 4 classes in the respective case study schools. The relevant subject teachers were approached, and classroom observations were conducted for those classes where the teachers provided voluntary informed consent (see below).

For each case study school, purposive sampling of school leaders was undertaken to include the principal, assistant principal and specified subject heads (Mathematics, Science and English). This meant a minimum of five school leaders in each case study school were interviewed. At one case study school, a career counselling teacher was included to provide more insights into the challenges faced by the students at the school. Purposive sampling strategies were designed to enhance understanding of selected individuals or groups' experience(s) or for developing theories and concepts by selecting "information rich" cases, that is individuals, groups, organizations, or behaviours that provided the greatest insight into the research question (Devers and Frankel, 2000).

All the teachers in both secondary schools, from Form 1 to Form 5, were included in the survey, a 100% sample or census, to identify the leadership practices that influence student outcomes. This ensured that all classroom teachers were given the opportunity to participate. The case study schools both had fewer than 50 teachers and a response rate of about 35% was recorded for both schools.

Research Instruments

The research instruments developed for this research were the interviews with school leaders, the teachers' questionnaire, and classroom observations. Exploratory designs began with a primary qualitative phase, then the findings were validated or otherwise informed by quantitative results. This approach is usually employed to develop a standardized (quantitative) instrument in a relatively unstudied area. The qualitative phase identified important factors, while the quantitative phase applied them to a larger and/or more diverse sample (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007).

Interviews

In phase 2, semi-structured interviews (see appendix) were conducted with the selected school leaders, to gain insights into the second and third research question; the influence the leaders exerted to promote enhanced student outcomes, particularly those from low socio-economic contexts, and the leadership practices. The interviews included probing questions to establish the main contributing factors to student outcomes, and to ascertain the leaders' influence. The interviews also sought to learn more about the school challenges and the actions that were taken to mitigate them. As this study was exploratory, and as recommended by Devers and Frankel (2000), a more open-ended protocol (with more open-ended questions), was chosen.

The study had two interview guides, one for the principal and one for the school leaders, comprising the assistant principals and subject heads (see appendix). Questions for the school leaders differed slightly as there were questions regarding the school principal. Both had four sections; Section 1: Context (3 questions), Section 2: Effective leadership styles (4 questions), Section 3: Leadership influence on student outcomes (3 questions) and Section 4: Evidence of impact (2 questions).

Questionnaires

Drawing from the outputs of phase 2, and the practices that were utilised to promote enhanced student outcomes, a questionnaire survey was developed. Structured questions, using Likert scales, were used for all the teachers to identify which practices are most commonly agreed to influence student outcomes, particularly for the low SES students. Kabir (2011) noted that open-ended questions left the answer entirely up to the respondent and therefore provided a greater range of responses while the use of scales was useful when assessing participants' attitudes. As such, open-ended survey questions were included for the teachers to identify and describe leadership characteristics of the principals that enhanced student outcomes. They were also used to encourage teachers to provide examples to illustrate their responses so that more insights could be gained. Multiple choice questions were used to gather the teachers' background to facilitate easy comparison. Teachers' feedback on the leadership practices helped to establish and quantify the school's successes and challenges, which could reinforce the themes or findings from the interviews conducted, and provided insights to the third research question.

The survey consisted of 21 questions, divided into two parts (see appendix). Part one captured the respondent's background and consisted of four multiple choice questions to cover their teaching background and years of experience at the school. Part two of the questionnaire was designed to obtain feedback on the school's leaders (i.e. principal and the subject heads for Mathematics, English and Science). It consisted of behavioural statements that described the school leaders' job practices and behaviours, as well as questions to consider the extent of the influence of the school leaders and the most effective practices implemented to drive student outcomes. Respondents were asked to consider each question in terms of their observations of the current school leadership over the past two to three years. There were three subsections in part two to address the three research questions. The first subsection referred to school leadership and student outcomes and had one close-ended question and four open-ended questions. It addressed the first research question on the relationship between school leadership

and student outcomes. It focused on the observed changes in student achievement at the school and strived to understand the factors that led to the changes.

The next section consisted of seven open-ended questions and one close-ended question to explore the leadership influence in promoting student outcomes. It contributed to the second research question by providing insights on how leaders exerted their influence, particularly for students from low socio-economic contexts, to improve student outcomes. It explored the highest and lowest performers at the school. In addition, it also addressed the initiatives undertaken to encourage the students and teachers to achieve their intended goals.

The final subsection focused on the leadership styles that impacted on student outcomes. It addressed the third research question. There was one close-ended question, three open-ended questions, and one question containing 19 items or tasks to evaluate the practices performed by the school principal. Respondents were provided with a 5-point Likert scale to indicate the frequency of the leadership practices in their respective school, with 5 representing "Almost always" (highest frequency) to 1 being "Almost never" (lowest frequency). The 26 items that respondents were asked to evaluate included instructional, transformational, and distributed leadership practices.

Observations

The classroom observations utilised two main tools. The first was the Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) tool to classify the verbal behaviour of teachers and students as they interacted in the classroom. The basic assumption of the system is that, in the classroom, the verbal statements of a teacher were consistent with his/her non-verbal gestures or with his/her total behaviour (Flanders, 1970). The Flanders instrument was designed for observing only verbal communication in the classroom and non–verbal gestures are not taken into account. To address this, field notes were used as the second tool to record non-verbal behaviour. Phillippi and Lauderdale (2018) noted that field notes aid in constructing thick, rich descriptions of the study context, and documents valuable contextual data.

In the Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC), the researcher/observer sat in the corner of the classroom and coded the interactions as they happened. Every three seconds, the observer recorded the predominant event that had happened during that period, so that 20 numbers were written on the recording sheet during each minute of observation. In Flanders interaction analysis system, the entire classroom interaction was put into one of the ten categories in the three main sections; teacher talk, student talk and silence or confusion.

For the field notes, details of the overall setting were made to provide a rich context of the study itself. Prior to beginning the study, Mulhall (2003) noted that the researcher should plan an approach to field note collection that was congruent with the theoretical framework and the methodological approach. The theoretical framework and methodological approach helped to define the nature of knowledge, which directed the line of inquiry and the value placed on different sources of information. The field notes undertaken for the study included basic information such as dates of the data collection, the teacher's details and subject information, classroom details and arrangements, student demographics and gender, and pertinent information about the lesson observed. Detailed field notes about the overall study setting assisted the researcher in a robust understanding of the participants' lives, contextualising their response to the phenomenon of interest (Phillippi and Lauderdale, 2018). It prompted the researcher to closely observe environment and interactions, and to encourage the researcher's reflection and identification of bias (ibid).

Data Collection

Public schools in Malaysia began their school term in January and end the year in late November. A week-long term break occurred in the months of March, June and September, typically during mid-month. The Malaysian Education Certificate (SPM) national examination for form five students typically began in early November. The form three assessment (PT3) national examinations started with an oral assessment of the English and Malay language in August, with the written examination occurring in mid-October. Hence, the visits to the case study schools were scheduled to take place during the non-examination period, from mid-July to mid-October, with another opportunity from February to April. Due to the delay in securing approvals from the officials, the first case study school's data collection was completed from February to April 2017, while the second case study school's data collection took place from May to August 2017.

The shortlisted national secondary schools to be considered as potential case study schools were finalised by June 2016. Access was secured through prior approvals from the Education Planning and Research Division (EPRD) of the Ministry of Education, the Selangor state education office, and the district office where the schools are located, following ethical approval from the University (see below). After the formal access processes, hand-delivered letters were sent to the targeted principals by January 2017, requesting permission to conduct research in their respective schools.

Documentary analysis

Upon receiving a positive response from the targeted schools to conduct the research, the first phase of the research, documentary analysis of school records, began in early February 2017 for the first case study school and in early April for the second school, while awaiting confirmation to interview the identified school leaders. Past performance data were collected so that a comprehensive analysis could be performed to observe trends that may be influenced by school leadership practices. In addition, the tenure of school leaders (principal, assistant principals, relevant subject heads) were also analysed to determine whether there was any difference in students' performance prior to the current school principal's tenure. Students' attendance and family background record, minutes of meetings, and each school's annual performance review report and educational reports to the district and state educational offices, were also reviewed.

Interviews

Identification of the school leaders and the selected subject leads was finalised by late February for the first case study school, with the interviews scheduled for mid- to end-March. For the second school, the interviewees were finalised by end-April and the interviews scheduled for May. The interviews were conducted through one-on-one face-to-face interviews with the selected individuals during the school session, in a setting within the school that allowed for privacy. The principal, senior assistants and subject leaders were chosen to be interviewed. Seven school leaders (the principal, three senior assistants, and three subject leaders) were interviewed at each case study school.

Questionnaires

Initial analysis of the interviews was carried out in early May, for the first school, and late June, for the second school, to determine whether any additional inputs to the survey items would be required. The teachers' survey commenced in July or August for both case study schools. The teachers were provided with an online survey which was later changed to a hardcopy survey and distributed to the teachers, as the initial response rate was low (less than 15%). Response rates as low as 30% have been considered reasonable in self-completed postal or mail surveys (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 1997) but, according to Comley (2000), most virtual surveys in 1999 showed a response rate between 15 and 29%. Feedback received was due to the teachers not having the optimal internet access to respond to the survey adequately. In addition, some of the teachers indicated their preference for a pencil-and-paper survey

which they could easily complete during their break while at school.   The change improved the response rate for the survey to about 35 percent for each school. This was important as a small sample size led to sampling error that impacted on the accuracy of the survey findings (Kabir, 2011).   Ilieva et al. (2002) also noted that there was no conclusive evidence that indicated a difference in responses between self-completed paper surveys and online surveys.

Observations

Classroom observations were conducted from mid-July to early August. Only classroom observations from the targeted three subjects were considered. As only two teachers consented for each school, only two classroom observations were successfully completed at each case study school. This was the minimum to enable comparative analysis. Classroom observations were conducted for the English and Science classes at school 1, and for Science and Mathematics classes at school 2.

The encoding process to capture the observations was based on Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) tool. All observations are encoded into one of the ten categories that were segmented as teacher talk, pupil talk and silence. Teacher talk consisted of 1. Accepts feeling, 2. Praises or encourages, 3. Accepts or uses ideas of pupils, 4. Asks questions, 5. Lecturing, 6. Giving directions and 7. Criticising or justifying authority. Pupil talk consisted of 8. Pupil-talk response and 9. Pupil-talk initiation. There was only one category for Silence, which was 10. Silence or confusion. The direct and indirect influence of the teacher's behaviour were noted. At an interval of every three seconds, the researcher wrote down on the recording sheet the category number (out of the ten categories) which best represented the communication event just completed. The one-hour classroom observation for the Science, English or Mathematics subjects respectively were recorded and encoded using this process to systematically observe and study the teacher's classroom behaviour and the process of interaction inside the classroom. In addition, field notes were used to capture the non-verbal behaviour based on the categories planned prior to the observation. This helped to capture the researcher's impressions shortly after an observed event occurred.

Data Analysis

In a sequential mixed design, data collected and analysed from one phase of the study were used to inform subsequent phases of the investigation (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006). This iterative study design entails cycles of simultaneous data collection and analysis, where analysis informed the next cycle of data

collection. In addition, as a dual-case study, Yin (2009) discussed the four main strategies for case study analysis: examining theoretical propositions, creating a description, using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data, and examining rival theories.   He recommended that researchers began with the end in mind.

Qualitative data analysis

Multiple types of data were collected in both case study schools. It began with the documentary analysis where findings influenced the design of the interviews and questionnaires. Contextual, performance, and inspection data were collected. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with principals, senior assistants, and a purposive sample of subject leaders, at each school. Classroom observational data were gathered from two classes in each school. Qualitative data were analysed through a step-by-step process (Creswell, 2008). Using a simple process of qualitative content analysis, the data were subjected to the three-stage analysis method described by Miles & Huberman (1994) — data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. Transcribed data were read for a general sense of the findings, and notes made in margins. This was followed by coding and the placing of material under headings. Codes or categories are tags or labels for allocating units of meaning to the descriptive inferential information compiled during a study. In this study, codes were attached to chunks of varying-sized words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting, which took the form of a straightforward category label or a more complex one, for example, a metaphor (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Coding was also used to notice relevant phenomena; collecting examples of those phenomena; and analysing those phenomena in order to find commonalities, differences, patterns and structures (Seidel and Kelle, 1995). Central themes were then identified and key quotes, to enhance the data, were highlighted. An initial categorisation emerged that was tested and refined in second-level analysis.   Creating categories triggered the construction of a conceptual scheme that suits the data, which helped the researcher to ask questions, to compare across data, to change or drop categories and to make a hierarchical order of them. For example, various categories were very quickly identified from the data collected on leadership influences on student outcomes, such as those related to the leaders' personal attributes or leadership practices and the school context (such as a high percentage of weak students or students from low SES background).   The challenges faced contributing to the observed outcomes supplemented and strengthened the initial categories.

Common patterns across the data were further interrogated and refined to provide the final thematic framework. As the qualitative analysis progressed, it led to the eventual outcome of 'data condensation' or 'data distillation', whereby the body of data did not merely become smaller and more manageable in the analysis process, but was the result of interpretation and organisation (Tesch 1990). A cross-case thematic analysis (Yin, 2003) of the qualitative data was also undertaken, and reported in chapter six. From the study, a few themes began to emerge from the common patterns arising from the coding. Principal tenure, internal promotion and teamwork appeared to significantly contribute to the observed student outcomes and school culture. This resulted in further narrowing and condensing the data to specifically analyse how leaders and/or leadership influences contributed to the common emerging themes. A cross-case thematic analysis of these common patterns between the two dissimilar case study schools yielded further evidence supporting the emerging thematic framework, especially those relating to the principal tenure's influences on the school culture and student outcomes.

Quantitative data analysis

The quantitative data from the teachers' survey were subject to descriptive and reliability statistical analysis using IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistics were used to simplify large amounts of data in a sensible way. It was used to describe the basic features of the data in the study by providing simple summaries about the sample and the measures. The measures of central tendency, the mean and median, were used to show the average or most commonly indicated responses for the leadership practices. The measures of dispersion or variation, comprising the range, variance and standard deviation, were used to show how "spread out" the data were and to determine how it would affect the mean, if any. Reliability statistical analysis was employed using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient, a measure of internal consistency. It measured how closely related a set of items are as a group and is considered to be a measure of scale reliability (Ursachi et al., 2015). While a Cronbach's alpha result should yield a number from 0 to 1, negative numbers could be obtained as well. A negative number indicates that something is wrong with the data. The general rule of thumb is that a Cronbach's alpha of .70 and above is good, .80 and above is better, and .90 and above is best. The Cronbach's alpha results from my data sets were more than .90, affirming that the teachers' survey reached a very good level of reliability.

<u>Data integration</u>

The qualitative and quantitative data were then integrated. Integration, or linking, of the two strands of data, defined mixed-methods research and highlighted its value. Creswell & Plano Clark (2011) provided three approaches in handling the data. Firstly, merging data or combining the qualitative data in the form of texts or images with the quantitative data in the form of numeric information. Secondly, connecting data involves analysing one dataset (e.g., a quantitative survey), and then using the information to inform the subsequent data collection (e.g., interview questions). Finally, embedding data or a dataset of secondary priority is embedded within a larger, primary design.

Fetters, Curry, and Creswell (2013) noted that Integration can happen at multiple levels of a study – design-level, methods-level, or interpretation-level. In this study, the first linking of data happened at the design-level with the use of a sequential design, where the results from the initial qualitative phases of the research (documentary analysis and interviews) were used to build the subsequent quantitative phase of the teachers' survey in the research design. At the interpretation-level, qualitative findings about the leadership practices at each school, derived from the school leaders' interviews, were compared with the quantitative data from the teachers' survey. Descriptive analysis was used to list the top three leadership practices identified to be most effective and least effective. Descriptive statistical analysis of the quantitative data from the survey responses, and of student performance from the documentary data, were also used to compare data regarding the student outcomes. Descriptive analysis was utilised for student performance, to show the mean, highest and lowest value for academic performance in the school, compared with the teachers' feedback on leadership practices.

To achieve successful integration, the data needed to address each of Greene et al's (1989) five empirically derived, general purposes of mixed-methodological research studies; namely triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation and expansion. A mixed-methods design with triangulation intent sought convergence of two or more methods that had offsetting biases to assess a given phenomenon so that the validity of inquiry findings was enhanced (Greene et al., 1989, p.258). In my study, the use of both qualitative interviews, teachers' survey, and documentary analysis of the school's past and present academic performance to assess leadership practices that impacted on student outcomes, illustrated this triangulation intent. In a complementary mixed-methods study, "qualitative and quantitative methods were used to measure overlapping but also different facets of a phenomenon, yielding an enriched, elaborated understanding of that phenomenon" (Greene et al., 1989, p.258). This was achieved in my study when the identification of the effective leadership practices from the qualitative

interviews were used to identify their impact and influence on student outcomes from the quantitative teachers' survey in order to gain additional insights on the leadership practices.

The purpose of a development mixed-methods study was "to use the results from one method to help develop or inform the other method" (Greene et al., 1989, p.259). This was accomplished in my study when the results from the documentary analysis guided the focus area and development of the interview questions. Initiation sought the discovery of paradox and contradiction and new perspectives that emerged/ from the mixed-methods study (Greene et al., 1989, p.259). Principal tenure and succession planning were some new perspectives that emerged from my study. Expansion "aims for scope and breadth by including multiple components". (Greene et al., 1989, p.260). In my study, findings on the leadership styles from the qualitative interviews were expanded or elaborated in the quantitative teachers' survey to examine the details of the leadership practices.

Cross-case analysis

Cross-case analysis was a method that facilitated the comparison of commonalities and differences in the events, activities, and processes, the units of analysis in case studies. The term cross-case analysis was sometimes used as a general umbrella term for the analysis of two or more case studies to produce a synthesized outcome (Khan and VanWynsberghe, 2008). Cross-case analysis for the two case study schools was conducted, to address the fourth research question, a comparative analysis between the two case study schools. This analysis sought to determine the differences in leadership approaches, if any, between the higher and lower band case study schools. Quantitative analysis, and triangulation of the data, were made to ensure consistency and reliability.

Research Ethics

Rights-based approaches or principle-based (or deontological) approaches tended to be used in which ethical decisions were linked to the consequences or outcomes of research participation, on the rights of individuals, or on the basis of moral principles. Rights-based approaches involve respect for individuals, protection from harm and participation in research (Alderson, 2004). Principle-based approaches involve adherence to moral principles that encompass autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence and justice. Autonomy refers to giving participants the freedom to make their own informed decisions about participation in research. Non-maleficence means that the research must not inflict harm. Beneficence means that the research should benefit others. Lastly, justice indicates that people must be treated

equally within the research process (Seymour & Skilbeck, 2002). The potential conflicts among this set of principles carries the implication that sometimes an action will be ethical in one respect and unethical in another (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012). Some researchers have argued that these approaches do not necessarily translate well to social research, partly because the ethical dilemmas that arise in social research are context-specific (Goodwin et al, 2003). In addition, Punch (1998) argues that adhering to specific ethical rules in relation to research can affect the very issue that is being studied, such that it becomes impossible to conduct the research. Ethical dilemmas arise in research at both macro (for example, concerned with issues like gathering enough data to draw valid conclusions) or at the micro levels (for example, the details of how individual interviews can be conducted) (Stutchbury and Fox, 2009).

Informed consent

Informed consent has a central place in the ethics literature and refers to the voluntary consent of the individual to participate in research, and who should not be harmed in any way (Burgess, 2005, p.5). BERA 2011 defines voluntary informed consent to be the condition in which participants understand and agree to their participation without any duress, prior to the research getting underway. However, Wiles et al. (2005) noted that "gaining informed consent from potential study participants is far from being a straightforward process as researchers need to consider a broad range of issues in providing information to study participants and in obtaining consent. These include the format, style and timing of information provision and the form of consent that is appropriate...and the level of consent" [p.21].

Principals at the case study schools were contacted and permission to conduct research in their schools was requested in person. The researcher took the steps necessary to ensure that all participants in the research understood the process in which they were to be engaged, including why their participation was requested, how their data would be used and how and to whom it would be reported. The consent process was followed to ensure that individuals were participating in the research voluntarily, with full knowledge of relevant risks and benefits. However, Hammersley and Traianou (2012) argue that it may be impossible for participants to be fully informed as it cannot mean that all information about the research is provided, since this is potentially endless.

The participants were requested to sign a voluntary informed consent form to indicate that they had provided their consent before data collection commenced. Wiles et al. (2005) noted that expectations exist for researchers to gain signed consent from research participants as it allows participants to

understand what participation will involve and what their rights are in relation to participation and issues of confidentiality and anonymity. In addition, it was seen to protect the researcher from later accusations from study participants   However, in certain contexts, Coomber (2002) noted that the use of signed consent forms compromised issues of confidentiality and anonymity which were particularly important issues where participants were in need of protection (e.g. domestic violence).

Avoiding harm

It is fundamental that no harm must come to participants as a result of their participation in the research. This meant not only that participants must not be exposed to pain or danger but also that there must be no adverse consequences to a person as a result of their participation (Vanclay et al., 2013, p. 247). The researcher must do their utmost to protect participants from any harm, and to ensure, through the principle of informed consent, that the participant is fully appraised of all possible risks from participation (ibid). During the research, participants were informed of all possible risks as part of the informed consent process. Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were assured so that their feedback and responses would not be used against them. In addition, the interviews, survey, and observations occurred at the school premise, a place familiar to them.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

The confidential and anonymous treatment of participants' data is considered the norm for the conduct of research (BERA, 2011). Researchers must comply with the legal requirements in relation to the storage and use of personal data as set down in national legislation. In essence, people were entitled to know how and why their personal data is being stored, to what uses it is being put and to whom it may be made available (BERA, 2011).

In addition, there is an assumption of anonymity. Research participants were treated on the presumption that they would be anonymous and that their anonymity would be protected, unless they had given permission to be named. Thus, there was a requirement for the expressed permission from participants for any use of the real names of people or where a person's identity would be evident from the context (Vanclay et al., 2013). However, researchers must also recognized participants' rights to be identified with any publication of their original works or other inputs, if they so wish (BERA, 2011). Yin (2014) highlighted

the use of pseudonyms as one ethical consideration specific to case study research, to safeguard participants' anonymity.

For the survey, there was an explanation of the survey process, assuring levels of confidentiality with responses and offering an opportunity to have access to the final survey results when completed. The online surveys were distributed and accessed through the internet, utilising the "Qualtrics Forms" to provide a secure online facility. Hard copies of the questionnaires were distributed to the teachers and a collection box was set up in the staff room, to enable the teachers to submit their questionnaires securely and confidentially. This assured the respondents' anonymity. As noted earlier, the researcher followed the University of Nottingham's protocols and procedures to obtain ethical approval.

The researcher also informed the participants about data collection protocols, including openness and disclosure, right to withdraw, protection from harm, any unexpected detriment arising from participation in the research, privacy, and the researcher contact, by using the British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines (BERA, 2011).

Authenticity

The goal of mixed-methods research was to utilise the strengths of two or more approaches by combining them in one study, and by attempting to minimize the weaknesses of each approach through a mixed design. As mixed methods research involved combining complementary strengths, and non-overlapping weaknesses, of quantitative and qualitative research, assessing the validity of findings can be particularly complex, due to the problem of integration. Design quality and interpretive rigour were the two main categories of the integrative framework for data interpretation in mixed-methods research (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009).   Design quality referred to the degree to which a researcher had selected the most appropriate procedures for answering the research questions (ibid). Interpretive rigour referred to the degree to which credible interpretations had been made from the obtained results (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2003). Researchers were expected to illustrate how their interpretations were based on the results they obtained and how these interpretations led to the inferences they made. Interpretive consistency meant that the type of generalisation made by the researcher was justifiable, given the sampling design. If the sample design did not warrant the generalisation, then some degree of interpretive inconsistency occurs (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2014). As a rule, the greater the similarity with respect to persons, settings, and times, the higher the validity of the corresponding generalisations (ibid). Another

important consideration was the interpretive correspondence, which referred to the degree of correspondence between the purpose and research questions of the study and the inferences made from relevant data and analysis (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). Interpretive distinctiveness, another component of interpretive rigour, referred to the distinctive credibility and plausibility of the inferences made from quantitative and qualitative results, which ruled out the effect of extraneous variables or other rival interpretations (ibid).

"The authenticity and quality of educational and social research can be judged by the procedures used to address reliability, validity and triangulation" (Bush, 2013, p.76). A measure is considered reliable if it yields the same result consistently, while validity refers to the legitimacy of the findings (how accurately they represent the truth) (Straub et al., 2004).

Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of a measurement and is concerned with whether the results of a study are replicable (Hartas, 2010:71). Reliability in survey research required standard instruments and meticulous instrument design and testing (Bush, 2013, p.77). "Internal consistency reliability was measured using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient, considered to indirectly indicate the degree to which a set of items measures a single unidimensional latent construct" (Ursachi et al., 2015, p. 680). "An instrument's internal consistency is based on the correlation between different items of the same test. This correlation indicates if a number of items supposed to measure the same construct produce similar scores." (ibid, p. 681). The goal of reliability in case study research was to minimise the errors and biases in a study so that a later investigator could arrive at the same findings and conclusions if they followed the same procedures as described by an earlier investigator (Yin, 1994, p.146).

The teachers' survey utilised a structured questionnaire, which was initially administered online. However, the use of the internet for data collection could raise reliability issues. Dillman and Bowker (2001) noted that coverage error, sampling error, measurement error and non-response error were particularly prevalent in internet-based surveys. To reduce coverage error, teachers without internet connectivity at home were provided with the choice of completing the survey from a tablet provided by the researcher, which was later changed to a hard copy questionnaire, due to teachers' preference. Sampling error was avoided as all the teachers were included (full population sample). Measurement and non-response errors were mitigated through prior contact with the teachers and in providing them with

an adequate time frame to respond. Support from the school's principal and leaders to encourage the teachers to participate in the survey was also sought. In addition, the length of the survey was taken into consideration to facilitate survey completion within ten to fifteen minutes. Lefever et al. (2007) noted that, when the survey was too time consuming and too long, it influenced data reliability if the respondents lost their concentration or interest before finishing the questionnaire.   In addition, a Cronbach's alpha analysis was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire. It was used to assess the reliability of the questionnaire in measuring the common leadership practices at the school, through Likert-type scales and items.

The study utilised semi-structured interviews for the school leaders. This may made it more difficult to ensure reliability "because of the deliberate strategy of treating each participant as a potentially unique respondent" (Bush, 2013, p. 79). In addition, the increasing recognition that each school provides a distinctive context for practising school leadership increased the difficulties involved in seeking reliability in interview research (ibid). This issue was mitigated as the school leaders from the same case study school shared similar experiences and context, and thus allowed some scope for reliability.

Validity

"The concept of validity is used to judge whether the research accurately describes the phenomenon that it is intended to describe" (Bush, 2013, p. 81). Internal validity relates to the extent that research findings accurately represent the phenomenon under investigation (ibid, p. 82) and involves strategies such as triangulation, member checks and peer review to establish credibility. To determine that the research measured what it was purported to measure, the internal validity of the survey questionnaire and interviews were tested and analysed to ensure that they match the research aims and objectives. Peer review with a qualitied researcher, to examine the research processes and data interpretations, were used to ensure that the questionnaires measure what they were intended to measure.   During the study, a high degree of similar results was recorded for one of the case study schools. To ensure the validity of the survey results, the researcher began to purposefully select available teachers in the teacher's common room and interviewed them based on the survey questionnaire. This helped to ensure whether the similar results recorded previously were valid and sought to remove bias. To further reduce the risk of bias in the interviews with school leaders, transcripts of the interviews were returned to the interviewee for

confirmation or amendment (member checking). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that engaging in member checks is the most crucial tactic for assessing trustworthiness.

External validity referred to "our ability to generalise the results beyond the context of a specific study" (Hartas, 2010, p.76). The problem of generalisation in case study could be minimised by replicating the study in another similar setting (Yin, 1994). External validity was related to the extent that findings could be generalised to the wider population (ibid, p.83). However, as qualitative researchers seek depth rather than breadth of information about a specific context, qualitative researchers tend to use the term transferability, which is related to whether the findings are germane to similar contexts (Pitney, 2004). This dual-case study occurred in similar settings (e.g. similar educational districts, school types and community) but in different institutional contexts. When a central theme found in one school occurred in the other school, it facilitated external validation through cross-case analysis to better understand the "how" and "why". At the same time, rich, descriptive information about the study context or participants were provided so that readers could determine whether the results applied to their situation or experiences to encourage transferability of the findings.   Analysing data from this multiple dual case settings, and finding common themes between them, would suggest to readers that the findings are applicable to their own environments.

Triangulation

Triangulation involves collecting data from multiple and varying sources and using multiple analysts or multiple data-collection strategies (such as interviews and observations). The fundamental idea is to cross-check information or findings to ensure that a full and accurate understanding of a phenomenon is obtained (Pitney, 2004). Denzin (1973, p.301) identified four types of triangulation. There were data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and methodological triangulation. Data source (or respondent) triangulation involved time, space, and persons and occurred when the researcher looked for the data to remain the same, or be similar, in different contexts. Investigator triangulation involved multiple researchers in an investigation examining the same phenomenon, not applicable to this single researcher study. Theory triangulation involved using more than one theoretical scheme in the interpretation of the phenomenon. It occurred when investigators with different viewpoints interpreted the same results. Methodological triangulation involved using more than one option to gather data, such

as interviews, observations, questionnaires, and documents. One approach was followed by another, to increase confidence in the interpretation, as in the current research.

Stake (1995) highlighted the validation issues in data gathering as "most qualitative researchers not only believe that there are multiple perspectives or views of the case that need to be represented, but that there is no way to establish, beyond contention, the best view" (p. 108).

This exploratory sequential mixed-methods research design involved the sequential implementation of the qualitative and quantitative methods. When similar results were derived from both the qualitative and quantitative methods, methodological triangulation was achieved (e.g. when feedback from the school leaders' interview matches the findings from the teachers' survey and the school performance data from the documentary analysis). Respondent triangulation was achieved when different respondents from the interviews provided similar views and feedback on certain phenomena, such as the effective leadership practices in the school that impacted on student outcomes.

Reflective Statement

The study employed a sequential mixed-methods approach in four phases to collect data that would provide insights or answers on how leadership influences student learning outcomes in Malaysian public secondary schools. Documentary analysis on the case study schools had been key in providing the necessary evidence on student outcomes, student background and the past leadership legacy. Together with the interviews, it contributed to the identification of an important emerging theme arising from the study, namely how principal tenure influences the school culture and student outcomes. While interviews were able to yield insights on the school context, and how leadership influence student outcomes, it was still subjective and lacks substantiated evidence, which documentary analysis was able to provide. In order to better validate another emerging theme arising from the study, namely how the integrated leadership of past principals contributed and sustained the positive student outcomes observed, I would have liked to spend more time analysing the school's historical performance review and reports to the state and district education offices.

Overview

This chapter provides the details of the research design and methodology employed in the study. It explains the rationale for the exploratory sequential mixed-methods research design and the research methods employed to address the research questions. The sampling and data analysis processes are discussed, along with the mitigations introduced to address the potential issues and challenges identified. The study adhered to BERA and University ethical guidelines to safeguard both the participants and researcher's interest. Much care was also taken throughout the study to ensure data authenticity and integrity are preserved.

Chapter 4: Findings - School 1 (High Performing School)

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings for School 1, a high performing band 2 school, and the relationship between leadership and student outcomes. The first section covers the school context. This is followed by a section that identifies the relationship between leadership and student outcomes. The next section displays the results of the leadership influence on student outcomes. The final section shares the results of the preferred leadership styles employed in the school.

Seven interviews were completed with school leaders, comprising the principal, two senior assistants, one subject head and three subject committee heads. A total of 18 teachers provided feedback for the teachers' survey, which represents 33% of the total teacher population of 55. One classroom observation was made as only one subject teacher was willing to have her class observed. More than 50 school documents were analysed, notably student population and demographics, students' past achievements, school policies and procedures, school activities and minutes of meetings.

School Context

School background

The school is in the suburb of Petaling District which is part of the Klang Valley in Malaysia. This district is located in the middle of the Klang Valley, adjacent to the capital, and has been experiencing growth and urbanization.

The school was established in January 1989. At that time, there were only two secondary schools in the community within a 5km radius. It started as a double session school with an initial student population of close to 2000. As the nearby township began to grow, four more secondary schools were added from 2005 and the student population began to shrink as parents have more choices. In addition, being a cluster and later a controlled school, it was able to convert to a single session school in 2014. The student population decreased to 868 students by March 2017, which is approximately the maximum intake for a single session school.

The school was recognised as a Band 2 school from 2011, when banding was introduced by the Ministry. It was awarded the Cluster School of Excellence status in 2009 by the Malaysian Ministry of Education. With this award, the school began to move to a controlled school concept with tighter admissions criteria managed by the District Education Office (PPD), whereby only those achieving 3 As and above in the Primary School Evaluation Test (UPSR) are qualified to enter the school. The controlled admission came into full effect when the school became a single session school in 2014. Being a cluster school, the school has three focus areas, namely English, scouts and "cha-li-pong" (a traditional local musical instrument). As a controlled school, the school is assessed in terms of academic achievement and student discipline. Being a cluster school, the school's co-curriculum also involves a number of national and international programmes and sending students overseas.

School organisation

Public education in Malaysia is centrally managed by the Ministry of Education (MoE). Education policies are set by the Ministry and disseminated to the schools through a chain of command that flows from the State Education Department (JPN) to the relevant District Education Offices (PPDs) and finally to the respective schools.

In preparing for the curriculum change to the new Secondary School Standard Curriculum (KSSM) to provide learners with a comprehensive set of 21st century skills and competencies to replace the previous Secondary School Integrated Curriculum (KBSM), the District Education Offices have held many sessions with their schools to help the transition to the 21st century education system approach (SPA-21). This school was chosen as one of the pioneers of this approach in 2015. The SPA-21 approach was officially launched to other schools in 2016. In 2017, to supplement the SPA-21 approach, the STEM approach was also introduced for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. District Education Office staff come and observe the teachers teaching the SPA-21 to ensure the approved approach is being used at least once a year.

The school has also received mentors under the School Improvement Partners (SIP+), and the School Improvement Specialist Coaches (SISC+), schemes. These are initiatives, outlined in the Malaysia Education Blueprint, as part of the transformation programme to improve schools' performance. SISC + is only open to 3 core subjects, namely Malay, English and Mathematics. Their task is to guide teachers in the aspects of pedagogy, PBS, KSSM and as a direct link between the Ministry and the school. SIP+ is a mentorship programme for principals and school management to improve the quality of administration

in schools that wish to improve their performance. Most of the SIP+ and SISC+ staff are selected by the Ministry from former principals, senior assistants and officers from the PPDs and State Education Department.

Under the SISC+ scheme, the coaches have been visiting the school to upskill and develop the teachers, to be prepared to teach the SPA-21 approach. This was started for the Malay, English, Mathematics and Science subjects in 2016. High order thinking skills (HOTS) is one of the skillsets that is being emphasised, and teachers are required to assess and ask HOTS questions to their students. The principal and the teachers felt that the coaches and mentors were helpful. To this end, the school principal has also facilitated this initiative by organising top teachers to provide training sessions for the teachers during the quarterly teachers' meeting.

School infrastructure and environment

The school has good infrastructure, including a Resource Centre and the library, which the school is in the process of improving. In improving and enhancing the school infrastructure, the school follows the guidelines set forth by the Ministry. Most of the basic requirements had been met. There is a counselling room, as students must go the counselling room to be with the counsellor when they have a problem or are recommended by their form teacher. The counselling room was recently enhanced as the principal believes that the students must like to be there and be relaxed to talk to the counsellor. A Drug Prevention Room was also setup to educate students on the perils of drug abuse. There is also a special room to facilitate the school-assessment evaluation required for the Form Three Assessment (PT3), introduced in 2011.

Although the school has a computer lab, contributed by the PTA, it does not have enough computers to conduct an online class effectively, as there are only 15 computers and the students would need to share. In addition, the bandwidth speed, under the nation-wide bandwidth initiative BestariNet, does not provide adequate bandwidth to conduct e-learning effectively. This inhibits online learning and teaching, with exercises often given to the students to be completed at home using their home internet and computer.

"Money is a big problem in this school. Let's say for computers, you say that you want everyone to learn through computer, right? E-learning and all that. But the facilities are not there. We do have the room, but we don't have the computers. Not enough. How can we take the class to the computer room when there are only 10 computers there and we have 30 students? So, that's all facilities. The infrastructure is not enough, or conducive enough. All the time we ask people for donations, always begging for money you know. The PTA and all. So, this is one major problem."
(Head of Technical and Vocational Studies)

The principal believes in providing a conducive environment to facilitate student learning, in the setup of classrooms and administration rooms. She stresses the importance of students being happy in the school and enjoying coming to school, treating the school as a second home.   In addition, she also makes the staff room conducive for the teachers, with enough space and privacy for the teachers to work effectively.

The school also has a strong and active Parents Teachers Association (PTA), which actively contributes to the well-being of the students and the school's infrastructure, to ensure a conducive learning environment. Besides contributing to the computer lab, the PTA has also run many fund-raising activities, to cover the cost of upgrading the school's facilities and conducting co-curricular activities.

Staffing and resourcing

As noted earlier, the school has a complement of 55 teachers. Based on the respondents' demographics, most teachers have more than five years of experience working in the school and with the current principal (see figure 4.1).
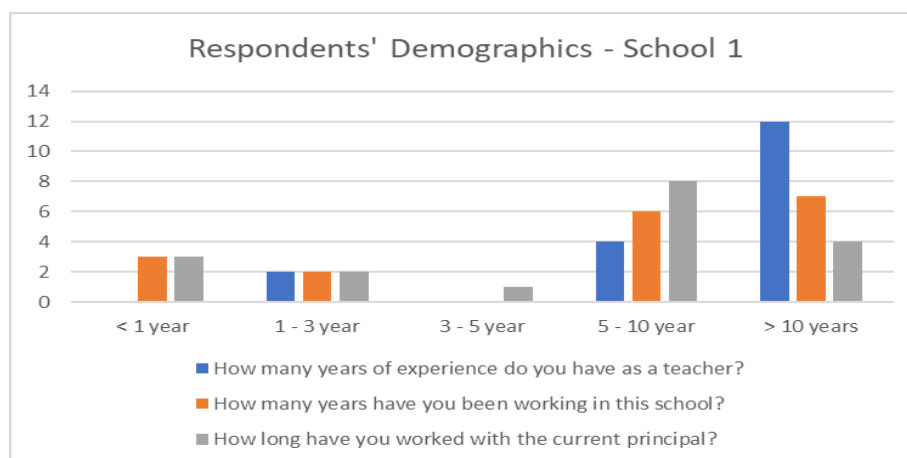
Figure 4.1: Respondents' Demographics - School 1

The school was facing staffing issue as four teachers retired in February 2017, with three of them choosing early retirement. Two of the retiring teachers were Senior Assistants and one was the Discipline Head. Four teachers were also on maternity leave. This has caused an acute shortage of teachers, particularly those teaching Science in the upper forms. Current teachers took over teaching for Geography and Moral Education. For those Form 3 and Form 5 examination classes, a retired Science teacher was called back to work while awaiting the replacement teachers. The remaining workload was addressed by part-time teachers, who were two former students who graduated with Biology degrees.

According to the principal, the government has previously provided funds for replacement teachers, especially for teachers who are on maternity leave. However, in the past two years, the school experienced funding cuts and had to rely on funding and contributions from the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) for extra co-curricular activities and additional academic classes. The cost of these part-time teachers was borne by the PTA. The PTA has been very involved with the school and often reaches out to the principal to volunteer their services, enabling the school to continue with the required activities. The collaboration and commitment the school was able to obtain from their former teachers, former students, and the PTA, provides evidence of the rapport between the school leadership team and these groups

Student demographics and community

Since the school was established in 1989, the student profile has changed quite significantly. As a newly established school, the students initially comprised excess students from nearby schools, who typically came with disciplinary problems and other issues. As the principal puts it, "*During that time, there was this mindset that this school is a gangster school, which is normal for a new school… all the students will be dumped here*".

However, as the school began to grow in stature for its high student achievement, it slowly began to be the preferred school for parents around the neighbourhood. As the school now has the reputation of securing 100% passes in the national Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM) examination results, parents not living in the neighbourhood also applied for their children to be admitted to the school. Currently, the school's student population comprises 70% Malay students, 21% Chinese, 7% Indians and the remaining from other races. This mimics the overall racial breakdown for Malaysia although, in the urban areas, the Chinese population tends to be higher.

The overall student enrolment is determined by the District Education Office (PPD). The school initially accepted all kinds of students as long as their application to the school via the PPD's portal was approved by PPD. If the student enrolment is accepted by PPD, the principal would have to accept it too. The principal can only recommend, but students' admission decisions were all made by PPD. The main criterion then was the student's proximity to the school. However, if parents from the low-income group came to the principal, and expressed their desire to send their children to this school, the principal would tend to give priority to them and provide a recommendation to PPD.

In 2009, the school became a cluster school of excellence, with the eventual intention of it becoming a controlled school in the next few years. It began to restrict the students' intake by introducing strict admission criteria. Students need to achieve at least 3As in the Standard 6 Primary School Evaluation Test (UPSR) results. Proximity to the school is not a key concern now as the school can still admit students who live quite far away, as long as the entry criteria are met. When the school moved to a single session school in 2014, the school fully became a controlled school. In addition, one block of the school was converted to a hostel to house students not from the neighbourhood and those from the lower income group. In general, the fee is RM1 per day, or RM250 per year, as the government subsidise the cost, which includes meals. However, for students who are not from the low-income group, and who would like to stay at the hostel due to transportation issue among other reasons, the cost would be higher.

The community where the school resides mostly comprises middle-class working professionals. Currently, less than 5% of the student population (or about 47 students) are from low socio-economic backgrounds, based on the number of qualified students eligible for the recent government aid to be distributed to those with household income level of less than RM3000. These students typically are not students from within the neighbourhood and tend to stay at the school's hostel.

There are about 115 hostel students, who are typically from lower income groups, and are given extra classes. These students are allowed to go home every fortnight. The cost of the hostels is borne by the government, and the parents. These students must maintain a certain percentage, at least 60% in their year-end grades, to continue living in the hostel. The principal elaborated that "w*e cannot say there are poor students here...mainly just low income….and low income means RM2000 and below [per month]*". The administrators and teachers also agree that they are not aware of any significant differences in the socio-economic status of the students. This could be due to the results-based criteria used in the students' admission to the school.

"I don't see a difference between the various categories in our students. Maybe because our discipline is almost nil, nothing to cause any anxiety… Maybe their confidence, from their economic strata, one or two. Basically, [for] all of them, their level is about the same. No distinct jarring difference".
(English Committee Head)

Leadership legacy of past principals

The school has had six principals since its inception in 1989 (see figure 4.2):
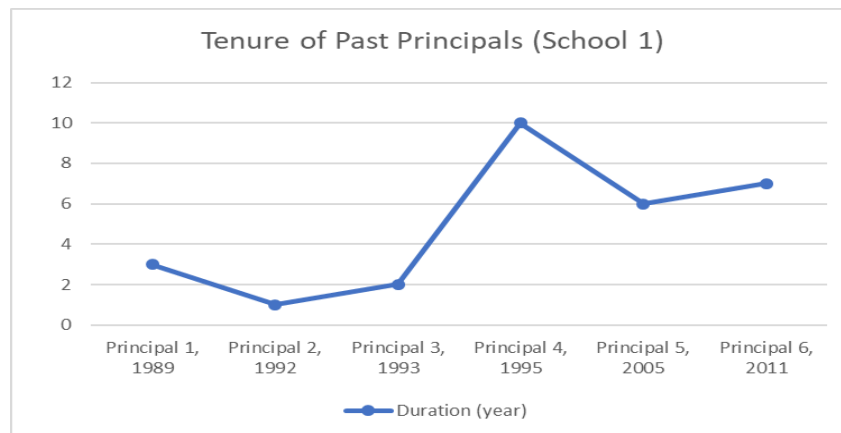
Source: School 1 2017 List of Principals

Figure 4.2: Tenure of Past Principals in School 1

During the initial years, the tenure of its principals was shorter, not more than three years. However, it began to change when the fourth principal was appointed in 1995. She served in the school for ten years until her retirement in 2005. The interviewees seemed to regard her as the main catalyst for the transformation that the school experienced in its early years. The fourth principal initially focused on improving the discipline of the students. She started the school on the pathway to become the Hopeful School at the district level, which the school was able to achieve. Once the school's discipline had improved, along with her administrators, she began to focus on improving the academic performance of the students. According to the current principal, the fourth principal introduced several internal programmes targeted towards form three and form five students, as they would be taking the national examinations. Her programmes differentiate the students according to their capabilities; high performing, moderate and weak students each have their respective programmes. One such programme introduced was the "Jewels, Diamonds and Pearls" programme which had proved to be successful in improving students' performance. The interviewees viewed the fourth principal as a formidable leader

who was able to focus the school towards a single vision and to communicate it well through her actions and policies. The consistency in her efforts and actions was one of the driving forces leading to enhanced student outcomes.

Her successor, the fifth principal, transferred from a nearby school and served six years in the school. Under her leadership, she continued the efforts made by the fourth principal and the school continued to improve. While the previous principal had successfully worked on the school's main foundations, and addressed the disciplinary issue, the fifth principal made a lot of changes to the school's environment and the landscape of the school. The school was already moving towards becoming a cluster school of excellence. As noted by the English committee head, *"the fifth principal sort of wrapped things up for us. So her reign was more on setting up things and making sure everything was workable so that we meet whatever requirements to become a cluster school and so on"*. The school started its ambitious path to become a Cluster School of Excellence in 2006. As there were lots of documents required to support the application to become a cluster school, the fifth principal rallied the teachers towards meeting the requirements, such as the filing process and the data to be collected, along with improving the overall management of the school. In 2009, the school finally received the Excellence award. The Cluster School of Excellence is a merit award granted to High Achieving Schools which are, in turn, given wider autonomy in administration and additional allocations for the advancement of specific fields such as academics, sport and extra-curricular activities.

The current principal worked together with the fourth principal in the same school prior to joining this school. She was personally requested by the fourth principal to transfer to this school to become the subject head for language. She came to this school in 1998 at the age of 38. Not long after, she became the first senior assistant during the fifth principal's tenure before becoming the principal in 2011. Her predecessor had handpicked her to be her successor and had personally groomed her to take over her role after her retirement. According to the current principal, she felt fortunate to have the opportunity to observe and experience the leadership style and influences of the two previous principals, as this helped to shape her leadership style from observing the practices that worked, and improving on those that were less effective.

The school's leaders encouraged internal promotion, and this was regarded as one of the key leadership strengths by participants, as trust and a positive working culture have been established. This facilitates continuing collaboration among the school administrators and teachers alike, creating a team culture that cultivates strong trust and motivation among the teachers. Most of the teachers and administrators had

been in the school for more than 10 years. Two recurring themes from the interviews are teamwork and collaboration. The teachers' survey findings indicate that common practices include strong teamwork, dedicated and committed teachers, feedback, and frequent monitoring of teachers and students. According to the senior assistant for student affairs, "*In* [this school], *they are those who are future principals, they will come here for their practical for about 2 weeks. They usually commented that the teamwork that existed here, it's really difficult to find. They saw the teamwork and the commitment. Whatever programmes that are conducted, others will follow.*"

School leaders and teachers alike are proud of the achievements of the school and some participants felt that they were fortunate to be in the school. As a high performing school, some teachers felt that they have high standards to maintain:

> *"Maybe the work ethics in this school is a higher notch, we are always on the go. We have always had a benchmark. . . . people had always expected something of us. The people outside, they see our school, they expect the teachers to be a certain way, our administrators to be a certain way, our school to be managed in a certain way. And that sort of become a part of our life, you know what I mean? It became a part of your image and you also feel that you had a duty to uphold whatever your school's aspirations are. So, I have that responsibility in my heart so when I talked to my teachers, this is exactly what I told them. I tell them that this is a privilege. We have certain privileges given to us as we have good students*".
> (English Committee Head)

Student Outcomes

This section combines the findings from the documentary analysis, and the interviews with school leaders and teachers, to determine the relationship between leadership and student outcomes, if any. It strives to understand the contributing factors to any perceived improvement or decline in student outcomes.

Past examination results

In 2002, the school achieved a pass rate of 88.17% in their SPM results. It improved to 96% in 2003, and steadily improved until it reached a 100% pass level in 2014, which it has maintained since then. This shows significant progress from when the school opened in 1989, when it was considered to be a 'gangster' school and seen as a dumping ground for 'unwanted' or unruly students with disciplinary problems. Figure 4.3 shows the school's SPM results.

Overall SPM results, School 1
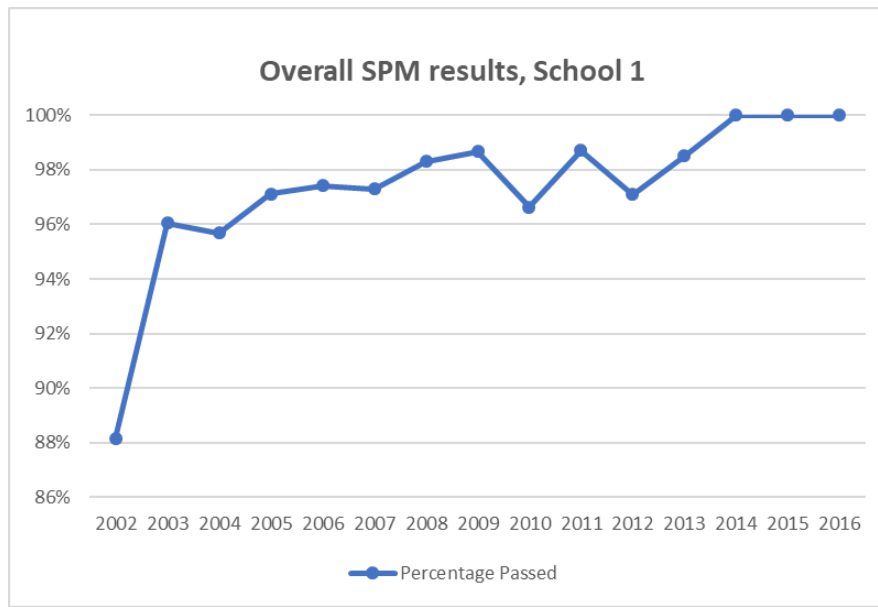
Source: School 1 Overall SPM Results Analysis (2002 – 2016)

Figure 4.3: Overall Malaysia Education Certificate (SPM) Results, School 1

This improvement in grades seemed to occur towards the end of the fourth principal tenure in 2005 and it also appeared that her initiatives and efforts to drive student outcomes was continued on well by her successor. When the fifth principal ended her tenure in 2011 and the current principal took over the reign, it also appeared that the efforts were continued as there was no noticeable drop in the student achievements during these two transitions. The internal promotion and grooming of incoming principals that was practised in this school appeared to yield a positive impact as it seemed to build upon the previous principals' successes and didn't seemed to cause any disruption to the organisation and governance of the school.

There are many other factors that may contribute positively to the improvement in the student outcomes. Most notably, when the school could select higher quality students as the entry criteria became stricter when the school achieved the Cluster School of Excellence award in 2009 and later became a controlled school in 2014. Only students achieving a minimum of 3As and above in the Standard 6 UPSR results are admitted. In addition, when the school moved to a single session school in 2011, the student population was reduced by half, providing greater control and focus to teach the remaining students. However, it is noteworthy to point out that these two events only occurred after the school has already shown significant and sustainable achievement in its student achievements, as the inflection point for the rise in

student outcomes occurred in 2003, which was towards the end of the fourth principal's leadership, from 1995-2005.

The survey also shows that most teachers (78%) perceived an improvement in student achievement in the school.   Most of them attributed this to the general improvement in the test results for the Form Three Assessment Test (PT3) and the Form Five national examination (SPM).   The factors that contributed to these improvements range from having supportive teachers, to focused students who compete among themselves to improve their marks, and the cooperation between the teachers and administrators in introducing and implementing various programmes to improve pedagogy and answering techniques. Those who felt a decline noticed the changing attitude of students.   One survey respondent noted "*a slow gradual decline in terms of quality.   Science students show the biggest lack of improvement because 10-20% of them enter the Science stream in Form 4 with very poor basics in Maths and Science*". The main perceived causes are poor work or study habits, and lack of motivation, along with a general lack of understanding of Mathematics and Science concepts.

Quality of students

Figure 4.4 presents further analysis of the overall SPM results and the quality of the students.
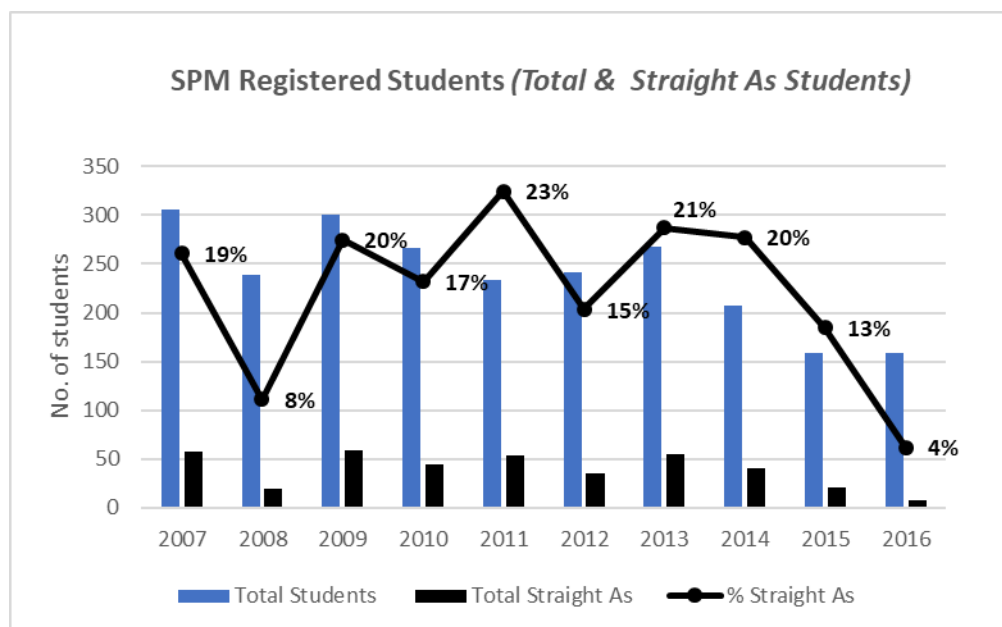
Source: Overall SPM Results Analysis (2002 – 2016)

Figure 4.4: SPM Registered Students (Total & Straight As students), School 1

The school achieved 100% passes from 2014 onwards. However, the number of students achieving straight As (an indication of the quality of the students), had also fallen drastically, to the lowest on record at 4% in the previous year.   Even when the school was only achieving pass scores of 96%, the number of straight As students had always been more than 15% of the registered students, with the exception of 2008. The best performance so far was in 2011 when more than 1 in 5 students scored straight As for their SPM. Significantly, this higher percentage occurred when the school was still a double session school, with a higher student population, and not able to control their student enrolment. As noted earlier, the school moved to a single session from 2011 and the first cohort of single-session students took their SPM in 2015.   In 2007, there were 306 students registered to take the SPM. The number was almost half in 2015 and 2016, at 159 students.   In addition, the number of students achieving straight As (an indication of the quality of the students), declined sharply from a high of 23% in 2011 to the current low of 4% in 2016.

Using descriptive statistics to further analyse the data, the average number of students over the 10-year period from 2007 to 2016 was 238 (see table 4.1).   With a high standard deviation of 51.5 students or 21.6%, it indicated a wide dispersion of data around the average number of students. The current student population of 158 is almost half the number of students 10 years ago when the school moved to a single session school.   However, the percentage of students who passed their SPM had been steadily and consistently improving, with an average of 97.3% in the past 15 years, with a relatively small standard deviation of 2.89.   The total number of students achieving straight As also displayed a wide dispersion from the average of 39 students, with a high of 59 in the year 2009 to a low of 7, which occurred currently.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
Total_straight_As	10	52.00	7.00	59.00	39.2000	18.25011	333.067	-.618	.687
Percentage_Pass	15	11.83	88.17	100.00	97.3100	2.88154	8.303	-2.424	.580
Total_students	10	148.00	158.00	306.00	237.8000	51.54674	2657.067	-.413	.687
Year	15	14	2002	2016	2009.00	4.472	20.000	.000	.580
Valid N (listwise)	10								

Table 4.1: Descriptive statistics on school 1's SPM percentage pass and total students from 2002 - 2016

Two factors arise from the results discussed above. First, even though the school was controlling student admissions, the achievements of its students dropped rather than improved. Second, despite the drop in the number of students' achieving straight As, the school improved its overall students' performance in SPM and achieved 100% passes from 2014-2016.

Figure 4.5 provides further insights on student achievement.   From the 2016 SPM results, further analysis is conducted on the top 30 students, more specifically the racial distribution of the top performers versus the overall registered students.   Two-thirds (20) of the top 30 students are Chinese students, six are Malay students (or 20%) and the remaining four (13%) are Indian students. The data became more pronounced when compared with the total of 171 registered students for form five. Although the Malay students comprise the majority of the registered student population, at 70% or 118 students, a disproportionately small number of them made it as top scorers (only 6 students or 5%) compared to that of the Chinese students where 50% of Chinese students are in the top 30, as are one-third of the Indian students. The data suggest that, with fewer Chinese and Indian students, the number of high performing students may be reduced.
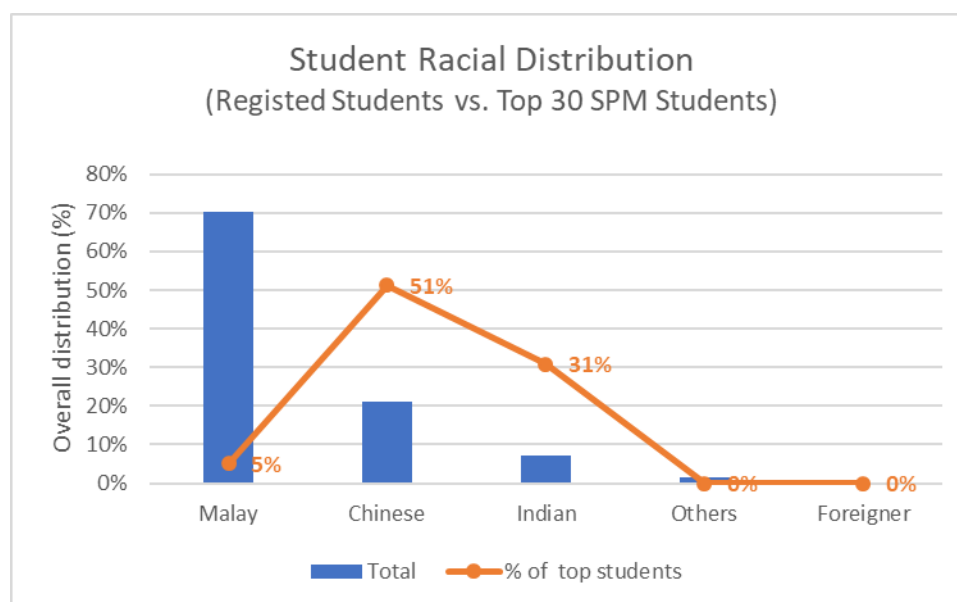
Source: Mar 2017 Student Racial Analysis, 2016 Top 30 SPM Students for School 1

Figure 4.5: School 1's Student Racial Distribution (Total Student vs. Top 30 SPM Students)

Figure 4.5 confirms the perception of the Mathematics Committee Head, who noticed the change in the balance of Malay and Chinese students, and the links to the decline in high performing students. She

added that having too many Malay students for Mathematics may not be healthy as the Chinese students are generally better and could serve as mentors to teach weaker students.

Quality of the national examinations

The improvement to 100% pass rates, despite the drop in high performing students, may imply that the overall quality of the SPM examinations has decreased in recent years. According to the Additional Mathematics teacher, the school examinations and the grading system seemed to be tougher than the actual SPM examinations. The teachers have observed that students who have been failing the school examinations in Additional Mathematics may surprisingly obtained a pass in SPM.   In addition, in order to maintain 100% passes in Additional Mathematics (considered as one of the hardest subjects), the teachers will advise some of the weak students who have been getting single digit marks in Form 4 to not register the subject for the SPM examinations in January.   To ensure that the remaining students can pass, the teachers will provide extra classes for the weaker students.

However, it was also observed that the focus on developing more holistic students, who are well-rounded, rather than focusing solely on academics, may also influence the number of straight A students:

> *"Our students are good, as our co-curriculum is very strong. And when we have concerts and..oh…you must see the students perform. Fantastic. So, they are really good, very talented students. Maybe they are dividing their focus to two or three areas, not just academic alone. Maybe that's why you see it's more spread out. You may not see straight As, but you could see maybe a better more well-rounded child coming out. Better…more holistic. Isn't this in our Blueprint? So, you don't just see a pure A+s and bookworms. There's no bookworms. They are all-rounded."*
> (Head of Technical and Vocational Studies)

Past principals' influence and intervention programmes

However, as well as the factors discussed above, the inflection point in the school's progress occurred during the tenure of the fourth principal. The fourth principal strengthened the foundation of the school through her initiatives in tightening the school's governance and improving students' discipline. She also clearly set the school's direction and instilled a strong vision for the school to become an excellent school. It started with the school being recognised as the "Hopeful School". Finally, the school achieved the

Cluster School of Excellence award in 2009 as her successors built upon the fourth principal's efforts by driving the school towards achieving higher standards.

The improvement in the students' performance, despite lower numbers of straight As, the 100% pass rate can also be attributed to the many intervention programmes and initiatives introduced by the school leaders. There are many academic programmes that the school runs which are specifically targeted to the various students with different ability levels. The fourth principal introduced the highly successful and effective programme, called the "Jewels, Diamonds and Pears" programme, in 2007. This programme targeted different set of students according to their capabilities and is backed by the PTA.   The "Jewels" are those that have the potential to be excellent. The "Diamonds" are ordinary students who can be groomed to become excellent and the "Pearls" are those who are on the borderline of passing and failing the examinations, that could be pushed to pass. The subsequent principals built upon the success of this programme, and introduced further programmes, such as the "English Attack Programme", to improve weak students' mastery of the English language, in 2008, and the "Platinum" programme, for students who are weak in Science subjects, in 2014.

However, consistent with the feedback from the school leaders and principal, the teachers also felt that the school leaders have introduced many programmes targeted at both the high and low performing students that are found to be effective in improving the students' performance (see above). The recently introduced English Attack Programme was also singled out as involving students in co-academic programmes, such as speech and debates, which helped the students to improve their speaking skills. Overall, although the school has many teachers with more than 10 years of teaching experience, most of them comment on the importance of the school's leaders in successfully directing and pushing the school forward. Most agreed that the school leadership had been able to build a strong foundation and governance structure to successfully rally the teachers and staff towards achieving a common vision and goals, enabling an environment for the teachers and students to teach and learn effectively. According to the Head of Technical & Vocational Studies, "…*75% is attributed to leadership. 25% is the student's own. Because of the motivation, the programmes that we organized…*"

Based on the feedback from her teachers and administrators, the most important contribution made by the principal include her various programmes to improve students' performance, her understanding of what everyone is doing, and thus able to manage the teachers effectively, her communication skills in aligning everyone towards a common goal and driving her initiatives, and in imparting her knowledge and supporting the school in meeting the Ministry's requirements.

"She gives the idea on how to carry on with the school, then administer this school. Make sure every teacher plays their own role. She overall manages the school. "
(Mathematics Committee Head)

"I think imparting her knowledge of what the Ministry wants from us. She is someone who shares those kind of things, whatever programmes, she will make sure she has a course for us. She keeps the teachers abreast of what is required to do our work, do our best. We know what our roles are, and she constantly motivates us".
(English Committee Head)

<u>Teachers' commitment and challenges</u>

Teachers' quality and experience also plays an important role in student outcomes. According to the principal, and other school leaders, the school has highly committed and experienced teachers (with the majority having more than 10 years of teaching experience). In 2017, when the school was facing staffing problems, due to early retirement of their senior teachers, and replacement teachers were not available from the District Education Office, retired teachers volunteered to fill the gap on a temporary basis. According to the principal, it is "*due to the love for the school, love for the students, they don't mind coming back*".

The main challenge faced by the school now is to maintain the current 100% pass rate, and to improve the quality of pass. With the recent changes in co-curriculum, there are many changes in teaching and learning approaches. As a cluster school, it is also required to organise some curriculum events. The principal puts a lot of demands on teachers to engage in various activities, beyond the regular teaching responsibilities. Most teachers find that it is very fast paced, as there are many activities outside academic work.

> "*Moral support for the teachers (is needed). It's actually very stressful to maintain that achievement. Every year, the students' cohorts are different. We actually cannot compare, because every batch has different levels. "*
> (Science Committee Head, School 1)

Leadership Influence on Student Outcomes

This section discusses whether and how the school leaders influence student outcomes. Specifically, the direction set by the school leaders, and the influence that they have over the school, teachers and students, to yield positive student outcomes, will be explored in various dimensions. It will examine how

the leaders motivate and develop teachers to enhance their commitment, and to improve their teaching, leading to improved learning, by exploring classroom practices and teachers' pedagogical approaches.

<u>Influence on school leaders and the organisation</u>

As a centrally managed school, the organisational structure is determined by the Ministry. The District Education Office (PPD) has a set of guidelines and expectations on how schools should be governed.

The principal can nominate the individuals that she would like to fill the leadership positions, as long as they meet the position's requirements. However, it would still require the approval from PPD to formalise the promotion, to enable the leaders to receive an extra allowance and/or an increment in their salary. The leaders in this school tend to favour internal promotion and strive to fill available positions internally, wherever possible. This was practised during the fourth principal's tenure and continues to be the preferred approach. Capable teachers are identified and groomed to take on leadership roles. The current principal herself was testament to the success and strength of the internal promotion as she was groomed by her predecessor to take up the role, working her way up from the subject head for language to first senior assistant before becoming the principal. In her current leadership team, this practice could be actively seen as her first senior assistant was promoted from her position as the subject head for language, while her senior assistant for student affairs was the previous senior assistant for co-curriculum. All of them had been in the school for more than 15 years.

> *"As a principal, she wants her subordinates to be moving forward. She does not like them to remain at the same level. She would like the administrators to have continuity as she would one day be retiring. Just like the previous ones, they retired. She would like us to continue on the legacy."*
> (Senior Assistant, Student Affairs, School 1)

> *"If someone from outside came, we won't know how it would be. There's also the strength then, when it's an internal promotion, as the work culture already existed."*
> (Senior Assistant, Student Affairs, School 1)

The principal receives directives or information from the PPD, and it is her responsibility to distil the information, and to share it with her administrators and teachers, identifying its relevance to the school. The principal does not always make her own decisions, and she will usually discuss with her senior assistants first. The principal will provide the direction and her vision for the various initiatives, while her senior administrators and subject heads share the workload of executing her vision and implementing the initiatives. The respective committee heads, responsible for their subjects, would further oversee the

implementation of the programmes by the respective teachers and progress updates will be reported upwards and actively tracked. In addition, the committee heads usually discuss issues with their respective subject heads. Issues that cannot be resolved would then be escalated to the principal for her attention.

Delegation of work is very important to the current principal, especially to the senior assistants. She firmly believes that leaders cannot work alone and must have their own people, working together with them, in order to be able to govern the school effectively. However, she is careful to note that *"delegation of job does not mean we do not want to work".* In order to ensure that her leaders, teachers and staff are aligned to her vision and working towards a common goal, she spends a lot of time to communicate her vision and her goals clearly. The school slogan that she introduced, "One Team, One Goal, One *<School Name>*" has been so strongly internalised among her leaders, teachers and students that this slogan is often times used and served as the foundation that drives the teamwork culture and 'togetherness spirit' of the school.

The effectiveness of the leadership team in governing the school has developed in recent years, with the various changes in the teaching approach and the introduction of a new curriculum proposed by the Ministry. The leadership team must quickly understand and identify the impact of these new initiatives on the school and to plan how to ease the transition of the teachers and students to the new approach seamlessly. This is required so as not to jeopardise the school's academic performance and the teachers' academic workload.

In 2015, the school adopted the 21st century education system, or SPA-21 approach, based on directives from the Ministry and the District Education Office. This approach aims to develop students holistically by focusing on the four elements, namely communications in class, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity, known as the 4Cs in 21st century learning. As the pioneer of this approach in the district in 2015, the leaders have to determine what and how to implement this in the school. Though guidelines were given by the District Education Office, the details of the implementation and the execution had to be determined by the school. At the initial phase, the principal and her leadership team worked closely together on how the school would adopt this approach. Discussions among the leaders were held and feedback solicited openly from all parties, with various views and challenges identified. Decisions were made collectively, rather than top-down, to implement the approach only for the language subjects, namely English and Malay. It was to be introduced to the junior classes of Form One and Form Two only. This decision was taken to minimise disruptions to the examination classes of Form Three and the senior

forms of Form Four and Form Five. The subject head for language will be responsible for this initial implementation. The school leaders provide the necessary support and set the appropriate structure to protect teachers' teaching time and to minimise disruption. As such, throughout this transition period, it is noteworthy that the school continues to achieve 100% passes in the Form Five SPM examination results despite the changes in co-curriculum and the teaching approach.

> *"The administrators are very important. Last time, in my previous school at Lembah Subang, we frequently changed Principal. That's why we faced a lot of problems. And I wanted to move here, that's one of the reasons. Our system there was not systematic, and students' discipline, because administrators were not firm, so students' discipline was a problem. We found it difficult to teach the students…Leadership is very important. Though the teachers still have a role to play, but without strong leadership, it will not be structured and in confusion. Even though the leadership influence is indirect, it's still very important… The leaders need to pull the teachers together and align goals…Most important is leader, then teachers. Get teachers to work together."*
> (Math's Committee Head)

This is one of the hallmarks of the work culture that has been inculcated in the school.   There is strong teamwork and collaboration among the administrators and teachers. Harmony and strong cooperation exist, with no distinct cluster of leadership that might divide the school, as noted by the senior assistant for student affairs. Everyone works together and "*It all comes intuitively".* He added that, *"If there were no co-operation among the three senior assistants, then there would exist three different clusters. If there are clusters, then there would be problems. There would be divisions, this group is for her, that is for another…. then there would be problems. But here, at this moment, it's really great".*

The principal is sensitive to the needs and the workload of her leaders and teachers. She constantly strives to provide clear directions and strong support to her leaders and teachers alike for them to lead and run any school initiatives, so that it would not unnecessarily burden or stress the teachers. Her leadership team, in turn, are actively involved in all the school initiatives so that the teachers would not have to feel that they are solely responsible to execute and implement the programmes assigned to them.

> *"We (the administrators) always work together with the teachers so that the teachers are not stressed by the additional workload".*
> (1st Senior Assistant, School 1)

> *"There's no gap. The administration is all done collectively, together. This is the advantage that I feel exists here a lot…If there were no co-operation among the three Senior Assistants, then there would exist three different clusters…. If there are clusters, then there would be problems as there would be divisions".*
> (Senior Assistant, Student Affairs, School 1)

As a result of this, the principal and her leadership team are often able to gain the full support of teachers to implement the various new school initiatives, despite the teachers' current workload. As the senior assistant for student affairs states, "*New teachers would experience that the workload in this school is definitely more than the average. But since we already have this culture, we continue on with it".* This work culture is also apparent to others too. As a high performing school, the school tends to receive future principals who come to this school for their two-week practical, as part of the new principal development programme organised by the Ministry. According to the senior assistant for student affairs, these future principals also commented that, "*the teamwork that existed here, it's really difficult to find. They saw the teamwork and the commitment. Whatever programmes that are conducted, others will follow".*

Influence on teachers

As the principal is able to establish a clear leadership structure and nurture a strong leadership team aligned to her vision and goals, the school leaders seek to provide a conducive and supportive environment to facilitate teaching and learning.   This is important as research show that teachers have the most direct and significant effect on students' outcomes since they are responsible for teaching the students (Hattie, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2008).

The school has a lot of experienced teachers. The survey shows that more than 88% of respondents have more than five years' teaching experience, with more than two-thirds of the respondents having more than 10 years' experience (see figure 4.6). Almost three-quarters (72%) of the respondents have worked for more than five years in this school.   Having long-serving teachers allows continuity on policy implementation and transformation plans. Previous outcomes and learning have been analysed, based on feedback from the teachers. The survey respondents may not represent the whole population of teachers, so the findings are indicative rather than decisive.
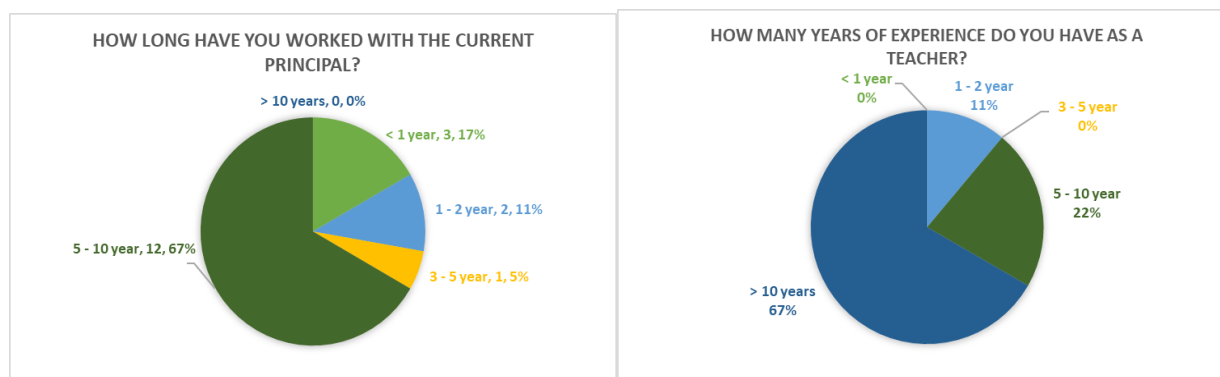
Source: Teacher's Survey 2017

Figure 4.6: School 1's Survey Respondents' Teaching & Working Experience

The participants claim that teamwork is practised and emphasised strongly at this school. Teachers and leaders are frequently asked to take on more responsibilities, beyond their daily teaching commitments. The many initiatives currently undertaken by the school are embraced collectively, even if they are assigned to an individual. This sense of camaraderie, and the distributed workload, enables teachers to feel supported, and not overly stressed, when given more responsibilities. As noted by the Maths committee head, "*It's easy to get help here. We help each other. I still feel happy in this school*". This is supported by the first senior assistant, who said that, "*We (the administrators) always work together with the teachers so that the teachers are not stressed by the additional workload*". *Teachers* are encouraged, and give extra time, without it being regarded as a burden. This approach appears to produce good results, and to sustain the commitment and enthusiasm of the teachers:

> "*When the teachers are united, the students can see it too. It's like a family here and the students feel it too and respond accordingly. It then becomes a virtuous cycle rather than a vicious cycle, where everyone fends for themselves*".
> (English Committee Head)

Other practices that are widely embraced by the leaders and teachers are the principal's 'open-door' policy, and her warmth. The principal seems to have formed strong ties with her administrators and to have an approachable and warm character that makes it easy for her to form a rapport with her teachers and students. She appears to have deep empathy and sensitivity towards her teachers. She often recognises the efforts made by the teachers, in the teachers' meetings, the weekly assemblies, and in periodic social events, where teachers eat together. Her administrators and teachers recognise the energy, passion and effort she puts in to improve the school and the students, thus they also contribute

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extra effort. As noted by the English subject head, "*How can we slow down if she has so much energy? Though we have a lot on our plates, but because she understood our workload and, if she has to personally reach out to us, we find it very difficult.*" The Additional Mathematics teacher similarly noted, "*Although she is much older than us, and she's got all the energy to do all of this, we who are younger, can't say that we can't do it. We better run behind her. If you don't see the principal in action, you may also not do much. This one we see her in action. So, we can't just sit down quietly, right?*"

The teachers in this school often go beyond their regular teaching hours to conduct extra classes, and extra-curricular activities, for the benefit of the students, as they felt appreciated and could see the commitment and passion of the principal and senior leaders.

> "*To the teachers, by showing her gratitude towards what we did… By celebrating the results, by treating us to eat…. Every time there's a teacher's meeting, she would thank us for the hard work. She will say it to us… By doing that, it helps to boost our self-esteem.*"
> (*Science Committee Head)

The principal is perceived by her teachers to practise high moral values and often challenges her teachers by asking them questions on how they see themselves and what do they think would be the right actions or behaviours that they should embrace as teachers. She is seen to take care of her teachers' welfare, particularly when they have personal problems (such as a sick child) and allows them to take leave without guilt. This simple act of caring has endeared her to the teachers and encourages loyalty and commitment from them.   The principal remembered how, when she was a teacher and a young mother, the care provided to her by her previous principal made her more committed to work harder. As a principal who was previously a teacher in this school, she had been able to internalise good practices from her predecessors.

> "*I think she takes into account people's feelings. She understands, and she knows how to deal with the teachers. She's not the strict type. She has a give and take policy.*"
> (*Additional Mathematics teacher, School 1)

> "*She is very down-to-earth. She has known what it is like to be a teacher before being an Administrator. So, her understanding of what we are going through may be better than someone who has not transitioned that flow, and you know, who has not known the strata and all.*"
> (*English Committee Head)

The principal is able to nurture a team of highly committed and passionate teachers who have positive attitudes, with strong conviction that they are not just teaching the students, but providing them with life lessons and nurturing the students to become educated citizens, in their behaviours and respect for one another. This sentiment is echoed by her teachers and administrators alike who are willing to put in the extra effort to get the necessary work done on behalf of the students despite their workload.

> *"She would ask, as a teacher is getting paid to teach the students, what's our responsibility to the students during school hours? How should we teach them in such a way that they are learning effectively? What more could we do to encourage their learning?"*
> (Head of English)
>
> *"Meaning, we need to have a positive attitude. We cannot see the child as somebody who is useless. We have to always give them opportunity, we have to always motivate them, and help them out. That's the thing that would help the school."*
> (Head of Technical and Vocational Studies)
>
> *"Once, you are a teacher, you are involved 100%. No matter whether I teach them or not, I would still be involved in guiding the students to be a proper person."*
> (Science Committee Head)

As teachers' performance is often tied to the academic performance of their students, the principal and her leadership team proactively monitor the academic progress of the students.   Any drop in the results would warrant discussions among the administrators and the teachers to identify the problem and ideas to overcome it. Teachers in this school have their own set of key performance indicators (KPIs) that clearly identify the expectations and targets. The teachers individually are responsible to set their own KPIs, rather than being set by the principal or administrators, to encourage a stronger sense of ownership and commitment from the teachers. According to the principal, the teachers determined their own metrics and targets as they know their classes best. They will base their KPIs "i*n terms of the subjects that they teach, and the classes that they teach, who are the students that they think can get higher grades and all that. So, every teacher has to fill in a form like that."*

Previously, the targets were more broad-based. Teachers only needed to identify the number of students who can get As in their classes so that a projection on expected student performance and targets can be set school-wide for each subject. However, this tracking became more targeted recently based on the latest directives from the State Education Department (JPN). According to the principal, it has become more personal and, on a teacher-to-student basis. The teachers now are required to name the students

that they feel could get As, rather than providing just a number. As the school already has the processes and structures in place, improving on the processes only requires some small changes, which were quickly incorporated and practiced. This is also one of the reasons why teachers in this school may find that the school is very fast paced, as the school is involved in various initiatives such as internal programmes, or ad-hoc directives from the PPD or JPN.

> *"Everything is going too fast. We are always on the go. Whatever programmes that come from MoE, PPD, one thing about my principal, she is all the time on her toes. So, all of us teachers also have to be on our toes. So, there is no time to sit and relax. But it's all good, of course, it's all for the betterment of the students. So, we do what we can, we try out best. Like she went for a meeting yesterday, today she calls for a meeting with us all and tell us what she wants to do, and then we have to start our work. And next day, there's another thing."*
> (Head of Technical and Vocational Studies, School 1)

> *"We need to maintain our position. It's getting harder"*
> (Teachers' survey feedback)

The principal also actively performs classroom observation, along with her senior assistants.   According to the teachers' survey, the frequency ranges from the informal weekly or monthly observations to the more official once or twice a year observation. The District Education Office requires at least an annual classroom observation as results of the observation must be recorded and submitted to the office. Almost half of the survey respondents (about 45%) felt happy when the principal visited their classroom, with most feeling "excited", "feeling proud" and "good". Only about 20% of the respondents felt "a little awkward", "don't feel comfortable" and "nervous". These teachers seemed to be those teaching Science and Mathematics. The principal generally provides feedback, ranging from the "cleanliness of the class", "teacher's leadership in class" and "methods to make the teaching session even more effective". Overall, the principal gave positive and constructive feedback, along with guidance and praise that are appreciated well by the teachers.   Written feedback is only provided if it's a scheduled evaluation as part of the requirement from the District Education Office (PPD). The school leaders are required to provide this feedback to PPD as part of the annual teachers' performance evaluation process.

The principal ensures that her teachers continue to develop, in line with new initiatives from the government. As part of teachers' development, the Ministry mandates seven days for staff development, known as On-the-Job Training (LADAP).   These are typically short courses for teachers and other programmes in accordance with the requirement set by the District Education Office. Teachers could also take external workshops organised by the District Education Office or the State Education Department.

In addition, the principal also organised internal workshops facilitated either by their own teachers or guest speakers from other schools or colleges on certain expertise areas to learn the various teaching experience from the experienced teachers. The principal would proactively organise this kind of sessions if she felt that the teachers are struggling with it and encourage the teachers to go for further courses as required. The teachers generally find the programmes to be effective in improving their skills (especially with the teaching approach for SPA-21 recently), as it is mostly experiential learning. It focuses on new approaches that teachers can incorporate to make their lessons more interesting and relevant in the global world, namely using the internet and various media and engagement approaches. Almost all of the teachers interviewed found that the mandatory 7 days LADAP and programmes arranged by the school suffice for their training and they do not seem to register any interest in taking extra development courses for themselves. Most of the teachers want to remain as teachers, and increase their teaching skills, rather than climbing the ladder to become an administrator.

Currently, the principal's focus is to ensure that teachers use the 21st century learning (SPA-21) approach in their teaching. Teachers are provided with a lot of training to incorporate the SPA-21 methodology in their respective subjects, most notably to incorporate the higher order thinking skills (HOTS) questions in their lesson plan and assessment. The teachers need to actively encourage the students to think analytically, by asking the 'why' and 'how' questions. With SPA-21, as the students are grouped together in groups of four or five, interactions among the students from different backgrounds are better facilitated as students are encouraged to work together. All students must contribute by giving ideas. This approach produced positive feedback and reviews from the teachers. As the approach was incorporated in the lower forms one and two first, the teachers noticed that the lower form students seemed to be more responsive and active compared to those upper form students.   They would easily form into their respective groups and know their roles.

However, from the author's observation of one class, and subsequent interviews with the teachers, there is resistance to this approach, particularly for the senior classes in forms four and five, especially for the teaching of Science and Mathematics. The teachers found that the approach may be more suited for the junior classes where the time pressures to complete the syllabus may not be as intense as those examination classes, and most appropriate for the teaching of languages. The pressure of completing the syllabus, so that the students would not be compromised in the national examinations, leads some teachers to think that it is difficult to encourage students to be more participative in the new method. However, the principal and the administrators alike do not force the teachers to adopt the SPA-21

approach as there is a general acceptance that the 'traditional' teachers also have their own ideas and may know why it's better. Overall, trust exists that the teachers would know what is best and most effective for their students, and this sort of liberty given to teachers serves to empower them to teach their students with greater passion and commitment.

> *"Actually, SPA-21, the method is very relaxed. It is not focused on the syllabus. Their syllabus is actually quite flexible. When it comes to the upper forms, it's very hard for me to follow the SPA-21 method. We are chasing time to finish the syllabus. For me, frankly speaking, it's very hard to follow… Depends if we have subjects that are suitable, then we can. Like presentations, then yes. But not all the time."*
> (Science Committee Head)

In 2017, to supplement the SPA-21 approach, the STEM approach was introduced for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. This is to bring a greater focus to the STEM subjects and to address some of the shortfalls in the SPA-21 methodology where it was observed that most teachers teaching STEM do not seemed to find the approach relevant as it requires too much time which they need to complete the syllabus.

Overall, the teachers acknowledge the importance of leadership in setting up a conducive learning environment and providing support to facilitate teaching.

Influence on students

Leadership effects on student outcomes are not as direct as for the teachers. However, by directly influencing the teachers, and providing a conducive learning environment, school leaders can provide an indirect influence on students from the policies and activities introduced, along with the values and culture inculcated. The school's tag line and vision to build a holistic student (which includes excellence in personal development, academics and co-curriculum) is generally well-known and echoed by both the administrators and teachers. Excellence is emphasised first because, when the students are disciplined, this will help them academically and in their co-curriculum.

In order to motivate the students to learn, the principal and school leaders of this school seem to focus on four key areas to introduce the experience, environment, values and culture to encourage the students to study and listen to their teachers. The aim is to develop a well-adjusted and all-round student who is healthy emotionally and socially, and not just excelling in their education. The interviews, and survey data, indicate four main focus areas:

- provide a sense of belonging to the school,
- love for their teachers,
- conducive environment and
- differentiated programmes to improve students' performance.

Sense of belonging to the school

The principal is seen frequently at the school entrance every morning to greet students as they arrive at school. If she cannot be there, she ensures that one of her administrators, and a teacher, are present to greet and welcome the students. By welcoming the students personally, she wants the students to feel that the school is like their second home, where the teachers and leaders know them and take a personal interest in them.   As noted by the science committee head, "*(The students) do come to talk to us all the time.*" Similarly, the English committee head also said that, "*Our teachers are very approachable so that the students can come to the teacher at any time. That I feel is our strength. We are available to them and they come to us at any time. They are not frightened of us*."

The principal and the teachers reach out to the students personally, to relate to them and provide support to address their issues. The teachers may notice the student's problems, in the classrooms or during activities, and they will highlight them to the principal. According to feedback from the teachers, students who are identified to have problems have their names given to the counsellors for further actions.   The counsellors arrange to meet with the students to learn more about the problem, if any, and provide the necessary support.   To ensure that some of these students can commit to the agreed goals or actions, the counsellors may request the assistance of these students' respective form teachers to check in with the students on their progress. This network of support and attention from the leaders and teachers helps to ensure that proper care and support are provided to students who need them, thus reinforcing the loving culture that the leaders are trying to inculcate, and having the students perceive the school as a second home.   According to the senior assistant for student affairs, the school does not have many disciplinary problems among their students. In addition, most of the students in this school are carefully selected due to the controlled admission requirement and may realise that this is an above-average school. As observed by the English committee head, "[The students] *would think that they are in a good environment and probably better off than other people, so they are special. They are already in a school that is so renowned, and they have all these facilities given to them, so they feel that they are important and special. That makes them want to do what is necessary to belong to this place, and to have a sense of belonging*."

To further reiterate the sense of belonging to the school, the principal has a slogan that is constantly repeated during the weekly assembly, where the principal would shout it out and the students and teachers complete the slogan.   It is used in all aspects of the school, from extra-curricular activities to academic programmes and daily learning. The slogan, "One Team, One Goal, One <school name>", embodies the spirit of oneness and closeness to the school.

> *"Yes, when we just speak it, we feel it.   There's a sense of the community…. When we speak to the students, "One Team", they will be able to continue to speak the slogan…. they can feel it...they can feel the passion…and also the climate…the closeness.   When we are able to create this kind of good environment, and they feel loved, then they will also follow…. When we have this slogan, it feels like we understand each other respectively.   Helping each other."*
> (Senior Assistant for Student Affairs, School 1)

The teachers and administrators also appear to be sensitive to the needs of the small group of students from low socio-economic backgrounds. For example, aids are not given out openly, but the qualified students are called in personally. In addition, when the teachers hand out exercise modules that require payment from the students, the teachers are also sensitive to the needs of the lower income group of students who may not be able to afford it.   The teachers may pay on behalf of these students.   The students tend to be shy to express their financial inadequacy and this requires the teachers to be sensitive to their unspoken needs.   These students are not ostracised or discriminated from curricular activities because of the finances, especially in uniformed bodies.   According to the principal, "a*ctually those who could not buy uniforms, they are given free uniforms, by the government".* She adds that, "b*ut let's say if they don't have any money, let's say we do a programme outside, like the academic programme, some of them have no money, and the teachers got to know, so sometimes the teachers chipped in together, to pay for the students. Sometimes, we asked from PTA to pay for the students".* The teachers also facilitate interactions among the students from different backgrounds, which are made easier with the SPA-21 approach to learning, as students are clustered together. By grouping students from various backgrounds together, it strengthens the message of unity and dispels any differences either group may have felt about each other. In general, the teachers do not observe interactions among students from different socio-economic backgrounds to be a problem:

> *SPA-21 is one of the key initiatives to encourage the students to work together.   When they are in groups, they forget anything…any kinds of differences, they forget… Wherever there are differences in working, it may be due to the characteristic status rather than the economic strata…They are quite helpful with one another actually. Anyway, we also encourage mixing and sitting together in groups, we don't allow them*

to sit with their preferred groups but mix them with others. We showed them that you
can work together.”
(English Committee Head, School 1)

The author can attest to the good environment as she received warm greetings when she was walking around the school, and several students came over to offer their help. There is a sense of "ownership" radiating from the students, apparently linked to a strong sense of belonging to the school.

Love for their teachers

The principal has always emphasised that students must love coming to school, and that the teachers must love to teach their students. The teachers are encouraged to be like a friend to their students.

> *"What I can say is the loving culture. Loving culture because the first people that will be*
> *close to the teachers are the students. To reach out…the students must feel that they*
> *are being loved by their teachers. You need to reach out. So, one of the things that I*
> *always get feedback from parents is that the parents see that the students, their*
> *children, love their teachers. They will say that their teachers are like their friends. The*
> *approach that the teachers use, make them want to tell them things, and of course*
> *confidential, certain things, the teachers will not speak about. Unless, there's a problem,*
> *then they will come to me. …that the student has a problem…"*
> (Principal, School 1)

It was repeatedly stressed that teachers have to be a friend to their students, so that they love their teachers and the school. The belief is that, if the students love their teachers, they will be willing to listen to their teachers and will thus want to learn and do their homework. As such, the teachers constantly need to know the right balance between being a teacher and a friend, and also the approach to use with the students. The teachers are asked not only to teach their students their subjects, but also to instil good values in them during class time.

> *"To become their friend…we need to know the students' characters".*
> (First Senior Assistant, School 1)

> *"Talk nicely with them, don't be rude and arrogant. If you want to scold them, don't do*
> *it to demotivate them in front of their friends, you don't like shout at them. That would*
> *belittle them and make them lose confidence. They don't like you also, all the time*
> *shouting at them. You can call them out separately, ask them what's wrong with them,*
> *why are you doing this? Quietly…personally…."*
> (Additional Mathematics teacher)

> *"(The students) want to know that you know them. It's not just about going in to the*
> *class and coming out, it's not really about the knowledge. They know which teachers*

> *mean what, and whether she really means what she says.   I'll be approachable, I'll be*
> *kind and whatever, but business is business. If you have done something wrong, I'll tell*
> *you and that's where we draw the line.*
> (English Committee Head)

The teachers also felt that being very approachable, so that the students can come to them at any time, is also a strength. Students are not frightened of their teachers and the teachers are available to talk to them. By becoming approachable to their students, communications between the students and teachers are greatly improved. However, to nurture this openness and connectedness with their students, teachers need to invest time in their students, and it could be a struggle for teachers with examination classes.

> *"So, when (the students) are in school, the teachers became their life, you know. Some*
> *of them, they are so close to you, they want to tell you things, they want to hug you…but*
> *that could only happen if you don't have the pressure of so many other things. Teachers*
> *have to be with them, and teach them, and it's not all about the syllabus. But when you*
> *are teaching exam classes, mine are all exam classes, I struggle."*
> (English Committee Head)

To build a greater rapport with the students, the principal herself also attends the opening and/or closing ceremonies of the various co-curriculum activities held in the school (both within and outside the school). Her availability and commitment to the students sets an example for the teachers.

> *"She's always down there, she's very good in the sense that she always shows herself to*
> *the students directly. She even enters the classes and talks to the students who have*
> *discipline problems. And, at assembly, she will be most of the time down there. She will*
> *take the microphone and she will shout out the motto, "One team, one goal, one <school*
> *name>". I think the students like her very much because she participates in their*
> *activities."*
> (Head of Technical and Vocational Studies)

Conducive environment

The principal believes in providing a conducive environment to facilitate student learning. She stresses the importance for students to be happy in the school and love coming to school, treating the school as a second home.   In addition, she also makes the staff room conducive for the teachers, with enough space and privacy for the teachers to work effectively. The previous two principals had initiated the creation of mini parks to beautify the landscape of the school. The current principal enhanced it further and created more mini parks and introduced mini ponds with relevant messages or key values to be shared with the students. She aims for the school to be a knowledge-driven school, with many words of wisdom and

motivational verses painted around the school to serve as 'passive life instructions' to inculcate important values to the students. These words can be found everywhere in the school, at the staircase, the trees, the walls, the columns, to passively motivate and inspire students, rather than forcing all these values on them. As soon as the student enters the school, they will be exposed to these slogans.

The administrators and the teachers agree that the school environment is very important in motivating the students to learn. The school constantly tries to make these words relevant and come alive for the students. According to the Senior Assistant for Student Affairs, "*When we speak at the assembly and all, we also tried to link it together. For example, we will say, what can you see around the walls of the hall. So, indirectly, it's living words for them*." Having a good environment also serves as a reminder for the students that they are in a renowned school, with all these facilities provided to them. The English Committee Head says that, "[the students] *feel that they are important and special. That makes them want to do what is necessary to belong to this place, and to have a sense of belonging*". The Mathematics Committee Head also observed that, *"if the classroom is messy, the students are also very noisy. But if the classroom is decorated nicely, then the students will behave nicer. Actually, I really think that the school environment is important".* The principal adds that:

> *"Let's say that for the co-curriculum, the students are ever willing to come to school, especially the uniformed units. Like I said, during the weekends, these Scouters, Red Crescents…they will come to school for their activities. So, maybe based on the conduciveness of the school, they like to come. We did our camps in the school compound with the facilities we have. We have these obstacles for them to go through…we also have the camp sites here".*
> (Principal, School 1)

Differentiated programmes to improve students' performance

The school has various programmes tailored for students with different capabilities; high performing and low performing. Most teachers' survey respondents suggest that high performing students are those who are "hardworking and show interest towards learning", have "commendable personality, active in co-curriculum, and display leadership skills". They tend to be "more confident, brave and ready to move forward". In addition, they are usually from the first class. One teacher says that they are the "Chinese students from the Science stream".   On the other hand, low performers generally "don't pay much attention when class is in session", "lazy and give reasons", "having various disciplinary problems, identification problems and family problems" and those who are "less skillful in English", leading to shyness and lack of confidence. They are usually from the last class. Initiatives typically provided to the high performers, to encourage and motivate them, are praise and awards, while for the low performers

are additional classes, motivational courses and counselling support. In addition, school leaders put a lot of emphasis on the students' performance and use a lot of performance metrics and data to identify the weak areas.

Students are also provided with motivational talks by the counsellors, at the beginning of the year, targeted towards form five students. Before the exams, the principal would personally encourage all six classes from form five, with a group motivation. She constantly looks at the results so that she could talk to them personally. The principal believes that one very important factor to motivate students is to find time talking to them. *"If you don't spend time, don't give your time…you will only be talking and talking"*. As the school has many past successes, one of the key motivation initiatives used on the students is to benchmark the achievements of their predecessors, making it achievable and more realistic for the students.

> *"We always tell them what had been the achievements of their predecessors, you know. Once they heard that, they are like, "Oh! Ok." So, you have a benchmark, and it's achievable. If so many had done it, it's not far from you. It's not something that's unreachable for you".*
> (English Committee Head)

> *"When the students are motivated, they are excited to learn. It's like…err…when I see students who are not motivated, they tend to be very passive in class. They don't have the urge or need to study. However, when they are motivated, even though for a short while, at least whatever they learnt during that short while, it's inside their head. So, it's really important for students to be motivated."*
> (Science Committee Head)

The school introduced what appears to be an effective academic programme, during the fourth principal's tenure (more than 10 years ago), called the Jewels, Diamonds and Pearls programme that specifically targets the various aptitudes of the students, as mentioned earlier. The teachers provide questions with various difficulty levels to suit the aptitude of the different students. The students themselves do not know which group they are in, as the teachers do not want to discourage them with the classification.

Intensive classes start one or two months prior to the exams to provide extra support in preparing the students to answer the exam questions. These are normally conducted after school, or on Saturdays. The principal recently introduced the PAKSI programme for low-performing students, that serves as a crash course to prepare them on how to answer the SPM about three to four years ago. The students, about 40 of them, are selected based on their trial test results. The performance of these students would usually

impact on the performance of the school, making the difference as to whether or not the school achieves a 100% pass rate. It covers the main subjects of English, Malay and History. To make it more conducive for the students to learn, the programme is held in a hotel for three days and two nights, to experience a different environment, as the majority of these students are from the lower income group. They will be taught to answer questions, techniques and approaches to use, and ways to improve them from average to excellence. Most teachers surveyed found that these differentiated intervention programmes introduced by the school leaders effectively contributed to the school's 100% passes in all subjects for the Form 5 National Examinations despite having weaker students who were failing some subjects in the school's internal examinations.

The SPA-21 approach encourages further interaction among the students. Group work, and initiatives such as English Attack, help to build student confidence in speaking up and ensuring that their opinions are heard. The programme was initially focused on communications and targeted towards those students, particularly the hostel students, who have a poor command in English. It slowly evolved into reading skills, and some exercise drills, to the current "Speakers Corner", where students are encouraged to perform during recess. Every week, two or three classes would have to perform and this helps to build the students confidence in public speaking. This encourages greater collaboration and participation among the students beyond the standard classroom structure and environment.

> *"I think being aware is the most important thing. You need to be aware of the reality. And then applying whatever you have in your hands to your best. A sense of awareness in your classroom. Then you will know and get all these things that are best for your students."*
> (English Committee Head)

Students sit together in groups of four or five, with tables and chairs arranged in clusters, to facilitate group discussions. Each student takes turn to play a specific role daily, namely being the timekeeper, the recorder or the leader. This encourages open collaboration and encourages students to speak up more in class. It's more difficult to be passive students in this setup as everyone needs to be involved in the activities. The students are also rewarded (with stickers for example) when they ask or answer questions, and for their presentation. This encourages greater participation among the students as there is a tangible goal that they can work towards, besides getting recognition. There are activity corners around the classroom to facilitate the learning points. Students are also able to keep track of their performance, and that of their classmates, as their results are pinned to a board at the back of the classroom.

Students from the school tend to quite competitive. As noted by one teacher, *"students compete among themselves to improve marks."* Teachers generally agree that their students have a good attitude and tend to be influence by the efforts and behaviours of classmates and peers. Most of the students showed considerable improvements from the various programmes that the school introduced, which is also apparent from the 100% passes achieved by the school in the past few years for the Form 5 national examinations. The school typically has a higher goal for their students' achievements, actively monitoring the number of As that their students can achieve, and supporting them to do so.

> *"Proud to say that the achievement of English in our school has been very consistent. We have been the strongest subject in this school for all these years…Our concern is more on securing their A plusses than in making them pass."*
> (English Committee Head)

However, there are also some teachers who may feel that the students may already have a certain level of aptitude or ability and cannot really be forced to excel beyond their potential. This mostly applies to the last class, or weaker students, where the general approach is to enable them to pass the subjects rather than to excel in getting As, which is the emphasis in the first two classes. A positive attitude, with students wanting to learn, is important to ensure the success of the programmes initiated by the school. However, some teachers do not really see the differences and encourage all their students to give their very best and to commit to learning.

> *"Improved a lot, normally it's the first 3 classes. If they really want to do, they can improve a lot. Then the moderate and the last classes, they must work very, very hard in order to improve. Generally, the hostel students are not the best students in this school."*
> *(*Mathematics Committee Head)

One of the key issues surfaced by the teachers is the current streaming practice. Students are streamed in pure science, sub-science, and arts in form four and form five, according to their Form Three Assessment Examination (PT3) results. Those with the highest score will be streamed to pure science and the moderate to weaker students are usually in the sub-science or arts stream. However, due to the requirement from the government to have 60% of pure science classes, the last class for the pure science class usually consist of students who may be better off in a sub-science or arts stream, as they may be weak in their science and mathematics, just to fill the quota. These students struggle, especially in

additional mathematics, and may give up the subject by the end of form four. In general, the weaker students tend to come from single parent households, or the lower income groups.

> *We go according to their results in PT3, and then we put them accordingly. The government wants 60% in Pure Science. So, that's why, in our school, we have more Pure Science setup. So that more students are exposed to Pure Science. But so, the weaker ones will also be put into Pure Science, in the last class, to fill the quota. So, this is the class that would need a lot of help. And they would do much better if they are in the Arts class.*
> (Additional Mathematics teacher, School 1)

Students cannot be given a choice in the streaming process, because this is not at the discretion of the teachers, or the school leaders; it is a directive from the government. As noted by a teacher, the parents may also play a role in keeping their children in the science stream, due to the prestige, and may actively prevent their children from changing to the arts stream, despite them being unable to cope with the workload. These are the students that the teachers and leaders struggle each year to ensure they pass their subjects so as not to jeopardise the good academic track record of the school.

> *"At school level, we can't do much. We can only push them to produce better results. So, we just give them what…in terms of academics, we try to help them".*
> (Additional Maths teacher, School 1)

> *"I think the most effective are the intensive programmes. … It's usually on Saturdays and for targeted students. We have a list of these students, but we can't really force them to come as they may also have extra classes outside. Usually those who come for the classes, they really want to come. They really want to study".*
> (Science Committee Head, School 1)

Despite the limitations of the streaming process, school leaders have mitigated the effects by providing differentiated intervention programmes to target students who require the most academic support. In addition, by providing a conducive environment for teaching and learning, the school leaders enable teachers to focus effectively on teaching, and on improving the students' performance.

Influence on parents

The school has an active Parents Teachers Association (PTA). There are also bureaus, such as the co-curriculum bureau, that school leaders use for communication. There is a representative to facilitate the exchange of messages from the school to the PTAs and to the parents in general. The principal reaches out to the parents through the WhatsApp channel, via the parents' representative, as required. Form

teachers also have their own respective WhatsApp channel with the parents of their students to keep them abreast and informed on the various classroom and school activities. Parents actively formed a WhatsApp channel among themselves to keep abreast of the school's activities and progress.

The creation of the WhatsApp group started with the SPA-21 approach three years ago. This has facilitated more effective communication between the school and the parents and makes it much easier to quickly disseminate information and get quick updates. This also encourages greater collaboration between the school and the parents. Parents can be actively and easily involved in wide ranging areas, from the funding activities, to supporting the school's co-curriculum needs and in enforcing rules applied to students.

The availability and accessibility of the WhatsApp channel has provided the principal and school leaders with a medium for wider influence on parents, to keep them aligned to the school's vision and initiatives. For example, when the school was recently faced with an acute shortage of teachers, due to early retirement of its senior teachers and their teachers' maternity leave, the school leaders were able to effectively reach out to the PTA to help address this issue. When PTA learned that the school's funding was cut by the government, the PTA and individual parents approached the principal to contribute to the cost for extra classes, or part-time teachers' fees.

As the school began to gain a reputation for its academic excellence, and with its current standing of being the Cluster School of Excellence, and with 100% passes in form five, parents in the community strive to get their children admitted to the school. This is a far cry from the school's initial days. As such, parents are generally appreciative of the efforts of the school leaders and teachers in driving the achievements of the school and tend to provide their support whenever required. Therefore, parents actively seek to contribute to the welfare of the students and to the school. For example, parents willingly contribute their expertise to the school's initiatives and co-curricular activities.

> *"I give you an example, we have the Archery club, ok? Yesterday, we have this Archery competition at the school-level organised by the Archery club. So, we don't have the expertise. Our teachers are just the normal advisors. So, the parents came in. They helped, so the coach was there…and the parents became the technicians…So, for netball, we also have parents that are very involved. So, they find coach, the netball team, they come together on Saturdays to practice."*
> (Principal, School 1)

The principal also works actively with the PTA and the community to drive some of the school initiatives. When the principal decided to register the school as an eco-school, the principal was able to gain support from the PTA to form an eco-group. As the principal observed, "*if we want to move by ourselves, it's quite difficult…but if we have the PTA behind us, getting the support from the parents…it's very good".* The principal was also able to gain the support from her surrounding neighbourhood to plan for a green event. "*The neighbourhood…we have always had a very good rapport with them…. [their key representative] will come and see me and all that, so we always have good rapport…at the same time, she is also staying around here, and our PTA committee members are also staying around here, so it's actually one community.*"

Administrators and teachers are also able to actively reinforce policies and rules with parents. According to the English committee head, *"when the school has given [the students] a letter, and they don't give it to their parents, you can just post it there [in the WhatsApp channel] and they will all know".* However, school leaders and teachers mostly reach out to parents of students with disciplinary problems, especially near examination time. Most teachers also do not reach out directly to the parents, to communicate on school activities, unless this is necessary. It' is done either by reaching out to a parent representative, or via the students.

Leadership Styles

This section presents insights on how leadership practices are connected to changes in school organisation and, subsequently, to improvements in students' learning. In addition, it will also look closely at the various leadership styles, and the leadership styles employed by school leaders.

<u>Past leadership legacy</u>

Previous principals, especially from the fourth principal onwards, have left a leadership legacy that is emulated and continued by her successors. While each principal may have their own personal characteristics, these specific traits and practices may be what was needed at that time to move the school forward to the next stage. At each stage in the school's development, there appeared to be a distinctive leadership style. There are three distinct stages in the evolution from an initial 'gangster' school to its current top performing position.   Figure 4.7 shows these phases:
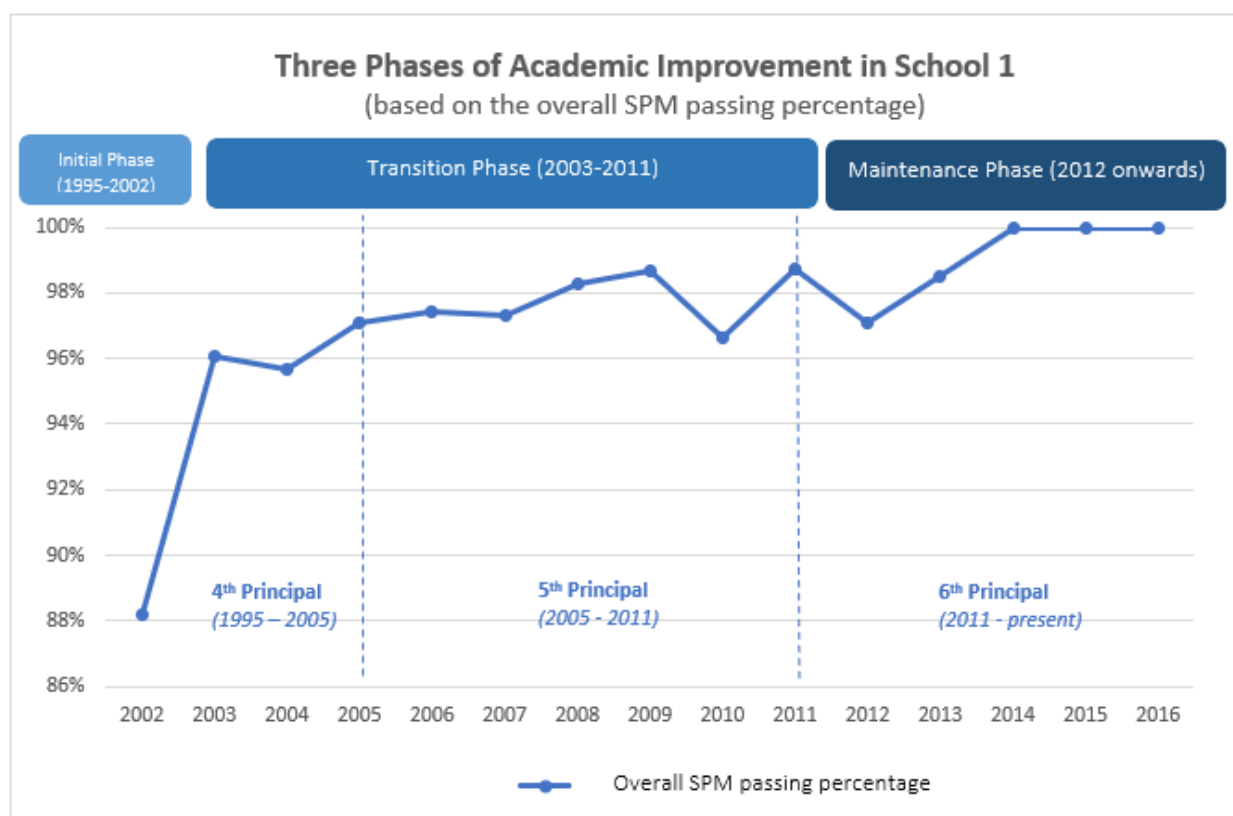
Source: School 1 past principals records and past SPM results

Figure 4.7: Three Phases of Academic Improvement in School 1

Initial Phase

In the initial phase, as the school was newly established with short tenure principals for the first four years, the school lacked identity and vision. Discipline was a problem. Against this backdrop, the fourth principal came to help turn the school around. She was focused on discipline and provided a vision for the school to become the Hopeful School. She adopted an autocratic style of leadership to enable her vision and initiatives to be firmly and quickly implemented and adopted. The fourth principal was recognised as "motherly", but at the same time "very stern", by the current principal. Feedback from administrators and teachers alike seemed to echo this sentiment as most found her to be autocratic, very serious, and feared by other teachers. Teachers did not feel that they could readily share their opinions with her, and were mostly reduced to just following her instructions. The fourth principal liked to put a 'gap' between the teachers and herself. According to the first senior assistant, this was probably "*to earn respect from other teachers*".

"The fourth principal was here, she had to handle the school when we had a very mixed cohort of students, meaning we also had some disciplinary problems at that time because it was not just the cream that was coming in. And we had two sessions. So, her challenges were different. She not only had to handle the academic excellence, she also had to oversee the infrastructure, and the students as we had so many of them.
(Senior Assistant, Student Affairs)

She did a good job as she was a strict principal and she managed everything at her level best.
*(*English Committee Head)

"The first thing [the fourth principal] did was to create a good discipline among the students… because as you know, this school was infamous as the school for naughty students and all that…. So we always believed that you must start with discipline first. So, when you have good discipline, then you can mould the students to be good in academics."
(Current principal)

Transition Phase

When the foundation was laid in place, and the initial initiatives began to take root, the fourth principal changed her leadership style in what became the transition phase, with more focus on academic work and on improving students' performance. She began to adopt a more instructional leadership style, introduced several internal academic programmes, and set expectations for the teachers to identify students with different capabilities with developed tailored programmes to meet their needs. The principal started to develop a learning culture and demanded excellence from her teachers to improve student outcomes. This phase was subsequently continued by the fifth principal, who embraced the vision of her predecessor and set the benchmark higher, to become a Cluster School of Excellence. To be awarded cluster school status also required the school to have a strong governance and management structure in place, so the fifth principal also adopted an autocratic style with her teachers and leaders to ensure proper controls were in place. To secure implementation during the transition phase, the autocratic style seemed to be the preferred choice for these past two principals. The school identity and work culture began to solidify as administrators, teachers and students were driven towards a common goal. This was not welcomed by all teachers:

"[The fourth and fifth principals were] *very strict and they didn't listen to your personal problems. They didn't really want to give and take. What they said is, that's it. That's all. No compromise. Difficult for teachers to say anything…not to say oppose, nobody opposes, but people they don't understand. You must understand human beings as well. "*
(Head of Technical and Vocational Studies)

Maintenance Phase

When the school began to win accolades and was recognised as a cluster school with excellent student outcomes, the school began to move to the third phase, the Maintenance Phase. This is mostly the phase of the current principal. Most of the hard work of getting to this place was already achieved by her predecessors, with the main challenge now to maintain current achievements. The work culture and school spirit began to evolve with the new opportunities. While the previous two principals were generally very strict with the students and teachers, the current principal tends to be more diplomatic and practices a more distributed leadership style. She discusses with her leaders and teachers, who had been 'seasoned' by the transition phase, before proposing a solution. This has built a strong sense of trust and rapport, which facilitated her leadership style. Her internal promotion to the role she is currently enjoying also made her appreciative of her leaders and teachers, who were her peers. By knowing her teachers well, and being aware of their strengths and weaknesses, she can manage them effectively.

> *"As a principal, you cannot just be autocratic, but must use a different style to make the teachers more at ease. I find that that is very important, because the teachers must like what they do, and they must feel… not to have so much stress, emotional stress and all that, then they can do their work better. And, in terms of family. I always tell them that the family comes first. When their family is safe, then they will be able to perform better…You cannot give up. You must keep on giving…talking to them…mainly I think that talking to them will really help. When you talk to them, you can actually engage with what are their problems…"*
> (Current principal)

> *"Like now, the students can just come in to the office anytime they like. During the 5th principal's time, they cannot. Only if they have something really important, then they could go in and see her or something like that. Now, with the current principal, the students can come in and meet her anytime…. for the teachers, it's really good. So, I can just come in and discuss with her, like I cannot do like this, I would like to do like that. I need to have more time rather than "I need this by this time and that".*
> (Science Committee Head)

Current practices

The teachers' survey findings show that the common practices of the school include teamwork, dedicated and committed teachers, always soliciting feedback, and frequent monitoring of teachers and students. Most of the survey respondents found that the most effective leadership practices are those where the leaders are *"friendly and caring; lead by example and involving students in planned activities; and making*

the students to be the executors of the programme with the teacher's guidance". Most appreciated the current principal's openness and friendliness and her coaching and mentoring. The least effective leadership styles are those where the leaders are having a *"firm attitude and punishing students"* or *"Lacking firmness in disciplining".* The former refers to those who are very strict and tend to resort too readily to punishment, while the latter are those who lack the firmness to discipline students with problems.

The Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis was carried out in SPSS on the perceived leadership practices, comprising 19 items in the teachers' survey. It was used to measure the internal consistency of the questionnaire in measuring the various leadership practices, namely instructional leadership, distributed leadership and transformational leadership. Table 4.2 summarises the Cronbach's alpha for these three leadership styles based on school 1's survey respondents. It showed the questionnaire to reach a very good level of reliability with alpha greater than 0.9.   A generally accepted rule is that alpha (α) of 0.6-0.7 indicates an acceptable level of reliability, and 0.8 or greater a very good level (Ursachi et al., 2015).

School 1's Teachers' Survey	Cronbach's Alpha
Instructional leadership tasks	0.988
- Defining school mission	0.969
- Managing the instructional programme	0.928
- Developing the school learning climate	0.983
Distributed leadership tasks	0.970
Transformational leadership tasks	0.955

Table 4.2: Reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha on School 1 Teachers' Survey

The teachers generally provided positive comments about their principal. Most survey respondents agree that their principal tends to practise the instructional leadership style most often, as noted below. The three pillars of instructional leadership are defining the school mission, managing the instructional programme and developing the school learning climate programme (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985). The survey questions include elements of these behaviours, using the Likert scale to determine the frequency of the principal in performing the stated tasks. All items are responded to on a Likert scale of 1-5, where 5 = Almost Always and 1 = Almost Never. The higher the score, the more frequent the principal was perceived to perform the task. The results are summarised in figure 4.8.
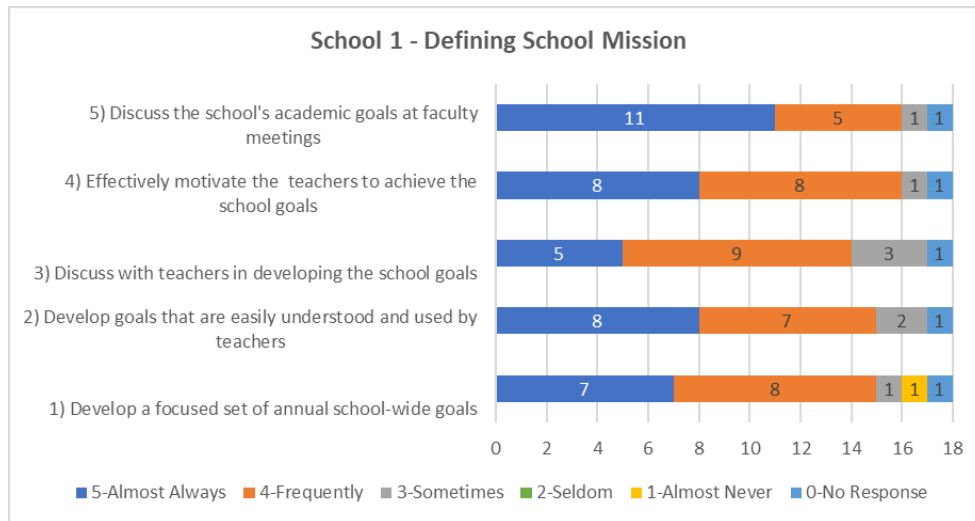
School 1 - Defining School Mission

5) Discuss the school's academic goals at faculty meetings: 11 | 5 | 1 | 1
4) Effectively motivate the teachers to achieve the school goals: 8 | 8 | 1 | 1
3) Discuss with teachers in developing the school goals: 5 | 9 | 3 | 1
2) Develop goals that are easily understood and used by teachers: 8 | 7 | 2 | 1
1) Develop a focused set of annual school-wide goals: 7 | 8 | 1 | 1 | 1

■5-Almost Always ■4-Frequently ■3-Sometimes ■2-Seldom ■1-Almost Never ■0-No Response

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Q1_annual_goals	17	4.00	1.00	5.00	4.1765	1.01460	1.029
Q2_easily_understood_goals	17	2.00	3.00	5.00	4.3529	.70189	.493
Q3_discuss_with_teachers_on_school_goals	17	2.00	3.00	5.00	4.1176	.69663	.485
Q4_motivate_teachers_to_achieve_school_goals	17	2.00	3.00	5.00	4.4118	.61835	.382
Q5_discuss_goals_with_teachers	17	2.00	3.00	5.00	4.5882	.61835	.382

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	4.067	3.889	4.333	.444	1.114	.035	5

Source: School 1 Teacher's Survey, N=18
(5-Almost Always, 4-Frequently, 3-Sometimes, 2-Seldom, 1-Almost Never)

Figure 4.8: Results of School 1's Teacher's Survey (Defining the School Mission)

Figure 4.8 shows that most (75%) of the 17 respondents reported that the principal almost always, or frequently, discusses the school's academic goals at faculty meetings (mean of 4.58) and is generally perceived to motivate the teachers to achieve the school's goals (4.41), which are easily understood and used by teachers (4.35). The tasks that the teachers found her to perform relatively less frequently are discussing with them in developing the school goals (4.11) and develops a focused set of school goals

(4.17). Although the principal shares the school goals and vision, they appear to emanate from a top-down approach.   The development of a focused set of school goals also had the widest range, with the lowest score being 1 or almost never and the highest score being 5 or almost always. This task also had the highest dispersion from the mean compared to the rest. Although the range is very wide, the mean was 4.17, indicating that a majority of the respondents found her to frequently practise this task, despite an opposing viewpoint to the contrary. From the summary of the item statistics above, the responses had a mean of 4.067, indicating that on average the teachers viewed their principal to frequently practise most of the tasks related to defining the school vision.
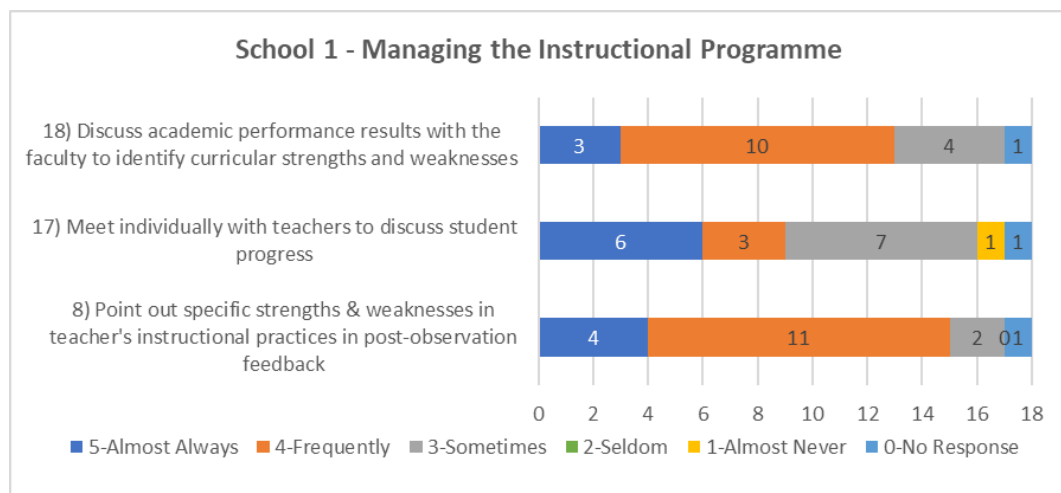
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Q8_teachers_instructional_practices	17	2.00	3.00	5.00	4.1176	.60025	.360
Q17_discuss_student_progress	17	4.00	1.00	5.00	3.7647	1.14725	1.316
Q18_discuss_academic_performance	17	2.00	3.00	5.00	3.9412	.65865	.434

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	3.741	3.611	3.889	.278	1.077	.020	3

Source: School 1 Teacher's Survey, N=18
(5-Almost Always, 4-Frequently, 3-Sometimes, 2-Seldom, 1-Almost Never)

Figure 4.9: Results of School 1's Teacher's Survey (Managing the Instructional Programme)

Figure 4.9 shows that the principal does not enact instructional leadership as frequently as defining the school mission.   She received the highest mean score of 4.11 for providing post-observational feedback on the teachers' instructional practices, followed by discussing academic performance with the faculty to identify curricular strengths and weaknesses (3.94). The standard deviation was small at 0.6, indicating a low dispersion from the mean as most teachers generally agreed that she frequently practices these two tasks. There was more inconsistent feedback in relation to her discussing with teachers individually on student progress as it had the widest range and the biggest standard deviation. Almost half of the survey respondents reported that she does not frequently meet individually with the teachers to discuss student progress (mean of 3.76).   The principal indicated in her interview that she prioritises her time by focusing on weak students. If the students are progressing well academically, the principal may meet less often with the teachers. This might explain the conflicting responses received for this question.
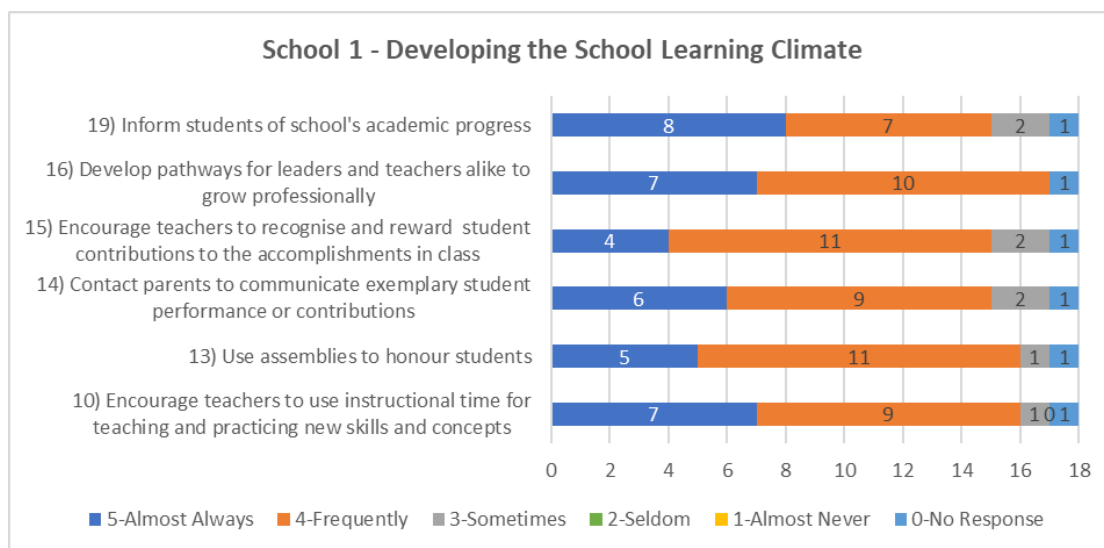
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Q10_teachers_using_instructional_time	17	2.00	3.00	5.00	4.3529	.60634	.368
Q13_honour_students	17	2.00	3.00	5.00	4.2353	.56230	.316
Q14_contact_parents	17	2.00	3.00	5.00	4.2353	.66421	.441
Q15_recognition_reward	17	2.00	3.00	5.00	4.1176	.60025	.360
Q16_professional_dev	17	1.00	4.00	5.00	4.4118	.50730	.257
Q19_comm_school_academic_progress	17	2.00	3.00	5.00	4.3529	.70189	.493

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	4.046	3.889	4.167	.278	1.071	.010	6

Source: School 1 Teacher's Survey, N=18
(5-Almost Always, 4-Frequently, 3-Sometimes, 2-Seldom, 1-Almost Never)

Figure 4.10: Results of School 1's Teacher's Survey (Developing the School Learning Climate)

Figure 4.10 shows that, in general, the survey respondents agree that the principal frequently develops the school's learning climate (average men of 4.05). They consistently feel that the principal almost always develops pathways for leaders and teachers to grow professionally, with a mean of 4.41, and a tight standard deviation of 0.5. She also almost always encourages teachers to use their instructional time effectively (4.35) and informs students of the school's academic progress (4.35). The teachers reported that she frequently informs parents (4.23) about the school's academic progress and performance, and provides recognition and incentives for learning (4.11).

The survey also asked questions about distributed leadership, as shown in figure 4.11. All the survey respondents reported that the principal distributes various tasks to them to lead and to achieve the school priorities (4.47). While this may appear to suggest delegated authority, or an allocative distributed leadership style, most respondents (83%) report that the principal very frequently encourages open collaboration among the teachers, students and parents (4.53).
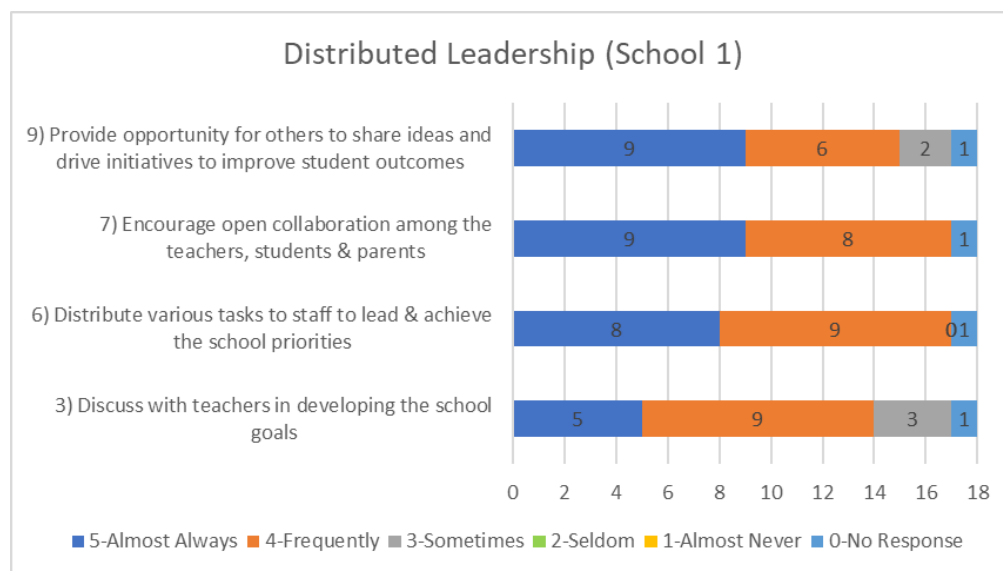
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Q3_discuss_with_teachers_on_school_goals	17	2.00	3.00	5.00	4.1176	.69663	.485
Q6_distribute_tasks	17	1.00	4.00	5.00	4.4706	.51450	.265
Q7_open_collaboration	17	1.00	4.00	5.00	4.5294	.51450	.265
Q9_opportunity_to_improve_outcomes	17	2.00	3.00	5.00	4.4118	.71229	.507

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	4.139	3.889	4.278	.389	1.100	.030	4

Source: School 1 Teacher's Survey, N=18
(5-Almost Always, 4-Frequently, 3-Sometimes, 2-Seldom, 1-Almost Never)

Figure 4.11: Results of School 1's Teachers' Survey (Distributed Leadership)

She also encourages teachers to contribute ideas and lead on various school priorities (4.41). Though less frequently, most (77%) of the teachers also say that the principal consults them when developing school goals (4.11). This suggests that the principal seeks to implement a distributed leadership style in her school by progressively empowering her teachers and leaders, although this is mainly through an allocative approach. Overall, respondents feel that the principal frequently and consistently displays distributed leadership as the average summary of means for all the items is 4.14, and with a small range in the responses.

Most of the respondents (88%) found that the principal exhibits strong transformational leadership (see figure 4.12 below). In particular, she can effectively motivate her teachers to achieve the school goals (4.41), develops goals that are easily understood and used by the teachers (4.35) and focused (4.17). Almost two-thirds of the respondents also found the principal to be amicable, frequently participating in extra co-curricular activities (4.00). In general, most of the respondents feel that the principal frequently practices transformational leadership (with average mean of more than 4.00 for all tasks) except for talking informally with the teachers and students alike (3.76).
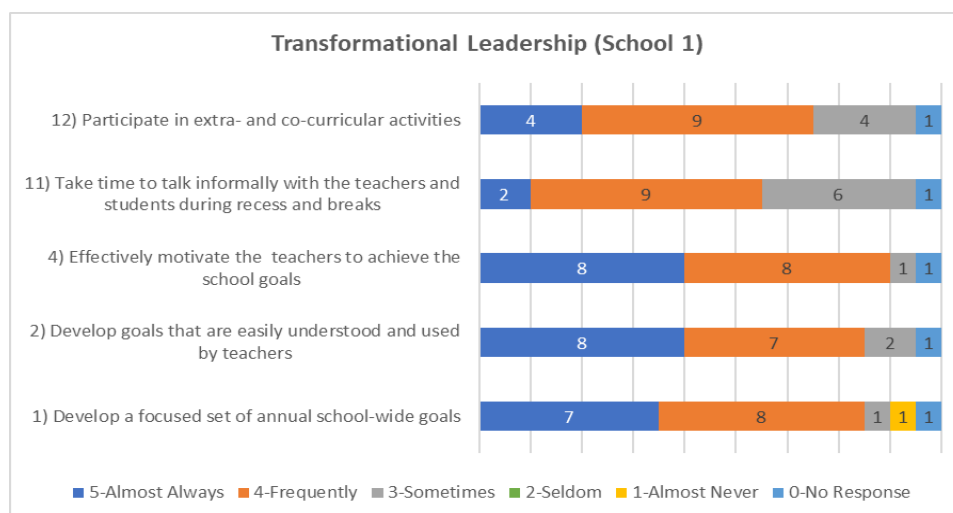
Transformational Leadership (School 1)

	5-Almost Always	4-Frequently	3-Sometimes	2-Seldom	1-Almost Never	0-No Response
12) Participate in extra- and co-curricular activities	4	9	4			1
11) Take time to talk informally with the teachers and students during recess and breaks	2	9	6			1
4) Effectively motivate the teachers to achieve the school goals	8	8	1			1
2) Develop goals that are easily understood and used by teachers	8	7	2			1
1) Develop a focused set of annual school-wide goals	7	8	1		1	1

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Q1_annual_goals	17	4.00	1.00	5.00	4.1765	1.01460	1.029
Q2_easily_understood_goals	17	2.00	3.00	5.00	4.3529	.70189	.493
Q4_motivate_teachers_to_achieve_school_goals	17	2.00	3.00	5.00	4.4118	.61835	.382
Q11_talk_informally	17	2.00	3.00	5.00	3.7647	.66421	.441
Q12_cocurricular_activities	17	2.00	3.00	5.00	4.0000	.70711	.500
Valid N (listwise)	17						

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	3.889	3.556	4.111	.556	1.156	.056	5

Source: School 1 Teacher's Survey, N=18

(5-Almost Always, 4-Frequently, 3-Sometimes, 2-Seldom, 1-Almost Never)

Figure 4.12: Results of School 1's Teachers' Survey (Transformational Leadership)

Collectively, the survey results suggest that the principal practices an effective instructional leadership style, and also delegates tasks effectively to her administrators and teachers. It appears that the principal provides a clear vision to guide her teachers towards a common goal, so that student outcomes can be

improved. She can frame the school's goals well, and communicate them effectively, through various channels, such as the administrators' weekly meetings, teachers' quarterly meetings, weekly assemblies, and the WhatsApp group with students and parents. The vision is usually disseminated from the principal to the senior assistants, and then to the teachers, students and parents, in what seems to be a top-down approach.

> "I think a lot of it is attributed to the leadership because the teachers need guidance. So, we as leaders, we need to guide the teachers, to whatever we want them to be. Of course, every now and then, we will share with them what is our aim, what is our direction, but sometimes they don't know where to go and all that. So, to make it align, we must be there to go with them. For us here, we always say, we have this tagline, "One Team, One Goal, One <school name>". "
> (Principal, School 1)

> "Communications with teachers and peers, with students, and with the administrators, it's very important to get to where we are now. It's by communications that we know what the principal wants us to do. Also, by communicating with the students, we know how to tackle the students to be a better student, to get good results. That's how I see it".
> (Science Committee Head)

Overall, the leadership style most frequently practiced by the principal was perceived to be distributed leadership (4.13) (see table 4.3). Due to her heavy workload, the principal needed to distribute the various tasks in order to maintain the school's current high academic achievements.

Leadership Styles	School 1 (Avg. Mean)
Instructional Leadership	3.95
Distributed Leadership	4.13
Transformational Leadership	3.89

Source: School 1 Teacher's Survey

Table 4.3: School 1 principal's leadership style

The principal also tends to frequently utilises instructional leadership (3.95). The school has a clear vision that is communicated well, and leaders regularly monitor and evaluate students' performance and solicit feedback from teachers for improvement. Instructional time and learning approaches are being developed, and classroom observations are performed regularly by the principal and her administrators. These are conducted both informally, on a weekly basis, and formally, at least twice a year, where the

leaders provide feedback to the teachers on their teaching approaches. Administrators also check students' exercise books, to ensure that the teachers cover the syllabus appropriately and provide the right level of exercises, at least once a year.

> "[The principal] *gets feedback from the other heads, the panel heads who would inform her that maybe this person needs some help over here. And she will look into it. She would come in. Otherwise, she would basically, as she strolls around, she's doing her observations. She's at the corridor, she's outside your class, she's watching you from the side. Maybe she knows that you are a senior teacher and she knows your style, maybe she will come in a diplomatic manner, maybe not sitting in your class, you know".*
> *(*English Committee Head)

Besides being an instructional leader, the principal also adopts a transformational leadership style (3.89) that is perceived to emanate from her charisma and the strength of her character. This has helped her to foster a positive and dedicated work culture and endeared her to leaders and teachers. The principal has very strong family values and she transmits her values to her staff. She understands that, if the family is secure and safe, then the teachers can do their work well. Her loving and open character serves as an antecedent to her exemplary leadership styles. She is often described by her administrators and teachers as a friendly, caring, and empathetic person. She is very observant and takes personal interest in the welfare of her teachers, showing her concern about their needs and her gratitude for their efforts. Her leadership, by example, provides motivation for teachers and administrators, as she 'walks her talk'.

> "*She would approach her teachers. She will say that I know all of you are working very hard and that you are doing your best. I know that lots of things are difficult for you but I know that somehow, you will still be able to overcome it. She makes us feel and know that something she is aware of".*
> (English Committee Head)

Overview

This chapter outlines the research findings for school 1 and identifies the leadership effects on student outcomes. Past principals (beginning from the fourth principal) and the current leadership team have been able to contribute positively to the school's performance. They have progressively built a strong culture of teamwork, and a conducive teaching and learning environment, where the school's goals and vision have been effectively internalised and practiced by most teachers. This collective teacher efficacy, and the differentiated academic programmes, contribute to the school's students achieving 100% passes

in their SPM results over the past three years. However, it is also important to note that the school has been controlling student admissions since 2011, allowing it to select higher quality students. Nevertheless, the strong influence and rapport between school leaders and teachers, students and parents, suggest an open and collaborative environment that facilitates learning and helps to address the challenges faced by the school.   The next chapter presents findings from a low performing school, exploring similar themes, in order to determine similarities or differences in the leadership influence and practices that affect student outcomes.

Chapter 5: Findings - School 2 (Low Performing School)

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings for School 2, a low performing band 6 school, and the relationship between leadership and student outcomes. The first section covers the school context. This is followed by a section that identifies the relationship between leadership and student outcomes. The next section displays the results of the leadership influence on student outcomes.   The final section shares the results of the preferred leadership styles employed in the school.

Seven interviews were completed with school leaders, comprising three senior assistants, three subject committee heads and one counsellor. The interview with the principal could not be conducted, as he retired about a month before the field work. While waiting for the new principal to be assigned to the school by the District Education Office (PPD), the three senior assistants, headed by the first senior assistant, were put in charge of the administration of the school. A total of 17 teachers, representing 35% of the total teacher population, participated in the teachers' survey. Two classroom observations were made for the mathematics and science subjects respectively. More than 40 school documents were analysed, notably student population and demographics, students' past achievements, school policies and procedures, school activities and minutes of meetings.

School Context

School background

The school is located within a five-km radius of School 1. It was established in 1998 with 375 students, approximately 10 years after school 1 was established. It started as a double session school. In 2008, the school had more than 1500 students. However, in 2013, it became a single session school as it was unable to meet the quota for a double session school. Some teachers had to be redeployed by the State Education Department (JPN) to other schools. Currently, the school has fewer than 500 students (way below the maximum enrolment capacity of 800).   Four more secondary schools were added in the township since 2005, presenting more choices for parents, some of whom sent their children to a neighbouring school which is perceived to be better than school 2.

The school was allowed by the Ministry to offer form six from 2011. Recently, the school was advised by the Ministry that it will be converted to a junior high school, for form six students only. Beginning from

2018, the school will stop taking in new form one students and teachers exclusively teaching form one subjects are being identified for transfer to other schools by the District Education Office (PPD). Once the current form one student cohort finishes form five in 2021, the school will become a fully-fledged junior high school, exclusively for form six students only.

The school is within five minutes walking distance from nearby low-cost flats that are mostly inhabited by low-income families of Indonesian descent. Due to the proximity of this school, most parents living in these flats prefer to send their children to this school. The District Education Office assigned standard six students from nearby primary schools to this school as their feeder school. With this link, the school's student population should not be as low as 500. However, several form one students transferred to nearby higher performing schools within the first two months of the new school term. According to the first senior assistant, "*Nobody would want to come because of the infiltration of the immigrants' colony here*." This perception of the 'immigrants' from Indonesia seemed to be the underlying sentiment among administrators and teachers who felt that the significant presence of this group of students have contributed to the ever-decreasing academic performance of the school. According to the English committee head, this decline started in 2012.

School organisation

Malaysia's education is centrally administered by the Education Ministry. As such, the school has a similar organisational structure to that of School 1. The principal is supported by three senior assistants, similar to School 1. However, rather than having a senior assistant for co-curriculum, the school has a senior assistant for form six. In addition, unlike School 1, most of the school leaders are new to the school and were not promoted internally.

At the time of the interview and data collection in June 2017, the school's principal had recently retired, and the new principal had not been identified. While awaiting the arrival of the new principal, the school was managed by the three senior assistants. The first senior assistant only joined the school on December 2016, just three months before the principal retired. The senior assistant for student affairs started worked in the school three years ago. Hence, the longest serving administrator is the senior assistant for form six, who has been with the school for 17 years and had been in her current role for the past six years.

The school has had a recent change in their subject heads and the committee heads for science, English and mathematics. The committee heads for science and mathematics assumed their roles a few months before the field work. The English committee head had been in her role for one year.

School infrastructure and environment

The school has good infrastructure and adequate resources, similar to School 1. The school is also equipped with a computer room, resource room, library and counselling room. Most of the basic requirements had been met. The school also has a gymnasium as it offers a fitness training course. There is also a classroom that is being fitted to teach the 21st century education (SPA-21) methodology currently advocated by the ministry, sponsored by the local community council, MBSJ. According to the senior assistant for students' affairs, MBSJ had spent RM100,000 to transform the class into a SPA-21 classroom, complete with all the materials, chairs and television. However, unlike School 1, the school does not have a hostel to house its students.

The school also suffered from the low bandwidth speed as experienced in School 1, under the BestariNet initiative from the ministry. As the classrooms are not being fitted with LCDs and projectors, e-learning could not be conducted effectively. According to the science committee head, she has to resort to using her laptop to overcome the problem when trying to present online materials to her students. "*But I usually show the videos and all in their own groups. Take turns to see the videos. In a small group, maybe six or seven persons for the first round, then the second round, another seven*." Though seen as a solution, she conceded it was not effective and would prefer LCDs fitted in the classroom.

Staffing and resourcing

As noted earlier, the school has about 49 teachers. Based on the respondents' demographics, most teachers had more than five years of teaching experience and working in the school. However, the school also seemed to receive new teachers who had less than one-year's teaching experience and were newly assigned to the school (see figure 5.1).
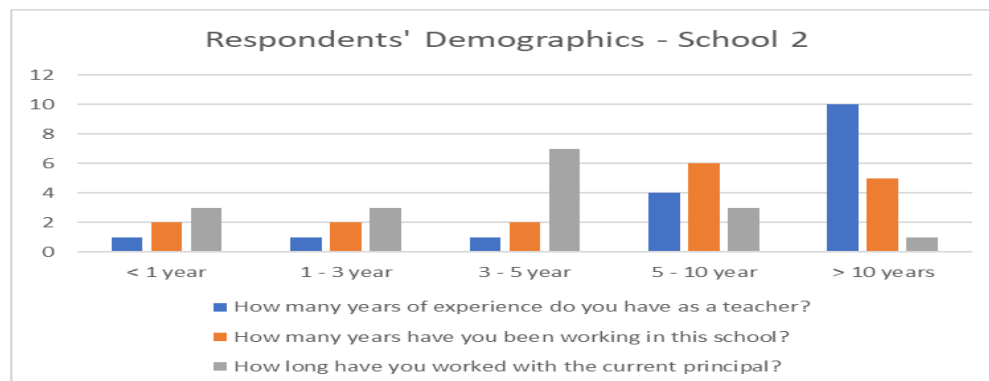
Figure 5.1: Respondents' Demographics - School 2

One of the key challenges currently faced by the administrators is to effectively lead the teachers. In the absence of a principal, the three senior assistants were tasked to run the school, with the newly transferred first senior assistant leading the school administration.

> *"Ever since he has retired, it has been up to the shoulders of the senior assistants to really run the school. And ahmm…and…to make changes, to give instructions, new instructions or how do we say, to make changes basically in the system…it takes a little bit of time because they are so used to what* [the previous principal] *has been giving…the instructions and directions… I would say that with* [the previous principal]*, there were more lee ways."*
> (Senior Assistant for Form Six, School 2)

The first senior assistant felt challenged in leading the teachers and implementing needed change. "*I'm only number 2 here. I faced obstacles here because I'm number 2 and more importantly, I'm Chinese. They,* [the teachers], *would not take instructions from me. They all hate me actually."* However, the first senior assistant may be too harsh on herself as the mathematics committee head felt that she has been leading the school well. The latter stated that, if she presented her problem to the first senior assistant, "*she will try to solve it then and there. She will not try to keep it aside and ask you to come and see her another time. No. If you have a problem with this, then you come and see her, she will go through all this and listen to you and she will find the solutions for you*."

However, with three senior assistants jointly running the school, decisions were not made easily and quickly. According to the senior assistant for form six, "[the three senior assistants] *constantly sit down and actually discuss before we come up with a decision."* Often, a consensus needs to be reached on important decisions before they would be executed, making the decision process much longer. If there is no consensus, "*we will try to see whichever will suit everybody."* (senior assistant for form six).

> *"It's a bit challenging to have everyone sit together…agreeing…but it is a very healthy discussion I must say, because we don't have the veto power to say that "Ok, I want to go ahead with this". It's more of a discussion and a…ahmmm…I believe, it's more…how do we say…. positive."*
> (Senior Assistant for Form Six, School 2)

Student demographics and community

The school has about 500 students. In addition to the three main Malaysian groups of Malay, Chinese and Indian, the school has an additional racial category known as the Malay-Indonesian, a rare category that

is not often recorded. The local Malay students made up 48% of the student population, while those from Malay-Indonesian descent comprised another 20%. Collectively, more than two-thirds of the student population are Malays (68%), while the Chinese and Indian students are around 12% respectively. The remaining eight percent are foreign students from Philippines or from other ethnic groups within Malaysia.

The school administrators differed in their views about the number of students who are from the low-income group. For example, the first senior assistant mentioned a significant number of students in this school are from the B40 (the poorest 40% income) group in Malaysia, while the senior assistant for form six assumed as high as 80% of the student population are from underprivileged families, and the senior assistant for student affairs, who should have access to the data, assumed that they comprised about 60% of the student population. However, they all agreed that students from the lower socio-economic status are often those from Malay-Indonesian descent. As noted above, these comprise about 20% of the student population, the majority of whom are low performing, although not all low-performing students are from this group.

The low-cost flats near the school are mostly inhabited by these students from the Malay-Indonesian descent. Parents from these low-cost flats prefer to send their children to this school (about five minutes walking distance) even though there is another secondary school just a short distance away. According to the senior assistant for student affairs, the nearby school's performance is much better than this school "*because, there are more Chinese there and some from [*another nearby township*] …and also there are more local Malays. The Indo-Malay, more come to our school.*" The first senior assistant added that most of these students are not interested in learning and "*they come to school because their parents asked them to go to school…short of the school being used as a baby-sitting service*."

Students from this lower income group also tend to work part-time, either because they have ample free time or to support their family income. The school counsellor said that, "s*ome students feel that they have nothing to do, like they have lot of free time, and work at* [the nearby shopping mall]. *For one hour, they get paid RM4.50 or RM5 an hour.   So, if they worked from 4 pm – 10 pm, they can get RM30, which to them seems a lot. They must at least be 16 years old, so Form 4 and Form* 5." However, by working part-time, these students seemed to compromise their studies. The senior assistant for form six noticed that "*some of our students, after school, they work. They have to…some of them have to work, to support the family even. So, they don't go for tuition, don't even believe that they have ample time to study at home. Because, once you work part-time, you won't have much time to study….They would be sleepy, not*

focused in class, they can be very loud, in terms of mannerisms also, they can be quite harsh. Some, though not all, will be involved in disciplinary problems."

The administrators generally agree that most of the current student challenges originate from this group. They seemed to lack interest in their education, come late to school or play truant, and like to sleep in class. However, the senior assistant for student affairs added that their home environment may also not be conducive for the students to study, with some of them preferring to stay at school after hours rather than going back home. According to her, "w*hen some of the teachers interviewed them, they said their homes are quite small. Not much space. The rented space is also shared with other families, can be two families shared one house like that. The students told the teachers, at home, how can they do their homework?"* In addition, she also observed that students with disciplinary problems tend to come from broken families, which according to her, "*means their parents are divorced, single parents, or even if not divorced, always quarrel…".* She adds that:

> *"So far, the ones we knew are from the Malay-Indon. There are some from the local Malays also. When we handle the students' cases, those with discipline problems, when we investigate their background, most of the time they came from a family where their parents split, or if don't split, one of the parents seldom comes home, like that. Most of those students with problems came from this kind of family. So, that's why we make this kind of conclusion, if those students with discipline problems, their background is usually those from a broken family. But it does not mean those from a broken family, all will have a discipline problem. It's just that those who are usually not ok, they came from a broken family."*
> (Senior Assistant for Student Affairs, School 2)

Leadership legacy of past principals

The school has had eight principals since its inception in 1998 (see figure 5.1):
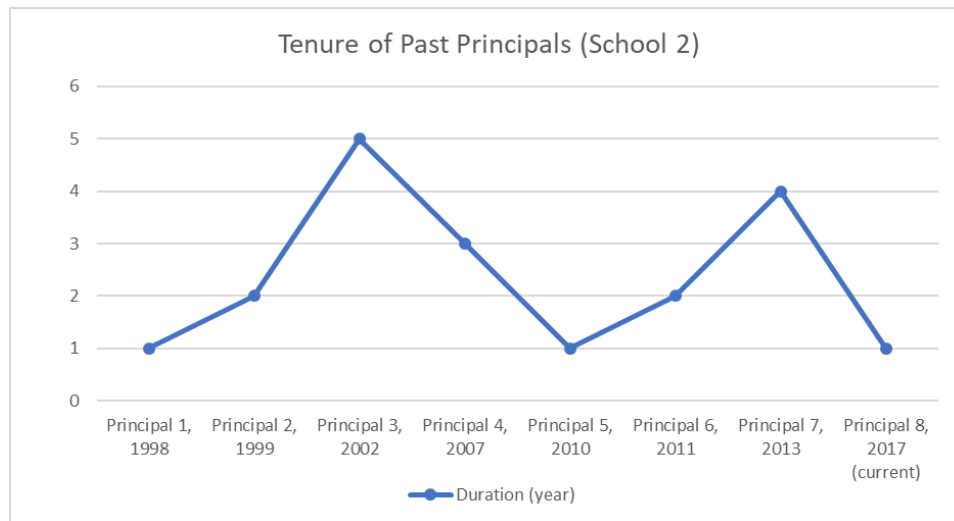
Figure 5.2: Tenure of Past Principals in School 2

Most of the school's principals had a short tenure of less than three years, with only the third principal and the recently retired principal serving more than three years. The current principal only started in September 2017, after the field work for this research. Most of the principals were transferred to this school as their last stint before their retirement. Therefore, their short tenure was due to them reaching their retirement age of 60. Hence, the impact these principals made on this school was perceived to be minimal. According to the senior assistant for form six, most of these principals were not really "*hands-on and didn't really monitor the teachers or students' performance actively*." In addition, the science committee head noted that most of the past principals are female, except the recently retired principal. "*For lady bosses, they are very fussy. They wanted something solid…you can't do any hanky-panky. Very detailed.*"

Only one principal, the third, who also served the longest, with five years of service, appeared to stand out and made a difference to this school. She seemed to be well-respected by most of the teachers as stated by the senior assistant for form six; "[the teachers felt that] *what she was doing then, was really good for the school. Because everything was in order*." Her positive attitude appeared to extend beyond the teachers as she went on to add, "*Because you can really see, can really feel. Because at that time, the students were doing fine and they loved to come to school*." However, the mathematics committee head noted that not all the teachers may have appreciated her strictness, as "s*ome [were] happy with her and some not happy with her….*".

"There's one particular principal that really stands out. [She's the third principal]. *I believed that she is a good example of what a good principal should be…. Her presence made a real impact because, at that time, our results went up and our discipline was at its best. Because of what she did, she monitored everyone and everybody. We are not talking about just the students, teachers, workers….and everybody knew her, and everybody listened to her. She didn't really sit in the office that much, she walked around. She really monitored the school per se. She was really close…she had programmes that she attends…I see her very close to the students…in ahh…ah…how do we say? The naughty ones, she would identify them and pay more attention to them also. We have this disciplinary board and they pointed it out to her. She also teaches the….ahh….classes, so she was able to pick up these naughty ones. She knew what she was doing, not just delegating orders around. I believe as a head, you need to know what you are doing, and what's going on".*
(Senior Assistant for Form Six, School 2)

"[The third principal] *was very strict. That year, the school's performance was very good…The reputation of this school was also very good. Because of the Chinese HM".*
(Mathematics Committee Head)

However, during the tenure of this principal, the school was a double-session school and there were a limited number of schools around the neighbourhood. Hence, parents at that time lacked the school choices they now have, meaning that the student population was more evenly distributed in terms of socio-economic status. Currently, the three newer secondary schools within the community have higher student enrolments than this school. Feedback from administrators and teachers indicates that one of the major deterrents for parents in the neighbourhood, especially those from the middle-class income group, to send their children to this school was due to the high number of students of Malay-Indonesian descent and the perceived low academic performance of this school.

Student Outcomes

This section combines the findings from the documentary analysis, and the interviews with school leaders and teachers, to assess the relationship between leadership and student outcomes, if any. It also examines factors contributing to any perceived improvement or decline in student outcomes.

Past examination results

The school has observed a steady decline in the Malaysia Education Certificate (SPM) results since 2011, with an increase in 2014 before declining again the following year. Figure 5.2 shows the results from 2011-2015. The most recent 2016 results had not been analysed at the time of data collection, although

the results had been available for three months.   This school only analysed the results for the previous five years, while School 1 kept a record for the past 15 years, including the most recent 2016 results.
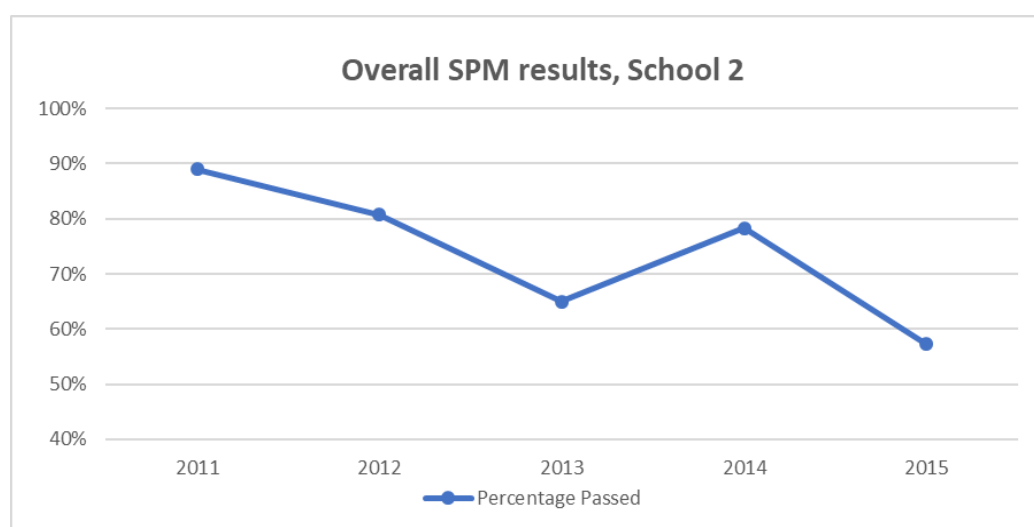
Source: School 2 Overall SPM Results Analysis (2011 – 2015)

Figure 5.3: Overall Malaysia Education Certificate (SPM) Results, School 2

Figure 5.2 shows that the school achieved a pass rate of 90% for the SPM results in 2011, the year in which the school was first allowed to offer from six, compared with a figure of only 57% in 2015. The low score of 65% in 2013 coincided with the school becoming a single session school. This was also the year in which the recently retired principal began his service in the school. The results improved again in 2014, only to dip even lower in 2015, all during the tenure of the recently retired principal.

The students' SPM's results for 2013-2015 were further analysed by subject, to understand the subjects that may have caused the greatest improvement or decline. Figure 5.3 shows the school's SPM results by subject from 2013 to 2015. The blue vertical line indicates the year 2013, orange for 2014 and green for 2015. The first five subjects are core subjects taken by all the form five students, while the elective subjects are taken by students in the arts or science stream respectively. The school also has a unique sports science elective.

Figure 5.4: 2013-2015 Malaysia Education Certificate (SPM) Results (% Passed by Subjects), School 2
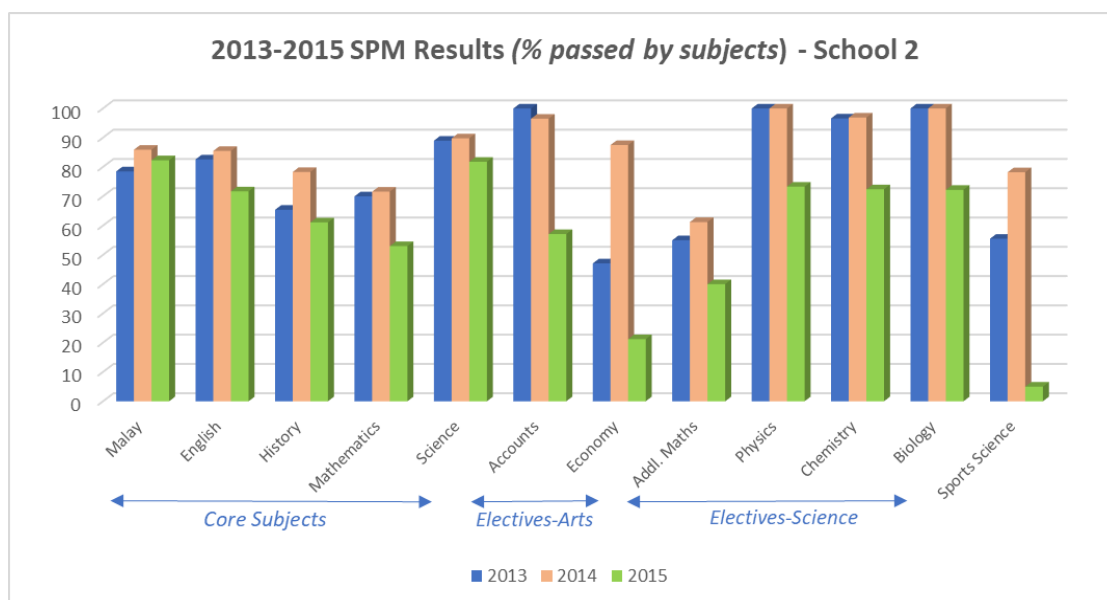
Source: School 2 SPM Results Analysis by Subjects (2013 – 2015)

History and mathematics are the weakest of the core subjects, with a mean of 68% and 65% respectively (see table 5.1). Mathematics also had the largest standard deviation among the core subjects at 10.3, indicating the widest dispersion from the mean. There was also a marked decline in the percentage of students who passed Mathematics in 2015 (by 20%) and a significant decrease in history in 2015 to 60%, from a high of almost 80% in 2014. In contrast, Science had the highest average score at 86%, with a tight range and standard deviation, indicating that most students had similar outcomes. Malay language had the next highest average score at 82%, with the lowest standard deviation at 3.7 and the smallest range.

Among the arts elective subjects, there was a significant decline of 35% for accounts in 2015 while, for economics, the big improvement gained in 2014 (of more than 35% from 2013) was reversed to an even lower pass rate of 21% in 2015. Accounts had an average score of 84.5% while economics' average score was a low of 51.9%. Both accounts and economics had high standard deviations 23.8 and 33.4 respectively, indicating a wide dispersion from the mean. Science elective subjects, namely Physics, Biology and Chemistry, had higher average scores than the arts elective subjects. These three subjects had a mean of more than 88%. Additional mathematics, generally perceived as a difficult subject, had a low average score of 52%. Compared to the arts elective subjects, the standard deviations for the science elective subjects were relatively small, almost half that of the arts elective subjects. This suggested that the science stream students performed consistently and better academically than the arts elective

students, with smaller variances in the aptitude of the students. However, all the science elective subjects observed a decline of more than 20% in 2015 compared to the previous years. Sports science, a new subject that was made available in this school, declined dramatically from almost 80% in 2014 to just 5% in 2015. This has led to a skewed data set that may not be measuring an accurate response or average score. It had the highest variation in the range and the widest standard deviation among all the subjects.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Malay	3	7.40	78.50	85.90	82.2333	3.70045	13.693
English	3	13.80	71.70	85.50	79.9333	7.27622	52.943
History	3	17.20	61.10	78.30	68.2667	8.95116	80.123
Mathematics	3	18.60	53.00	71.60	64.8667	10.30793	106.253
Science	3	8.00	81.80	89.80	86.8667	4.40606	19.413
Accounts	3	42.90	57.10	100.00	84.5333	23.82233	567.503
Economy	3	66.30	21.20	87.50	51.9333	33.41322	1116.443
Addl_Maths	3	21.20	40.00	61.20	52.0667	10.90015	118.813
Physics	3	26.70	73.30	100.00	91.1000	15.41525	237.630
Chemistry	3	24.50	72.40	96.90	88.6333	14.05928	197.663
Biology	3	27.80	72.20	100.00	90.7333	16.05034	257.613
Sports_Science	3	73.20	5.00	78.20	46.2333	37.46950	1403.963

Table 5.1: Descriptive statistics for 2013-2015 Malaysia Education Certificate (SPM) Results (% Passed by Subjects), School 2

Administrators and teachers' perceptions of student outcomes

There is a contrast between the data shown in figure 5.1 and the perceptions of the senior assistant for student affairs, who is responsible for analysing students' performance. She claimed that the weakest subjects are "*Maths and Science. English also. Because here, the students are from that area,* [families living in the low-cost flats area] *their English is very poor.*" However, figure 5.3 shows that English and Science are two of the strongest core subjects, with more than 80% pass rates in 2013-2014, although English dipped slightly to 72% in 2015. This seems to imply that the administrators may not use available data to guide and inform them on areas for improvement so that they could develop intervention programmes to improve student academic outcomes effectively, unlike in School 1. This issue was further

compounded as the principal delegated the responsibility for monitoring and improving students' academic performance to his three senior assistants.

Most of the teachers and administrators tend to attribute the variations in student outcomes to the quality of the students and teachers. The lack of focus on students' academic performance, by the recently retired principal, was also commonly cited as a main factor in the decline in students' academic outcomes over the past few years.

> *"Sure, we were under* [the recently retired seventh principal] *for 4 years. It just took a nose dive. Before - It was ok. There was…we could do something about it. After that, it took a nose dive. And it's very difficult to do something when you hit rock bottom.*
> (English Committee Head)

> *"Not as bad as now. It's getting worse. The quality of the students and the quality of the teachers. The quantity is not really affected. When you have a good head teacher, of course the quality of the teachers improves. Because of the quality of the teachers, even though the quality of the students is not good, you can also bring up the quality of the students also."*
> (Mathematics Committee Head)

Despite the steady decline in the results, some of the administrators and teachers felt that the results had been improving. While the school had observed an overall decline, there were pockets of improvement, which may be the focus of some of the teachers and administrators.

The teachers' survey shows that only a slight majority of the respondents (52%, or 9 out of 17 respondents) observed a decline in student achievement, while 41% claimed improvements. Most of them attributed the decline to the quality of the students, a lazy attitude, a lack of emphasis on learning, and "*the requirement for 'higher order thinking skills' (HOTS) questions.* [The students] *are [too] lazy to think, especially those from the weaker classes."* In addition, peer group influence was also identified as a main factor. "*Even those with higher SES and are average, will tend to be influenced to be lazy as they don't want to be ridiculed.*" Teachers who found that the school's performance had improved mostly focused on the improvement in the grade point average (GPA) and the effort and guidance undertaken by the teachers themselves in providing extra classes and giving exercise drills to improve the students' results.

The school's administrators seemed to be satisfied for the school to show some improvement without setting aggressive goals to regain its former pass rate above 80%.

"..in 2015, our results dropped. We are the last, or second last, in the district, for SPM. But the following year, we are able to boost more than...I meant more than 20%. Because when we feel that...this is what the principal told us...when we are down, there are so many opportunities for us to go up. But when you are the top, you tend to fall, right? So, it's better for you when you are at the bottom, take it as a challenge...there is a chance for you to improve. When you are the top, it's more difficult. A little bit, and you can fall."
(Senior Assistant for Student Affairs, School 2)

"For the past year [2016], the SPM results had gone up, which is really good because the past two or three years, it was not doing well. And I believe that the effort made by the teachers and the students also...really made it happened."
(Senior Assistant for Form Six, School 2)

"I think our results will go up this year. Last year, it started to go up. This year, from my observation, I think, from the batch of form five, I think they are quite good. Actually, all this depends on the students' quality. We cannot say that one year the results improved or declined because of the teachers. The teachers are still the same. Same teachers teaching the students. It's the batch of students. If the batch of students are very weak, the results will be impacted."
(School Counselor, School 2)

However, some exceptions were noted, particularly for the English and science committee heads. As these are core subjects taken by all form five students, despite the quality of the students' cohort, these two subjects were able to sustain high pass rates. The efforts made by these two committee heads may have maintained the results despite the challenging context. Exercise drills were often used as a strategy to improve grades, which may compromise the focus on students' learning.

"[The school's performance is] *not very good, but the last year [2016] SPM, we did actually go up. It went up because we did a lot of intensive programmes for them. We pushed them and pushed them. For English, at least. We have a special timetable, where classes are broken up into A, B and C. The As will have to work harder than the Bs and the Cs. It was done where the timetable is totally different from their standard timetable. They will be separated, and the teachers will drill them on the past year questions, spot questions, and we bring speakers from other schools and outside to give talks, to give them writing strategies, answering techniques. Even if 2% improved, it's significant.*"
(English Committee Head)

"For SPM, there is this one teacher who is very creative. She will gather 10 or 15 of the last...those students who are at the bottom of the class who only get less than 20 marks, she will gather them and give them drills. Take one or two questions only where the students would get marks, like draw graphs, tabulation of data. She would do that. For SPM, it's possible as the format of the questions is the same. Every year, the format is the same. So, she will drill the past year's questions, maybe 2 or 3 weeks before the

exams, the teacher will conduct the drilling. That's why the results improved a bit then… That is what we can do for those weak students. For the objective questions, we recommend if you need to guess, then just guess one letter only."
(Science Committee Head)

Students' quality and motivation

Students are streamed according to their standard six examination results (UPSR) from form one onwards and typically remain with the same class until form three. Each form has only three classes, and the first class usually has the best students, while the weak students are typically in the last class. Students are streamed again in form four after the form three examinations (PT3), according to their preference for science, arts or commerce subjects, subject to final approval from the school, as there are Ministry requirements to enrol more students in the science subjects. Overall, the quality of the students enrolled in the school had been decreasing as middle-class parents from the neighbourhood prefer to send their children to nearby higher performing schools. The decline was most pronounced from 2012, just after the recently retired principal started to serve in this school.

> *"The first year when I entered into this school* [in 2008], *the batch of students were quite good quality. Better than now, a lot. We had a lot of students that can be leaders, be it in the academics and co-curriculum. They performed very well. Now, it's totally different. It's getting worse, not getting better."*
> (Mathematics Committee Head)

> *"It wasn't like this all the time. When I first joined the school* [in 2009], *our students were pretty good… Towards the end, everything has declined, because when you see a lower income and failing students attending a particular school, higher income parents pull out their children, and put them with better students, for example, in* [the neighbouring school]. *Everybody pulled out, pulled out, and they are now in* [the other nearby schools]. *I think around 2012. The decline started around this time."*
> (English Committee Head)

> *"Current level of attainment…what I can say is that they are way, way, way beneath what the Ministry would have assumed for the form two level…because I'm now teaching the form two English. I'm teaching the second class and the last class. The second class, I would say, I would have at least 4 people who are English illiterate. English illiterate means they don't understand what I am talking about at all. The last class more than half. Most of them cannot comprehend English… Their level of proficiency, if we judged by our Malaysian education system, I would say that many of them will only be in Year 3 or Year 4."*
> (First Senior Assistant, School 2)

The students' performance varies significantly from the first class to the third class. Teachers and administrators referenced their students often by the first and last class distinction, with perceived attitudinal and behaviour differences, besides their academic performance. The teachers and administrators do not seem to expect As from their weaker students in the lass class, who are mostly from the lower income group. These students are assumed to represent at least 20% of the student population and are typically of Malay-Indonesian descent. As observed by the mathematics committee head, "*For the last class, there are more Malay-Indons*." Most of the teachers found students from the last class lacked motivation to learn, and they may also tend to have a rude or stubborn attitude.

> *"These are children who do not have this hunger for knowledge. They are hungry for physical and material things. Knowledge is not in their priority list. They don't see education as a tool to get out of this poverty cycle. They don't see it. It will be what we called a vicious cycle. Generations after generations, they are stuck in the rut…*
> *Many of them, I'm very sad to say this…but I often told them off…they don't know how to behave, how to sit properly…. they don't know how to talk properly. Nobody teach them how to sit properly, talk properly".*(First Senior Assistant, School 2)

> *"First class, that's the best class, best in terms of the rest. Even in the second class, there are lots of failures. Only two or three students can pass. I'm teaching Maths. The others…most of them get marks below 20. This is the second class. The students who passed, let's say one of them is 70, and the other 80. But the rest, they are below 20. So, the gap is very wide. [In the last class], nobody passed."*
> (Senior Assistant for Student Affairs and Mathematics Teacher)

The mathematics committee head provided further insights into the varying performance of the students. The majority of students from the first class have tuition outside while the students from the last class, mostly from the lower income families living in the nearby low cost flats, could not afford outside tuition. In addition, the latter also had weak basic understanding and comprehension of the subject for them to learn effectively. The mathematics committee head added that the background of these students contributed to their lack of motivation to learn due to their weak basic understanding:

> *"If you have no strong basics in primary school, and you pass it on to the secondary school, there will be some problems that will occur. Because secondary, you have the secondary syllabus to cover, we do not even have time to cover the primary syllabus for them. So, if they don't pick up their primary syllabus, they feel very hard to move on. So from there, they will lack the interest to study…In the last class, of course the parents have financial problems and cannot afford to send them for tuition, so they totally depend on the teacher. And then they lack the motivation…. Because when you enter the class, the environment, they will say, "teacher, I got no mood to study". The feedback that they give you, you can really see that they don't like [to study]."*
> (Mathematics Committee Head)

In addition to the significant performance variation between the first and the last class, some teachers also tend to believe that the overall quality of students in the school to be lower than the neighbouring schools, who are perceived to have higher student performance. As observed by the English committee head, "*Even for our first class, if they go to a very good school, they probably get Bs or Cs*."

The recently retired principal tried an alternative approach by seeking to increase the students' non-academic achievements. For example, in 2016, he rallied the whole school, both teachers and students, to construct 3D inspiring quotations on the school wall that was recognised as the longest 3D quoted wall in the Malaysian Book of Records. His focus was more on developing the students' personality and technical skills, often requesting some students to help him in his workshop to repair the school's infrastructure. He also focused on sports to improve the school's reputation. According to the science committee head, the area that improved the most seemed to be sports. "*For sports, this year and last year, we have gotten so many golds in the district… For archery, we represent Malaysia at the country level where the students go overseas. In these past 2 or 3 years, we have more awards in sports. Last time, maybe more in academics, as the emphasis was more in academics.*" However, these non-academic initiatives preferred by the principal were not aligned to the more academic focus of the administrators and the majority of the teachers as the school's performance and prestige are mostly influenced by the students' academic performance in the form five national examinations.

The students also do not seem to compete much with each other, so there is no peer influence to help motivate the students to outperform one another.

> "*Among the Chinese, maybe they compete among each other. But for the rest, not really. I guess it depends on their personality. Let's say, for the Chinese, they see that this one student is doing well, and they will feel that they want to compete with her and do better. But, for the Malays, I don't see it. They will say, "It's OK. I perform like this, I'm quite satisfied". They would think like that. They don't care about others. I don't care how well you perform; it does not affect me. Why need to perform as I achieve already. Not totally no, but from the majority that I can see, they don't see it as a challenge. The students not take the top students as a challenge for themselves.*"
> (Mathematics Committee Head)

Focus on passing rather than learning

Due to the recently retired principal's lack of focus on students' academic performance, and the administrators apparent lack of rigour in using students' performance results and data to guide their analysis, it seemed that the school leaders may not be proactively striving to increase students' outcomes.

The focus is more to enable the students to secure pass grades in their studies rather than excelling. According to the senior assistant for form six, "w*e just want our students to have a better future actually. We do not want to be so ambitious and want them to have all As, or a string of As, and yet they are unable to get.*"

> *"We tried our best to help them. We help them to overcome. Maybe not 100%, maybe not all, but at least we can push them to credit. Now according to the results, we can see more fails than passing."*
> (Mathematics Committee Head)

> *"But here, we can't really achieve 100%. If we can achieve 100%, our results would have shown it. So, the results show that, the percent passed is about 74%. Another 30% is below 40 marks, normally, in their exams… We can't achieve the 100% passing."*
> (Science Committee Head)

Ensuring all students are learning may not be the main focus as teachers struggle with the challenging student context.

> *"Let's say this topic 6, you don't have to teach from A-Z for this topic. You can choose the parts you would like to teach. So, the harder parts, you can skip as they won't be able to answer it anyway."*
> (Science Committee Head)

The focus for weaker students would be to repeat similar exercises so that the students gain familiarity with the questions to enable them to pass the examinations. The teachers would slot additional classes or programmes directly into the school's timetable to ensure maximum student participation, as students from this school are not willing to stay for additional classes held after school hours.

> *"We have extra programmes for them. For example, we have, extra periods in class for certain core subjects. Because we have elective programmes and subjects, so we concentrate more on the subjects that would be taken in SPM for the exam. This is really to help the students. We gave them more work, drilling them on the questions….*
> *Because, we are a single session school, we go home at 2:30. We have ample time to slot in. Usually, in the second half of the year, we will focus more on the academics as it's nearer to the exams. So, we pushed a lot of core subjects into the timetable."*
> (Senior Assistant for Form Six, School 2)

For the form three and form five exam classes, the mathematics committee head said that she will adopt the method such as "*spot the questions. I mean like get the past year questions, get a few of the past year questions, let them be familiar with the questions. How the questions are asked in the exams and select*

some key words. In Maths, even though you may not understand the whole question, if certain key words appear, you will know what the solution is to solve the question."

The approach is also believed to be effective, especially if motivation is also provided to the students. According to the senior assistant for student affairs, "*Yes, it actually works. Especially giving the motivation to the exam class. We drilled them the questions. The questions that are familiar to them, and the questions that usually come out during exams. So that during exams, they are familiar with the questions as if they had done them before."*

Differentiated learning for different classes

In general, the teachers in this school tend to teach students differently in the first class from those in the weaker last classes. The inherent belief that those students in the last class lack motivation to study, or lack basic understanding to comprehend the subject, seemed to 'force' the teachers to use this different approach. According to the mathematics committee head, students in the last class will be asked to keep doing similar questions until they gained familiarity with the questions but, for the first class, she would try to complete the syllabus. This differentiated approach for the good and weak students is used extensively in the school, as agreed by the senior assistant for form six, "*For the good students, we just brush them up a little bit, and for the weaker ones, we would really drill them, we help them, especially on the techniques of answering the questions. Because, we know that, we are not hoping for As from these students, but we want them to pass, to get a good decent future after SPM*."

> *"I use different methods in teaching the first and last class. In the first class, you can go faster. They have no understanding problem, no language problem. They have no simple calculation problems so you can go fast. But for the last class, you have to go slower. And sometimes I will have to pick the important points for them, because there is a lot to cover. So, most of the time, it's the simple calculation for the last class. The problem solving, I will skip. For the last class, the students in the last class….how to say….even if you teach them the problem solving, they cannot really do it. They don't really understand."*
> (Mathematics Committee Head)

According to the senior assistant for student affairs, who also taught mathematics, she "*uses guided lessons…or what I sometimes do, I gave them basic questions, so that when they answered the questions, they get it right, it sort of encouraged them, that this subject is not that hard*." The teachers found that these 'small wins' helpful to motivate the students to improve. However, there is a conflict with slowing down and completing the syllabus. She adds that "i*f we continue to do like that, we won't be able to finish*

the syllabus. In PT3, the questions will ask from this until this...but if you continue on with just the basics only, you won't cover it. But it's actually better than nothing. That's what we think. The challenge is, when we do it this way, when the PPD come to observe, they will look whether we had covered the syllabus."

> *"I'm not teaching the syllabus. I cannot teach the syllabus. But . . . the Malaysian government requires me to teach the children on what they are going to be asked or be evaluated in their exams or written exams. So, I still have to go through the motion of it...much as they fail to understand what I am talking about. Their scores are all less than two digits. In most of their exams. Most of them."*
> (First Senior Assistant, School 2)

> *"We have to finish the RPT (The One-year Teaching Plan), the syllabus…I have not heard of the teachers who did not complete. We must. We have in RPT, per week, what are the topics, the details of the topics, and what topic we should teach by that week, that particular week. For example, this week is the 26th week of the year. So, in the RPT, we see and we should finish this topic, and all these sub-topics….[if cannot finish].. The solution is, you have to do extra classes, after school."*
> (Science Committee Head)

Teachers struggle to complete the syllabus while teaching students from the last class who are slow to learn and are perceived not to have a good learning attitude. The lack of interest may also be attributed to the students' weak comprehension of the subject matter and their inability to understand the lesson.

> *"We want to change their attitude, their studies…it's very hard. Not that they don't want to study, they listen to you, they ask you, but they are slow. Even the calculation table, they can't remember. 3x something…they are searching for their calculators."*
> (Senior Assistant for Student Affairs)

> *"Except for the first class, they are keen to study. The rest of the classes, there is no interest at all. They don't have the motivation to better themselves. Teachers are affected because we feel like we are teaching a wall. When we teach, they do not want to study, they just want to sleep, cause a ruckus in class or talk. They don't bring their books. And even if they want to study, it's a bit difficult as they are very green in the language… It's very frustrating. So, we teach English in Malay to at least get them to understand. We teach English in Tamil. I don't know about the Chinese teachers, whether they taught in Chinese. Some of the Chinese students are also very weak. This is how we adapt."*
> (English Committee Head)

Extra classes

Both the administrators and teachers do not believe that they could effectively provide extra classes for the weak students as the students would not attend classes after school hours. Hence, any intervention programmes or additional academic support would have to be conducted during school hours. Hand-outs and drills are usually given during these sessions.

> *"If you do extra classes, nobody comes. Nobody comes. They are not interested."*
> (First Senior Assistant, School 2)

> *"Even though I want to do the extra class for them, they don't want to stay back. Because they think the school hours are already very long for them. From 7:30 until 2:30, it's already long. If you want them to stay back, we will start the extra class from 3-4 pm, one hour. That's why they don't want to stay back. None of them."*
> (Mathematics Committee Head)

> *"Like, we give…not really like additional classes, because if we provide additional classes, nobody will come, only the teachers…the students won't come…so we put in the time-table, maybe one or two periods every week, for them to do…we just print out past year questions on all the modules, and we then give it to the students for them to do…during the class time. We force them to do. During holidays also, we gave it to them to do at home…but not all will return it."*
> (Senior Assistant for Student Affairs, School 2)

> *"We have extra programmes for them. For example, we have extra periods in class for certain core subjects. Because we have elective programmes and subjects, so we concentrate more on the subjects that would be taken in SPM for the exam. This is really to help the students. We gave them more work, drilling them on the questions."*
> (Senior Assistant for Form Six, School 2)

The school seemed to rely heavily on drilling students with past year questions or similar exercises to improve student achievement, with limited alternative intervention programmes. Just as the principal seemed to delegate the responsibility of improving the students' academic achievement to the administrators, the administrators also seemed to leave it to the teachers to conduct the necessary extra classes for their students. Both administrators and teachers do not seem to adopt any rigour in the tracking and monitoring of teachers' and students' performances. Teachers are left to determine the best approach based on their self-motivation. For example, the science committee head would provide small group discussion to interested students who may not understand the lessons taught during the regular class hour. However, she said that it was only attended by "*a few students, maybe 4 or 5 in a group. And we will give a small group discussion. Very few are willing to stay back. Most of them [are] not willing. Just a few, maybe in one class, they have a group of 6 or 7 persons*".

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Despite all this, according to the senior assistant for student affairs, there was a noticeable improvement in the SPM results for 2016 after the dip in 2015, which she attributed to the commitment of the teachers.

> *"Nothing much…like I told you just now, we print out module questions for the students. And because of that, maybe the spirit of the teachers teaching are different. They see the results, that bad, embarrassing…so they personally realised and take it upon themselves to improve…. Last year, we double it up. During holidays, we also did it. Before, on holidays, we didn't do it. The focus."*
> (Senior Assistant for Student Affairs, School 2)

> *".. Slightly improved. For this year's SPM results, slightly improved from last year. Got some improvement. SPM last year from 80% to 84%. 2-3% increased."*
> (Science Committee Head, School 2)

New pedagogy

The 21st century teaching approach (SPA-21), encouraged by the Ministry, does not seem to be practiced effectively in this school, especially for the science and mathematics subjects. The senior administrators also did not seem to share much about the initiatives, if any, that had been taken by the school to actively implement this approach. From the classroom observations, and the field observations, I observed that most teachers still resort to a chalk and talk approach, though outwardly, physically, classes are arranged with tables clustered together. Group work, which is the essence of this approach, is not being practised.

> *"Forming a group will not work. If within a group, they will talk nonsense and don't pay attention on the lesson as they are together with their friends. They are very talkative in class also. So, if we form a group and do the activities for them and carry on, it will be noisier and not all students are involved. So let's say, if there are 5 in a group, only 3 will be actively involved, and the other 2 will just sit there and do nothing.*
> (Mathematics Committee Head)

Teachers seemed to prefer the chalk and talk approach as it is familiar to them and, according to the mathematics committee head, "*if the students are not paying attention, we can observe the students talking and all…[The students] will know that the teachers will spot them and they cannot simply do what they want. They will have to focus.*" In addition, as the SPA-21 approach usually uses complementary online or PowerPoint materials that require the use of a computer and projector screen, the absence of this equipment, along with the low bandwidth, reduce the effectiveness of the teaching.

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Leadership Influence on Student Outcomes

This section discusses whether and how the school leaders influence student outcomes. Specifically, the direction set by the school leaders, and the influence that they have over the school, teachers and students, to yield positive student outcomes, will be explored in various dimensions. It will look specifically at how the leaders motivate and develop teachers to enhance their commitment, and improve the quality of teaching, leading to improved learning, by exploring classroom practices and teachers' approach to teaching.

<u>Influence on school leaders and the organisation</u>

The school has a history of principals serving an average of three years and a regular change in senior assistants. As such, the principal's influence on school leaders in this school may not be as distinct as in School 1.

Administrators and teachers seemed to agree that the recently retired principal exerted minimal influence on school leaders, particularly in academics. He is mostly seen as a leader who did not want to get involved in the daily operations of the school. He preferred instead to delegate most of his duties, especially in academics, to his senior assistants. According to the senior assistant for form six, "[the principal] *always said that he is not the academic type of person. And most of this, the…how do I say it….the academic workload, is passed on to us, the senior assistants*." He was seen as a do-it-yourself (DIY) principal who appeared to enjoy fixing and repairing the infrastructure of the school than to improve the students' academic outcomes. However, as noted by the science committee head, "*Of course what the teachers want is to bring up the percentage pass academically. Academically, we want the PT3 results and SPM results to become better.*"

> "He is a DIY principal. He likes to do things, all the repairing…"
> (Senior Assistant for Student Affairs, School 2)
>
> "I believed he was more of an outdoor type of person. He likes handiwork and likes to do things with his own hands…building things. He has contributed a lot, in terms of the school infrastructure but…ahh… I mean he is good with certain things and all, but for me, I wished he was more focused on academics."
> (Senior Assistant for Form Six, School 2)

In addition, he seemed to focus more on the administrative requirements of the school, such as completing the paperwork and filing requirements from the Ministry, rather than leading the school. As

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such, the first senior assistant remarked that one of the most significant contributions made by the recently retired principal was the filing system. She said that "t*he only one I noticed is the filing system, whereby, when the letters come through the school email, he insisted that all the letters need to be printed out and put into the respective files before he reads the letters, meaning for whose action."* Even though she was very new to the school and had less than six months working with the principal, this observation was also shared by other administrators, who felt that the strict adherence to the administrative and filing tasks may not be beneficial.

> *"It has actually given us more work, because for us, our focus is on teaching. That is our core, our core business. But when doing all these…filing…especially making the front cover and all…it's taking up a bit of our time to do that… To me, it's not really administrative work as all these could be given to the staff. That's why we have staff. But he wants us, the senior assistants, to be hands on."*
> (Senior Assistant for Form Six, School 2)

> *"The filing system here is very strict. Our file. The teachers have their lesson plans. He made sure we upload it, made sure we do it, made sure he signed it…"*
> (Senior Assistant for Student Affairs, School 2)

Two of the three senior assistants supporting the principal were relatively new to the school. The first senior assistant was recently transferred to the school, less than six months before his retirement. Her predecessor also served for only two years in the school before he was transferred out. The senior assistant for student affairs has only been in the school for just over two years. Only the senior assistant for form six has been with the school for a long time, more than 17 years, and has been in her role for the past six years. Hence, it can be observed that the school did not have a long-serving leadership team that could be tapped to follow through on any long-term school initiatives, with limited opportunity to harness the benefits and consistency that could be gained from it, as observed in School 1.

Without the principal's strong guidance and leadership, there appeared to be a lack of coordinated school-wide policies or initiatives. The administrators seemed to focus more on their own portfolio, or areas of responsibility, rather than overseeing the overall concerns of the students. For example, the senior assistant for form six referred mainly to the initiatives that she conducted for her form six students rather than the overall student population of the school. This became more apparent when the principal retired in March and the new principal only came in September. For a period of six months, the administration of the school was led by the new first senior assistant, assisted by the other two administrators and subject heads. Rather than continuing and adopting the 'culture' or practices set by the recently retired principal,

the administrators seemed keen to introduce new initiatives to improve the school, particularly in enforcing discipline among the teachers and a greater focus on academics to improve the school's performance.

> *"…in terms of leadership, he is…I would want him to be stricter. In terms of…ahmm…taking actions on the teachers, especially those who are problematic, with a lot of excuses and problems. For example, in terms of tardiness….in doing work and in coming late to school maybe. Sometimes, we do…we do have…emergencies that made us come to school kind of late…but this one is like second nature…the tardiness, those sorts of things. For me, I don't like all that."*
> (Senior Assistant for Form Six, School 2)

> *"For the previous principal, I don't see him patrolling the class. And then sometimes, he will take the students out that don't like to study, he will call the students out to help him in the workshop. So, I cannot say it's good or not good because he is the principal."*
> (Mathematics Committee Head)

Being new, the first senior assistant felt that she did not have the cooperation of the teachers as the teachers did not like her strict administration. She lamented, *"Because why? I come down hard on them. They don't like, nobody has told them what they are doing is wrong. Or what they are not doing is wrong. Nobody has told them that. They got away with murder all this while."* Therefore, she seemed to look out for herself more than for the welfare of the school. She added that, "t*he structure is not supporting me. And furthermore, I don't wish to stay on. I have planned for applying for an earlier retirement, by the end of the year, but then he went off on a…a…what you call that…on a retirement. And until now, there's no principal. Once there's a principal, I'll straight away put in. Not for retirement, I need to see my doctor for my knee problem."*

However, some of the teachers already noticed the positive effect from the first senior assistant's leadership. According to the mathematics committee head, "*I mean the current first senior assistant, she is quite ok. She is quite tough. She will talk directly to the teachers and to the students also. Very strict. We can see that the school is under control. She just came in this year…* [She has incorporated] *a lot of changes. In the system, the teachers' work progresses, she wants it on time."*

To facilitate the administration and implementation of the initiatives in the school, the senior assistants are assisted by the subject heads, who have their respective subject committee heads working with teachers to implement the programmes.   The science committee head and the mathematics committee head had just recently assumed their respective post (less than six months) as the previous mathematics

committee head requested to step down due to her teaching commitments, while the previous science committee head was transferred to another school.   Both the current science committee head and mathematics committee head were recently appointed by the first senior assistant. The new mathematics committee head has reservations about her leadership capabilities in leading the mathematics teachers in this school as she is not confident in her role yet. She commented that, "*I worry, because I'm at the same level with the teachers, sometimes when I comment, I also cannot comment directly to the teacher. Sometimes, can indirectly. Maybe not from me, but from the science and maths subject head as she is older. She is experienced and not like me, who is younger. I don't know, but maybe the teachers may be more comfortable if it's from the subject heads or from the senior assistants*." In stepping up to her role, she has not been groomed or given support by the subject head or the previous committee head.

The English committee head was also recently appointed to her role last year. Some of the challenges she faced were "t*ime constraints, too many programmes are running all at the same time. I hardly have time to do my core business of teaching.*" She appeared to be worn out and tired, and acted as a member of the disciplinary board. As the Ministry will be changing the current English syllabus, to adopt the Cambridge syllabus, the English committee head had been busy attending courses and meetings to learn about the new changes. She is also required to conduct in-house training to the school's English language teachers to prepare them on the implementation of the new curriculum. From her account, it seemed that the English committee head is directly held responsible for managing the overall programme, with little help and support from the school's administrators.

The first senior assistant had been working with the subject heads to improve on the school's academic performances and to introduce some new initiatives.

> "[The first senior assistant]…*She is more towards the academics. She will go through it with the subject heads. Whatever, she would like to do, she will talk to the subject heads and the subject heads will assign to us. .. when you have problems, you can always come to see her and approach her. You can tell her the problems you are facing in class, the issues, and discussed with her. Then she will be able to find the solutions and discuss with the teachers together.* "
> (Mathematics Committee Head)

Overall, the influence of the principal on the school leaders is minimal, with most disagreeing with his lack of focus on academic matters while practising strict enforcement on filing and administrative matters.

<u>Influence on teachers</u>

The school has a lot of experienced teachers. The survey, completed by more than one third of the school teachers, shows that more than 82% of the teachers have more than 5 years of teaching experience, with the majority (59%) having more than 10 years' experience (see figure 5.4, right pie-chart). The survey respondents' distribution seems aligned to the overall teachers' distribution, as according to the science committee head, "m*ost of the teachers in this school are quite experienced, having more than five years teaching experience with the majority close to 10 years."* Recently, the school received three new teachers to teach the mathematics and science subjects.

Data measuring how long the teachers had worked with the recently retired principal (see figure 5.4, left pie-chart) had to be interpreted carefully. As the recently retired principal had only served in the school for four years, the survey response from 23% of the teachers stating that they had worked with the current principal for more than 5 years was disregarded as it could not be true. Normalising the data to take into account the remaining respondents, half of the respondents worked with the recently retired principal for less than two years, and the other half, for more than two years.
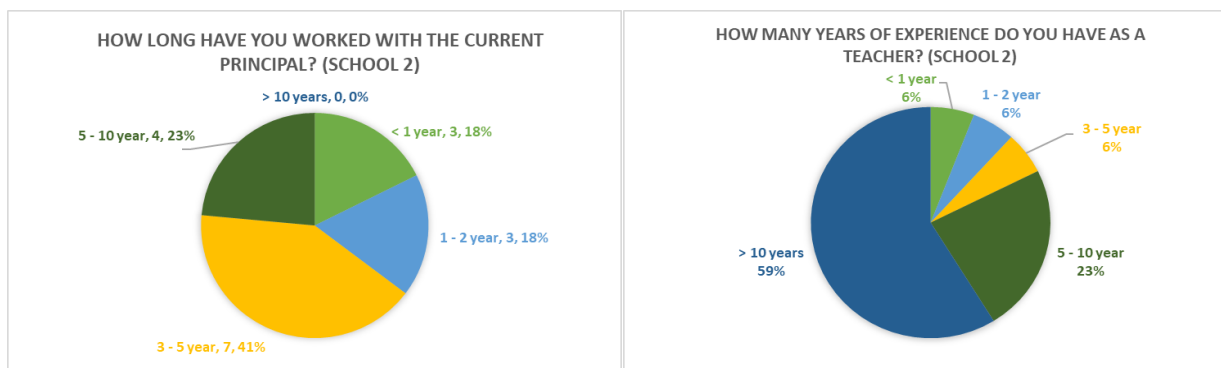
Source: Teacher's Survey 2017 – School 2

Figure 5.5: School 2's Survey Respondents' Teaching & Working Experience

The recently retired principal adopted a hands-off approach towards students' academic performance and delegated most of the tasks to his three senior assistants. The senior assistants are the ones who would develop plans and initiatives to encourage and instruct the teachers on how to improve students' performance. However, the teachers may not welcome the interventions or monitoring by the administrators as, according to the senior assistant for form six, "[the teachers] *are always thinking that we are trying to spy on them but we are not. We are just trying to improve the school system."*

In addition, there does not appear to be a coordinated effort by the administrators to manage and support the teachers to increase students' performance. According to the senior assistant for student affairs, "*at the staff meetings,* [the school leaders would just] *tell the teachers to do something for the weak classes.*" There were no specific details provided. It seemed that the teachers were expected to independently execute what they deemed to be the right approach suitable for their own respective classes, with little support or guidance from the administrators.   The science committee head seemed to concur. *"The teachers in this school are very independent. With low guidance from the administrators, we can still work. We fulfil our work and responsibilities, we teach, we go in class, we use whatever JPN and JPS want us to do, we do.*"

Teachers' discipline

Teachers' discipline was reported to be quite lax with the previous principal. According to the first senior assistant, she found him to be "*too lenient. He doesn't come down hard on the teachers and he doesn't come down hard on the staff.*" She added that some teachers would even seek permission to run their personal errands during school hours, for example, "*She wanted to see another teacher, why does she need to go during school hours?*" As such, in the absence of a principal, the first senior assistant had begun to enforce stricter guidelines on teachers requesting to leave during school hours.

> *"You know, they are so used to it. Ask permission, go out. Ask permission, go out. Cause I told them when I came here, if anything happens, and you don't fill in the book and I don't sign, don't say I don't want to help you if there is an accident because I'm not told that you are out of the school. I am not going to vouch for the fact that you left the school, I'm not going to vouch for the fact that you were in school and that you left with my permission. Sorry, I'm not going to do that. So now, they are a bit scared, some of them."*
> (First Senior Assistant, School 2)

Teachers' commitment and challenges

Overall, teachers in this school struggle to find satisfaction from teaching the students. As the first senior assistant, who taught English, remarked, "t*here is no sense of satisfaction because these people have no need to want to learn English. They feel they don't need the language, they don't understand why I keep telling them that English is so important…I no longer have the passion because of this kind of environment you put me in. I no longer have the passion.*" She observed that most of the teachers are not motivated and "*very few of them are committed.*"

> *"I think teachers overall…most of the teachers here are very dedicated. It's really sad that we have children, students like this. The new batch, the ones that just graduated, are very different. They don't have a sense of responsibility to their job."*
> (English Committee Head)

The apparent contradiction between teachers' lack of commitment, and their dedication, may be explained by the challenging student context. The teachers had to motivate themselves, especially when teaching students from the last class, coping as best as they could. They do not seem to get much encouragement or motivation from the principal or senior leaders.

> *"For me myself, I sometimes feel demotivated also. When you have prepared, ready to teach, then you come to the class, you enter, you see them sleeping, and you have to wake them up. Some of them are tired, they are working, they are tired…some play truant…"*
> (Senior Assistant for Student Affairs, School 2)

> *"As I said, we have to motivate ourselves outside. It's very sad, but this is the reality for schools having this sort of students."*
> *(English Committee Head)*

Overall, the teachers are perceived to adopt a passive culture rather than a proactive culture of trying to find solutions to the problem, and thus seem to lack commitment.

> *It's not like* [the teacher] *can't do anything, it's more like I don't want to do anything. Correct or not? It's too much of an effort to want to do something. That's why I say, Don't ask, don't do… The culture here is evasive. Don't talk, don't do. Don't ask."*
> (First Senior Assistant, School 2)

One task that seemed to be the bane for most teachers was the immaculate filling process that the retired principal insisted on, which appeared to be his most 'significant' contribution. The principal did not appear to focus on the content but more on the appearance and formatting. According to the senior assistant for form six, "[the principal] *just gave us a template, then told us to create it, edit it and show it to him. Then you will be like…doing it…then ahh…uhh..you will be so caught up with doing it, because he wanted it to be done."*

Teachers' relationships
There are mixed views on the relationships and cooperation among teachers in the school. According to the English committee head, the teachers are quite "c*lannish. Malays among Malays. Chinese with Chinese.",* with cross-mixing only when necessary for work purposes. Being an Indian who speaks English

only, this feeling of 'clannish' seemed to arise from the teachers speaking their own mother tongue. "*I speak to everyone. But then again, when you sit together with 3 Chinese teachers, they start to speak in their language, and you feel left out…. It doesn't impact us working together because we don't 'anti' them, we don't 'anti' them because of all this. But if there is a task to be performed, and she is my partner, we work."*

However, the science committee head claimed that cooperation among the teachers was one of the "*best things here. Compared with my previous school, I'd say that the relationships among the teachers here are really good. Sometimes, we got personal issues. And we need to attend a course, and we have no one to care for our children, the teachers here would be willing to babysit for you so that you can attend your course. We would not be able to get this kind of sibling relationship even among our friends."*

However, good relationships among teachers were apparent for those long-serving teachers. Some teachers, especially those from the minority race, tend to feel left out (when the teachers speak in their own mother tongue) and the relationships tend to be formal rather than close. There seemed to be two major groupings, the older, more experienced teachers and the younger, recently graduated teachers.

> "*Good practices…hmmm….in the classroom…in the school….We have, how do you say….cooperation. I did mention that it's not so easy to get some teachers to cooperate, right? But there are some teachers who have been in this school for 17 years, just like me…same batch. For me, the relationship is really close. We have been here for ages, right? So, when there are emergencies, and we have problems and we need to swap classes and all that, it's easier to get it done. Shall we say that there's a buddy system in place. Everyone chipped in to help."*
> (Senior Assistant for Form Six, School 2)

For science, the teachers seemed to work well, and were self-guided, with little guidance from the principal or administrators.

> "*We work together. In the Science panel, we work together. We do help each other, sharing materials and we do LADAP in our internally, inside our panel. Extra from our compulsory LADAP in school. We stayed back a lot. We stayed back a lot…. We make the decisions ourselves and be firm. But then after all, we still need permission from the principal to sign, like if we need to buy new materials, buy books and others, we must refer to the principal too as the last person."*
> (Science Committee Head, School 2)

Teachers' performance and development
Similar to School 1, teachers are required to attend 10 days of mandatory training courses in a year, known as the LADAP. LADAP is a course that must be taken by all the teachers, to enhance their teaching (PdPc)

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or the curriculum or their teaching techniques.   The administrators would usually have a schedule of all the planned courses for the year to be shared with the teachers. One noteworthy course introduced by the principal, and led by the school counsellors, was the house visit to low performing students with disciplinary problems to directly learn about the students' home environment so that teachers could reach out more effectively to them.

The principal constantly challenged his teachers to do things on their own. He seemed to encourage innovation and encourages that in both his teachers and students. According to the senior assistant for form six, "h*e likes us to be more creative, more innovative, not just buy ready made goods from outside."* However, this has been met with mixed responses from the administrators and teachers, as doing things by themselves required the teachers to spend more time, more importantly time away from teaching, which impacted on the students' academic performance.

> *"For the recently retired principal, he is…hmmm…what do you use to describe him? Ok…hardworking. Diligent. He will do things like we would not have tried before in our teaching profession, but he would make us do that. He would make us try something new. For example, his passion is in construction, tools, construction. If you see the landscape, that's him…his idea. And then, he won't do it by himself. He will ask each and every teacher here to do it together. Teachers felt very stressed …"*
> (Science Committee Head)

The first senior assistant felt that the previous principal did not do enough to monitor and observe the teachers, to improve their classroom performance. He left the responsibility solely with his three senior administrators. The senior assistant for form six agreed that "w*e always monitor them. We will check their weekly teachings, and programmes…yeah… correct….observations in class, we make our rounds….that is our constant monitoring."* The teachers and administrators felt that the recently retired principal was usually seen in the office, and hardly came out to patrol the school.

> *"I would say that constant monitoring is a must, and class control by the teachers. You cannot just let the students sleep in class. We didn't tell them to work part-time, it's their choice. But, in school, you just need to tell them to just focus. You cannot just let the child sleeping in class to continue sleeping."*
> (Senior Assistant for Form Six, School 2)

Teachers' observation and monitoring had become a necessity, particularly since the District Education Office (PPD) frequently audited and observed the teachers due to the low performance of the school. At the time of the data collection, in June 2017, PPD had already been twice to observe the teachers, particularly for the science and mathematics subjects.

> *"For Science, last year and this year, we have lots of people who came and observed us. From JPS, PPDs, Nazirs..maybe because the % passed was about 70%. Maybe for other subjects, we have 80…90%..maybe not so urgent or important. But for science, it's 70+… considered quite low…not that low. That's why they came and observed, how the teachers teach, what materials they used, and what techniques. Sometimes they sent somebody from PPD or JPS to help us, to show, like a demo on how to teach and we learned from that. We have extra LADAP for that, extra courses. We learnt and we tried to apply it in our class."*
> (Science Committee Head)

Teachers' performance is assessed by the senior administrators, with minimum involvement from the recently retired principal.

> *"But for those teachers' performance, it's given by the administrators. Our administrators understand the situation and the classes that the teachers took, so it won't just be assessed based on the students' performance. They will also look at the potential of the teachers. Not just squarely on the students' performance. Otherwise, we will be finished."*
> (Science Committee Head)

> *"For my side, I think he* [the principal] *performed better in others than the academics. Errr…like the workshop stuffs, repairing spoilt things…he is more interested in this rather than helping the teachers and the students. Even though we have meetings, he seldom talked about the academics, the challenges we faced, what we need to do to overcome it, as our results keep on dropping. He never emphasise on this. Not in detail. It's very general like take the paper and show us the results and the teachers have to do something. He does not work with the teachers to find the solution. He likes the outdoor things rather than the academics."*
> (Mathematics Committee Head)

Influence on students

The principal did not seem to take an interest in the students' welfare and, particularly, in improving the school's weak academic performance. He delegated most tasks to his senior assistants and focused more on repairing the school's infrastructure, and other targeted initiatives, as he deemed fit. One of the main challenges faced is in educating a high percentage of academically weak students, from an economically and socially challenging context, who also lack the interest in learning, without the strong leadership from the principal. The lack of alignment with the principal's objectives among his administrators seemed to cause an underlying dissatisfaction that may compromise the ability and commitment to make a positive impact on the students.

"Looking at what my ex-boss did, he didn't really [want to] be with the students. He didn't really get close to the students. So, because of that, it's really unfortunate, that some of the students don't really know him. Because of all the work he delegated to us, the students seemed to see more of us, than him. Academically, yes. But even in formal functions, he would, he wouldn't always be there. So, he didn't really make an impact on the students, which I believe he should have."
(Senior Assistant for Form Six, School 2)

"He has made the school environment better. But in terms of students' welfare and achievement, he seldom cared about it. The students' welfare is left to the senior assistant for student affairs."
(Mathematics Committee Head)

Students' motivation to learn

As the administrators and teachers seemed to feel overwhelmed by the challenging student context, there seemed to be mixed views about either trying to do the best for the students or leaving them by themselves. They had to tap into their moral conscience, and their reason for being an educator, especially, as remarked by the senior assistant for student affairs, she will *"look at the students…what if they are my children? If others did that to your child, and don't teach them, how do you feel? We do our best, we do what we can do…for the sake of that is your job."*

"You see, you see…and this, this problem happens to a lot of school in Malaysia where the underprivileged students and the poor students, not poor in monetary-wise, not poor in material, but poor in knowledge, suffer. Most schools just leave them to their own devices. You take care of yourself. I got no time for you. After all, you are not interested in studying. So why should we waste our resources?"
(First Senior Assistant, School 2)

"We get demotivated. Personally, for me, in class, if there is no motivation in my class, I will…I won't do anything. I won't want to force them. If they don't want to learn, I will then just leave them be."
(Science Committee Head)

For the teachers to have a positive influence on the students, they seemed to require the cooperation and support from the students to learn. The school leaders relied on the teachers to self-motivate, and find their own approach to reach out to the students, which seemed like a delegation of tasks from the administrators directly to the teachers. There seemed to be a high focus on the circumstances, with a belief that the teachers' successes are largely due to the students' willingness and attitude to learn, thus absolving the teachers from being proactively committed to identify effective intervention programmes. As there is a significant difference in the attitude of students in the first and last class, the teachers may

be more likely to concentrate teaching the first class, where their efforts are appreciated, rather than educating the weaker students in the last class, as an approach to motivate themselves and to cope with the challenges.

> *"Only when a child is willing to learn and there is interest and they are motivated, we also feel motivated to take them further. Maybe it's 60-40. Our work is probably the 60 to 70%, they have to give us the 40 to 30%. …* [In reality now], *the teachers sometimes had to beat their chest. Because we talked and talked and talked, and no response. We came here to teach, we love teaching."*
> (English Committee Head)

> *"That's why it's hard for them to pass. And when we conduct classes on the technique to answer, well…they don't bring their books, not interested. It's those from the last class. How do you conduct revision with them then? They don't even bring their notes from the start. At mid-term, their books are also lost. Very hard. For those good classes, they go for tuition and then, when the school has activities or speakers who came, they would attend. The PTA will be willing to pay for the speakers to come. For the good classes, it helps. I mean, there's not much we need to think about."*
> (Science Committee Head)

> *"They have a problem with their understanding also. For maths, they have to read through the questions and then do the calculation part. The part of the understanding for them is very weak. So, if they are weak in the understanding, it's very hard for them to proceed to the calculation part."*
> (Mathematics Committee Head)

Incentives to learn

To incentivise the students to learn, individual teachers provide recognition or reward for top students. This does not appear to be a school-wide coordinated approach as it seemed to arise from the teachers own initiatives, and at their own expense.

> *"Like my class, the top students, I always give an award. In my class for English. I don't give them a piece of paper. I give them something that they want. I, I, I…give them…ermm…booklets, little diaries, or notebooks. I give them a mug, a tumbler, water tumbler, something that they can use, I give them pencil box."*
> (First Senior Assistant, School 2)

The recently retired principal, with the support from the school counsellors, had introduced a programme called "Loving Prayers" three years ago in 2014, with the objective to provide the teachers with first-hand experience on the home environment and background of the weak students to effectively reach out to them.

> *"We have this one called the "Loving Prayers". Each teacher, in pairs, are assigned to a student. Weak students are targeted, and we are supposed to visit them at their house to meet them and their parents and to discuss their studies, their problems. We did that for two years. It was started by* [the recently retired principal]*.*
> (English Committee Head)

As the majority of the low performing students are from the lower income group, the economic and social context could be main factors that inhibit their learning capabilities. The house visit aimed to provide teachers with the opportunity to learn personally about the home conditions of the lower income students. This initiative is led by the counsellors who identified the respective students residing within the same area and assigned teachers, who go in pairs, to the identified homes. Each teacher is assigned to two students. This programme is structured as one of the mandatory LADAP courses that teachers had to attend in a year. The students' name list is extracted from the discipline board, the senior assistant from student affairs, and from the counsellors. The focus is on students with disciplinary problems, and from a poor background, so that the teachers would be able to identify their specific needs.

> *"From this activity, we found that the environment where they* [the students] *stayed is really bad. That's why they like to come to school…Then, we found out, that some students are very, very poor. Myself and the other teacher, we go. Two people as a pair. So, we have to go to 4 houses. The 4 places we went, the flats around here, we went in, I still remembered when we went in, the flats had no electricity. No electricity. So, we found out that the family was very poor. Living in darkness and hot. So, we tried to help them. We tried to give them electricity. Trying to help but the parents said don't want. They want to do it by themselves."*
> (School Counsellor)

> *"We have this programme where teachers identify houses or students where we feel we need to…errr….well…ok. It's a programme initiated by our counsellors whereby teachers, especially the form teachers, we go and visit our children…students….home. Just to get to know more about them, their life after school. So, we did that. We didn't do it this year, we did it last year. I think we did it for the last two to three years. We just need to understand more, why our students are such…Maybe, for some teachers, they want to see those students who are always absent from school, just to find out, just to learn more….so that we can actually find out and help them in school why they are as such.*
> (Senior Assistant for Form Six, School 2)

> *"I think, last year or last few years, we have LADAP where we go to our selected students' houses. We select the students, with low performance and low motivation, we select them. Two teachers go to each student's house, we went there and investigate and visit, ask questions to their parents or guardians and ask them what problems do they have at home. Then only we could see, "Oh actually, they have so many problems". One of the problems is [having a]working mum and dad and not being home for quite some time, the children don't have a time-table or schedule. They don't know what to do. So they just sleep. No one asked them to do anything…. There's not much we can do. We*

> *can't help much because of the way they live like this, their parents and their upbringing of their families are like that. We could only advise."*
> (Science Committee Head)

Through this programme, the teachers were able to better appreciate the environment the targeted group of students came from. However, even with the greater understanding and empathy achieved between the teachers and the students, the teachers still felt that they were limited on what they could do for the students to help turn around the situation. In addition, the lack of follow-up and discipline caused the programme to be quite short lived. The programme only ran for a year, rather than the initially intended two years, as the school was focusing on various other initiatives. According to the counsellor, "a*s we had another focus, so my HM said, we can do this every alternate year. By right, this year we had to do, but we didn't do. 2016, we were supposed to do. But because we had a very big project, Malaysia Book of World Records, so, after that, we do, do, do….we also forgot. This year, we had the Resource Centre competition for Drug Prevention at the National level. We represent Selangor, so we were also kept busy, and we forgot."* However, it's also interesting to note that the English committee head and the senior assistant for form six seemed to perceive that the programme ran for more than a year as noted in their remarks above.

As such, the overall impact on teachers and students was, at most, short-lived. As noted by the counsellor, "m*aybe for a short while. We discussed about the problems we are facing, with them in the class not being attentive. We discussed. But I think it's a very temporary measure. The parents around this area, they have no time. They worked from morning till night. They have no time to supervise their children, their whereabouts, their studies. It's very difficult. I can understand what the parents are going through*."

Another measure undertaken by school leaders to 'motivate' the students to come to school is to resort to warning letters and threats of expulsion from the school. The first senior assistant said that, *"we talked about trying to encourage the students to come to school, we sent out a lot of warning letters that if they don't come in 30 days, we will expel them."* However, according to the school counsellor, though the disciplinary board may threaten to expel problematic students, the board usually provided students with ample opportunity to correct their actions as the intention was to 'encourage' the student to attend school. So far, she only knew of 10 disciplinary cases (excluding absenteeism) where the students were expelled from school. Even though they are expelled, the student could still appeal to the District Education Office for reinstatement. The school counsellor believed that the window of opportunity, for school leaders and teachers to make an impact on the students, occurs when they are in form two.

"Start from form two. Form one, they are still very innocent. The critical year is form two. If in form two, we really can help them, form three, form four and form five, no problem. So, if in form two we really cannot help them, most of the time, they would be expelled at the end of form two or form three."
(School Counsellor, School 2)

Holistic student development

The recently retired principal focused on driving non-academic initiatives to provide greater recognition for the school. According to the senior assistant for student affairs, "[the principal]…*because he knows the level of the students here, even if you aim so high, in the end you will be very frustrated because they cannot achieve."* As the school leaders and teachers seemed to be struggling to motivate the low-performing students to improve academically, this non-academic initiative provided another avenue to motivate these students to improve holistically.

"He tried to build the students' 'sahsiah'. 'Sahsiah' is more to the build-up of the students, the discipline of the students. The morale of the student. That is 'sasiah'.
…because we knew that the students came from this kind of background, so we tried to build up this good sahsiah, this good behaviour, all the good habits…so that when they have a good sasiah, maybe they will try".
(Senior Assistant for Student Affairs, School 2)

"Yes, I believe more needs to be done, and need to be done more. It doesn't always need to be academic, because not everyone is academically good. You know, those soft-skills, you know like, public speaking, letting the students gain confidence with themselves. So they are comfortable with who they are and what they have."
(Senior Assistant for Form Six, School 2)

"but like what the teachers faced in class, err…we have students who didn't want to improve themselves even though we have given so much of attention, so much of resources we have provided, and then they are…the ones who caused our failing rates to be high. It comes from this group of students who do not want to change. They still want to come to school, but they didn't want to study. So, the principal focused on other areas so that the school is not seen as too 'small', we also have our other achievements besides academics that we could not push much, we have co-curricular activities that we excel. In sports also, there are a couple of events that we won at the district level, in softball, in football. These are our other achievements."
(Science Committee Head)

Initiatives from the principal tended to focus on extra co-curricular activities as a source of school pride. His most successful initiative before his retirement was constructing the 3D quotations along the wall of the school which made it to the Malaysian Book of Records. This initiative involved both the students and the teachers alike.

> "[The principal's most important contribution]…*I think it was what he did on the wall…the quotes. It was a joint effort between the teachers and the students. He took the academic time to do it.*"
> (English Committee Head)

> "*This is one of the programmes he did where he managed to get the teachers and the students to work together. This is really one good thing about him, he actually had that problem before he retired, where everybody worked together so that we are able to have this on the Malaysia Book of Records…we are actually in the Malaysia Book or Records for the wall with the most quotations, if you notice the quotations. That's actually his initiative.*"
> (Senior Assistant for Form Six, School 2)

The principal stressed teamwork as one of the important benefits for the initiatives that he introduced, along with the hands-on experience from performing the task itself. His aspiration, it seemed, was to help students to develop a skillset.

> "Teamwork. He, [the principal], *very much stressed on teamwork. Anything that you want to do, you need to do as a team. Like the recent one that we did for the Malaysian Book of Records, we gather all the students, the teachers, when we do this activity, you can feel it, the togetherness.*"
> (Senior Assistant for Student Affairs, School 2)

> "*Positive benefits like the teamwork, and also the hands-on experience that you will not get in a book or in class…like outdoor activities…*[Relationships with teachers and students].. *It gets better and [we] have lots of memories on the wall. There are so many stories behind to finish the wall. It took three months.*"
> (Science Committee Head)

Although the principal's non-academic initiatives provided benefits, such as greater teamwork and understanding between the teachers and students, some teachers also felt that the time and effort taken compromised their time for teaching and added unnecessary stress on them. Administrators and teachers seemed to agree that the low performing students, who are mostly from the low-income group from Malay-Indonesian descent, prefer to be in involved in non-academic work like extra co-curricular activities, or helping the principal perform repair works around the school. However, the teachers may still find the lack of academic focus to be an issue. As noted by the mathematics committee head, "y*es, they enjoy. They find it very enjoyable. Like doing the gardening, the artwork. It's enjoyable for them doing all these kinds of things. But in school, well…if you are the Officer, will you accept this? I don't know.*" One of the reasons cited was that the students could use this 'work' as an excuse to not be in class and the teachers would not be able to validate whether the students were assisting the principal or not.

The school leaders also tried to instil good practices among the students. According to the English committee head, "w*e tried, we always stressed on good behaviours, helping the teachers, respectful. We have the merit system, where you helped the teacher, not just carry the books for the teacher, but you go out of your way, like carry her bags, and teacher is doing something and you stayed back to help the teacher. We have a merit system, where if the teachers felt that this student is pretty good, we give them points."* This is mostly targeted towards the students from the last class who may not like to study, but prefer to do physical jobs.

The school also has a programme known as the Caring Teacher, where every Friday, assigned teachers would go outside the gate to welcome the students. According to the school counsellor, "s*ome students, they just come in, and never greet the teachers. If we want to achieve 100% what we would like to get, it's very difficult. But, for me, if we can get 70%, it's very good already."* Significantly, the school leaders and principal do not greet the students daily, but only on Friday as required by the programme.

Counselling and motivational programmes
The school has two counsellors to address the students' needs. These counsellors developed the leadership programmes to build the confidence of the students. The teachers select the students to be involved in these programmes. However, these leadership programmes only seemed to benefit a small group of students (around 50 students), and usually the best and most promising students. According to the English committee head, the programmes are usually targeted towards students "*who have shown initiatives and put in the effort - the ones who want to learn*". These students would be sent to attend outside courses sponsored by colleges like SEGI or Taylor's college, or the motivational programmes run by the counselling teachers.

> *Like we did, the leadership programme for the students, we did to train the students. Recently, last week, I did. Before, we sent them to Inti College. We give them the leadership camp in Inti College. When they come back, we noticed that they are more motivated. It's a one-day event. Last week, I have a leadership programme. It's called the leaders-train-leaders. I planned the programme but the facilitators are from my club, the peer counsellors. 15 of them run the whole activities, for the 50 students. Form 4 students are the leaders, and the students are the form two and form four students….. This is a one-day event, and yes,* [the first senior assistant] *allows us to run it during the class time. If you asked them to come on Saturdays, it will be very difficult. So, it's from 7:30 am to 3:00 pm….. Actually, we are supposed to give them the assessment form. But the teacher in-charge never did so. I will give it later, after the event."*
> (School Counselor, School 2)

Similar programmes for the more 'problematic' and low-performing students do not appear to be available.   In addition, as these programmes are conducted during school hours, it also took away the lesson time for the students involved.

Students with disciplinary problems are usually referred to the counsellors for counselling session. Most of the problems faced are usually personal. According to the counsellor, "s*o, if disciplined, the students are not interested to study. They are a bit naughty. Coming late. Play truant. All these, we cannot help. We can't really help them because the parents also cannot help them. Their parents also cannot control them. They don't want to come into the school. Once they didn't come into the school, we really cannot do anything*."   The counsellors in the school do not have measurable targets to gauge the success of their counselling sessions, as they believe that, "*counselling will take a long way. It's a process. It takes time to process and give the student the awareness. Sometimes, maybe during school time, they do not. But, after they finished their studies, and they go outside, maybe there will be something that will influence them*." The students also usually promised to change but tend to forget the commitment made.

The counsellors provided psychometric tests, such as the Interest Test, to assess the students' interest in a certain career, and a personality test from the Examinations Board to identify their interests and preferences. These tests are administered from form one to form five, and data from this could be used to design initiatives to reach out to the students, especially those low-performing students who may not be academically inclined. The counsellors used this information to plan for the Career Day, where colleges are invited to present a career talk at the school. This talk is mostly targeted at the form five students, so they will know what course to select after their SPM. However, this also tends to ostracise those lower-income students who may not be able to afford a college education.

> *"But sometimes, the students, like my Career Talk, some students are the more academic type, if you asked them to come down and see the demo, they don't like. If we call a speaker to come and talk to the students about the courses, if it's the academic-type, they are interested. They like the information like that.   But for those hands-on ones, they don't like it. So, it's 50-50. We need to strike a balance. Sometimes, for these students, we have to keep repeating the same thing, to talk to them. "*
> (School Counselor)

Overall, the school leaders do not seem to coordinate initiatives with the counsellors to effectively address the low academic performance, or to develop the students' interest, as none of them referenced this as a source to introduce initiatives for the low-performing students. This could be due to the lack of clear objectives or guidance from the principal or the senior administrators. It seemed that the work performed

by the counsellors may be in isolation from the overall teaching faculty, as the counsellors are not invited to the leadership meetings.

Influence on parents

Most of the parents are not affluent even though they live close to an affluent neighbourhood. According to the senior assistant for form six, most (as high as 80%) of the students have parents who *"really need to work hard to make a living."* They are unable to attend PTA meetings as they "*would have restrictions or limitations on working, even on weekends."* She also observed that "*they are not so well educated so they don't really understand the system, in a way*." As mentioned earlier, the administrators seemed to have different views about the number of low-income students in the school, that range from as high as 80% to a low of 20%.

Most parents from the neighbourhood chose not to send their children to this school due to the school's poor reputation. In addition, as the school is earmarked to be a junior college, whereby it will only admit form six students, parents are also doubtful about sending their children there.

> *"*[Parents from this neighbourhood don't send their children here] *because they know already that this school's performance is not good. So, some parents are very choosy. They will look at the school first. If the school's reputation is not good, they will not come here. But of course, some of them have no choice. In standard six, they need to apply. And PPD will determine which school they go in to. If they are not satisfied with the school, they can appeal and transfer their children to other school. So, initially the enrolment can be quite a lot, but later the parents apply for transfer to transfer their children out of this school…, because other [nearby] schools, their reputations are quite ok, so majority of Chinese students transferred out. And now, the students also know that this school is going to close down, their parents also know about that, so they also transferred their children out. Because they would think that they would be lack of teachers. So, for next year, there will be no more form one, so the form one teachers will be redeployed. There will be fewer teachers in this school.*
> (Mathematics Committee Head)

The school's Parents Teachers Association (PTA) seemed to be relatively small. There are only 14 active members, including a class teacher and the senior assistant for form six. However, the senior assistant for form six noted that the members "*are very committed…and they are very generous in their contribution. We have this programme where we give incentives to students to improve their performance."* The senior assistant for student affairs added that the PTA provides cash incentives to

encourage the students to improve. "[The PTA] *give them cash if the students improved…especially the last class. Just improved, not even passed. If lots of improvement, they give them. Just give them cash*."

However, as noted by the senior assistant for student affairs, it was difficult to reach out effectively to parents, particularly those of the low-performing students, or those with disciplinary problems, as these parents would typically not be available. Middle-class parents, who are supportive of the school's programme and would attend the PTA, are usually parents of good students.

> *"…the Chinese…the Chinese are ok. Their parents are very supportive. The Malays, where their parents are working in the company…they are ok. The family background is good. The parents that usually come to school, these are the parents of the good students. There is no problem with them. These are the parents that are willing to help…so we did not really meet our purpose. The ones we want them to come, they don't come.* [Referencing a nearby school], *that school is quite the same with this school…but their enrolment is much bigger. They have 800+ but more than half their parents are not from this* [low-cost flat] *area. But here, the majority are from this area. But here, there are no questions [during the PTA meetings]. So very fast end. Very fast. They don't know what to ask."*
> (Senior Assistant for Student Affairs, School 2)

The school organised an annual report card day to meet with parents and to provide feedback on their children's performance. The report cards would not be given if the parents did not attend. In recent years, the results can be viewed online but this may not be helpful for those uneducated parents, as the majority are from the low-income group, so they may not know how to access the results online.

> *"Now, even if the parents don't come, they can also see the results as you can view the results online now. But not all the parents will be able to do that. Educated parents ok, but if not educated, they don't even know how to use the computer so how can they view the results? This is usually for those very, very poor families."*
> (Mathematics Committee Head)

Overall, the school leaders seemed to have limited success in reaching out and influencing the parents, especially those from the lower income groups, due to their work commitments and lack of time to take an active interest in their children's performance.

Leadership Styles

This section presents insights on how leadership practices are connected to changes in school organisation and, subsequently, to changes in students' learning. In addition, it also examines the various leadership

styles employed by school leaders to learn which styles are effective or ineffective in improving student outcomes in this school.

Past leadership legacy

The school has had seven principals, with the majority having a short tenure of typically one or two years. This is usually due to the principal being posted to this school when they were already close to their mandatory retirement age of 60. The seventh principal, who has recently retired, was the only male principal.

As noted in the discussion of school context, the third principal seemed to stand out in terms of her leadership skills and her contribution to the school. As the only Chinese principal, and the longest serving principal, who served for five years from 2002 to 2007, she was focused on improving the school's academic performance and actively monitored the teachers and students. She was strict with the teachers and managed to improve the school's discipline, performance and reputation.

> *"She was very strict. But they all said that the Chinese HM was very good. In the academic side . . . the management was very good. According to what I heard from the senior teachers, she was very hard working. Every morning, she would be patrolling the classrooms. The teachers would not realise. If she noticed anything that is not right, in the meeting, she would point to the teacher in front of others, the mistake that the teacher made. Maybe for the teacher, she will not be happy. But for the others, it will serve as a warning. They would make a mental note that for them, in their classroom, they need to do this and that, teach well, to avoid being made an example. She also made sure that the teachers entered the classroom on time. If not on time, she would call the teacher. She was very strict."*
> (Mathematics Committee Head)

The fourth principal seemed to continue the effort of monitoring the teachers. According to the science committee head, "s*he is the kind who will walk around and see how the teachers teach. She is very involved. In the meetings, she always wants to be present. Unlike* [the recently retired seventh principal], *he would not like to be involved. He would just leave it to his teachers to do everything. He would be OK with whatever outcomes from his teachers."* While the third principal was strict, according the to the mathematics committee head, the fourth principal focused more on the students' welfare and was "*a very kind principal, who's so kind until she is being bullied by the students... She is more the kind that keeps on advising the students, rather than taking any action."* The science committee head added that the

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fourth principal was fortunate to have a senior administrator who emulated and complemented her style and, together, they had been effective in governing the school.

The fifth principal, who only served for one year at the school, also continued monitoring the teachers actively. According to the mathematics committee head, the fifth principal would "*patrol the class, go behind the classroom, observe the teachers. Talk to the teachers. When she has the time, she will always go to the classrooms. The teachers won't know ahead of time. She will go directly to the teachers if she has anything to share. So, it's better. At least with this, the teachers would know that, if they go into the classroom, they must teach the students.*" Unfortunately, this principal had not been able to make her mark on student outcomes due to her very short tenure.

Active teachers' monitoring seemed to stop with the sixth principal who served for only two years. According to the mathematics committee head, the sixth principal had an unpleasant and perceived biased observation practice, where she would be observing the teachers discreetly. She would evaluate the teachers informally based on their current job position and formal job responsibilities, not from classroom observations. She would submit her yearly evaluation of the teachers to the Ministry at the end of the year, based on her informal judgments, without any feedback from the teachers themselves. The mathematics committee head felt that this lack of transparency provided a lot of room for bias as "y*ou will only know your results by the end of the year. So on the marks that she gave, it was according to the posts. So, if you hold a normal post, so that will mean your marks will be lower than others. It's like our duties, besides teaching, our other responsibilities, like Cleanliness Teacher and committee members….etc. Well, whether fair or not fair, we had no chance to voice out. As she did not see us personally, and she didn't ask us what we carried out, what were out duties, what did we do this year, what had we done for the students, what did we do for this school, not even have the chance to voice out... I mean at the end of the year, she will not call you. She will not ask what you had done, what areas for improvement…she never listened to all of this.*"   She felt that the judgment was unfair "b*ecause sometimes, when you don't hold any post, it does not mean or reflect your results.   I can be holding many posts, but I may not be doing anything. Or I can hold lesser posts, and I may be doing the best for each.*" However, the English committee head found that the sixth principal focused on academics. *"She was not long with us, only for a year. She implemented a lot of programmes to bring up our SPM and at that time, PMR results. And we did, our percentage did go up. But she was only with us for one year. So, she was just scratching the surface before she got a transfer. She asked for a transfer and she got a transfer…. It*

was specific programmes for form three and form five. All those extra exercises and extra classes. Her efforts, unfortunately, were not carried on by the recently retired seventh principal.

The seventh principal did not seem to continue the practices and approaches such as a keen focus on the academic performance of the school, and active and strict monitoring of the teachers and students. He preferred to delegate these tasks to his senior administrators.

> *"Most of them were females before. Only recently, we had a male principal, [*the seventh principal]. *For lady bosses, they are very fussy. They wanted something solid…you can't do any hanky panky. Very detailed. Got to be punctual. It's better for the organization like this…can work better. And we also feel that we are very disciplined. I prefer this kind more. It's OK that you are firm and strict, don't be like the recent one, where it's quite relaxed. There were many decisions where we had to use our opinions. "How do we do this? Never mind, we will try first".*
> (Science Committee Head)

Current practices

The teachers' survey findings show that the common practices of the school include frequent compromises and considerations. However, some also found that the leaders are "*always giving orders to the teachers but lack follow-up actions*", and seemed to be using their authority to push through changes that are needed to rectify problems. A majority of the survey respondents found that the most effective leadership practices are those where the leaders showed appreciation for the teachers' efforts and contributions, being firm and committed, leading by example and being *"able to identify the students' strengths and weaknesses and encourage them to enquire and ask during class".* The least effective leadership styles are those where the leaders have the attitude of apathy, "*acting like they don't care*", "*critique without reason and get angry and made own assumptions", "don't walk the talk, don't do what was said"* and being *"incompetent, unable to lead by example."*

A reliability analysis was carried out on the perceived leadership practices comprising 19 items in the SPSS statistical tool. Table 5.2 summarises the Cronbach's alpha for these three leadership styles based on school 2's survey respondents (refer to the appendix for further details). It showed the questionnaire to reach a very good level of reliability with alpha greater than 0.9, indicating the survey items are reliably measuring the applicable leadership tasks.

School 2's Teachers' Survey	Cronbach's Alpha
Instructional leadership tasks	0.977
- Defining school mission	0.954
- Managing the instructional programme	0.928
- Developing the school learning climate	0.933
Distributed leadership tasks	0.960
Transformational leadership tasks	0.940

Table 5.2: Reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha on School 2 Teachers' Survey

The teachers generally provided neutral to negative comments about their principal. Most survey respondents agree that their principal hardly practised the instructional leadership style as he mostly delegated the tasks to his administrators. Figure 5.5 summarises the overall results on how the school mission and goals are defined in this school. All items are responded to on a Likert scale of 1-5, where 5 = Almost Always and 1 = Almost Never. The higher the score, the more frequent the principal was perceived to perform the task.
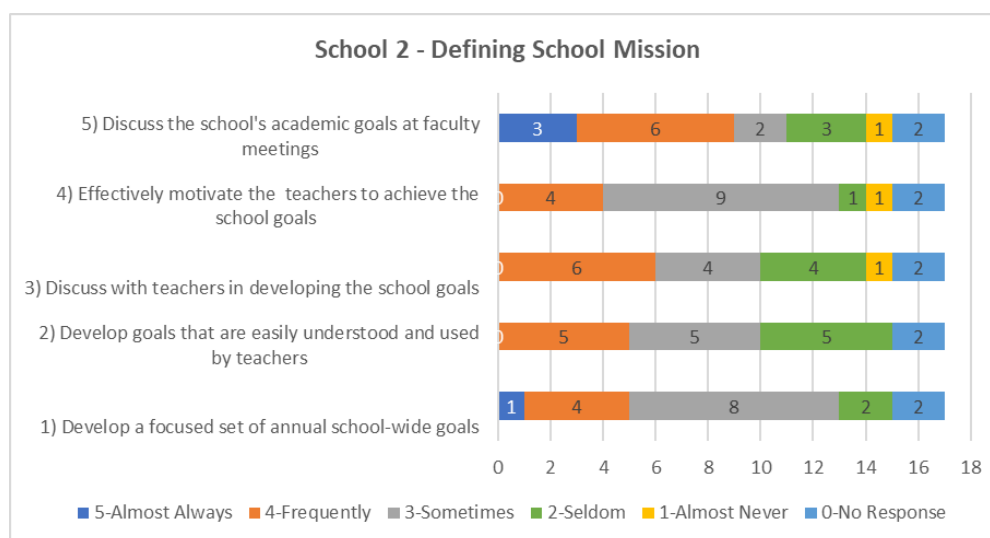
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Q1_annual_goals	15	3.00	2.00	5.00	3.2667	.79881	.638
Q2_easily_understood_g oals	15	2.00	2.00	4.00	3.0000	.84515	.714
Q3_discuss_with_teache rs_on_school_goals	15	3.00	1.00	4.00	3.0000	1.00000	1.000
Q4_motivate_teachers_to _achieve_school_goals	15	3.00	1.00	4.00	3.0667	.79881	.638
Q5_discuss_goals_with_ teachers	15	4.00	1.00	5.00	3.4667	1.24595	1.552

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	2.788	2.647	3.059	.412	1.156	.032	5

Source: School 2 Teacher's Survey 2017, N=17
(5-Almost Always, 4-Frequently, 3-Sometimes, 2-Seldom, 1-Almost Never)

Figure 5.6: Results of School 2's Teacher's Survey (Defining the School Mission)

More than seventy percent of the respondents found the principal almost never or only sometimes defined the school mission for them (average mean of 2.79). Most notably, they found that the principal did not effectively motivate the teachers to achieve the school goals (mean of 3.07) and rarely developed a focused set of annual school-wide goals (3.27). The task, discussing with the teachers in developing the school goals (with mean of 3.00), registered the highest standard deviation at 1.25 and the widest range. This implies contradictory views, as some teachers may have experienced the principal discussing the school goals with them while others did not.

In addition, the respondents found that the principal mostly lack in developing goals that are easily understood (3.00). This is consistent with the feedback from the administrators who are unclear about the principal's vision. It is interesting to note that, even though the senior assistant for student affairs had worked with him for two years, she was still unclear. "*His vision? I'm quite new here…I managed to work with him for 2 years….so not very clear. He did teach us a lot. If we don't know how to do something because last time he was from the Department.*" He did not seem to set any targets or provide clear directions to the administrators or the teachers. The expectation was for the teachers to follow the syllabus and that the teacher should all know what this meant, as shared by the senior assistant for student affairs. The syllabus is provided by the District Education Office and the senior assistants are

required to observe the teachers twice a year as they need to provide a report to the District Office. It is also interesting to note that, when the English committee head was asked about the school's vision, she appeared to 'default' to the 'common' vision applied elsewhere in other schools, which may not be true for the school, *"Vision? Like any other school, is to excel academically. That is also the principal's vision."*

Figure 5.7 shows that the principal hardly manages the instructional programme at the school (average mean of 2.49).   Almost all the survey respondents found that he rarely provides any observations or feedback on the teachers' instructional practices (2.73) and did not meet frequently with them to discuss the students' progress or academic performance (2.73).
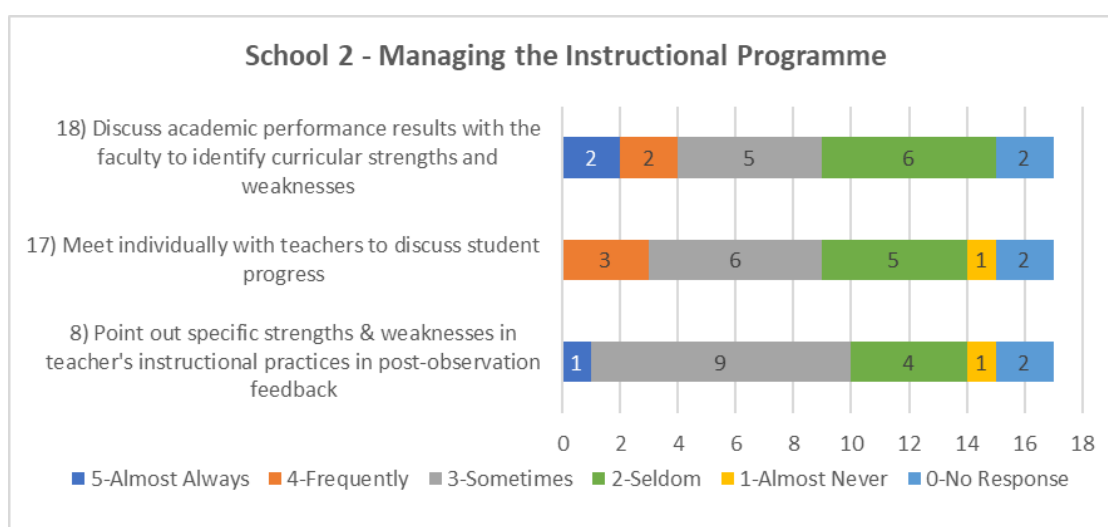
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Q8_teachers_instructional_practices	15	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.7333	.88372	.781
Q17_discuss_student_progress	15	3.00	1.00	4.00	2.7333	.88372	.781
Q18_discuss_academic_perf	15	3.00	2.00	5.00	3.0000	1.06904	1.143

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	2.490	2.412	2.647	.235	1.098	.018	3

Source: School 2 Teacher's Survey 2017, N=17
*(5-Almost Always, 4-Frequently, 3-Sometimes, 2-Seldom, 1-Almost Never)*

Figure 5.7: Results of School 2's Teacher's Survey (Managing the Instructional Programme)

The range and standard deviation observed for all the tasks associated with managing the instructional programme was high, with the highest standard deviation (at 1.07) observed for discussing academic performance with the faculty to identify curricular strengths and weaknesses. This is consistent with feedback from the interviews which indicated that the principal appeared to be less focused on academics, while the administrators and teachers seemed to prefer for him to focus more on academics. This also contributed to the lack of clarity or misalignment on the school's vision or objectives. As noted by the mathematics committee head, "w*ell, for me, I'm more the academics. For different teachers, they may have different thinking. So this principal has different thinking also, and it's less on academics.* [The principal preferred to focus] *on the skills work. Other way we see it, it's OK right? As the student can still improve on their skills work. In different view, those that are particular in the academics, they would feel it's not right as you would need to keep the students in the classroom even though they may not be interested to learn. And you have to figure something out to try to make the students interested in learning in the classroom. There are some [*teachers*] who are very particular and would like you to do like that."*

Figure 5.8 shows that more than half of the survey respondents also found that the principal did not effectively develop the school learning climate, the third dimension of instructional leadership. They found him most lacking in contacting parents to communicate exemplary student performance (2.93). In addition, most teachers agreed that he rarely developed pathways for leaders and teachers to grow professionally (3.2) as it had the narrowest standard deviation at 0.56. The highest standard deviation (1.01) was observed for the task informing students of the school's academic progress, with an average mean of 3.2. The principal's lack of academic focus caused different views among the teachers with conflicting goals.
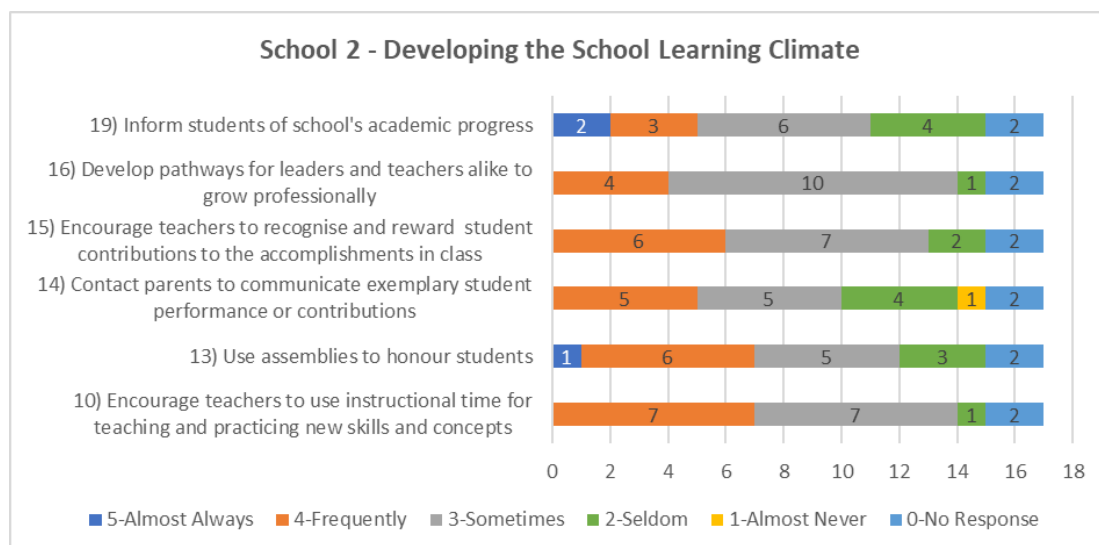
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Q10_teachers_using_instructional_time	15	2.00	2.00	4.00	3.4000	.63246	.400
Q13_honour_students	15	3.00	2.00	5.00	3.3333	.89974	.810
Q14_contact_parents	15	3.00	1.00	4.00	2.9333	.96115	.924
Q15_recognise_and_reward_students	15	2.00	2.00	4.00	3.4000	.63246	.400
Q16_professional_dev	15	2.00	2.00	4.00	3.2000	.56061	.314
Q19_inform_students_of_school_academic_progress	15	3.00	2.00	5.00	3.2000	1.01419	1.029

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	2.804	2.588	2.882	.294	1.114	.012	6

Source: School 2 Teacher's Survey 2017, N=17
(5-Almost Always, 4-Frequently, 3-Sometimes, 2-Seldom, 1-Almost Never)

Figure 5.8: Results of School 2's Teacher's Survey (Developing the School Learning Climate)

According to the science committee head, the principal seemed to encourage them by 'forcing' down the timeline on them. He would say that "*you all must finish this by some time frame*". She added that "*he will give his ideas, that will come from him, but then it will come back to us. We have a lot of people right? So, if there are 20 of us, there will be 20 ways of doing things. So, it's like that. Yes. We had to discuss. Different people would prefer different things. And the time management, we will just guess what needs to be done. Then when we did it, it will be, "Oh no, not this format." And we had to find what's the right format. That's because our leader did not inform us what is the right format, what we should be doing, what is required in the report, so we had to do a lot of things twice, thrice…it's quite tiring.*" However, the current leadership, under the three administrators, seemed to provide a better environment, as she went on to add that, "*But with these 3 administrators, we don't face this problem. They would inform us what needs to be done. They would say, "Here, this is what you need to do. It needs to be like this. The deadline is this." So, we knew what needed to be done and did it. Just one time, and it's done. Even if we have much work, it's still ok. We can manage our time.*"

Figure 5.9 shows that, in general, the survey respondents agreed that the principal almost always delegates tasks to staff to lead, and to achieve the school priorities. It had the highest average mean of 4.07 and the smallest standard deviation at 0.46. He appeared to practice the delegation of tasks commonly found in administrative leadership rather than empowering his administrators and teachers to lead effectively in their areas of expertise. The principal was found most lacking in discussing with the teachers on the school goals (3.0) and in providing the opportunity for others to share ideas and drive initiatives to improve student outcomes (3.13). These two tasks also registered the widest dispersion from the mean with a high standard deviation of 1.00 and 0.74 respectively, indicating the conflicting responses received from teachers.
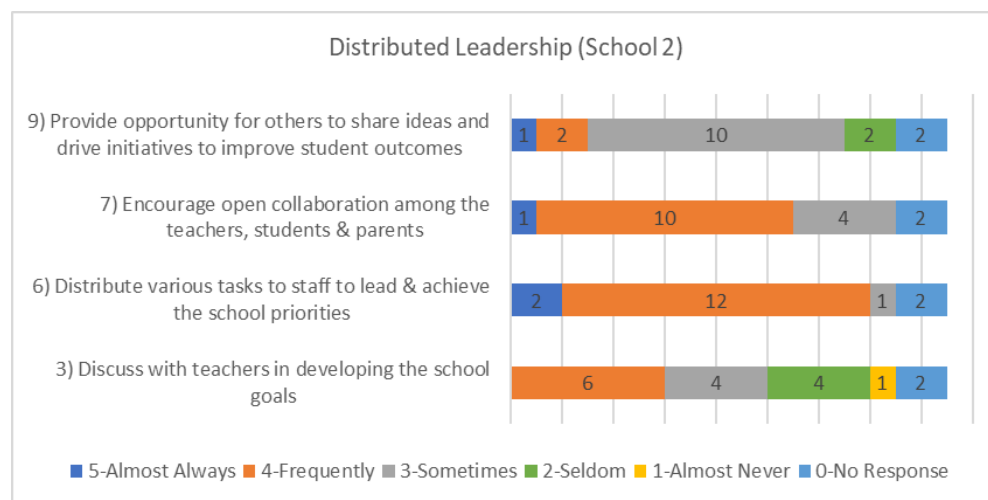
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Q3_discuss_with_teachers_on_school_goals	15	3.00	1.00	4.00	3.0000	1.00000	1.000
Q6_distribute_tasks	15	2.00	3.00	5.00	4.0667	.45774	.210
Q7_open_collaboration	15	2.00	3.00	5.00	3.8000	.56061	.314
Q9_opportunity_to_improve_outcomes	15	3.00	2.00	5.00	3.1333	.74322	.552

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	3.074	2.647	3.529	.882	1.333	.188	4

Source: School 2 Teacher's Survey 2017, N=17
(5-Almost Always, 4-Frequently, 3-Sometimes, 2-Seldom, 1-Almost Never)

Figure 5.9: Results of School 2's Teachers' Survey (Distributed Leadership)

More than half of the respondents found that the principal seldom exhibits transformational leadership (see figure 5.10 below). In particular, he seldom develops goals that are easily understood and used by the teachers (3.00), and also not able to effectively motivates his teachers to achieve the school goals (3.07). He also seldom participates in extra co-curricular activities (3.2), which recorded the highest standard deviation at 0.94.
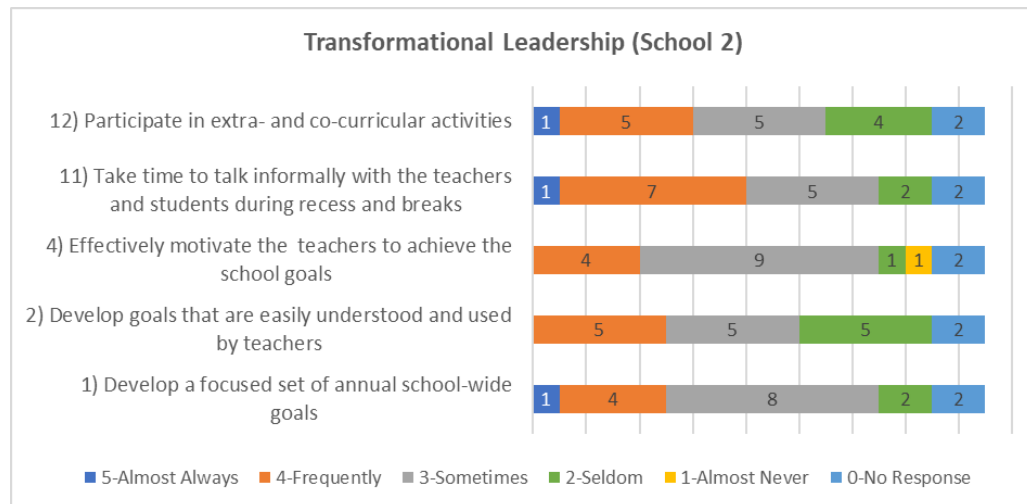
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Q1_annual_goals	15	3.00	2.00	5.00	3.2667	.79881	.638
Q2_easily_understood_goals	15	2.00	2.00	4.00	3.0000	.84515	.714
Q4_motivate_teachers_to_achieve_school_goals	15	3.00	1.00	4.00	3.0667	.79881	.638
Q11_talk_informally	15	3.00	2.00	5.00	3.4667	.83381	.695
Q12_cocurricular_activities	15	3.00	2.00	5.00	3.2000	.94112	.886

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	2.824	2.647	3.059	.412	1.156	.026	5

Source: School 2 Teacher's Survey 2017, N=17
(5-Almost Always, 4-Frequently, 3-Sometimes, 2-Seldom, 1-Almost Never)

Figure 5.10: Results of School 2's Teachers' Survey (Transformational Leadership)

Collectively, the survey results suggest that the principal hardly displayed any instructional leadership features (see table 5.2 below). He appeared to favour the hierarchical leadership style and frequently practices the distributed leadership style.

Leadership Styles	School 2 (Avg. Mean)
Instructional Leadership	2.69
Distributed Leadership	3.07
Transformational Leadership	2.82

Source: School 2 Teacher's Survey 2017, N=17

Table 5.3: School 2 principal's leadership style

The school counsellor elaborated on his leadership style:

> *"for* [the seventh principal], *I knew him more. He's the type that used the pyramid. Under him, they are a few senior assistants; for student affairs, co-curriculum and form six. So, he's the leader. His mindset is like that. I'm the leader, and you are under me. So, for the academics, it's under the senior assistants. The senior assistants have to be fully involved in the academics and take care of the discipline. And also senior assistants for co-curriculum and form six. He himself will be overseeing the whole school... Hands-on. He already said that [he had] four senior assistants. "These senior assistants will help me to oversee different, different divisions". He will do more on the infrastructure. .. Academics… he delegated it out to them and he only needs to have them report to him. Infrastructure… That he will do it all by himself. He came in here, he repaired the classroom door…He looked at the physical and did more of the filing."*
> (School Counsellor, School 2)

The mathematics committee head put it more bluntly, "*his character is like our…how to say…is like the Sultan and the Prime Minister. Our principal is like the Sultan. He just signed the agreement and whatever, all this paperwork. Just put his signature and the ones carrying out the duties would be like the Prime Minister, so it's all the teachers*".

As the principal was previously from the District Education Office (PPD), in the Quality Assurance department, he was very strict on quality and filing. Therefore, he tended to focus on the administration rather than the pedagogy. According to the mathematics committee head, "t*he [seventh] principal was very particular about the paperwork. He wanted us to do like this, the alignment, the wording, the font, the size. It's just the lesson plan only. He wanted it to look good so that he could send it over to PPD and*

remarked that the teacher did well. But this didn't help the students. Our paperwork did not help the students." The strict filing process that the seventh principal seemed to focus on garnered a lot of negative feedback from the administrators and teachers, as most did not see the value of performing the task. The requirements were not shared and often the teachers had to do multiple rework and revisions before they were able to meet his requirements.

Overview

This chapter presents the research findings for school 2 and discusses the leadership effects that impact on student outcomes. The past principals had not been able to make a significant and lasting contribution to the school due to their short tenure and the constant replacement of new leaders did not provide good momentum to follow-up on initiatives that had been introduced. In addition, the number of students from the nearby low-cost flats seemed to impact on overall student quality and academic performance, as middle-class parents preferred to send their children to higher-performing schools with a lower percentage of low-income students. The challenging student context, and the lack of academic focus by the previous principal, that was not aligned to the expectations of his administrators and teachers, led to weak commitment to improve student outcomes.

The next chapter provides a cross-case analysis, to assess the leadership styles and practices that impact on student outcomes, seeking to identify what works and what is less effective. The discussion also links the data to previous research on leadership and student outcomes.

Chapter 6: Analysis and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter provides a comparative analysis between school 1, a high-performing school, and school 2, a low-performing school. The contextual details for both schools will be first discussed in the introduction, followed by the cross-case analysis of both schools. Next, a comparison of the leadership influences at both schools will be made to identify how school leadership impacts student outcomes. Finally, the leadership practices and styles practised in the school will be discussed.

This section provides brief contextual details about the two schools, discussing first the school background and the differences in the school context. As both schools were deliberately chosen to be contrasting in terms of student performance, with school 1 being a high-performing school and school 2 a low-performing school, differences in the school context are expected.

School background and location

The two schools are located within a five-kilometre radius of one another in the suburbs of Petaling District. As they are both governed by the same District Education Office and State Education Office, they enjoy similar leadership, and administrative policies and practices.

School 1 is a high-performing school established in 1989, while school 2 is a low-performing school established 9 years later in 1998. Both schools started as a double-session school before moving to a single session school in 2011 for school 1 and in 2013 for school 2. School 1 has reached its maximum student enrolment capacity of 800 while School 2's student enrolment has decreased and stood at 500 during the fieldwork period. However, both schools have a similar number of teachers, approximately 50.

School conditions

The school conditions refer to the schools' infrastructure and facilities. The schools have similar school conditions, because they are located close together and share similar neighbourhood amenities and community. Both schools received sponsorships from the nearby colleges and community in enhancing the environment of the school and classes. Care has been taken to make the schools conducive for learning, with motivational words painted or hung around the school. Classrooms are arranged to facilitate 21st century learning initiatives currently emphasised. School 1 has a hostel for about 100

students, mostly from the lower income group, in another wing of the school. This enabled school 1 to receive students living further from the school as they had the option to stay in the school. School 2 had converted some classrooms to a gymnasium to facilitate a Personal Trainer classroom syllabus. Overall, both schools had enough resources to ensure that the environment is conducive for learning.

Durán-Narucki's (2008) research on a sample of 95 elementary schools in New York City found that, in run-down school facilities, students attended fewer days on average and achieved lower grades in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math standardized tests, with attendance found to be a mediator for student outcomes in ELA and Math. Maxwell (2016) examined the social climate and student attendance as mediators of the relationship between the physical environment and academic achievement for 236 New York City's middle schools using secondary data. The findings indicated that academic achievement is linked to building conditions, mediated by the social climate and student attendance. The New York research suggests that school conditions play a role in influencing students' attendance, which may impact on student performance. However, despite the similarities in school conditions, school 2 experienced a much lower student attendance (below 70%) than school 1 (more than 90%).   Therefore, school conditions did not appear to be a strong influencing factor in the respective school's student outcomes.

Students' cohort quality and socioeconomic status

The overall student cohort quality in school 1 was above average as it was able to impose a student admission requirement (based on past academic achievement) to choose better quality students, as it was awarded the Cluster School of Excellence. Most of the students from school 1 are from a middle-income family, with less than five percent from the lower socioeconomic group. In contrast, more than 20% of the students from School 2 are from lower-income families, (mostly from Malay-Indonesia descent), and they tend to live in the low-cost flats that are only a few minutes walking distance from the school. In addition, as student performance in school 2 was declining, this discouraged parents from sending their children to the school, reducing both student numbers and quality.

The student context appears to differ quite significantly between the two schools. School 2 appeared to be in a disadvantaged position as research has shown that schools with greater proportions of disadvantaged students face extra teaching and behavioural challenges and less advantageous peer effects, leading to unequal educational quality between schools. These 'school effects' are known to account for 8-15 percent of variance in student academic achievement (Reynolds, 1992). More recent research also found that students' socio-economic status influences the leadership style of successful

principals (Leithwood et al., 2006). Moreover, Allen et al. (2014) indicated that low SES students may benefit academically if they are in high performing schools. As such, the student context is a key factor when assessing leadership styles and student performances in both schools.

<u>Teachers' experience</u>

Teachers' experience in the two schools are quite similar. In a centrally administered education system, teachers' employment and assignments are centrally distributed, and not managed by the individual schools.   Both schools have a good mix of experienced teachers. More than 60% of the teachers interviewed had more than ten years of teaching experience, and about a quarter (25%) of the teachers had five to ten years of experience. For the less experienced teachers, School 1's new teachers generally had one to two years of teaching experience, while School 2 received around 6% of new teachers who had less than one year's teaching experience. Even though the teachers' experiences were gathered from the survey respondents, it is deemed to be a good indication of the distribution of teaching experience among the teachers of the schools as the survey respondents were randomly selected. In addition, the leadership team being interviewed had also confirmed similar distribution of the experiences among their teachers in their respective interviews.

Kini and Podolsky (2016) found that teaching experience is positively associated with student achievement gains throughout a teacher's career, and not just in the first three years. However, total years of teaching experience alone was not a significant predictor. Teachers' effectiveness increases at a greater rate when they teach in a supportive and collegial working environment, and when they accumulate experience in the same grade level, subject, or district (Huang & Moon, 2009; Kini and Podolsky, 2016). Using 10 years of data from a large urban U.S. school district, and looking at how teachers' contributions to student standardized test scores changed as they gained experience, Papay & Kraft (2016) found that a given teacher will be 39 percent more effective by year 10 if he or she works in a supportive school than if he or she works in a less supportive one, as strong work environments create better learning opportunities for everyone.

As both schools have teachers with a similar distribution of teaching experience, of which the majority had taught for more than 10 years, the schools are assumed to enjoy the benefits of having experienced teachers. Williams et al. (2001) found that schools where teachers have at least five years of teaching experience correlate with high student achievement. However, more recent research has shown that teachers' effectiveness is dependent on the working environment and not just on the teachers' personal

teaching experiences (Huang & Moon, 2009; Kini and Podolsky, 2016). In addition, Klem and Connell (2004) stated that "the most potent predictor of student outcomes difference was teachers" collective responsibility. . . [which] promoted student engagement and learning" (p. 271). Collective teachers' efficacy is characteristic of a faculty team that takes responsibility for student learning. Ross and Gray (2006) linked teacher efficacy to principal behaviour. The next section will explore how the schools' environment and leadership practices influence collective teachers' efficacy. One of the seven claims made by Leithwood et al. (2008) was that school leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions.

Overall, as the schools are located close to one another and thus served similar neighbourhoods, with the same central educational administration, and there do not appear to be significant differences in school conditions or teachers' experiences. The main differences observed relate to the students' SES and cohort quality. The next section shows how these differences might influence student outcomes and/or leadership practices in both schools, especially as the two schools were sampled purposively in terms of their academic achievement spectrum.

Key themes

This section discusses the key themes identified from the two case study schools. These are listed below and they will be discussed in the light of the schools' contexts, the schools' leadership practices and the observed student outcomes:

1. Principals' tenure and past leadership legacy
2. Collective teachers' efficacy
3. The working and learning environment
4. Parental engagement

Principals' tenure and past leadership legacy

Principals' tenure refers to the years the respective principals served at their schools. As principal assignments are centrally managed, by the district education office, this would imply that the principals' tenure for both schools should also be similar. The school system in Malaysia is viewed as bureaucratic and hierarchical in nature, with an over emphasis on centralized school management. However, principals in school 1 served on average, a five-year term, while principals in school 2 served, on average, a two-year

term. Therefore, even though school 1 was established about 10 years earlier than school 2, it only had six principals compared to school 2's nine principals, at the time of the research.
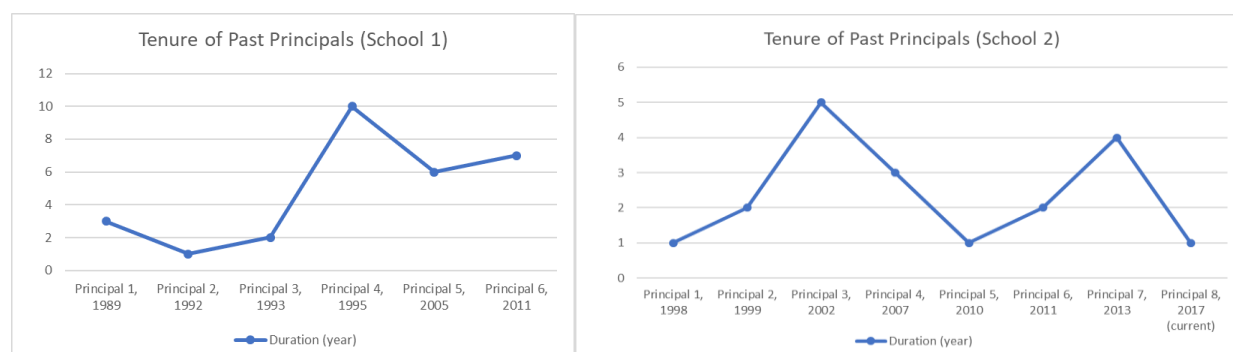
Figure 6.1: Tenure of past principals in schools 1 and 2

For school 1, principal tenure was shorter in the initial years, not more than three years. However, it began to change when the fourth principal was appointed in 1995. She served in the school for ten years until her retirement in 2005. She started to strengthen the school's foundations and put in place a succession plan for the school leaders, thus ensuring continuity in school initiatives and programmes. These efforts were continued by her successors, enabling the school to improve significantly and achieve the target of being recognised as the Cluster School of Excellence and, subsequently, achieving 100% passes in the form five national examination since 2009.

For school 2, most of the principals were transferred to the schools as their last stint before their retirement, resulting in most serving less than three years. The longest serving principal was Principal 3, who served five years. She instituted discipline and structure to the school, building a conducive environment for teachers to teach and student to learn. During her tenure, school 2 enjoyed good academic achievement. However, the school organising structure kept changing with each new principal, with most not building upon their predecessor's past successes due to their short tenure and/or understanding of the school prior to their retirement. The school's academic achievement has been declining in recent years, from a high of 90% passes in 2011 to only 57% passes in 2015.

The findings seem to indicate the importance of having long-serving principals, as it provided stability in terms of leadership organisation and practices. Long-serving principals were able to have succession planning in place for key leadership positions. School 1 has succession planning for the principal and key leadership positions. The relationship and trust built by the school's principals with the district education officers enabled the principals to recommend their staff to be considered for vacant leadership posts,

rather than the district officers appointing someone into those positions as per the status quo, which was observed in school 2.

Internal promotion is practised for most of the leadership roles in school 1, as teachers are identified and groomed for leadership roles. This resulted in the school's leadership team mostly serving at least five years in the school, with a deep understanding of the school's policies and initiatives. Internal promotion also caused less disruption to the school. This seemed to allow the school to continue progressing without having to adjust to different leadership styles and expectations. According to Tuckman (1965)'s four stages of group development, namely the forming, storming, norming and performing stage, school 1 teachers and administrators appeared to be able to maintain being in the desired 'performing' stage. The leadership stability and consistency spared them from having to reintroduce themselves to each other and discover one other's working styles and preferences, before gaining the trust and commitment to perform.

On the contrary, there were three changes in the school's senior leadership within the past three years in school 2. The first senior administrator had only been assigned to the school for the past six months, replacing her predecessor who had been in his position for less than three years. In addition, another senior administrator had only served in the school for the past two years. The frequent changes in senior leadership positions observed at school 2 also extended to the subject head teachers. In the past year, two subject heads had requested to become ordinary teachers to focus more on their teaching. Younger teachers were then assigned by the principal (without any prior consultation) to assume the new roles. The younger teachers did not seem to get much support or guidance from their predecessors or principal in their new role, and thus had to learn on-the-job.

Fernandez et al. (2007) found that principals' tenure was the variable that most significantly affected performance in terms of academic gains, standardized test accountability scores, teacher turnover, and student attendance rates. Clark, Martorell, and Rockoff (2009) also found that policies which cause principals to leave their jobs early (early retirement or move into district administration) are harmful to school performance, which was a practice observed in school 2. Principals mostly had less than three years to their retirement when they were assigned to school 2. The continual replacement of principals and senior leadership team members in school 2 appeared to adversely affect the performance of the school, while the positive impact was perceived to be minimal and not sustainable. Previous studies found that principals' years of experience correlate with high student achievement (Clark et al., 2009; Williams et al., 2001). However, the findings from the case study schools suggest that principals' tenure is a more

important determining factor. Most of school 2's principals had long years of experiences, as they were assigned to the school when they were close to the retirement age of 60, but they failed to make a positive impact on student achievement, apparently due to their short tenure. In contrast, School 1's principals who were younger, and with less leadership experience, were able to continually improve their student outcomes, as their longer tenure promoted stability. The decision of successive principals to continue the previous leadership legacy and practices appeared to be an important factor underpinning School 1's sustained growth and improvement.

Hallinger and Heck's (2010) research on school improvement shows that schools in which the same principal was present over the 4-year period of the study demonstrated stronger growth in learning-directed leadership and stronger academic capacity at the end of the 4-year period. Academic capacity, or the school's capacity for academic improvement, is defined as the school's focus on teaching and learning practices and the relative presence of these factors.   This involves not just the direct efforts to improve classroom teaching behaviours but also school-level efforts to improve the learning environment. This includes not only student learning but also teacher professional development, teacher collaboration, student support systems, resource allocation, and academic focus and expectations.   Ng (2016) pointed out the importance of preparing and developing principals and head teachers as school leaders, as they are vital for school performance.

Day et al. (2016) alluded to an 'integrated leadership' or 'layering' of 'fit for purpose' combinations and accumulations of leadership strategies and actions over time, through the enactment of the principals' personal and professional values and visions to move their schools forward. By 'layering', the authors referred to the ways in which, within and across different phases of their schools' improvement journeys, the principals selected, clustered, integrated and placed different emphases upon different combinations of both transformational and instructional strategies which were timely and fit for purpose. As such, the principals progressively built the individual and collective capacity and commitment of staff, students and community. School 1 appeared to benefit from this 'layering' and 'integrated leadership' as, beginning with the fourth principal, successive principals were able to help the school transition from a school with disciplinary problems to a cluster school of excellence over a period of 13 years. Currently, in its 'maintenance' phase for the past six years, the school has maintained its high performing status and also improved upon its past achievements by attaining 100% passes in the SPM results since 2014. The strategies initiated by the principals to achieve these positive outcomes are discussed in the next section.

<u>Collective teachers' efficacy</u>

Principals appeared to impact on student learning by creating conditions in the school that would have a positive impact on teacher practice and student learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1998), confirmed by more recent systematic reviews (Leithwood et al., 2004, 2006) and meta-analyses (Robinson et al., 2008) of empirical studies of school leadership effects. Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) found teacher efficacy was enhanced by the influence of the principal. Collective teacher efficacy is related to the behaviours of the teaching faculty to increase student achievement. Schools with higher collective teacher efficacy have higher student achievement. According to Hattie (2009), collective teachers' efficacy (CTE) has an effect size of d=1.57 and is strongly correlated with student achievement. Ross and Gray (2006) linked teacher efficacy to principal behaviour as principals influence the interpretation of student achievement by their definition of what represents success.

The findings from the author's two case-study schools support previous research. In school 1, teachers are aligned to the principal's vision and inculcated her vision and beliefs in their teaching. They are motivated to hold extra classes to help their students excel in examinations and for the school to maintain its 100% passes in SPM.

At school 2, teachers seemed to be at odds with the lack of emphasis on students' achievement by their principal. The principal in school 2 de-emphasised academic achievement in favour of co-curriculum success and this appeared to cause conflict with the teachers. The latter group felt that they were being assessed through their students' academic achievements, as the district education officers make more frequent visits to the school if the academic achievements are trending downwards. Therefore, teachers at school 2 received conflicting messages from their principals and the district education officers, resulting in a sense of frustration and dissatisfaction over their principal leadership. Teachers in school 2 generally felt demotivated and tired, which also seemed to be reflected in their perceptions of the students. Rather than taking ownership over the declining student achievement, the teachers seemed to imply that their students' lack of interest in studies, and disciplinary problems, were preventing the teachers from effectively helping them to improve.

According to Hattie (2003), high efficacy teachers spend more time monitoring their students overall and are able to maintain student engagement in artful ways, whereas low efficacious teachers tend to seek out reliable students to answer, allow outbursts, or even answer themselves, all to avoid the uncertain or incorrect answers. Teachers with low efficacy attribute failures, and even successes, to external factors

(Ware & Kitsantas, 2007). Ross and Bruce (2007) stated that, "lower-efficacy teachers concentrate their efforts on the upper ability group, giving less attention to lower ability students who the teachers view as potential sources of disruption" (p.51). Teachers of low efficacy perceive that external factors, such as SES, are not only beyond their control, but stifle any efforts they make in the classroom (Auwarter and Aruguete, 2008). School 1 teachers seemed to exhibit traits of high efficacy whilst school 2 teachers seemed to be low efficacious teachers. This could explain the many 'excuses' or 'justifications' often heard from School 2 teachers about the quality of their students and how they could not teach effectively, particularly those students who were not from the first streamed class.

Barkley (2006) added that school staff teams with high levels of perceived efficacy set challenging and worthwhile goals in which they exert relentless efforts to meet these goals. If the students perceive that they are participants in a caring learning environment, they are more likely to be engaged in school. Higher levels of engagement produce increased attendance and higher test scores. Barkley (2006) noted that this demonstrated the link of teacher efficacy to student achievement on standardized tests. School 1's teachers expected their students to excel, and to score A grades. Motivational programmes are frequently held, along with personalised programmes for students with different capability levels, to encourage students not only to merely improve, but to score well during the examinations. However, teachers in School 2 seemed to believe that their students would not be able to achieve As, especially students not from the first class. Therefore, intervention programmes were merely focused on enabling their students to pass their examinations. This could impact on the students' perceptions of their own capability to excel and promote a culture of low performance in the school, which may also relate to the principal's decision to emphasise co-curricular excellence at the expense of academic excellence. One teacher in School 2 observed that even students in the first class seemed satisfied at just securing a pass rather than competing among themselves to score the highest grade. Brookover and Lezotte's (1979) study of failing schools concluded that "the most pervasive finding was the one concerning teachers' and principals' attitudes toward student achievement. The staff in the declining schools had low opinions of their students' abilities, while staff in the improving schools had high opinions of student abilities". This connects with the contrasting attitudes in schools 1 and 2.

Podell and Soodak (1993) found that teachers who were high in efficacy did not discriminate against students by SES; generally, they retained the students in their classroom. These teachers are driven by a 'do-whatever-it-takes' mentality and are noted for their enthusiasm and commitment to teaching. Their optimistic perception trickles down to their students and establishes a direct link to student performance

(Yost, 2002). Students of high efficacy teachers receive more than simply a positive outlook, they perceive that their teacher truly cares about them (Collier, 2005). They form bonds of trust with their students which, in turn, guides instruction and discipline; this creates a genuine community of care where students not only feel connected to their teacher, but to each other. In a caring environment, students embrace and carry out their teachers" same attitudes and behaviours with their classmates". While teachers in school 1 mostly used the often-quoted phrase that "teaching is a higher calling" and "we owe it to the students to give them our best", those at school 2 seemed to display a reluctance to teach students from the last class, which has a high percentage of low SES students. Rather than being driven to teach these students well, the teachers say that "it's tiring to teach students who forget to bring their homework" and "we have to wake them up at the start of the lesson". The focus is thus more on the 'undesirable' students that seemed to display a lack of interest in learning. Evidence exists that teachers' collective efficacy can be a stronger predictor of student achievement than students' socio-economic status (Bandura, 1993). However, students' socio-economic status remains a key factor that influences student achievement, with parental education having the strongest influence (Buckingham et al., 2013).

Hoy and Hoy (2006) provided another perspective by stating that "teacher efficacy is context specific; teachers do not feel equally efficacious for all teaching situations" [p. 147]. School 2's leaders and teachers were constantly managing tensions and problems stemming from the particular circumstances and context of the school, notably the low-SES and low-achieving students. The changing student context of school 2, with an increasing percentage of low SES students, appeared to have a significant impact on the teachers. These teachers felt challenged to teach their students, particularly those from the last class, as their lack of interest in learning, level of understanding and frequent truancy, made it difficult for the teachers to teach effectively and follow the syllabus. The lack of two-way engagement between the students and teachers appeared to dull the teaching, unlike in school 1 where the teachers seemed more motivated by the creativity and innovation of the students. School 1 teachers were able to introduce a lot more initiatives and encourage deeper learning in students as the students appeared to possess the required understanding and were interested to learn. In contrast, school 2 teachers had problems arranging intervention programmes outside official school hours, as they believed that attendance would be very low. As such, the programmes and practice drills were typically held during official school hours to enable high attendance among their form three and form five students. Warren (2002) reported that 75% of teachers in low income schools demonstrate signs of low teacher efficacy. These findings indicate that students of low SES, especially boys, are susceptible to the negative effects related to low teacher expectations. Leithwood et al. (2006) note that studies showing that students having difficulty at school,

especially those disadvantaged by their socio-economic backgrounds, benefited more from learning in heterogeneous rather than in homogeneous ability groups. Relatively high expectations for learning, a faster pace of instruction, peer models of effective learning, and a more challenging curriculum, are among the reasons offered for this advantage [p. 95]. Although ability grouping may make it easier for teachers to teach, grouping of low ability students in the last class, as practiced in School 2, may not appear to be in the best interest of the students. Leithwood et al. (2006) also noted that a considerable amount of evidence suggests that the best curriculum for socially, economically or culturally disadvantaged children is often the "rich curriculum" that focuses beyond the basic skills and knowledge to one that is clearly aligned and aimed at accomplishing the full array of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions valued by society. School 2's principal may try to provide an alternative to his low performing students with his emphasis on extra co-curricular activities. However, his lack of emphasis on academic achievement seemed to do more harm to the school in general, alienating his administrators and teachers alike and thus did not provide the necessary empowerment or support required for them to reach out positively to the students.

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) suggested that mediators, which strengthen teacher efficacy, are: a) timely and continual feedback, (b) encouragement, (c) emotional support, (d) reinforcement, (e) availability of modelled experiences, (f) classroom visits and observations, (g) assistance in goal selection, and (h) rewards and recognition. All of these mediators, when adopted by effective leaders, communicate genuine interest and support to teachers. Hoy and Hoy (2006) indicated that "teaching efficacy, a teacher's belief that he or she can reach even difficult students to help them learn, appears to be one of the few personal characteristics of teachers that is correlated with student achievement" [p.146]. As teachers in the case study schools appeared to display different teaching efficacy, an important key factor in improving student outcomes, the following section provides further discussion about the working environment, and how supportive schools can nurture teachers.

The working and learning environment

Leithwood et al. (2008) stressed the importance of having principals and school leaders taking care of the welfare of their teachers as they have the most influential and direct impact on students' performance. Schools are characterised as learning communities when each individual member, and the organization as a whole, sets goals and builds a conducive environment for knowledge sharing and learning, where differences are respected (Ware & Kitsantas, 2007. In School 1, many of the elements discussed above

are practiced by the principal while, for School 2, the top-down approach, with the underlying lack of openness and respect for the individual teachers, did not seem to facilitate the school as learning communities that drive positive student outcomes.

The practices observed in School 1 seemed to emphasise a strong teamwork culture that values inclusivity (involving teachers and students alike), openness (always soliciting feedback, frequent monitoring), nurturing environment (friendly and caring), supported by strong leaders that led by example, along with dedicated and committed teachers. These themes seemed to form the underlying foundation of the successes observed in School 1, evidenced in the interviews and surveys. However, the nurturing and understanding culture also seemed to lead to a contradiction. While teachers believed that having a firm attitude and punishing students were the least effective practices, some also pointed out that too much understanding given to students for committing the same, repeated, offences was also ineffective. Some were concerned that this perceived lack of firmness in disciplining students could be the effect of the nurturing environment that the principal and school leaders strive to enforce. In contrast, the practices observed in school 2 seemed to depict a school where administrators and teachers appeared to be working in silos and just doing 'enough'. Weak leadership seemed to underpin the foundation of school 2, as teachers pointed out that their leaders were not good role-models nor did they provide good guidance or leadership (scolding without any reasons). Feedback was also not emphasised by the leaders, leading to lack of openness.

Malaysian principals have a heavy management responsibility in their schools. The burden of administrative work, and meetings at the district, state, and national levels, has resulted in little time for classroom observation and even less time to focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning (Tie, 2012). However, principals should still continue to create a supportive school as it can increase a teacher's effectiveness by as much as 39 percent by year 10 (Papay and Kraft, 2016). Strong work environments create better learning opportunities for everyone. According to Foy (2013), based on results from the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2011 and TIMSS 2011, school safety, the school's resources, and academic support, are three aspects of effective schools accounting for around 8% of the variance in reading achievement between students.

The practices in school 1 seemed to provide for a supportive working and learning environment, nurturing both teachers and students alike. The teamwork culture in an open and nurturing environment facilitated greater learning, with motivated and dedicated teachers enjoying teaching the carefully selected students to learn. This has also fostered greater understanding and trust among the teachers, administrators and

students alike, as teachers were willing to take on added responsibilities as they trusted their leaders to provide them with the necessary support and guidance. Students seemed to be close to their teachers, seeing their teachers as friends that they could confide in. In school 2, however, the lack of alignment and trust with the principal's vision did not seem to provide a supportive environment for the teachers to flourish. However, principals in Malaysia are now expected to involve all stakeholders in developing the goals, mission and values of the school (Rahimah & Ghavifekr, 2014). This is intended to facilitate greater trust and engagement in teachers and school leaders.

<u>Parental engagement</u>

Parent involvement behaviours include volunteering at school, communicating with the teacher, attending school functions, and assisting with homework. According to Harris and Goodall (2008), parental engagement in children's learning in the home makes the greatest difference to student achievement. Deslandes, Potvin, & Leclerc (1999) found parents who are less involved in the schooling of their children are usually from non-traditional families with lower levels of education. According to Hughes and Kwok (2007), positive relations with teachers in the classroom, and between home and school, appear to be more common for higher income children.

Due to its good reputation, school 1 attracted middle-to-high income parents residing around the neighbourhood to send their children. This raised the students' socio-economic status in School 1 to be higher than average.   As these parents chose to send their children to this school, and are aware of the strict enrolment criteria, the parents also tend to be more engaged with the school. Middle classes tend to value performance and peer groups while lower SES groups may look for accessibility, friendliness of staff, and support for those of lower ability (Allen et al., 2014). This may lead lower SES groups not to select high performing schools, either by prioritising school aspects other than academic performance, or to avoid possible rejection or failure. This parental choice of school plays a role in determining the success of low SES students. School 2 parents seemed to prefer sending their child to School 2 due to the proximity of the school due to their home (within five minutes walking distance), despite the school's low academic performance. As school 2 attracted and received more low SES students, some parents began to transfer their child from School 2 to higher performing schools within the neighbourhood, which also had a lower ratio of low SES students.

In Epstein (1987)'s sphere of influence, there are six types of involvement to encourage the partnership between the schools, families and communities, to improve student learning.   Schools help parents by

providing timely updates on their child's academic progress and health (Type 2-communicating), as could be seen by the openness and direct communication channel practiced in School 1 for the parents. School 1 also encourage the Epstein "Type 4- Learning at home", by having form teachers keep the parents involved with some of their child's big homework assignments via direct communications to the parents in the parents-teacher WhatsApp channel. In addition, parents in School 1 also actively exhibit the "Type 3-volunteering' involvement through active participation in the school's fundraising efforts to address shortfalls in the school's resources (e.g. supporting the cost for temporary teachers) so that instructional time at the school would not be compromised due to lack of teachers. School 1's active partnership with parents and their communities (e.g. the Green initiatives in the neighbourhood) provided better learning opportunities for their students beyond the school compound. School 1's parents are also involved in school governance committees such as in PTAs or taking on leadership roles that involve disseminating information to other parents (e.g. parents proactively setting up WhatsApp channel with the form teachers and including all the other parents). This characterised the "Type 5 decision-making" involvement in Epstein's sphere of influence. All this action contributed to the positive and improved student learning in School 1, whereby the learning was strengthen by the parents' involvement beyond the boundaries of the school compound. Hughes and Kwok (2007) also indicated that students are better adjusted, achieve more, and demonstrate increased achievement motivation, when parents participate in their children's education, both at home and at school, and experience relationships with teachers characterised by mutuality, warmth, and respect. This form of partnership is not apparent in School 2 where teachers found it hard to reach out to the parents as they tend to work long hours, for example 12 hours work shifts. School 2 also experienced low turnouts of parents in school programmes, such as Meet-the-Parents Day or Report Card Day. According to the teachers, the only time the school received a significant response from the parents was during the disbursement of funds from the government for poor families. School 2 leaders did not appear to be successful in forming a partnership with the parents to improve student learning, especially in respect of Epstein's Type 2 communicating involvement. Parents typically only became involved in their children's repeated truancy or bad behaviours when the school threatened to expel the students.

School 1 seemed to be set for success as the school, teachers, students and parents appeared to be encouraging students' learning and ultimately, their academic performance. School 2's context seemed to be more challenging in comparison. Teachers' teaching and motivation has already appeared to be affected by the challenging students' context. Three major points emerge from the data at the two schools:

- Principals' tenure plays an important role in defining and fostering the school culture, which could impact teachers' efficacy, leading to more effective programmes for students that impact positive student outcomes.

- Significant numbers of students with low socio-economic status, and with low academic achievement, appear to reduce teachers' efficacy and students' academic achievement.

- Teachers' efficacy needs to be nurtured and is context specific. High quality teachers could be bogged down by a challenging school context with poor quality students and poor leadership, leading to burn out.

Leadership Influences on Student Outcomes

In this section, we will examine the respective school principals' influence on key stakeholders and practices that yield positive student outcomes. Specifically, the main thrust of the analysis centres on how leaders exert influence on others such that they are able to deliver positive outcome and secondly, what are the most effective practices used that impact on student outcomes. How principals contribute to pedagogical knowledge and skills, along with workplace factors that affect student learning, will be discussed in this section. Leadership accounts for about ¼ of total direct and indirect effects on student learning, second only to classroom instruction (Leithwood et al., 2004).

<u>Leader's personal traits</u>

School 1 and 2 are different contextually, with the former being a high-performing school with few low SES students (less than 5%), while the latter is a low-performing school with more than 20 percent of low SES students. In addition, as a cluster school of excellence, school 1 has strict entry criteria for its students and is able to select students with a good academic background. School 2 is not able to select its students and has to admit students from its neighbourhood, particularly those living in the nearby low cost flats. As such, school 1 seemed to have more favourable and higher quality students compared to school 2. This contextual factor alone has strong influence on student outcomes at the two schools.

In Leithwood et al's (2008) influential paper, one of the seven claims made was that a small handful of personal traits explains a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness. The leadership characteristics of the principal act as antecedents guiding the principal's strategies and practices in their

school. In order to provide better insights on the influence of the leadership approaches in these two schools, three leadership perspectives are explored.

- *Leadership traits* ascertain the overt practices, behaviours or beliefs of school leaders that form the antecedents to the leadership practices and strategies.
- The *leadership strategies* help to determine the overarching set of strategies or purposes that guide the school leaders in their decision-making and explore how leaders use their influence to encourage school staff to act in ways that seem helpful in moving toward the agreed directions or purposes.
- This leads to the *leadership practices or styles*, how school leaders motivate and develop administrators and teachers, leading to stronger commitment and improvement in the quality of teaching, which leads to improved learning.

Taken collectively, these three dimensions yield the *leadership influences* that impact on school organisation and may result in enhanced learning and eventual impact on students' outcomes. The leadership perspectives are illustrated in figure 6.2. The leadership influence is at the outermost square as it is the result of the collective outcomes and interactions from the three leadership perspectives. The leadership traits form the next outermost square as the leaders' personal values and qualities guide the leaders' strategies and practices. The leadership practices or styles are embedded within the leadership strategies as they are typically influenced by the overall strategies that the leaders employ. Each specific strategy has its respective practices or styles.
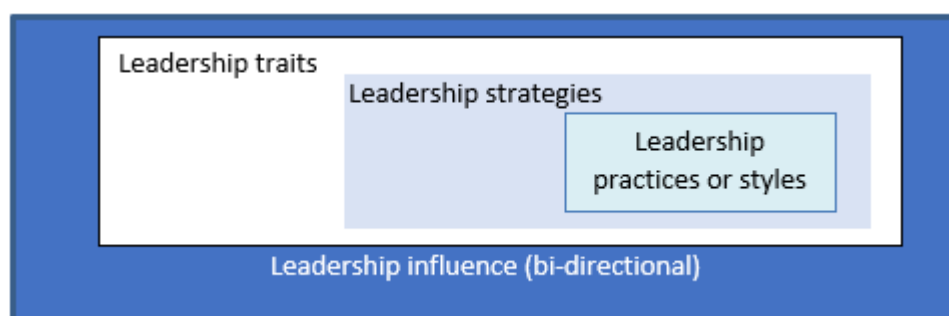
Figure 6.2: The three leadership perspectives model

School 1 is in an enviable position, whereby a lot of things seem to be in place and operating well. Teachers are motivated, students are performing well academically and there is a culture of teamwork

and trust supporting the teaching and learning environment in the school. School 1's leadership perspectives are summarised in table 6.1.

Leadership traits	Leadership strategies	Leadership practices or styles	Leadership Influence
Warm & personable Empathetic & 'motherly' High moral conscience Experienced educator	Conducive learning and work environment	Open-door policy Care and support for teachers and students Promote closeness and a loving culture between teachers and students	Well-respected Engaged and motivated teachers and leaders A trusting and teamwork culture
	Collective teacher efficacy	Teamwork Empowerment	
	Strong and dedicated leadership team	Internal promotion Teamwork	
	Strong and sustain academic excellence	Frequent feedback & monitoring of teachers and students Teacher-directed KPIs Various intervention programmes for weak students High engagement with parents on child's academic progress	

Table 6.1: School 1's leadership perspective

School 1's principal is warm and personable, guided by a high moral conscience. As an empathetic and experienced educator, she is able to relate to her teachers and leaders, to effectively motivate and empower them to successfully deliver on her assigned tasks and goals. She seemed to employ four main strategies for her school, each with its own distinctive style and approach. The implementation and choice of styles used appeared to be influenced by her personal traits and values. To encourage a conducive learning and work environment, she focused on an open-door policy to enable her staff and students to easily approach her and share their feedback with her. She also showed much care and support for her teachers, through her recognition of their work efforts, and welcoming her students daily at the school gate. She also promoted closeness and inculcated a loving culture among her teachers and students to encourage a sense of belonging and acceptance among the students. In trying to inculcate a high collective

teachers' efficacy, she stressed teamwork and empowerment. She had successfully created a strong culture of trust and teamwork among her leaders and teachers and is well respected by them. To build a strong and dedicated leadership team, she continued the work of her predecessors in valuing internal promotion to key leadership roles. She constantly identifies and grooms her teachers for key leadership positions. This has led to a highly experienced and well-respected leadership team, who understand the history of the school and are able to work well with the teachers in order to successfully deliver on the initiatives and programmes assigned by the principal. Lastly, in her strategy to maintain strong and continued growth in the students' academic achievement, the principal acts as an instructional leader who frequently monitors and provides feedback to her teachers. The teachers developed their own KPIs and are empowered to deliver on them, carefully identifying and categorising their students into various groups so that they could teach them more effectively, with personalised intervention programmes according to their abilities. The principal has also maintained a high-level of engagement with the parents, often seeking their support and guidance to contribute to the school positively, including school fund-raising programmes, eco-friendly projects, and support for teaching assistants and coaches. She seemed to have created a conducive work and learning environment for her staff and students, which may have contributed to the school's continued and sustained success in its students' academic performance. As a result, the School 1 principal is well-respected among her teachers and leaders, and she is able to effectively influence and motivate them to support her goals and initiatives.

School 2 faced a different set of challenges from School 1. Having a large number of low SES students and low performing students, the school is academically challenged. School 2's principal has a different approach from that of school 1. His leadership perspectives are summarised in table 6.2.

Leadership traits	Leadership strategies	Leadership practices or styles	Leadership Influence
Bureaucratic Rigid and structured "Do-It-Yourself" man Experienced administrator	Administrative excellence	Delegation of tasks Hierarchical (top-down approach) Strict filing and reporting	Unclear goals lead to conflicts among teachers with different priorities. Unpopular. Generate lack of trust and respect from school administrators and teachers alike.
	Emphasise non-academic achievement	Recognition and awards for non-academic pursuits Lack focus on academic programmes	

Table 6.2: School 2's leadership perspective

<u>Influence on school leaders and organisation</u>

School 1 principal's emphasis on internal promotion strengthened the school leadership as she actively groomed potential leaders and put them in leadership roles. Borba (2009) stated that effective and successful instructional leadership is more effectively attained after numerous years of successful teaching. The principal influences through her leadership by example, as she works hand in hand with her leaders to get things done. Her empathy and care for her leaders seemed to build a culture of empathy and strengthen the teamwork culture among her administrators and teachers alike. The teamwork and great camaraderie among the administrators and teachers is identified as the key success factor for the school, enabling the ease and effectiveness in working together to achieve the school's goals that are constantly articulated by the principal. This culture of teamwork has been inculcated from the past two principals and appeared to be very much ingrained into the lives of the staff, as shown in interview and survey responses. One of the most frequently explored ways in which leaders can influence an organization's effectiveness is through creating a positive organizational environment (Leithwood et al., 2004).

In contrast, in schools 2, the frequent changes in the principal and senior administrators' positions led to constant changes in the leadership and administration of the schools. School 2's principal adopted a hands-off approach towards students' academic performance and delegated most of the tasks to his three senior assistants. The administrators appeared to delegate the tasks to the teachers, resulting in ownership often at the teachers' level. The lack of leadership, clear ownership and accountability led to uncoordinated strategies and initiatives at the school level. There were more classroom-focused intervention programmes, usually during the school hours, to accommodate the students. While the focus on co-curricular activities has provided much success in archery and football, and a mention in the Malaysia Books of Records for achieving the longest mural with 3D quotations, the compromise in academic achievement was significant and caused conflicts among the administrators and teachers. As education in Malaysia is centrally administered, with a focus on academic performance, the school's steady decline in academic achievement has resulted in the school being highlighted by the state and district education officers as requiring further monitoring and support. This led to frequent visits and assessments by the officers, which resulted in teachers perceiving conflicting goals between the principal and the officers. In addition, the principal also tended to focus on the administrative and reporting requirements by the district and state education officers, emphasising strict filing and reporting protocol. This seemed to inconvenience his administrators and teachers and caused further conflict in terms of

work priorities. This contributed to higher stress and lack of stability and trusting environment to enable teachers to teach effectively. Stringfield and Teddlie's (1991) study described a roadmap for ineffective schools whereby it typically began with the introduction of a new principal lacking academic focus that led to declining attention on student learning and coherence among school processes. School 2 seemed to exhibit these actions as the principal's lack of academic focus and unclear vision and goals contributed to the school's ineffectiveness.

Influence on teachers

There is consensus among scholars that classroom experiences have the greatest impact on student learning. The more leaders focus their influence, their learning, and their relationships with teachers on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their likely influence on student outcomes (Robinson et al., 2008).   Increasing the visibility of classroom practice through frequent teacher observations of peers has been clearly linked to such benefits as improved instruction, improved teacher self-efficacy, and improved teacher attitudes toward professional development, among others (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).   One important aspect of this influence relates to teacher efficacy.

Promoting collective teachers' efficacy

School 1 principal's leadership by example and empathy nurtured a healthy collective belief by teachers in their ability to positively affect students. Her appeals to the teachers to regard teaching as a high 'calling', compelled her teachers to look beyond teaching as just a regular job, but to make a positive difference to their students. Being able to positively motivate her teachers, and their belief in their students, seemed to yield positive student outcomes, as observed in school 1. Collective teachers' efficacy (CTE) is the emphasis on teachers' belief that they not only have the capacity to influence student learning but the shared obligation to do so. CTE has an effect size of $d=1.57$ and is strongly correlated with student achievement (Hattie, 2009). In a study of 10 middle schools, Hipp (1996) found that principals affected efficacy by addressing in-school problems within their control, such as creating and supporting student discipline policies or enacting in-school structures for shared decision making. While it could be argued that school 1's admissions policy resulted in better quality students, being able to achieve 100% passes consistently for the past three years still required coordinated efforts from the leaders and high commitment from the teachers. Teachers were willing to provide extra classes to targeted students beyond their regular work hours to ensure the success of their students. In addition, as the teachers

observed the high energy and commitment from their principal, and were assured of support from the administrators, they were also more willing to take on added responsibilities.   The strong commitment and dedication from teachers in School 1, nurtured by the principal, enhanced collective teachers' efficacy and may be one of the key factor in the consistent and sustained growth observed in the students' academic achievement.

School 2's principal did not seem to take a particular interest in improving the school's weak academic performance. The school's high percentage of academically weak students from the lower SES group, who lack interest in learning, posed a huge challenge for the teachers. As the administrators and teachers seemed to feel overwhelmed by the challenging student context, there seemed to be mixed views about either trying to do the best for the students or leaving them by themselves. The school leaders relied on the teachers to self-motivate and find their own approach to reach out to the students, which seemed like a delegation of tasks from the administrators directly to the teachers. There seemed to be a high focus on the circumstances, with a belief that the teachers' successes are largely due to the students' willingness and attitude to learn, thus absolving the teachers from being proactively committed to identifying effective intervention programmes. In addition, not much support was provided by the principal in nurturing a conducive learning environment for the students or for the teachers in lightening their administrative burden so that they could better focus on teaching the weaker students. This resulted in lack of instructional time for the students. The teachers surveyed often cited lack of motivation or energy to teach their students, particularly those from the last class, since there seemed to be a lack of belief in the students' ability to learn. School 2 principal's high degree of delegation, and high-power distance, alienated his teachers as there was a strong hierarchical structure, that did not encourage collective teachers' efficacy.

Monitoring and feedback

School 1 practised an open-door policy and frequent monitoring of academic performance which created an openness for feedback and continuous improvement.   Noticeable declines in performance were quickly addressed collectively among the leaders and teachers, with remedial actions promptly executed. Hattie and Timperly (2007) found that the most powerful single influence enhancing achievement is feedback. The greatest effect is when teachers receive more and better feedback about their teaching. Teachers at school 1 have their own set of key performance indicators (KPIs) that clearly identify the expectations and targets to encourage a stronger sense of ownership and commitment from the teachers. According to the principal, the teachers determined their own metrics and targets as they know their

classes best. They will base their KPIs "in terms of the subjects that they teach, and the classes that they teach, who are the students that they think can get higher grades and all that. So, every teacher has to fill in a form like that".   In contrast, in school 2, transparency and clear goals were not set or practiced. Teachers were not fully aware of how their performance would be measured, although they had indicated that it would not be based on just the students' academic performance, otherwise, no teachers would want to teach the last classes. Although some actions were taken to improve the students' performance, it appeared to be exercised as a routine, with exercises drills using past year questions the most common approach used. Teachers in school 2 also rarely received feedback on their teaching from the principal.

Professional community

Wahlstrom and Louis (2008)'s study of more than 4000 teachers from a sample of schools in the US found that shared leadership and professional community explain much of the strength among variables that impact on teachers' classroom instructional practices. Shared leadership is defined broadly as teachers' influence over, and participation in, school-wide decisions. Teachers have to learn how to successfully interact and it requires initiatives from both teachers and principals to create conditions for rich dialogue about improvement. School 1 principal's efforts to create an open-door policy, that emphasises feedback and quarterly sharing of best teaching practices among their teachers to uphold and maintain the school's current academic standing, foster a climate that promote teaching and learning. Hallinger's (2010) review of 30 years of empirical research on school leadership points in particular to the indirect or mediated positive effects which leaders can have on student achievement through the building of collaborative organisational learning, structures and cultures and the development of staff and community leadership capacities to promote teaching and learning and create a positive school climate – which in turn promote students' motivation, engagement and achievement.

Researchers with the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL; as cited in Slick, 2002) deemed that professional development is essential to school reform. They stated that "teachers will require more than 20 percent of their work time for learning and collaboration if they are to be successful in implementing ambitious reform initiatives" (p. 200).   Currently, the mandatory training set by the Malaysian Ministry for teachers is only 10 hours a year, which is too little, but the school 1 principal often organised relevant workshops with experienced teachers from other schools for her teachers to be better equipped on current teaching trends, such as 21st century learning. By hosting it in her school, she was able to secure greater participation among her teachers and promote a collaborative culture of learning and sharing best practises. Although many factors affect whether a professional community exists in a

school, one of the most significant factors is strong principal leadership (Youngs & King, 2002). For example, allocated time and supportive school policies are critical to the formation of professional communities, and both are influenced by the school's formal leadership and could be seen to be practised by school 1 principal. The presence of professional communities appears to foster collective learning of new practices—when there is principal leadership (Marks, Louis, & Printy, 2000). School 2 lacks such initiatives as administrators and teachers tend to work in silos, without clear directives and leadership from their principal. The lack of openness fosters an environment whereby the teachers do not seem to welcome the interventions or monitoring by the administrators, thinking that their leaders were 'trying to spy on them". This suggests that collaboration and teamwork among the administrators and the teachers were not as strong as observed in School 1, where the teachers seemed to work closely with the school leaders and treated the constant monitoring and observations as opportunities for improvement.

Fostering a trusting environment

Research has indicated that principal respect and personal regard for teachers, competence in core role responsibilities, and personal integrity, are associated with relational trust among all adult members of the school (Bryk and Schneider's, 2003). High-trust schools exhibited more collective decision making, with a greater likelihood that reform initiatives were widespread and with demonstrated improvements in student learning (Wahlstrom and Louis, 2008). While school 1 teachers seemed to have high esteem and regard for their principal, this seemed to be the opposite for School 2. Teachers in school 2 are bogged down with administrative tasks as the principal enforced strict reporting and filing procedures. This was widely seen as an ineffective use of the teachers' time and caused much dissatisfaction as the teachers often had to make corrections to the reporting due to lack of guidance. In addition, School 2 principal's focus on co-curricular success appeared to cause conflict with how the teachers perceived their mandate, who believed that they should be academically focused. The school 2 principal also practises a top-down approach in assigning workloads to his teachers, often without prior consultation or consideration of the teachers' current workload. Although the teachers eventually took up the added responsibilities, the motivation and the satisfaction of the teachers towards the assignment was not be positive. This seemed to foster an environment of distrust and a lack of teamwork, with teachers working in silos and focusing only on their own responsibilities. Serva, Fuller, & Mayer (2005) examined changes in trust in work teams and found that perceived ability of colleagues was a strong predictor of trust and that trust was a significant predictor for risk-taking behaviours. This could be translated as the teamwork culture observed

in School 1, where the teachers' trust in the support and guidance from their principals and administrators empowered them to take on additional tasks more willingly.

Influence on students

Ware & Kitsantas (2007) noted that, in order for schools to be learning communities, teachers had to be caring and provide their students with relevant work and freedom to make their own decisions, with fair and predictable consequences. If the students perceive that they are participants in a caring learning environment, they are more likely to be engaged in school. Higher levels of engagement produce increased attendance and higher test scores. This demonstrates the link between teacher efficacy and student achievement on standardized tests (Barkley, 2006). School 1's principal strived to provide a nurturing and conducive learning environment for her students. She wanted to provide a sense of belonging to the school and encouraged teachers to love their students and to become their friends, whom the students could confide in. The belief is that, if the students love their teachers, they will be willing to listen to their teachers and will thus want to learn and do their homework. Care for students is instilled as teachers are expected to identify students who may need counselling and highlight this to the principal. This network of support and attention from the leaders and teachers helps to ensure that proper care and support are provided to students who need them, thus reinforcing the loving culture that the leaders are trying to inculcate, and having the students perceive the school as a second home. According to Benda (2002), "the principal is the most potent factor in determining school climate" and that "a direct relationship between visionary leadership and school climate and culture is imperative to support teacher efforts that lead to the success of the instructional [and disciplinary] program" [p5].

According to Brown and Evans (2002), one of the key factors in promoting feelings of belonging at school is students' participation in extracurricular activities. These positive school-related effects relate to a number of adaptive academic outcomes (Anderman, 2002), whereby academic engagement is an important indicator of students' commitment to school that may buffer against early dropout (Fredricks et al., 2004). However, the de-emphasis of academic performance in school 2 seemed to provide students with a choice; i.e. excelling in extra-curricular activities is an alternative to succeeding academically. This somehow provided a subtle message to the students, especially the weaker ones, to work harder to succeed in sports such as football. Principals influence the interpretation and implications of student achievement by their definition of what represents success (Ross and Gray, 2006). As such, the school has enjoyed considerable success in extra-curricular activities in recent years. This not only affected the

students who are academically weak; the teachers also observed that even students who are academically strong, those in the first class, also lack the competitiveness to excel academically as they did not want to 'stand' out among their peers. This peer influence, and the teachers' weak sense of belief in their students' capability, which was strengthened by their leaders' lack of commitment towards academic excellence, seemed to influence a lack of interest in learning and a culture of poor academic performance in the school. Hence, high truancy among students, and challenges in teaching them, seemed to be common issues faced by teachers in school 2. According to Hughes and Kwok (2007), when students experience a sense of belonging at school, and supportive relationships with teachers and classmates, they are motivated to participate actively and appropriately in the life of the classroom. While this was not the case for school 2, evidence for this virtuous effect could be observed at school 1. School 2 principal's lack of care and engagement with his teachers did not provide the necessary support or guidance for his teachers to reach out positively to the students. Committed teacher effort is "affected by the type of leadership that administrators exhibit" (Ware & Kitsantas, 2007, p. 304). The lack of teachers' alignment to the principal's vision, coupled with the challenges in teaching and the attribution of the lack of competency in their students, indicates that school 2 did not provide a positive learning environment for its students.

Influence on parents

In Leithwood et al's (2010) Four Path Model, the family path comprises unalterable and alterable types. The unalterable family-related variables are those over which the school has no influence (e.g., parental education, parental income), while the alterable family variables, sometimes referred to as family educational culture, are potentially open to influence from the school and its leadership. The alterable family variables are captured in Epstein's spheres of influence, as previously discussed in the "Parental engagement" section. There are six types of involvement to encourage the partnership between the schools, families and communities to improve student learning. Type 2-communicating is focused on school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programmes and children's progress. Schools help parents by providing timely updates on their child's academic progress and health. School 1's principal practised an open-door policy with the parents, whereby she shared her contact number to enable direct contact with them via WhatsApp. This inclusiveness and regular updates on school events and students' academic performance led to more positive engagement with the parents and parental involvement in school activities. In addition, form teachers were also encouraged to reach out to parents via WhatsApp, providing for a more effective and timely response to parents to follow-up with their

children on required homework and awareness on their child's progress. For school 2, parents were usually contacted only when their child had a disciplinary problem.

Parents in school 1 are from the middle-income group and they chose to send their children to this school. Hence, this could influence their high participation and involvement in their children's progress and in the school's activities. Research by Allen et al. (2014) shows that middle classes tend to value performance and peer groups while lower SES groups may look for accessibility, friendliness of staff, and support for those of lower ability. This is aligned to the observations made for school 2. In school 2, a high number of students are from the neighbouring low-cost flats. The lower SES parents prioritise the ease of sending their children to a nearby school over the school's academic performance. In addition, as the lower SES parents work long hours, they have less time to be involved in school activities, or to be informed on their children's academic progress. Hence, it is debatable how much influence school 2's leaders could have on lower SES parents to be more involved in their children's academic performance when they even have problems in feeding them due to their low income.

The comparative analysis of the leadership influences in the two case study schools indicates that school 1's principal was able to positively influence her stakeholders, leading to positive student outcomes. In contrast, the school 2 principal's influence on his stakeholders also seemed to impact student outcomes, but negatively. Although it is important to note that school 1's context was more favourable than that of school 2, it is still noteworthy to point out that the actions taken by school 1's principal seemed to contribute positively to enhancing and improving the condition of the school. As for school 2, the strategies implemented by the principal appeared to cause conflicting priorities for administrators and teachers, leading to compromised student outcomes. In the following section, the leadership practices and styles that influence student outcomes are further explored to consider whether and how they contribute to positive student outcomes.

Leadership Styles

According to the Blueprint, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has identified three leadership styles that it would like its school leaders to adopt, to replace the mostly administrative leadership that is currently practiced. These are instructional, distributed and transformational leadership. In this section, these three various leadership styles are explored to identify which styles are practised in the case study schools, and their impact on student outcomes, if any.

<u>Instructional leadership</u>

Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) instructional management framework provides three dimensions on the role of the principal; defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school learning climate, with 10 instructional leadership functions. Drawing from this framework, the teacher's survey items are categorised according to these three dimensions to assess how far the school's principal exhibits instructional leadership. Leithwood et al. (2004) have also inferred, through a review of the literature, that to create academic achievement, an instructional leader must adopt the following goals: create and sustain a competitive school, empower others to make significant decisions, provide instructional guidance, and develop and implement strategic and school improvement plans.

Table 6.3 provides the teachers' feedback on their respective school principal's behaviours associated with defining the school mission. It summarises the mean for each of the behaviours identified for the dimensions based on the numerical scoring of the responses; with 5-Almost Always, 4-Frequently, 3-Sometimes, 2-Seldom, 1-Almost Never. The more that the principal is perceived to exhibit these behaviours, the score will be closer to five, and the more effective the principal is deemed to be in defining the school mission. The data in table 6.3 are based on 18 responses from school 1 and 17 from school 2.

Instructional Leadership	School 1 (Mean)	School 2 (Mean)
Defining School Mission	**4.07**	**2.79**
1) Develop a focused set of annual school-wide goals	3.89	2.88
2) Develop goals that are easily understood and used by	4.11	2.65
3) Discuss with teachers in developing the school goals	3.89	2.65
4) Effectively motivate the teachers to achieve the school	4.11	2.71
5) Discuss the school's academic goals at faculty meetings	4.33	3.06

Source: School 1 and 2 Teacher's Survey 2017
(5-Almost Always, 4-Frequently, 3-Sometimes, 2-Seldom, 1-Almost Never)

Table 6.3: Comparative analysis of school 1's and 2's principals' effectiveness in defining the school mission

Table 6.3 indicates that school 1's principal is perceived to be better at defining the school mission than school 2's principal, scoring close to or more than 4 in the measured behaviours. This indicates that, on average, the respondents perceived that school 1's principal frequently (with average mean score of 4.07) defines the school mission well. In contrast, teachers in school 2 only perceived that their principal

sometimes (with average mean score of 2.79) exhibited behaviours related to defining the school mission, with the lowest score for discussion with teachers in developing the school goals and developing goals that were easily understood and used by the teachers. Similar trends are also observed for the other two dimensions of instructional leadership; managing the instructional programme and developing the school culture (see tables 6.4 and 6.5).

Instructional Leadership	School 1 (Mean)	School 2 (Mean)
Managing the instructional programme	**3.74**	**2.49**
8) Point out specific strengths & weaknesses in teacher's instructional practices in post-observation feedback	3.89	2.41
17) Meet individually with teachers to discuss student progress	3.61	2.41
18) Discuss academic performance results with the faculty to identify curricular strengths and weaknesses	3.72	2.65

Source: School 1 and 2 Teacher's Survey 2017
(5-Almost Always, 4-Frequently, 3-Sometimes, 2-Seldom, 1-Almost Never)

Table 6.4: Comparative analysis of school 1 and 2's principals' effectiveness in managing the instructional programme

Both principals did not score as well in managing the instructional programme, compared to defining the school mission, as they received lower scores on average. However, school 1's principal was still perceived by her teachers to be frequently (scores of above 3.5) managing the instructional programme, with the highest score received for pointing our specific strengths and weaknesses in her teacher's instructional practices in post-observation feedback (3.89). For school 2, the principal was mostly perceived as seldom (average score of 2.49) managing the instructional programme, with the highest score for discussing academic performance results with the faculty to identify curricular strengths and weaknesses.

Table 6.5 provides the feedback on the principal's effectiveness in developing the school's learning climate. School 1's principal was perceived to frequently (average score of 4.05) exhibit behaviours in developing an effective school learning climate, most notably in developing pathways for leaders and teachers alike to grow professionally (4.17), to inform students of school's academic progress (4.11), and to encourage teachers to use instructional time for teaching and practicing new skills and concepts (4.11). On the contrary, the majority of school 2 respondents felt that the principal did not develop the school

learning climate well (average score of 2.80), particularly in contacting parents to communicate exemplary student performance or contributions (2.59).

Instructional Leadership	School 1 (Mean)	School 2 (Mean)
Develop the school learning climate	**4.05**	**2.80**
10) Encourage teachers to use instructional time for teaching and practicing new skills	4.11	2.88
13) Use assemblies to honour students	4.00	2.82
14) Contact parents to communicate exemplary student performance or	4.00	2.59
15) Encourage teachers to recognise and reward student contributions to the	3.89	2.88
16) Develop pathways for leaders and teachers alike to grow professionally	4.17	2.82
19) Inform students of school's academic	4.11	2.82

Source: School 1 and 2 Teacher's Survey 2017
(5-Almost Always, 4-Frequently, 3-Sometimes, 2-Seldom, 1-Almost Never)

Table 6.5: Comparative analysis of school 1 and 2's principals' effectiveness in developing the school learning climate

There appears to be a strong emphasis on instructional leadership at school 1 compared with school 2 (see table 6.6). Most of the school 1's teachers acknowledged that their principal frequently practised instructional leadership (average score of 3.95). She was found to be strongest in defining the school mission (4.07), followed by developing the school learning climate (4.05), and lastly in managing the instructional programme (3.74). On the other hand, school 2's principal was only perceived to sometimes exhibiting instructional leadership (average score of 2.69), with the lowest score for managing the instructional programme (2.49).

	School 1 (Mean)	School 2 (Mean)
Instructional Leadership	3.95	2.69
Defining school mission	4.07	2.79
Managing the instructional programme	3.74	2.49
Develop school learning climate	4.05	2.80

Source: School 1 and 2 Teacher's Survey 2017
(5-Almost Always, 4-Frequently, 3-Sometimes, 2-Seldom, 1-Almost Never)

Table 6.6: Summary of instructional leadership practices in school 1 and 2

According to Robinson et al. (2008), instructional leadership makes an impact on students because it has a strong focus on the quality of teachers and teaching, and these variables explain more of the within-school residual variance in student achievement than any other leadership model (Darling-Hammond, 2000). The strongest effect sizes are found when principals promote and participate in teacher learning and development and in planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum.

Harris et al's (2017) small-scale, exploratory study of principals' instructional leadership practices in 30 Malaysian primary schools found that some of the duties and activities associated with being a principal in Malaysia are particularly congruent with instructional leadership practices. In particular, the supervision of teaching and learning, along with leading professional learning, were strongly represented in their data. However, school 2's principal did not appear to exhibit this 'common' instructional leadership behaviour of developing his teachers and providing feedback frequently to them. He was particularly weak in managing the instructional programme and did not seem to be able to provide effective guidance to his teachers. In contrast, the school 1 principal exhibited strong instructional leadership and was able to develop her leaders and teachers well, resulting in a school with a clear vision and high academic achievement. Sharma et al's (2018) literature review of instructional leadership in Malaysia showed a sizeable number of studies but they did not provide a clear picture of instructional leadership practices of principals, with some studies reported moderate to high levels of instructional leadership in terms of framing school goals and communication, while others revealed the low visibility of principals and low rates of supervising instruction. Quah (2011) noted that teachers seemed to have positive perceptions of their principals' instructional leadership.

Distributed leadership

Bush and Glover (2012) propose that the increase in principal accountabilities has created a need for distributed or shared leadership. Distributed leadership practice involves stakeholders in the decision-making process, fosters teamwork and creates a collaborative work culture in order to improve school performance (Park & Ham, 2016).

Table 6.7 provides the comparative analysis of distributed leadership practices in schools 1 and 2.

Distributed Leadership	School 1 (Mean)	School 2 (Mean)
Average mean	**4.13**	**3.07**
3) Discuss with teachers in developing the school goals	3.88	2.64
6) Distribute various tasks to staff to lead & achieve the school priorities	4.22	3.53
7) Encourage open collaboration among the teachers, students & parents	4.28	3.35
9) Provide opportunity for others to share ideas and drive initiatives to improve student outcomes	4.17	2.76

Source: School 1 and 2 Teacher's Survey 2017
(5-Almost Always, 4-Frequently, 3-Sometimes, 2-Seldom, 1-Almost Never)

Table 6.7: Comparative analysis of school 1 and 2's principals' distributed leadership practices

School 1's principal was perceived to almost always (average score of 4.13) practise distributed leadership, while school 2's principal was practising it sometimes (average score of 3.07). Both school leaders achieve the highest score for most frequently distributing various tasks to staff to lead and achieve the school priorities. The school 1 principal also appeared to frequently encourage open collaboration and provide opportunities and empowerment for her teachers and leaders to share ideas and initiatives. However, teachers in school 2 perceived their principal to predominantly distribute tasks to them while rarely empowering them to share and drive initiatives to improve student outcomes. For school 2, the most frequent activities practised by the principal appeared to be the delegation of tasks, which is not the same as distributed leadership.

Distributed leadership can easily become a 'catch-all' for any attempt to share leadership or delegate leadership to others (Harris, 2005). According to Spillane (2005), "a distributed perspective presses us to look not only at who takes responsibility for particular leadership routines and functions but also how the practice of leadership takes form in the interactions of these leaders with followers and with the situation" (p. 50). Bush and Ng (2019) found that, instead of the emergent model discussed and advocated in the literature, Malaysian schools embraced an allocative model, with principals sharing responsibilities with senior leaders in a manner that was often indistinguishable from delegation. School 2's principal seemed to practice a delegative and hierarchical style of leadership, in assigning tasks to teachers rather than distributing leadership through emphasising shared leadership and empowerment to achieve shared goals.

<u>Transformational leadership</u>

Table 6.8 compares the extent to which the principals in the case study schools are perceived to practise transformational leadership. Most of the teachers in school 1 felt that their principal frequently practices transformational leadership (average score of 3.89). Teachers in school 1 found that their principal most frequently motivates them to achieve school goals (4.11) and developed goals that were easily understood and used by them (4.11). They perceived less frequently that their principal was taking the time to build rapport by talking informally with them (3.56).

Transformational Leadership	School 1	School 2
Average mean	**3.89**	**2.82**
11) Take time to talk informally with the teachers and students during recess and breaks	3.56	3.06
12) Participate in extra- and co-curricular activities	3.78	2.82
4) Effectively motivate the teachers to achieve the school	4.11	2.71
2) Develop goals that are easily understood and used by	4.11	2.65
1) Develop a focused set of annual school-wide goals	3.89	2.88

Source: School 1 and 2 Teacher's Survey 2017
(5-Almost Always, 4-Frequently, 3-Sometimes, 2-Seldom, 1-Almost Never)

Table 6.8: Comparative analysis of school 1 and 2's principals' transformational leadership practices

In contrast, teachers in school 2 only sometimes found their principal to be practicing transformational leadership (average score of 2.82). He was weakest in developing goals that are easily understood and used by the teachers (2.65) and in motivating his teachers to achieve the school goals (2.71).

According to Ross & Gray (2006), transformational leaders build professional learning communities, to drive higher teacher efficacy with higher commitment to: (a) school mission, (b) higher parental involvement and, (c) contribution of effort to the community. It could be observed that school 1's principal has taken steps to build these professional learning communities as she was able to successfully obtain high commitment from her teachers and parents towards the school's goals. Ross and Gray (2006) further pointed out that, within this environment, teachers are sufficiently confident about their abilities to invite colleagues to help them to address areas of needed personal growth. In these collaborative efforts, they can develop new teaching strategies, which further teacher effectiveness and, thereby, increase teacher efficacy. Abdullah's (2005) Malaysian study found that school leader's transformational leadership affects the responsibility of the teachers to the school. Transformational leadership can increase teachers ' motivation, leading to a positive impact on students' academic outcomes.

Principals who choose to utilize the transformational leadership style are able to establish environments in which teachers feel satisfied with the leader or teacher relationship and are willing to invest more time, effort, and commitment to the success of the entire school and community (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999). This is very apparent in school 1 but much less so in school 2.

Transformational principals have the power to influence the beliefs of the staff in relation to student achievement. In such schools, teacher commitment to mission, goals, values, and community is driven by high teacher efficacy, which results in increased student achievement. In Malaysia, Abdul Rahman and Hashim (2017,) and Hashim and Abdul Shukor (2017), both indicate a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and teacher motivation in Malaysian schools. One of the reasons why teachers in school 2 felt tired and unmotivated, could be due to their principal's lack of transformational leadership and failure in establishing a nurturing and caring environment that teachers could relate to, and enhance their job satisfaction.

However, Robinson et al. (2008) found that the more generic nature of transformational leadership theory, with its focus on leader–follower relations, rather than on the work of improving learning and teaching, may be responsible for its weaker effect on student outcomes. Transformational leadership theory predicts teacher attitudes and satisfaction, but, on the whole, its positive impacts on staff do not flow through to students. From the research findings on school 1 and school 2, collective teacher efficacy, which is linked to transformational leadership, seemed to impact on student outcomes, either positively and negatively. Leithwood and Sun (2012) reinforce that transformational leadership practices are crucial, within an educational setting, to secure better performance and outcomes.

Table 6.9 provides the average score received for school 1 and school 2's principals for the three leadership styles above.

Leadership Styles	School 1 (Avg. Mean)	School 2 (Avg. Mean)
Instructional Leadership	3.95	2.69
Defining school mission	4.07	2.79
Managing the instructional programme	3.74	2.49
Develop school learning climate	4.05	2.80
Distributed Leadership	4.13	3.07
Transformational Leadership	3.89	2.82

Source: School 1 and 2 Teacher's Survey 2017
(5-Almost Always, 4-Frequently, 3-Sometimes, 2-Seldom, 1-Almost Never)

Table 6.9: The average scores received for school 1 and 2's principals for the three leadership styles

Distributed leadership seems to be the preferred leadership style perceived to be exhibited most frequently by the principals of both schools (although the school 2 principal's approach was mostly delegated leadership). Jones & Harris (2014) agree that, as the pressure of accountability grows and the demands for educational excellence increases, it is increasingly clear that improving school performance cannot be located with the principal alone.

School 1's principal exhibited a stronger instructional leadership style than transformational leadership. While school 2 principal exhibited weaker leadership on average, he appeared to show stronger transformational leadership than instructional leadership. Malaklolunthu & Shamsudin (2011) stated that principals in Malaysia are viewed as transformational leaders who are expected to lead change and improve performance in line with national expectations. The Ministry expects Malaysian principals to bring about change in their schools and to improve examination results year on year (Tie, 2012). Jones et al. (2015) found that, despite the pressure on principals to secure better school and student outcomes, principals in Malaysia increasingly view their leadership practices as transformational and distributed.

Overview

The Malaysian Education Blueprint emphasises that principals should be instructional leaders and not administrative leaders (MEB 2013: E-27), a challenge to achieve as administrative leadership is widely used in highly centralised systems such as Malaysia (Bush et al., 2018). However, as Malaysian principals have heavy management responsibilities, curriculum supervision (an important task for instructional leaders) is now a task regularly delegated to senior teachers as principals have no time to carry out these tasks (Tie, 2012). School principals face conflict when leading learning, and in the daily engagement with professional practice, as they are required to spend more time in ensuring and monitoring teachers' professional duties and students' learning activities (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2010). More efforts are still required in order to successfully assist principals to transition from their administrative work to becoming instructional leaders.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This chapter shows how the research questions were addressed and discusses the significance of the research.   The aims of the research were to establish how school leadership influences student learning outcomes in the Malaysian education system and to find out how school leaders close the achievement gaps for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.   The following section will show how the research questions were addressed from the research findings. This will be followed by the significance of the research, exploring contextual, methodological and theoretical significance.   The contextual significance discusses how the research adds to existing knowledge about school leadership in Malaysia, while the methodological significance explains how the research differs from that conducted by other Malaysian sources.   In the theoretical significance section, relevant theories will be discussed before identifying how this research contributes to the current existing leadership theories.   In the final section, the implications of the research for policy and practice will be discussed.

Answering the Research Questions

The research questions are:

1.   What is the relationship between leadership and student outcomes in secondary schools in the two case study schools in the Klang Valley?

2.   How do leaders exert their influence to promote enhanced student outcomes, particularly for students from low socio-economic contexts?

3.   Which leadership styles are most effective in promoting enhanced student outcomes in the case study schools?

4.   How do leadership approaches differ between higher and lower band schools in the Klang Valley?

The sub-sections below elaborate how the research questions were addressed in the study.

<u>RQ1: What is the relationship between leadership and student outcomes in a high-performing and a low-performing secondary school in the Klang Valley?</u>

The study has provided evidence that leadership impacts on student learning, either directly or indirectly. In school 1, there is a strong emphasis placed on students' academic performance. The school leadership provides a clear vision and mission, facilitated by a conducive environment for learning, and support for teachers. All of this has contributed to excellent and consistent student outcomes over the years. School 1 had been achieving 100% passes in the form five national examinations in the last three years.

For school 2, the lack of academic focus by its school principal, coupled with unclear goals and mission, caused conflicts among teachers and appeared to jeopardise learning effectiveness at the school. In addition, the frequent changes in its principal and senior leadership, due to retirement, did not seem to contribute to the conducive learning and working environment required to improve student outcomes. As a result, school 2 has been experiencing a steady decline in its student performance during the past few years.

It could be argued that the school context, which differs between the two schools, may have influenced the student outcomes. School 2 faced a more challenging context as it had been receiving a higher percentage of students (from 20 - 40%) from the lower SES background in recent years, due to the school's proximity to low cost flats. These students were often in the last classes as they had difficulty in following the lessons due to their weak academic background and were usually low performers. However, according to school 2's teachers' feedback, the principal's weak leadership and lack of academic focus had worsened the situation at the school. The school had the worst academic performance in its district under the principal's leadership. In addition, teachers also had higher administrative tasks due to the stringent filing requirements implemented by the principal, with many teachers finding it to be unnecessary and adding to their already high workload.

While leadership accounts for about one-quarter of total direct and indirect effects on student learning, second only to classroom instruction (Leithwood et al., 2004), this study provides evidence of how leaders can impact on the working conditions and the support that teachers receive which, in turn, impact on student outcomes.

<u>RQ2: How do leaders exert their influence to promote enhanced student outcomes, particularly for students from low socio-economic contexts?</u>

The school 1 principal seemed to tap on the moral conscience of her teachers to motivate them to give their best to their students. She frequently led by example and stressed the need for teamwork to support her leaders and teachers, so that they would be more willing to assume added responsibilities as required. Teachers in school 1 were empowered to improve the academic performance of their students as they determined the KPIs for their students based on their own identification and categorisation of their students, according to their academic performance and potential. School 1's principal frequently monitored the teachers' performance against their stated KPIs and would discuss and plan intervention programmes with the teachers if any teachers were found to have students not progressing as expected. These are all part of the school's highly successful 'Diamonds, Jewels and Pearls' programme, which have different goals and interventions for students with different capabilities and potential. It has been credited with much of the academic success at the school. The teachers in school 1 seemed to work beyond the regular work hours to provide additional classes for their students, particularly the weaker students, to improve their academic performance.

There is no marked difference in academic performance between the low SES students , and the others, as only students with proven academic excellence were admitted to the school, regardless of their background. However, the principal did acknowledge that the students with the lowest academic potential may not be from the middle-class families, residing in the more affluent neighbourhood, and may not have a conducive home environment for learning. In response, she had introduced an immersive programme for the weakest students to be held at a hotel for 3 days and 2 nights, a few weeks prior to the national examination. This programme is aimed at providing the students with a conducive learning environment to prepare them for the examination. Students were given last minute intensive exercises and preparation for the examinations by teachers in an environment that emphasises learning to motivate the students. School 1's principal made the extra effort to ensure that these weaker students were able to catch up as they had a direct impact on the school's ability to achieve 100% pass rate for all subjects in the national examination. The programme has been very successful as the school has secured 100% passes in the national examinations every year since it was introduced. The principal's proactive stance, and empathy, along with the commitment and trust that she seemed to receive from her leadership team and teachers, enabled the principal to influence the school's learning culture, so that positive student outcomes could be sustained.

The school 2 principal and leaders seemed to adhere to a 'one-size-fits-all' model for all its students, including exercise drills during class hours for form 3 and form 5 classes a few months prior to the national examinations. The only distinct programme for higher potential students was the provision of motivational talks to encourage them to perform better. Teachers were not empowered to identify and differentiate their students according to their abilities. There seemed to be a general acknowledgment that the 'lower quality' students that the school seemed to have in abundance, who did not enjoy learning and were unable to follow the lessons taught by the teachers, could not improve, regardless of the support or intervention from the teachers. The teachers seemed to 'hope for the best', with the leaders readily accepting the school's challenging context as something that was not within their control. This resulted in school 2 having the worst academic performance in its district. Rather than taking responsibility for this disappointing performance, the principal began to focus more on extra-curricular achievements, to provide an alternative for the students to achieve. He did not set any goals and targets to improve the school's academic performance but appeared to believe it could not get any worse than where the school was.

However, some evidence of how much student outcomes could be enhanced if the principal had focused on academic press for the school could be seen by the initiative taken by the school's senior administrators when the school was at the bottom of the school performance list for its educational district. School 2's senior administrators decided to rally the teachers to improve the school's academic performance. By appealing to the teachers' sense of pride and embarrassment at being in the worst school, concerted efforts to improve the academic performance were made. More exercises and drills were introduced, and teachers seemed to be united in the one goal to improve the school's academic performance and not be at the bottom the following year. With this renewed rigour and drive, the teachers did not seem to focus on why their students could not learn, but rather that they just showed some improvements, no matter how small. Their efforts appeared to be successful, as the school registered a 15% improvement within a year and was not the worst performing school the following year. This seemed to reinforce how leadership can influence student outcomes, either negatively in the case of school 2 principal's lack of academic focus, or positively, when the senior administrators decided to set a target to improve the school's academic performance. In contrast, the principal introduced initiatives to provide the students with an alternative to excel in other areas beyond academics, such as in extra-curricular activities (e.g. football and archery), and having the school recognised in the Malaysian Book of Records as the school with the longest 3D quotes. He also tried to bridge the gap and empathy among the teachers for lower SES students through the "Loving Prayers" programme. This outreach programme assigned teachers, in

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pairs, to visit the homes of identified low SES students, in order to better understand their living conditions and to interact with the parents to discuss options to enhance students' learning. While the principal may have good intentions, his lack of follow-up did not provide much momentum for his initiatives. Teachers continued to struggle with conflicting goals and lack the support to teach effectively. Due to the absence of strong leadership and commitment from the principal, the rigour and focus on academic could not be sustained.

RQ3: Which leadership styles are most effective in promoting enhanced student outcomes in the case study schools?

The two principals seemed to adopt distinctively different leadership styles. While the distributed leadership style seemed to be the most popular style employed by leaders in both schools, there are differences in how it was enacted in the respective schools. As principals are tasked by the Ministry of Education with many responsibilities, they would be unable to perform well without effectively delegating some tasks to their senior administrators. However, effective distributed leadership requires the ability to empower others to lead, as opposed to just providing top-down delegation of tasks and responsibilities, but without authority or empowerment. While school 1 principal empowered her teachers and leaders to take on new roles and initiatives, discussing the goals and vision with them, and providing the necessary support for them to excel, she still seemed to need to assign tasks to them. The teachers did not voluntarily assume a leadership role for any tasks without first seeking the agreement from the principal or the school administrators. This seemed to be aligned to the allocative distributed leadership style noted by Bush and Ng (2019), which is consistent with a centrally managed and hierarchical educational system. The school 2 principal seemed to follow the top-down, hierarchical, leadership style and delegated various tasks to his leaders and teachers, without first soliciting their feedback or involvement. This delegation of duty and responsibilities resulted in school 2 teachers only doing what was necessary to get the job done, rather than to do it well, as observed in school 1. While school 1 teachers often used the phrase that they were entrusted by their principal to perform a certain task, and hence they had to do it well, and there was a sense of respect and trust for their principal, this approach seemed to be absent in school 2. While the allocative distributed leadership style fostered by school 1's principal seemed to result in motivated teachers giving their best efforts for the tasks assigned, this may not necessarily

translate to enhanced student outcomes. These tasks could be varied in nature and may not be academically focused.

The leadership style that seemed to be most effective in promoting enhanced student outcomes was instructional leadership. School 1 principal seemed to practise all the three instructional leadership dimensions introduced by Hallinger and Murphy (1985); defining the school's mission, managing the instructional programme and developing the school learning climate. She provides a clear vision and goals for the school, stressing academic excellence. She also introduced the school motto emphasising teamwork, which is frequently used at school events and activities by her leaders, teachers and students. She frequently monitors her teachers and informally performs classroom observations. Her teachers seemed to appreciate the feedback that they received from her to improve their teaching. She also constantly monitors the students' performance and works with her teachers to develop intervention programmes to improve their performance, based on the available data. School 1's principal also seemed to be warm and friendly, and well-liked by her teachers. Her charisma and empathy, and her leadership by example, seemed to motivate and empower her teachers to perform their best in their assigned tasks and work. Her ability to nurture a caring and warm learning environment at the school, and foster great teamwork among the teachers and leaders, appeared to enable them to focus and to deliver the school's goals; notably to maintain the current high academic achievement. The lack of instructional leadership and academic press in school 2 seemed to have a detrimental effect on the students' performance in the school. Performance has been steadily declining, with the school being the worst performing school in its educational district. However, as noted above, some evidence of the effectiveness of instructional leadership in enhancing student outcomes could be seen when the school's senior administrators decided to put in concerted goals and initiatives to improve the school's academic performance.

The leadership style that seemed to be the least effective in enhancing student outcomes was the administrative and hierarchical leadership style preferred by the school 2 principal. The top-down approach, and lack of monitoring and feedback, seemed to result in teachers doing only what was required, rather than being outcomes-driven as no explicit goals were set or agreed upon. He did not provide support or motivate his teachers to deliver well in the tasks he assigned to them. His goal to de-emphasise academic excellence caused much conflict among the teachers. He practised a close-door policy, whereby only his senior leaders had direct access to him, and not the teachers. He did not seem to value fostering good relationships with his teachers. As a result, he was unable to raise students'

academic performance and he did not obtain much trust and commitment from his teachers, thus a supportive and learning environment was not apparent in school 2.

Overall, while instructional leadership seemed to be the most effective leadership style in promoting enhanced student outcomes, school 1 principal did not just employ one leadership style. There appeared to be a 'layering' of leadership styles for different phases of the school. At the current phase, where students are consistently achieving and performing well, the focus is on maintaining the current performance. Hence, the school principal seemed to spend more time in empowering and motivating her experienced teachers and giving them the support needed to excel in their teaching. She seemed to practise distributed and transformational leadership styles. She appeared to be leading well as there were engaged and motivated teachers, who are aligned and motivated to deliver on her goals to achieve a strong academic performance for the school.

RQ4: How do leadership approaches differ between higher and lower performing schools in the Klang Valley?

School 1 and 2 are different contextually, with the former being a high-performing school with few low SES students, while the latter is a low-performing school with 20-40% of its students from the low SES background. In addition, as a cluster school of excellence, school 1 has strict entry criteria for its students and is able to select those with good academic backgrounds. School 2 was not able to select its students and had to admit students from its neighbourhood, particularly those students living in the nearby low cost flats. As such, school 1 seemed to have more favourable and higher quality students compared to school 2. This contextual factor alone would have a strong influence on the student outcomes at the schools.

School 1 is in an enviable position, with most aspects operating well. Teachers are motivated, students are performing well academically, and there is a culture of teamwork and trust supporting the teaching and learning environment in the school. As such, school 1 is focused on maintaining its current excellent academic performance. School 1 principal's leadership practices are influenced by her personal traits and values, generally guided by her warm and personable nature and high moral conscience. Her empathy and years of experience as an educator provided her with personal insights on how best to relate to her teachers and leaders, so that she would be able to motivate and empower them to successfully deliver on

her assigned tasks and goals. She mostly practices transformational and distributed leadership styles. She cemented the school's vision and goals into the school motto that is used in every aspect of the school's life and applied by everyone; leaders, teachers and students. The principal has also maintained a high-level of engagement with the parents, often seeking their support and guidance to contribute to the school positively. She seemed to have created a conducive work and learning environment for her staff and students, which may have contributed to the school's sustained success in students' academic performance.

School 2's principal has few similarities with school 1 principal's leadership approach. Prior to being the school's principal, he was an administrator in a district education office. Thus he lacked educator experience and, with his previous administrative background, he seemed to value a more authoritative and bureaucratic leadership style. Teachers could not openly approach him as he preferred to be consulted by his senior leadership team. His teachers had to adhere to strict protocols and hierarchy, which seemed to alienate him from his teachers. He mostly focused on administrative excellence and non-academic achievement. Being a relatively weak instructional leader, he also did not monitor or provide feedback to his leaders and teachers on how to improve the academic performance of the school. He preferred to delegate and assign a lot of tasks, especially academic-related tasks, to his leaders or teachers, usually without much prior consultation. As the district education office emphasised the school's academic performance, and it was actively tracked by the State education office and the Ministry, the teachers faced conflicts with the principal's lack of focus on academic achievement. With the weak leadership observed in school 2, exacerbated by the principal's conflicting goals and the school's challenging student context, school 2 seemed to be on a downward spiral. Improving student outcomes in school 2 requires clear goals, accepted and understood by its leaders and teachers, and a conducive work and learning environment to motivate and support teachers in their teaching, and students in their learning. Reynolds et al. (2014) noted that "Ineffective schools have weak principal leadership, a lack of emphasis on the acquisition of basic skills, a disorderly climate, low or uneven expectations, and inconsistent or no monitoring of student progress" (p. 214). This seemed to characterise school 2.

In addition, school 2 was continuously led by short tenured principals, an average of three years, who were close to retirement. School 2 also experienced frequent changes to its senior leadership team, who were usually assigned by the district education office when there was a vacancy, with no clear succession planning or development path for the schoolteachers to assume these positions. At the junior-to-mid level leadership roles, new and younger teachers were typically assigned to these roles by the principal,

when the incumbent, typically the older and more experienced teachers, wanted to relinquish their positions to focus only on teaching. These new teachers were usually not provided with much support or guidance and had to learn on the job. As such, a strong trust and teamwork culture in school 2 did not seem to exist.

According to Leithwood et al. (2008), schools that achieve and sustain improvement in students' academic performance and wellbeing are led by heads who have strong ethical values and moral purpose. Heads nurture success in schools through sustained articulation, communication and the application of core values with a range of internal and external stakeholders, using high levels of intellectual and interpersonal qualities and skills. These traits seemed to be present in school 1's principal and largely absent in school 2's principal. While successful leadership is context-specific, successful heads use the same basic leadership practices. Leaders have greater impact on the neediest underperforming schools; therefore, building leadership capacity in these schools should be part of any school improvement efforts.

Significance of the Research

This section addresses the contextual, methodological and theoretical significance of the research. The contextual significance discusses how the research adds to existing knowledge about school leadership in Malaysia, while the methodological significance explains how the research differs from that conducted by other Malaysian sources. The theoretical significance section shows how this research contributes to current leadership theories.

Contextual significance

In general, the school system in Malaysia is viewed as bureaucratic and hierarchical in nature, with an over emphasis on centralized school management (Abdullah, DeWitt and Alias, 2013). Recent policy developments within Malaysia have reinforced principals' accountability and underlined the importance of the role of the principals in securing school effectiveness and student learning outcomes (Jones et al., 2015; Rahimah & Ghavifekr, 2014). They are now viewed as transformational leaders who are expected to lead change and improve performance in line with national expectations (Malaklolunthu & Shamsudin, 2011; Tie, 2012). One of the imperatives of the Blueprint is to raise successful principals in all schools, with a focus towards instructional leadership. The Ministry stresses that "an outstanding principal is one focused on instructional and not administrative leadership" (MEB 2013: E-27). However, the most common leadership style practiced by the low performing school 2 principal was the administrative

leadership style, concurring with Bush et al.'s (2018) observation that, in highly centralised systems such as Malaysia, administrative leadership is widely used. The high performing school 1 principal, on the other hand, commonly practised instructional leadership. She frequently monitors and evaluates her teachers, and has a strong emphasis on academic excellence.

Local research on Malaysian schools indicates that instructional leaders have indirect effects on students' academic achievement (Abdullah & Wahab, 2007). However, most local literature seemed to indicate the importance of instructional leadership to increase teachers' self-efficacy and competencies (Ibrahim & Amin, 2014), teachers' commitment and job satisfaction (Sharma et al., 2018; Abdul Hamid and Abdul Wahab, 2017), rather than its impact on student outcomes. The link with teachers' self-efficacy is important as, according to Hattie (2009), collective teachers' efficacy is one of the most important factors in influencing student outcomes. However, studies on distributed leadership also found positive links between distributed leadership and teacher self-efficacy (Abdul Halim 2015) and between distributed leadership, job stress and job commitment (Boon and Tahir 2013). In addition, local research examining the relationships between transformational leadership and a range of variables, including teacher self-efficacy, job satisfaction and teacher motivation (Abdullah, 2005; Hashim and Abd Shukor, 2017), also showed significant positive effects, echoing the distributed leadership findings. According to Bush et al. (2018), both distributed and transformational leadership appear to have enhanced teacher self-efficacy and reduced teacher stress. However, existing local research did not study the impact of teachers' commitment on student outcomes, and how it is facilitated by the principal leadership.

The inconsistencies noted in the leadership practices in Malaysia may be due to the tendency for most local literature to focus on high performing principals or successful schools. In Ismail (2009)'s quantitative study of instructional leadership in high and low performing secondary schools in Kedah, the author found that instructional practices differ in these school types. The adoption and interpretation of the leadership styles also seem to differ for my research, which provides a comparative analysis between a high performing and a low performing secondary school in Klang Valley, to determine how leadership impacts on student outcomes. For example, the form of distributed leadership practice seen in the low performing school 2 appears to be a top-down delegation of tasks, similar to the allocative model noted by Bush and Ng (2019). In contrast, the distributed leadership observed in the high performing school 1 seemed to be more collaborative in nature, with the principal actively empowering and soliciting the support of her teachers in leading specific initiatives. The focus on academic press and instructional leadership seemed to be the most effective leadership style for enhanced student outcomes, concurring with findings from

Robinson et al., 2008. There was evidence that, when the school leaders and teachers from school 2 stepped up their focus on academic achievement (when the school was ranked at the bottom in its educational district), the school was able to rebound. It demonstrated more than 15% improvement in its student academic performance the subsequent year, and successfully removed itself from the bottom position. My research has been able to contribute to the leadership and student outcomes discourse in Malaysia with the rich analysis obtained from the two dissimilar case study schools.

Methodological significance

My dual case study research is conducted on two schools located within 5 km radius of each other, in an affluent neighbourhood within Klang Valley, a highly populous and developed urban area in Malaysia. The schools were purposively chosen so that their respective external environment, such as the neighbourhood and the education district, was as similar as possible to better control the external influencing factors. The schools shared similar funding sources, programmes, district officials and rules and regulations. The main difference between the two schools is their student performance, indicated by the banding of the school. School 1 is a high performing band 2 school, and has less than 5% of low SES students, while school 2, a low performing band 6 school, has more than 20% of low SES students.

As a mixed-methods research, my study included teachers' surveys that provided the quantitative analysis of the leadership styles perceived at the school, along with the qualitative in-depth interviews with school leaders to learn about their leadership practices and challenges. Combined with the documentary analysis of past student performance and classroom observations, my study was able to provide rich datasets to provide data triangulation. Most research on school leadership in Malaysia focus on successful principals or high performing schools to learn their leadership practices (Waheed et al., 2018; Fook and Sidhu,2009) or to collect surveys only from teachers to learn how a certain leadership style, such as the instructional leadership style is being practised by their principals (Quah, 2011). For example, empirical research on instructional leadership had focused on the use of the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) developed by Hallinger (1990) (Hallinger et al., 2018 and Sharma et al., 2018) and mostly quantitative in nature, without support from qualitative interviews or observations like my research and did not focus on how it impacts on student outcomes. My research design differs from these local researches that tend to focus on successful leadership traits to be emulated among high performing principals or schools, when notably, there are more average and below-average schools than top performing schools in Malaysia. According to current statistics, the total number of schools in Malaysia is 10,154, and among them, only 128 are ranked as high performing schools, which is less than two per cent

(Ministry of Education, 2014). Focusing on the leadership practices of these small but elite schools would not be able to provide a concise and good analysis of the overall practices for the majority of the schools. In contrast, my research addresses leadership and student outcomes in both the high performing and low performing schools, thus providing a better representation of the actual school population in Malaysia and explore the different context.

Ismail (2009)'s quantitative study of instructional leadership in high and low performing secondary schools in Kedah, with 296 teachers, shared similar construct to my research design but it's only quantitative, and lack the in-depth qualitative interviews that could yield further insight into the responses. Waheed et al. (2018)'s study, on the other hand, only explored the best practices of two transformed schools in Selangor, one primary and the other a secondary national school, using qualitative multiple case study. While both these studies performed comparative analysis, the focus is more on the leadership practices in these schools, rather than analysing how it impacts student outcomes.

Most local research lack the in-depth and richness of data to interpret the results observed. Context is rarely being considered as it's assumed to be a 'given' since the focus is usually on high performing principals, and emphasis is on the common practices employed by these leaders. My dual case study design compares two dissimilar schools, with different context, to ascertain the leadership practices that impacts student outcomes, in order to address this gap. As noted by Leithwood and Day (2007) and Liu and Hallinger (in press), it is important to recognize the limitations of the quantitative paradigm when seeking to contextualize leadership. Thus, qualitative and mixed-methods studies are absolutely necessary to elaborate relevant features of leadership in context, as employed in my research design.

Theoretical significance

One of the key themes arising from my study is principal tenure and its effect on the school's overall leadership succession planning and on the development and the sustainability of school culture. In addition, I also explore how it could be applied to schools with different context.

Principal tenure

West et al (2000) argues that school leaders become less effective after five to eight years in a school. Fink and Brayman (2004) note that most schools in North America regularly rotate principals and assistant principals as a matter of policy. Proponents suggest that potential leaders can be developed and existing leaders remain fresh and challenged (Aquila, 1989; Stine, 1998). However, Fink and Brayman (2004)

contend that regularly scheduled principal rotation in turbulent times appears to create more problems than it solves.   The cumulative result is that a school's efforts to sustain "deep learning" experiences for all its students are severely limited (Hargreaves and Fink, 2003). Young and Fuller (2009) concurred, based on their study of principal retention in Texas, that any school reform effort is reliant on the efforts of a principal to create a common school vision and to integrate reform efforts into the culture of a school over several years. Other research suggests that principals must be in place for five years for the full implementation of a large-scale change effort (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1996).

There is little empirical research on principal rotation and tenure in Malaysia. However, this warrants deeper understanding as my research has shown the negative impact of frequent principal rotation. The low principal tenure (less than three years), and frequent principal rotation in school 2, did not facilitate sustained change, as there were no follow-ups of past successes or initiatives to help in creating a common school culture. Frequent rotation of principals in school 2 did not help in instilling trust and confidence in the leadership, with teachers often being wary of being monitored by the senior administrators, and student performance declining.   In contrast, school 1, with its stable leadership team, and strong succession planning, was able to maintain and sustain a virtuous cycle of teamwork, rooted in trust, which helps to motivate and support its teachers.   This has led to sustained high student outcomes.   The argument for a longer principal tenure (at least five years) is based on the potential to nurture and develop succession planning, and a culture of trust and teamwork, leading to enhanced student outcomes.

Wenger (1998) proposes a stage theory that provides insight into the transition process from one leader to another, for both the leaders involved in the transition as well as the school affected. Wenger contends that as we interact over time with multiple social contexts, our identities form trajectories within and across 'communities of practices'. Fink and Brayman (2005) employed four of Wenger's trajectories in their discussion of principals' succession, namely the peripheral trajectories, inbound trajectories, insider trajectories and outbound trajectories. In Day et al. (2010)'s ten strong claims about successful school leadership, the authors claimed that there are three broad phases of leadership success, early (foundational), middle (developmental) and later (enrichment).

This Malaysian research supports and extends established theory linking principal tenure with positive student outcomes. Figure 7.1 depicts the various trajectories that new principals go through over their tenure at a school. It is plotted against the level of influence they could expect to yield along with the leadership phases for each trajectory, as proposed by Wenger (1998).
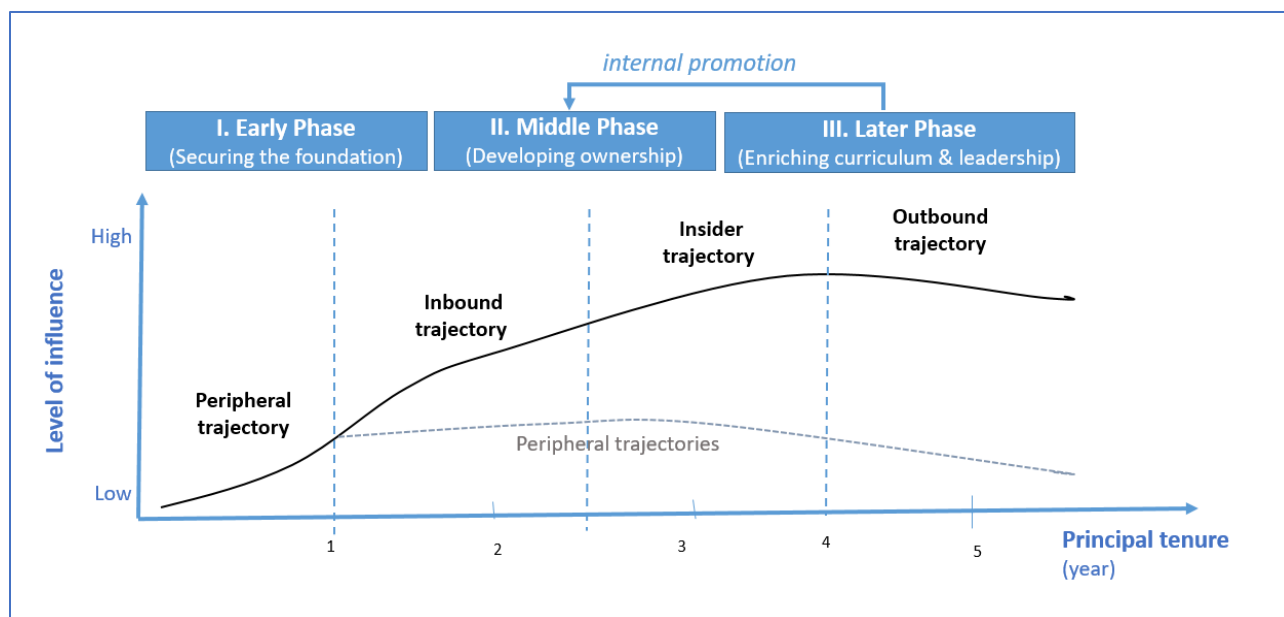
Sources: Results of analysis of school 1 and 2, Wenger (1998) stage theory and Day et al. (2010) three broad phases of leadership success

Figure 7.1 Theoretical framework on principal tenure and level of influence across each trajectory and leadership phases

I. Early foundational phase

New principals, who are assigned to the school, will start with a low level of influence and in the peripheral trajectory, crafting their identity with the communities in the school. Their main leadership focus at that time is to assess the school's needs and securing the school's foundation for growth, such as introducing the school's vision and goals. Principal tenure plays a key influencing factor in explaining the behaviours and influence of the principals, as evidenced at both my case schools.

School 1's transformation only began with the fourth principal, who served more than 10 years. Prior to the fourth principal, the first three principals of school 1 served less than 3 years and appeared to follow the peripheral trajectories proposed by Wenger (1998). These principals did not seem to contribute or influence the school effectively, with few teachers and current school leaders able to recall their contribution. The fourth principal spent her first few years securing the school's foundation by enforcing discipline and governance structure to guide her staff towards a common vision. She introduced many initiatives to enhance student outcomes, with the support of her leaders and teachers.

School 2, on the other hand, had been experiencing frequent rotation of principals, with an average tenure of three years. In addition, the senior leadership team had also undergone frequent changes. School 2

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also appeared to be the final destination for retiring principals, and this had an adverse effect on the school. Hence, it seemed that school 2's principals may not have gained full participation or become a full member of the school, seeming to stay at the peripheral trajectories, as teachers recognise the impermanence of their principal and resist their leader's efforts. Macmillan (2000) contends that teachers see their principals come and go like revolving doors and quickly learn how to resist and ignore their leader's efforts. As a result, the school's performance has been steadily declining and the teachers' trust towards their principal remained low.

If these new principals were able to successfully navigate into the inbound trajectory after their first year, their level of influence will increase as they slowly gain the trust and support of their staff. They could then begin to move to the second phase of leadership and introduce greater accountability and ownership of programmes and initiatives to improve the school. Otherwise, if they continue to remain within the peripheral trajectory, their level of influence decreases, affecting their effectiveness as leaders.

II. Middle developmental phase

Principals who had successfully navigate to the inbound trajectory are en route to the insider trajectory to become a full member of the school's community after their second year. Having set the required foundation, they are now positioned to empower their leaders and teachers to develop more innovative and enriching initiatives to drive the school improvement programme, practising more distributed and instructional leadership.

School 1's fourth principal, who seemed to be able to navigate from the peripheral trajectory into the inbound and later the insider trajectories, was able to garner the support of her leaders and teachers, enabling her to put effective measures that guided the school transformation. As a result, the school's academic performance had been improving and by the eighth year of her tenure, the school was already recognised for academic excellence, with 96% passes in the form five national examination.

The only principal that stood out in school 2 was the third principal, who served the longest at five years. She appeared to have successfully navigated to the inbound trajectory and able to get the support of her leaders and teachers for the initiatives she introduced. School 2 showed signs of academic improvement under her leadership but her efforts were not long-lasting, as her successors did not continue or build upon her initial success after her tenure ended.

III. Later enrichment phase

By the principals' fourth or fifth year, principals should consider moving from the insider trajectory to the outbound trajectory. They should consider the legacy they would like to build in the school and focus more on succession planning, nurturing and developing potential leaders with a proven track record to assume key leadership positions and to continue and improve on their successful initiatives.   This promotes sustained improvement and changes to the school.

School 1's fourth principal had been actively nurturing her middle leaders since her third year onwards. She had been recognising and developing potential teachers to take up key leadership positions in the school. Her efforts were continued by the fifth principal and the current sixth principal was the result of her nurturing and grooming. This is explored further in the s*uccession planning* section below.

Succession planning

In a centralised administration, such as that in Malaysia, principals do not actively manage the development and succession planning of their senior leaders. Any retirements, vacancies and needs are usually reported to the district education office, who would then appoint or assign the relevant individuals to assume the vacant positions at the school. Schools have very little autonomy in selecting their principal, senior leaders or teachers. However, my study has shown evidence that when a school principal actively nurtures the development of potential leaders and grooms them to assume key leadership positions in the school, stability and sustained momentum of change can be achieved, resulting in continuous growth and improvement for the school.

Moving straight to the middle phase with internal promotion

In contrast, no principals from school 2 had successfully navigated to this phase, introducing succession planning or inculcating a sustained positive culture at the school. While school 2's third principal showed signs of academic improvement under her leadership, her efforts could not be sustained as she did not put in place any succession planning for her senior leaders. In addition, subsequent principals also did not continue her successful initiatives, so the successes could not be emulated and a virtuous cycle and climate could not be nurtured.

Drawing from the theoretical framework proposed in diagram 7.1 above, school 1's fourth principal was able to put in place succession planning for the school leadership team. Her efforts were continued by the subsequent principals, who built upon her early efforts and successes. The time and effort taken in

grooming and nurturing potential teachers to be the school's future leaders had resulted in a stable leadership team, with strong middle leadership to support the vision and the initiatives of the principal. The current principal, the sixth principal, had been identified and groomed for her position. As such, she seemed to be able to deliver from the onset, starting at the inbound and/or insider trajectory and moving straight to the middle phase with her internal promotion. It has contributed to a climate of trust and collaboration among the teachers and leaders, further encouraging and enhancing the teaching and learning environment at school 1. As such, the school has not only been able to achieve academic excellence, but it has managed to sustain the momentum of growth and excellence. School 1 had been successful in building and sustaining a culture of teamwork and trust, often quoted by its leaders as the winning factor that helps the school to maintain its excellent academic achievement.

According to internal human capital theory (Lazear, 1992; Lazear and Rosen, 1981), internal applicants may have received opportunities from their employers to develop the necessary leadership skills adapted to serve their specific environment. Buckman et al. (2018) also contend that their internal experiences with the development of the school's culture, vision, and goals gave them an added advantage over external candidates. Fink and Brayman (2004) noted that "while careful planning does not guarantee that continuity will prevail... it does ensure that the leader has the opportunity to identify with the school and negotiate a shared sense of meaning with staff and work cooperatively with staff to deal with adversity" [p445]. Thus, this enable internally promoted principals to begin at the inbound trajectory, rather than at the peripheral trajectory, and to quickly navigate to the insider trajectory. As such, these principals could start delivering positive results from the onset. Positive results may start to be visible after three years, further strengthening the principals' leadership and influence. Principals can be in the inbound trajectories for a long period as long as they are still effective. Biott et al. (2001) has argued that, in some circumstances, principals on an "insider's" trajectory can remain indefinitely if they continue to learn and grow professionally.

Remaining in the initial phase with frequent rotation and no succession planning
School 2, on the other hand, relies on the district education office to assign and appoint new principals and senior leaders. As such, leadership stability could not be achieved and the various school principals seemed to be stuck at the peripheral trajectory, unable to contribute much to the school's improvement with their short tenure and weak culture. For example, the recently retired school 2 principal had no instructional or school leadership background, as his previous work experience was as an administrator in

the state education office. Fink and Brayman (2004) contends that school jurisdictions will need to think in terms of abilities and backgrounds of leadership teams rather than putting together senior management teams in a piecemeal fashion. Team dynamics should be emphasised in order to nurture a virtuous cycle in the school.

Context

Suggestions to turn away from describing 'what successful school leaders do' and towards 'how they do it' extend the call for research to place more emphasis on context.   As such, depending on the school context, there's a certain consideration that need to be emphasised when applying the theoretical framework discussed above. School 1 and school 2 face different context, which Hallinger (2018) identifies as the "school improvement context", another conceptualisation of context known as the historical context of a particular school. It can be broadly characterised in four different ways; effective, improving, coasting and ineffective. School 1 is in the 'effective' phase, evidenced by the stability of student success over time, while school 2 is in the 'ineffective' phase, evidenced by poor and/or declining performance in student learning over time. By understanding the school's improvement trajectory and culture, the principal could better define the nature of the leadership challenge. The culture of a school forms over time, changes slowly and can act both as a constraint and/or an enabler of a leader's efforts (Fullan, 2003; Hallinger and Heck, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2008; Louis, 2007). "In schools in more challenging contexts, greater attention and efforts were made in the early phase to establish, maintain and sustain school-wide policies for pupil behaviour, improvements to the physical environment and improvements in the quality of teaching and learning than in other schools" (Day et al., 2010, p.12).

As noted by Young and Fuller (2009), principal retention rates are heavily influenced by the level of student achievement in the principal's first year of employment, with principals in the lowest-achieving schools having the shortest tenure, and lowest retention rates, and the high achieving schools having the longest tenure and highest retention rates. In addition, the proportion of economically disadvantaged students in a school also has a strong influence on principal tenure and retention rates, with principals in high-poverty schools having shorter tenure and lower retention rates than principals in low-poverty schools. This phenomenon seems to be observed in my research, as school 1 principals serve much longer tenure than the principals in the low performing school 2. Whether the context influenced the principal tenure or the principal tenure resulted in the underperformance of the schools remained debatable.

Teachers from low performing schools exhibit lower teachers' efficacy and had low opinions of their students' abilities, compared to improving schools (Brookover and Lezotte, 1979), concurred by findings in my case study schools. Thus, principals should note that teachers in challenging contexts, who experience students' lack of learning abilities and interest, require much more support and understanding from their leaders to foster a conducive environment for teaching. This is important to narrow the socioeconomic gap in student achievement, especially evident in lower band 6 or 7 schools that usually have higher concentrations of low-income students (MEB, 3:20). A growing body of literature describes that a positive and open school climate influences student success (Blasé and Kirby, 2009; Hallinger, Heck and Murphy (2014)). In the educational sector, mutual trust between head teachers and teachers are considered significant to school effectiveness (Daly and Chrispeels, 2007). Indirectly, such positive relationships significantly influence student achievement (Tschannen-Moran and Gareis, 2015) and the overall performance of schools.

As for succession planning, internal promotion may not initially apply for low performing schools as discussed above. External human capital reasoning indicates that low performing schools seek to promote external assistant principal candidates from high performing schools (Buckman et al., 2018). Rao and Drazin (2002) indicated that the lower-performing organisation will hire employees from their competitors in hopes of the new hire transferring their elite skills to the current underperforming employees. On average, external candidates have higher levels of traditional human capital (e.g. years of experience and education level) than internal candidates (DeVaro and Morita, 2013). Hence, for principals that stayed at the peripheral trajectory even after three years, they would have been ineffective and have a low level of influence on their staff. Move to replace them with high performing principals should be considered to turnaround the low-performing school. In addition, beyond the consideration of principal tenure and succession planning, schools with differing socioeconomic status context such as my case study schools, may also need to consider other factors. Alig-Mielcarek (2003) identified that controlling for socioeconomic status, the principal's instructional leadership and the academic press of the school, are the two main school properties that can explain student achievement. These should be the focus and criteria in the selection of principals for low performing schools.

To sustain high student performance, schools should look into building a positive culture that could sustain the momentum of change in an improving or transformed school. Principal tenure and succession planning of key leadership position matters, as seen in both the case study schools, and imperative to develop and sustain a positive school culture focus on academic excellence. Merely

providing leadership courses for middle leaders, such as the Leadership Course for Middle Leaders (LCML), may not be sufficient to develop and nurture these leaders sufficiently. Besides preparing new leaders, it is important to also look at developing and nurturing middle leaders for key leadership positions within the school.

Implications of the Research

The research findings yield some important considerations for policy and practice. Firstly, retiring principals should not be assigned to low performing schools as this build in high turnover and may lead to limited commitment from the principal. While it may seem to be a good practice to transfer high performing principals to low performing schools to improve student outcomes, it is important to take into consideration that sustainable change takes time. Secondly, principal tenure should be addressed. The practice of frequent rotation of principals, often every three years, may not be yielding positive long-term effects, especially for low-performing schools. As noted by McAdams (1997), principals should be in place five years for the full implementation of a large-scale change effort, so it would be worthwhile to consider revising principal tenure, with a target tenure of five years rather than three. Thirdly, one of the key tasks for principals, beyond just ensuring good learning outcomes, is to ensure succession planning is put in place for senior leadership positions in the school. While there may be a fear of entrenching a negative culture, that is resistant to change, this could be easily mitigated by monitoring the school's performance. Building a positive culture that is conducive to teaching and learning, and developing an internal pipeline of potential leaders, are key to the sustainability of any initial improvement.

The research findings also yield some important theoretical and practical considerations. Understanding the level of influence and trajectory of a new principal, based on the school's past leadership legacy and principal tenure, help to inform the development of theory on the relationship between principal tenure and student outcomes. Integrated leadership, or 'layering' of different leadership styles at different phases of school development, helps to facilitate leadership success and transition. It diverts the focus from having a certain leadership style (e.g. instructional leadership) to drive successful outcomes. In practice, internal promotion or succession planning for senior leadership positions is to be encouraged. Internally promoted principals understand the school culture and are able to quickly navigate the inside trajectory. These principals could start delivering positive results from the onset, thus minimising the negative impact of changes and be able to sustain a positive change momentum.

Overview

This chapter has responded to the four research questions that drive the study. Leadership styles and practices in the two schools, although located within the same vicinity and sharing similar funding and educational administration, are shown to be very different. The school principal plays an important role in building a conducive teaching and learning environment, to support the teachers, to promote high quality teaching, leading to enhanced student outcomes. While an instructional leadership style, and an emphasis on academic press, promotes enhanced student outcomes, it is noteworthy to consider that maintaining academic excellence requires a team effort. Without a positive school culture, and an internal pipeline of like-minded teachers to be groomed to take up key leadership positions in the school, the improvement may not be sustained. This study shows that a longer principal tenure is crucial for sustained improvement in academic performance.

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Appendices

Ethics approval from the University of Nottingham, Malaysia

FASS2016-0031/ScEd/JCCM017166

The University of Nottingham

UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

Josephine Chay Choy Mee
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8 November 2016

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Dear Josephine,

FASS Research Ethics Committee Review

Thank you for submitting your proposal on **"Leadership and student outcomes: A case study of urban poor schools in Malaysia"** This proposal has now been reviewed by the FASS Research Ethics Committee to the extent that it is described in your submission.

I am happy to tell you that the Committee has found no problems with your proposal and able to give approval.

If there are any significant changes or developments in the methods, treatment of data or debriefing of participants, then you are obliged to seek further ethical approval for these changes.

We would remind all researchers of their ethical responsibilities to research participants. If you have any concerns whatsoever during the conduct of your research then you should consult those Codes of Practice relevant to your discipline and contact the FASS Research Ethics Committee.

Independently of the Committee procedures, there are also responsibilities for staff and student safety during projects. Some information can be found in the Safety Office pages of the University web site. Particularly relevant may be:

Section 6 of the *Safety Handbook*, which deal with working away from the University, http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/safety/handbook/general-precautions.aspx
Specific safety guidance on:
Fieldwork http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/safety/documents/fieldwork-policy.pdf
Lone working http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/safety/documents/lone-working.pdf
Overseas travel/work http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/safety/documents/overseas-travel.pdf
Risk management http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/safety/policies-and-guidance/guides-and-support.aspx

Responsibility for compliance with the University/National Data Protection Policy and Guidance also lies with the principal investigator or project supervisor.

The FASS Research Ethics Committee approval does not alter, replace or remove those responsibilities, nor does it certify that they have been met.

Sincerely

Yeoh Ken Kyid

Dr Yeoh Ken Kyid
On behalf of the FASS Research Ethics Committee

The University of Nottingham
In Malaysia Sdn Bhd (471520-U)

MSC-Status
Company

KEMENTERIAN PENDIDIKAN MALAYSIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION MALAYSIA
BAHAGIAN PERANCANGAN DAN PENYELIDIKAN DASAR PENDIDIKAN
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Tarikh : 16 Januari 2017

Josephine Chay Choy Mee
K.P.:

46000 Petaling Jaya
Selangor

Tuan,

KELULUSAN BERSYARAT UNTUK MENJALANKAN KAJIAN: LEADERSHIP AND STUDENT OUTCOMES : A CASE STUDY OF URBAN POOR SCHOOLS IN MALAYSIA

Perkara di atas adalah dirujuk.

2. Sukacita dimaklumkan bahawa permohonan tuan untuk menjalankan kajian seperti tersebut di atas telah diluluskan dengan syarat:

    i.   Penyelidik perlu berbincang dan mendapatkan pertimbangan pentadbir sekolah yang dilibatkan dalam kajian ini.

3. Kelulusan ini adalah berdasarkan kepada kertas cadangan penyelidikan dan instrumen kajian yang dikemukakan oleh tuan kepada Bahagian ini. Walau bagaimanapun kelulusan ini bergantung kepada kebenaran Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri dan Pengetua / Guru Besar yang berkenaan.

4. Surat kelulusan ini sah digunakan bermula dari **09 Februari 2017 hingga 31 Ogos 2017.**

5. Tuan juga mesti menyerahkan senaskhah laporan akhir kajian dalam bentuk *hardcopy* bersama salinan *softcopy* berformat Pdf. di dalam CD kepada Bahagian ini. Tuan dingatkan supaya mendapat kebenaran terlebih dahulu daripada Bahagian ini sekiranya sebahagian atau sepenuhnya dapatan kajian tersebut hendak dibentangkan di mana-mana forum, seminar atau diumumkan kepada media massa.

Sekian untuk makluman dan tindakan tuan selanjutnya. Terima kasih.

"BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA"

Saya yang menurut perintah,

(DR ROSLI BIN ISMAIL)
Ketua Sektor
Sektor Penyelidikan dan Penilaian
b.p. Pengarah
Bahagian Perancangan dan Penyelidikan Dasar Pendidikan
Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia

Approval from the Selangor State Education Office

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Tarikh   :   21/02/2017

JOSEPHINE CHAY CHOY MEE

46000 PETALING JAYA
SELANGOR

Tuan,

KELULUSAN BERSYARAT UNTUK MENJALANKAN KAJIAN: LEADERSHIP AND STUDENT OUTCOMES: A CASE STUDY OF URBAN POOR SCHOOLS IN MALAYSIA

Perkara di atas dengan segala hormatnya dirujuk.

2.   Sukacita dimaklumkan bahawa permohonan tuan untuk menjalankan kajian seperti tersebut di atas telah diluluskan dengan syarat:

     i)   Penyelidik perlu berbincang dan mendapatkan pertimbangan pentadbir Sekolah yang dilibatkan dalam kajian ini

     ii)   Surat kelulusan ini sah digunakan bermula dari 09 Februari 2017 hingga 31 Ogos 2017

3.   Jabatan ini tiada halangan untuk pihak tuan menjalankan kajian/penyelidikan tersebut di sekolah-sekolah dalam Negeri Selangor seperti yang dinyatakan dalam surat permohonan.

4.   Pihak tuan diingatkan agar mendapat persetujuan daripada Pengetua/Guru Besar supaya beliau dapat bekerjasama dan seterusnya memastikan bahawa penyelidikan dijalankan hanya bertujuan seperti yang dipohon. Kajian/Penyelidikan yang dijalankan juga tidak mengganggu perjalanan sekolah serta tiada sebarang unsur paksaan.

5.   Tuan juga diminta menghantar senaskah hasil kajian ke Unit Perhubungan dan Pendaftaran Jabatan Pendidikan Selangor sebaik selesai penyelidikan/kajian.

Sekian, terima kasih.

"BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA"

Saya yang menurut perintah,

(NOR FARIDAH BINTI A.BAKAR)
Penolong Pendaftar Institusi Pendidikan dan Guru
Jabatan Pendidikan Selangor
b.p. Ketua Pendaftar Institusi Pendidikan dan Guru
Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia

s.k: - Fail

" Jabatan Pendidikan Selangor Terbilang "

<u>Interview questions</u>

There are two types of interview questions, 1- for the principal and 2-for the school leaders.

1-Principal Interview

Project Title: Leadership and Student Outcomes: A case study of urban poor schools in Malaysia
Researcher: Josephine Chay [kabx5jce@nottingham.edu.my]
Supervisor: Prof. Tony Bush [Tony.Bush@nottingham.edu.my]

Introduction
Thank you for letting me interview you. This is a research study about school leadership and its influence on student outcomes in the Malaysian education system. There are three key areas of research investigation, namely how leaders exert their influence to promote enhanced student outcomes, what leadership styles are most effective, and the various leadership approaches that may be utilized in different context. The interview will focus on these main areas and will be recorded, with your agreement. Your participation is voluntary, and you may change your mind about being involved, and stop the recording at any time, and without giving a reason. You are free to withdraw at any point before or during the interview. Your identity will be concealed, and responses treated with anonymity. Thanks in advance for your time!
<To present the consent form for the interviewee's signature>

Section 1: Context
Main question 1.1: Please tell me a little bit about yourself. When did you become a principal and how long have you been in your present post?
Main question 1.2: What is the current context of the school? How many students and teachers do you have? What is the social and economic context of the students attending the school?
Main question 1.3: What are the current challenges that you face while being principal at this school? What do you see as the key challenges for the school in the future?

Section 2: Effective leadership styles
Main question 2.1: What is your vision for the school? How did you develop and execute this vision?
Probes: How far are you from achieving it? What are the key challenges faced and the support that you have received?
Prompts: What are the goals and objectives that you have for this school? How much autonomy and influence do you have to determine the school's vision apart from the government's directives? How have you obtained the support from your staff, parents and students alike?

Main question 2.2: What do you view as your most important contribution to the daily operation of your school?
Probes: What gets the bulk of your attention during a typical school day or week? How would you reallocate your time, if you could?
Prompts: How much control do you have over the teachers' instructional time and teaching? Would you like more control – or less?

Main question 2.3:
How did you engage and develop your staff and students?
Probes: What are the focus of your development plans for them? What have been the response and outcome so far?
Prompts: What are some of the actions or activities that you have planned for the staff and students of your school?

Main question 2.4: Do you utilise different approaches to increase the performance of different students? What approaches have you found to be effective, and which were not? What are the key challenges faced?
Probes: To what extent do you think the context and background of students is important? What role does leaders and teachers' training and development play in the process?
Prompts: How important do you think students' motivation and engagement contributes to student learning? Do you feel that your students identify with the school and teachers? What are the practices that may have led to this?

Section 3: Leadership influence on student outcomes

Main question 3.1: What are the major initiatives or actions that you have taken while at this school to improve student performance?

Probes: What are the problems along the way? What worked best and had the greatest impact on the school and on student outcomes?

Prompts: Did you encounter any challenges and/or receive support from your staff on the actions you have taken? Were you constrained by any resource implications? Do you get the support from the parents and students?

Main question 3.2: What changes have you have made to the classroom and school environment, if any? What kind of learning experience would you like teachers and students to have?

Probes: Could you identify some of the strategies and skills you have used to bring this about? What was the hardest thing to manage in the process? Do you think that the changes can be sustained?

Prompts: How much do the school and/or classroom environment contribute to student learning? How much autonomy do you have to make school-based decisions to improve the school ecosystem? How have you reached out to the government, teachers and parents to improve student learning?

Main question 3.3: How do you communicate the school's goals and objectives to your staff and students? How, if at all, are you reaching out to the families of students?

Probes: What are the ways you use to engage and motivate your staff, students and parents to be aligned and supportive of the school's objectives?

Prompts: What role do you play in communicating to your staff, students and parents, and how is that information shared? Are there regular events beyond parent-teachers associations and staff meetings?

Section 4: Evidence of impact

Main question 4.1: What constitutes good practice in your school and classrooms? *Probes:* Does learning and teaching seem to have improved? Are relationships between leaders, teachers and students better? Which group of students, if any, achieved the greatest improvement and which achieved the least improvement?

Prompts: Are you satisfied with the overall student performance in this school? What are the most effective and least effective leadership practices that may lead to enhanced student performance?

Main question 4.2: What evidence do you have that school leadership has led to enhanced student outcomes?

Probes: Which areas or subjects have shown the most improvement? Which group of students, if any, achieved the greatest improvement and which achieved the least improvement?

Prompts: Can you give specific examples of improved examination and assessment results over the past years? How much of it can be attributed to the initiatives and actions that you or your school leaders and teachers have made?

Closing

Those are all the questions that I have for you and we have reached the end of the session. Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. I would like to emphasise again that everything you have said would be kept in the strictest confidence. I will be in touch with you again in the near future with the transcript of our meeting for your review. Do you have any additional points that you would like to make or any final questions or issues that you would like to raise about the interview?

Project Title: Leadership and Student Outcomes: A case study of urban poor schools in Malaysia
Researcher: Josephine Chay [kabx5jce@nottingham.edu.my]
Supervisor: Prof. Tony Bush [Tony.Bush@nottingham.ac.uk]

Introduction
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<To present the consent form for the interviewee's signature>
Note: School leaders to be interviewed are the assistant principals and subject heads (particularly for Mathematics, Science and English).

Section 1: Context
Main question 1.1: Please tell me a little bit about yourself. When did you become a teacher and how long have you been in your present post?

Main question 1.2: What is your current role? What subjects do you teach, which students do you work with and what sort of backgrounds do they come from? What is their current level of attainment?

Main question 1.3: What are the current challenges that you faced while being a school leader at this school? What do you see as the key challenges for the school in the future?

Section 2: Effective leadership styles
Main question 2.1: What is principal's vision for the school? How has it impacted on you and your teaching?
Probes: How far is the school from achieving it? What are the key challenges faced and the support that would be required?
Prompts: What are the school's goals and objectives? How involved have you been in the development and the execution of these goals and objectives?

Main question 2.2: What do you view as the most important contribution your principal has made to the daily operations of your school?
Probes: How has this impacted on your work? What level of involvement have you been in personally or as part of a team with others?
Prompts: How much control does your principal have over the teachers' instructional time and teaching?

Main question 2.3:
How did your principal engage and develop you and the students?
Probes: What are the focus of your principal's development plans for you and the students? What have been the responses and outcomes so far? How align is it to your own developmental goals?
Prompts: What are the development plans that you would like to have? How has your principal encouraged your development?

Main question 2.4: What are the practices implemented in the school to increase the performance of different students?
Probes: What approaches have you found to be effective, and which were not, in addressing the different needs of the students? What are the key challenges faced?
Prompts: How important do you think students' motivation and engagement contributes to student learning? Do you feel that students identify with the principal and teachers? What are the practices that may have led to this?

Section 3: Leadership influence on student outcomes

Main question 3.1: What are the major initiatives or actions that you and your principal have taken to improve student performance?

Probes: What are the problems along the way? What worked best and had the greatest impact on the school and on student outcomes?

Prompts: What role have you taken in the implementation of the school's initiatives to improve student performance?

Main question 3.2: What kind of school-wide and classroom experience that the principal and you are focusing on? What kind of learning experience that you would like to encourage?

Probes: Could you identify some of the strategies and skills that have been used to bring this about? Do you think that the changes can be sustained?

Prompts: How much influence do you think the school and/or classroom environment contributes to student learning? What kind of role and contribution are you making?

Main question 3.3: How has the principal reached out to you and the families of students on the school's goals and initiatives?

Probes: How effective are the actions taken by your principal? Do you think that the steps taken are aligned to the school's objectives?

Prompts: What role do you play in communicating to your students and parents on the school's goals and initiatives?

Section 4: Evidence of impact

Main question 4.1: What do you say constitutes good practices in your school and classrooms?

Probes: Does learning and teaching seem to have improved? Are relationships between leaders, teachers and students better? Which group of students, if any, achieved the greatest improvement and which achieved the least improvement?

Prompts: Are you satisfied with the overall student performance in this school? What was the most effective and least effective practices that may lead to this?

Main question 4.2: What evidence do you have that school leadership has led to enhanced student outcomes?

Probes: Which areas have shown the most improvement? Which group of students, if any, achieved the greatest improvement and which achieved the least improvement?

Prompts: Can you give specific examples of improved examination and assessment results over the past years? How much of this can be attributed to the initiatives and actions of the principal, school leaders and teachers?

Closing

Those are all the questions that I have for you and we have reached the end of the session. Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. I would like to emphasise again that everything you have said would be kept in the strictest confidence. I will be in touch with you again in the near future with the transcript of our meeting for your review. Do you have any additional points that you would like to make or any final questions or issues that you would like to raise about the interview?

Teacher's survey

The teacher's survey used for the research is found below

2017 Kaji Selidik Guru Sekolah / Teacher Survey

Tajuk Projek: Kepimpinan dan Pencapaian Pelajar

Penyelidik: Josephine Chay [kabx5jce@nottingham.edu.my]

Penyelia : Prof. Tony Bush [Tony.Bush@nottingham.ac.uk] dan Dr. Ashley Ng (Ashley.Ng@nottingham.edu.my)

No. Rujukan Kelulusan Etika: FASS2016-0031/SoEd/JCCM017166

Anda dijemput untuk mengambil bahagian dalam kajian penyelidikan tentang kepimpinan sekolah dan pengaruhnya, jika ada, ke atas pencapaian pelajar. Maklumat ini direka untuk memberitahu anda apa yang ia akan melibatkan. Penyertaan anda adalah secara sukarela. Anda bebas untuk menarik balik pada bila-bila sebelum atau semasa kajian. Walau bagaimanapun, sebaik sahaja anda telah selesai soal selidik dan mengemukakan jawapan anda, ia tidak mungkin untuk menarik balik data.

Apakah projek ini?

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidik bagaimana kepimpinan sekolah mempengaruhi pencapaian pelajar dalam sistem pendidikan Malaysia. Kajian ini ingin lebih mengetahui bagaimana pemimpin sekolah merapatkan jurang pencapaian bagi pelajar dari sosio-ekonomi yang berbeza, dengan mengenal pasti gaya dan amalan kepimpinan yang menggalakkan pencapaian pelajar di sekolah kajian.

Siapakah yang diminta untuk mengambil bahagian, dan mengapa?

Pemimpin sekolah yang terdiri daripada pengetua, guru penolong kanan dan ketua bidang, akan dikenal pasti dan dipilih untuk memberikan pandangan mengenai amalan kepimpinan dan kesannya terhadap pencapaian pelajar di sekolah-sekolah yang dipilih. Ketua bidang akan dipilih daripada mata pelajaran Matematik, Bahasa Inggeris dan / atau mata pelajaran Sains. Jika tiada ketua bidang di sekolah, guru sekolah akan dipilih. Semua guru dari sekolah yang dipilih akan dijemput untuk mengambil bahagian dalam kaji selidik di laman intenet yang berstruktur untuk memberi maklum balas mengenai kepimpinan sekolah dan amalan yang memberi kesan kepada pencapaian pelajar, untuk analisis dengan data daripada pemimpin sekolah.

Apakah yang akan saya lakukan?

Guru-guru akan dijemput untuk mengambil bahagian dalam soal selidik berstruktur. Guru-guru akan diberi pilihan untuk melengkapkan soal selidik sama ada dalam keselesaan rumah mereka atau di sekolah di mana tablet yang disambung internet akan diberikan kepada guru-guru untuk mengambil soal selidik.

Adakah penyelidikan memberikan faedah peribadi kepada saya?

Kami berharap pandangan anda, dan orang-orang lain, akan memberikan pemahaman yang lebih baik mengenai pengetahuan dan persepsi tentang amalan kepimpinan yang mempengaruhi peningkatan dalam pencapaian pelajar, bersama dengan jurang yang perlu ditangani.

Apa yang akan berlaku kepada maklumat yang saya berikan?

Maklumat yang diberikan akan dilayan dengan sulit (kerana hanya penyelidik dan penyelia mempunyai akses kepada data yang diberikan). Identiti peserta akan dirahsiakan. Hasil penyelidikan ini tidak boleh secara langsung mengenal pasti data demografi atau lokasi. Maklumat peribadi peserta hanya akan dilihat oleh penyelidik sendiri. Data akan disimpan di dalam pangkalan data

terjamin dengan perlindungan kata laluan. Semua nota dan pemerhatian yang diambil akan disimpan di lokasi terjamin dengan penyelidik, diakses hanya oleh penyelidik. Pada akhir projek, maklumat peribadi akan dimusnahkan.

Apa yang anda akan lakukan dengan data ini?

Data ini akan digunakan dalam pembangunan dan penyiapan tesis kedoktoran, laporan atau apa-apa keputusan yang lain - contohnya digunakan sebagai abstrak untuk penerbitan. Keputusan kajian akan dikongsi dengan para peserta sebelum ia dirasmikan untuk tesis dan / atau laporan.

Jika anda mempunyai sebarang soalan atau kebimbangan, sila jangan teragak-agak untuk bertanya. Kami boleh dihubungi sebelum dan selepas penyertaan anda di emel di atas.

Project Title: Leadership and Student Outcomes
Researcher: Josephine Chay [kabx5jce@nottingham.edu.my]
Supervisor : Prof. Tony Bush [Tony.Bush@nottingham.ac.uk] and Dr. Ashley Ng (Ashley.Ng@nottingham.edu.my)
Ethics Approval Reference Number: FASS2016-0031/SoEd/JCCM017166

This is an invitation to take part in a research study about school leadership and its influence, if any, on student outcomes. This information is designed to tell you what it will involve. Your participation is voluntary, and you may change your mind about being involved, or decline to answer a question or (for interview studies) stop the recording at any time, and without giving a reason. You are free to withdraw at any point before or during the study. For anonymous questionnaires, once you have finished the questionnaire and submitted your answers it is not possible to withdraw the data.

What is the project about?

The research aims to establish how school leadership influences student learning outcomes in the Malaysian education system. It seeks to find out how school leaders close the achievement gaps for students from different socioeconomic backgrounds, by identifying the leadership styles and practices that promote enhanced student outcomes in the case study schools.

Who is being asked to take part, and why?

School leaders, comprising of the principal, assistant principal and selected subject heads, will be identified and chosen to provide insights on the leadership practices and its impact on student learning outcomes in the chosen schools. The subject heads would be chosen from the Mathematics, English and/or Science subjects. If no subject heads are available for the school, another schoolteacher will be chosen. All the teachers from the chosen schools will also be invited to participate in a structured online survey to provide feedback on the school leadership and the practices that impact on student learning outcomes, for cross analysis with data from the school leaders.

What will I be asked to do? Teachers will be invited to participate in an online structured questionnaire, with the questionnaire link and relevant information provided to guide the teachers on how to complete it. The teachers will be given a choice to complete the questionnaire either in the comfort of their home or in the school where internet-connected tablets will be provided to the teachers to take the questionnaire.

Will the research be of any personal benefit to me? We hope that your views, and those of others, will give us better understanding on the knowledge and perceptions about the leadership practices that influence enhanced student outcomes for the various students, along with the gaps that would need to be addressed.

What will happen to the information I provide? The information provided will be treated with strict confidentiality (as only the researcher and her supervisors will have access to the data provided). Participants' identity will be concealed and responses treated with anonymity. The outcomes of the research cannot be indirectly identified via location or demographic data. Participants' personal data information will only be access by the researcher herself. Data will be stored in a secured database

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with password protection. All notes and observations taken will be kept in secured location by the researcher, accessed only by the researcher. At the end of the project, the personal information will be destroyed.

What will you do with the data? The data will be used in the development and completion of the doctoral thesis, report or any other outcome – for example used as an abstract for a publication. The results of the study will be shared with the participants before it is officially formalized for the thesis and/or report.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to ask. We can be contacted before and after your participation at the above address.

"Dengan tandatangan di bawah saya menunjukkan bahawa saya faham megenai penglibatan saya dalam kajian ini dan jawapan saya adalah tanpa nama. Saya bersetuju untuk mengambil bahagian dan saya faham bahawa apabila saya mengemukakan respons saya, saya tidak mungkin menarik balik jawapan saya".

"By signing below I indicate that I understand what the study involves and that my answers are anonymous. I agree to take part and I understand that once I submitted my responses, it will not be possible to withdraw the data."

_____

Name:

Date:

Q1 Berapa lama anda telah bekerja dengan pengetua?

How long have you worked with the current principal?

- ○ Kurang dari 1 tahun / less than 1 year
- ○ 1 - 2 tahun / year
- ○ 2 - 3 tahun / year
- ○ 3 - 5 tahun / year
- ○ melebihi 5 tahun / more than 5 years

Q2 Berapa lama anda telah bekerja di sekolah ini?

How many years have you been working in this school?

- ○ Kurang dari 1 tahun / less than 1 year
- ○ 1- 3 tahun / year
- ○ 3- 5 tahun / year
- ○ 5 - 10 tahun / year
- ○ melebihi 10 tahun / more than 10 years

Q3 Berapa lama anda telah bekerja sebagai guru?

How many years of experience do you have as a teacher?

- ○ Kurang dari 1 tahun / less than 1 year
- ○ 1- 3 tahun / year
- ○ 3- 5 tahun / year
- ○ 5 - 10 tahun / year
- ○ melebihi 10 tahun / more than 10 years

Q4 Adakah anda mengajar matapelajaran yang disenaraikan di bawah? Tandakan semua yang berkaitan. *Do you teach any of the subjects listed below at this school? Check all the relevant subjects.*

- ❑ English
- ❑ Science (including Physics, Chemistry, Biology)
- ❑ Mathematics

Part II Bahagian II: Bahagian ini direka untuk anda memberi maklum balas mengenai pemimpin sekolah (pengetua dan pemimpin matapelajaran Matematik, English dan Sains). Ia mengandungi soalan mengenai kelakuan yang dapat menggambarkan amalan pemimpin sekolah. Selain daripada itu, ia juga mengandungi soalan mengenai pengaruh pemimpin sekolah dan amalan berkesan yang telah dilaksanakan untuk mempertingkatkan pencapaian pelajar. Jawapan anda adalah melalui permerhatian anda terhadap pemimpin sekolah di dalam 2 -3 tahun yang lalu.

PART II: This part of the questionnaire is designed for you to provide feedback on the school's leaders (i.e. principal and the subject heads for Mathematics, English and Science). It consists of behavioural statements that describe the school leaders' job practices and behaviours, besides questions asking you to consider the extent of the influence the school leaders have and most effective practices implemented to drive student outcomes. You are asked to consider each question in terms of your observations of the current school leadership over the past 2 – 3 years.

Q5 Adakah anda memperhatikan perubahan dalam pencapaian pelajar di sekolah?

Have you observed any change in student achievement at your school?

- ○ Ya /Yes
- ○ Tiada / No

Q6a Jika ya, adakah perubahan ini merupakan peningkatan atau kemerosotan dalam pencapaian pelajar? *If yes, is the change an improvement or decline in student achievement?*

- ○ Peningkatan / Improvement
- ○ Kemerosotan / Decline

Q6b Sila mengulas dengan lebih lanjut mengenai pencapaian pelajar yang diperhatikan. Bagaimanakah ia berlainan dari tahun dahulu? Pelajar manakah, jika ada, yang mencapai peningkatan atau kemerosotan yang paling banyak?

Please elaborate further on the student achievement that you observe. How did it differ from the past years? Which group of students, if any, achieved the greatest improvement or lack of improvement?

_____

_____

_____

Q7 Faktor apakah yang mempengaruhi pencapaian pelajar ini?

Which factors contribute to these changes in student achievement?

_____

_____

Q8 Adakan pemimpin sekolah di bawah memperkenalkan inisiatif untuk mempertingkatkan pencapaian pelajar?
Have any of the following school leaders introduced initiatives to drive student achievement?

	Memperkenalkan inisiatif / Introduced initiatives		Sila huraikan / Please elaborate.
	Ya / Yes	Tiada / No	Huraikan / Elaborate
Pengetua / *Principal*	○	○	
Ketua Sains / *Science Subject Head*	○	○	
Ketua Matematik / *Mathematics subject head*	○	○	
Ketua Inggeris / *English subject head*	○	○	

Q9 Pelajar manakah yang merupakan pelajar terbaik di sekolah? Sila hurai dan berikan ciri-ciri mereka. *What kind of students are the highest performers in your school? Please elaborate and list their characteristics.*

_____

_____

_____

Q10 Pelajar manakah yang merupakan pelajar terlemah di sekolah? Sila hurai dan berikan ciri-ciri mereka. *What kind of students are the lowest performers in your school? Please elaborate and list their characteristics.*

_____

_____

_____

Q11 Apakah tindakan atau inisiatif yand digunakan oleh pemimpin sekolah untuk menggalakkan dan memberikan motivasi kepada pelajar terbaik and terlemah di sekolah? Sila berikan contoh

What are the actions and/or initiatives that the school leaders have put in place to encourage and motivate the highest performers and the lowest performers in your school? Please provide examples.

	Sila berikan contoh Please provide examples
Pelajar Terbaik / Highest Performers	
Pelajar Terlemah / Lowest Performers	

Q12 Adakah inisiatif yang digunakan berkesan untuk mencapai matlamat dan tujuan yang dikehendaki? *Were the initiatives taken by your school leaders effective in achieving the intended goals and purposes?*

○ Berkesan / Effective
○ Tidak berkesan / Not effective

Q12b Jika ia tidak berkesan, sila huraikan. *Please elaborate why it is not effective.*

_____

_____

_____

Q13 Bagaimanakah pemimpin sekolah menggalakkan dan memberikan panduan kepada anda untuk meningkatkan pengajaran anda? *How, if at all, have your school leaders motivated and guided you to improve your teaching?*

_____

_____

_____

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Q14 Berapa kerap pengetua melawat kelas untuk memerhati anda mengajar walaupun ia bukan sebahagian daripada penilaian yang dijadualkan? *How often does your principal visit classrooms to observe instruction when it's not part of a scheduled evaluation?*

- ○ Tiada langsung /Never
- ○ Satu atau dua kali setahun /Once or twice a year
- ○ Sekurang-kurangnya sekali sebulan /At least once a month
- ○ Sekurang-kurangnya sekali seminggu /At least once a week

Q15 Apakah perasaan anda semasa pengetua melawat kelas anda? How do you feel when you see your principal enter your classrooms?

_____

_____

_____

Q16 Apakah maklum balas yang anda dapat bila lawatan tamat? What feedback do you get when the visits are over?

_____

_____

Q17 Apakah gaya kepimpinan yang paling berkesan dan memberi kesan terbesar dalam pencapaian pelajar yang telah digunakan oleh pemimpin sekolah? Sila beri contoh. *What do you observe as the most effective leadership style employed by your school leaders that has the greatest impact on student outcomes? Please provide examples.*

_____

_____

Q18 Apakah gaya kepimpinan yang paling lemah yang digunakan oleh pemimpin sekolah yang memberi kesan terkecil dalam pencapaian pelajar? Sila beri contoh.

What do you observe as the least effective leadership style employed by your school leaders that has the least impact on student outcomes? Please provide examples.

_____

_____

Q19 Secara keseluruhannya, apakah yang anda rasa ialah gaya kepimpinan yang digemari pemimpin sekolah untuk mempertingkatkan pencapaian pelajar? Kenapakah gaya ini dipilih?

Overall, what do you feel is the preferred approach that is used by your school leaders to increase student outcomes? Why do you think that this style or approach is preferred?

_____

_____

Q20 Adakah pengetua meminta pendapat anda mengenai prestasi beliau, sama ada sebagai penilaian tahunan yang rasmi atau dari saluran lain yang tidak rasmi? How often does your principal ask you for feedback on his/her own performance, either in the form of an annual evaluation or through more informal channels?

- ○ Tiada /Never
- ○ Satu atau dua kali setahun /Once or twice a year
- ○ Sekurang-kurangnya sekali setiap suku tahun /At least once a quarter
- ○ Sekurang-kurangnya sekali sebulan /At least once a month
- ○ Setiap minggu /Every week

Q21 Baca setiap kenyataan di bawah dengan teliti. Sila nyatakan sama ada pengetua melaksanakan mana-mana tugas berikut. Sila bulatkan satu nombor untuk setiap soalan. Untuk setiap kenyataan, responsnya adalah seperti berikut:

      5 mewakili Hampir Selalu   4 mewakili Kerap   3 mewakili Kadang-kadang

      2 mewakili Jarang   1 mewakili Hampir Tiada

Read each statement carefully. Please indicate whether the school principal perform any of the following tasks. Please circle only one number per question. For the response to each statement:

      5 represents Almost Always 4 represents Frequently 3 represents Sometimes

      2 represents Seldom 1 represents Almost Never

Q21a Setakat manakah Pengetua... *(To what extent does your principal . . .)*

	Hampir Tiada / Almost Never	Jarang/ Seldom	Kadang-kadang / Sometimes	Kerap / Frequently	Hampir Selalu / Almost Always
1) Membangunkan matlamat tahunan sekolah yang fokus *(Develop a focused set of annual school-wide goals)*	O	O	O	O	O
2) Memperkenalkan matlamat yang senang difahami dan dilaksanakan oleh guru *(Develop goals that are easily understood and used by teachers)*	O	O	O	O	O
3) Berbincang dengan guru semasa menentukan matlamat sekolah *(Discuss with teachers in developing the school goals)*	O	O	O	O	O
4) Memberi motivasi kepada guru untuk mencapai matlamat sekolah *(Effectively motivate the teachers to achieve the school goals)*	O	O	O	O	O
5) Berbincang mengenai pencapaian akademik sekolah di mesyuarat kakitangan *(Discuss the school's academic goals at faculty meetings)*	O	O	O	O	O

	Hampir Tiada / Almost Never	Jarang/ Seldom	Kadang-kadang / Sometimes	Kerap / Frequently	Hampir Selalu / Almost Always
6) Mengagihkan pelbagai tugas kepada guru dan kakitangan untuk memimpin dan mencapai matlamat utama sekolah *(Distribute various tasks to staff to lead & achieve the school priorities)*	O	O	O	O	O
7) Menggalakkan kerjasama terbuka di antara guru, pelajar & ibubapa *(Encourage open collaboration among the teachers, students & parents)*	O	O	O	O	O
8) Mengenalpastikan kekuatan dan kelemahan pengajaran guru dalam maklum balas selepas pemerhatian *(Point out specific strengths & weaknesses in teacher's instructional practices in post-observation feedback)*	O	O	O	O	O
9) Memberi peluang berkongsi pendapat dan memandu inisiatif untuk mempertingkatkan pencapaian pelajar *(Provide opportunity for others to share ideas and drive initiatives to improve student outcomes)*	O	O	O	O	O
10) Menggalakkan guru menggunakan masa pengajaran untuk mengajar dan berlatih menggunakan kemahiran dan konsep baru *(Encourage teachers to use instructional time for teaching and practicing new skills and concepts)*	O	O	O	O	O

	Hampir Tiada / Almost Never	Jarang/ Seldom	Kadang-kadang / Sometimes	Kerap / Frequently	Hampir Selalu / Almost Always
11) Meluangkan masa untuk bergaul secara tidak rasmi dengan guru dan pelajar pada waktu rehat *(Take time to talk informally with the teachers and students during recess and breaks)*	O	O	O	O	O
12) Menyertai aktiviti ko-kurikulum *(Participate in extra- and co-curricular activities)*	O	O	O	O	O
13) Gunakan perhimpunan untuk memberi penghormatan kepada pelajar *(Use assemblies to honour students)*	O	O	O	O	O
14) Hubungi ibu bapa untuk memaklumkan prestasi pelajar atau teladan baik yang diamalkan *(Contact parents to communicate exemplary student performance or contributions)*	O	O	O	O	O
15) Menggalakan guru untuk mengiktiraf dan memberi ganjaran kepada pelajar yang memberi sumbangan terhadap pencapaian prestasi kelas *(Encourage teachers to recognise and reward student contributions to the accomplishments in class)*	O	O	O	O	O
16) Membangunkan peluang kepada pemimpin dan guru untuk berkembang secara professional *(Develop pathways for leaders and teachers alike to grow professionally)*	O	O	O	O	O
17) Bertemu secara individu dengan guru untuk membincangkan kemajuan pelajar *(Meet individually with teachers to discuss student progress)*	O	O	O	O	O

	Hampir Tiada / Almost Never	Jarang/ Seldom	Kadang-kadang / Sometimes	Kerap / Frequently	Hampir Selalu / Almost Always
18) Bincangkan keputusan prestasi akademik dengan fakulti untuk mengenal pasti kekuatan dan kelemahan kurikulum *(Discuss academic performance results with the faculty to identify curricular strengths and weaknesses)*	○	○	○	○	○
19) Maklumkan pelajar tentang kemajuan akademik sekolah *(Inform students of school's academic progress)*	○	○	○	○	○

TERIMA KASIH ATAS PENYERTAAN ANDA

Jika anda mempunyai sebarang pertanyaan atau aduan mengenai kajian ini, sila hubungi penyelia pelajar terdahulu. Jika ini tidak menyelesaikan pertanyaan anda dengan sepuasnya, sila tulis kepada penyelidik (kabx5jce@nottingham.edu.my), Penyelia (Tony.Bush@nottingham.ac.uk) dan Penyelaras Etika Penyelidikan Pendidikan (educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk) yang akan mengemukakan pertanyaan anda kepada Pengerusi Jawatankuasa.

Kami percaya tiada risiko yang diketahui berkaitan dengan kajian penyelidikan ini. Walau bagaimanapun, seperti mana-mana aktiviti yang berkaitan dengan laman internet, risiko peribadi masih mungkin. Kami akan melakukan segala yang mungkin untuk memastikan jawapan anda dalam kajian ini akan kekal tanpa nama. Kami akan mengurangkan sebarang risiko dengan menggunakan perlindungan kata laluan pada data. Data peribadi dan data mentah akan dikekalkan dan disimpan di dalam folder sulit. Data mentah akan dimusnahkan pada akhir laporan.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

If you have any queries or complaints about this study, please contact the student's supervisor in the first instance. If this does not resolve the query to your satisfaction, please write to the researcher (kabx5jce@nottingham.edu.my), the Supervisor (Tony.Bush@nottingham.ac.uk) and the Education Research Ethics Coordinator (educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk) who will pass your query to the Chair of the Committee

We believe there are no known risks associated with this research study; however, as with any online related activity the risk of a breach is always possible. We will do everything possible to ensure your answers in this study will remain anonymous. We will minimize any risks by using password protection on the data. Personal data and raw data will be maintained and stored in secured folders. Raw data will be destroyed at the end of the report.

School 1: Reliability and descriptive statistical test results (using SPSS)

1a. Instructional leadership reliability analysis – Defining the school mission (School 1)

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.969	.970	5

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
1) Develop a focused set of annual school-wide goals	3.8889	1.40958	18
2) Develop goals that are easily understood and used by teachers	4.1111	1.23140	18
3) Discuss with teachers in developing the school goals	3.8889	1.18266	18
4) Effectively motivate the teachers to achieve the school goals	4.1111	1.23140	18
5) Discuss the school's academic goals at faculty meetings	4.3333	1.23669	18

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	4.067	3.889	4.333	.444	1.114	.035	5

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
1) Develop a focused set of annual school-wide goals	16.4444	21.673	.886	.866	.967
2) Develop goals that are easily understood and used by teachers	16.2222	22.654	.949	.919	.955
3) Discuss with teachers in developing the school goals	16.4444	23.791	.876	.807	.966
4) Effectively motivate the teachers to achieve the school goals	16.2222	22.889	.924	.862	.959
5) Discuss the school's academic goals at faculty meetings	16.0000	22.824	.926	.875	.958

1b. Instructional leadership reliability analysis – Managing the instructional programme (School 1)

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.928	.934	3

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
8) Point out specific strengths & weaknesses in teacher's instructional practices in post-observation feedback	3.8889	1.13183	18
17) Meet individually with teachers to discuss student progress	3.6111	1.33456	18
18) Discuss academic performance results with the faculty to identify curricular strengths and weaknesses	3.7222	1.12749	18

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	3.741	3.611	3.889	.278	1.077	.020	3

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
8) Point out specific strengths & weaknesses in teacher's instructional practices in post-observation feedback	7.3333	5.529	.855	.902	.896
17) Meet individually with teachers to discuss student progress	7.6111	4.958	.778	.717	.970
18) Discuss academic performance results with the faculty to identify curricular strengths and weaknesses	7.5000	5.206	.949	.936	.824

1c. Instructional leadership reliability analysis – Developing the school learning climate (School 1)

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	18	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	18	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.983	.983	6

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
10) Encourage teachers to use instructional time for teaching and practicing new skills and concepts	4.1111	1.18266	18
13) Use assemblies to honour students	4.0000	1.13759	18
14) Contact parents to communicate exemplary student performance or contributions	4.0000	1.18818	18
15) Encourage teachers to recognise and reward student contributions to the accomplishments in class	3.8889	1.13183	18
16) Develop pathways for leaders and teachers alike to grow professionally	4.1667	1.15045	18

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	4.046	3.889	4.167	.278	1.071	.010	6

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
10) Encourage teachers to use instructional time for teaching and practicing new skills and concepts	20.1667	31.676	.925	.911	.981
13) Use assemblies to honour students	20.2778	31.859	.953	.945	.978
14) Contact parents to communicate exemplary student performance or contributions	20.2778	31.389	.946	.907	.979
15) Encourage teachers to recognise and reward student contributions to the accomplishments in class	20.3889	32.134	.933	.933	.980
16) Develop pathways for leaders and teachers alike to grow professionally	20.1111	31.869	.939	.913	.979
19) Inform students of school's academic progress	20.1667	30.853	.952	.922	.978

2. Distributed leadership reliability analysis (School 1)

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	18	100.0
	Excluded^a	0	.0
	Total	18	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.970	.971	4

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
3) Discuss with teachers in developing the school goals	3.8889	1.18266	18
6) Distribute various tasks to staff to lead & achieve the school priorities	4.2222	1.16597	18
7) Encourage open collaboration among the teachers, students & parents	4.2778	1.17851	18
9) Provide opportunity for others to share ideas and drive initiatives to improve student outcomes	4.1667	1.24853	18

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	4.139	3.889	4.278	.389	1.100	.030	4
Item Variances	1.426	1.359	1.559	.199	1.147	.008	4

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
3) Discuss with teachers in developing the school goals	12.6667	12.353	.868	.777	.977
6) Distribute various tasks to staff to lead & achieve the school priorities	12.3333	12.000	.942	.962	.957
7) Encourage open collaboration among the teachers, students & parents	12.2778	11.742	.970	.974	.949
9) Provide opportunity for others to share ideas and drive initiatives to improve student outcomes	12.3889	11.546	.927	.866	.961

3. Transformational leadership reliability analysis (School 1)

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	18	100.0
	Excluded^a	0	.0
	Total	18	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.955	.956	5

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
1) Develop a focused set of annual school-wide goals	3.8889	1.40958	18
2) Develop goals that are easily understood and used by teachers	4.1111	1.23140	18
4) Effectively motivate the teachers to achieve the school goals	4.1111	1.23140	18
11) Take time to talk informally with the teachers and students during recess and breaks	3.5556	1.09664	18
12) Participate in extra- and co-curricular activities	3.7778	1.16597	18

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	3.889	3.556	4.111	.556	1.156	.056	5

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
1) Develop a focused set of annual school-wide goals	15.5556	19.203	.887	.878	.945
2) Develop goals that are easily understood and used by teachers	15.3333	20.000	.965	.945	.929
4) Effectively motivate the teachers to achieve the school goals	15.3333	20.588	.898	.824	.941
11) Take time to talk informally with the teachers and students during recess and breaks	15.8889	22.928	.763	.695	.962
12) Participate in extra- and co-curricular activities	15.6667	21.294	.882	.847	.944

School 2: Reliability and descriptive statistical test results (using SPSS)

1a. Instructional leadership reliability analysis – Defining the school mission (School 2)

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	17	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	17	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.954	.959	5

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
1) Develop a focused set of annual school-wide goals	2.8824	1.31731	17
2) Develop goals that are easily understood and used by teachers	2.6471	1.27187	17
3) Discuss with teachers in developing the school goals	2.6471	1.36662	17
4) Effectively motivate the teachers to achieve the school goals	2.7059	1.26317	17
5) Discuss the school's academic goals at faculty meetings	3.0588	1.63824	17

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	2.788	2.647	3.059	.412	1.156	.032	5

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
1) Develop a focused set of annual school-wide goals	11.0588	26.184	.910	.844	.938
2) Develop goals that are easily understood and used by teachers	11.2941	26.596	.913	.936	.938
3) Discuss with teachers in developing the school goals	11.2941	25.596	.920	.943	.936
4) Effectively motivate the teachers to achieve the school goals	11.2353	27.066	.877	.809	.944
5) Discuss the school's academic goals at faculty meetings	10.8824	24.610	.793	.716	.964

1b. Instructional leadership reliability analysis – Managing the instructional programme (School 2)

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	17	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	17	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.928	.932	3

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
8) Point out specific strengths & weaknesses in teacher's instructional practices in post-observation feedback	2.4118	1.22774	17
17) Meet individually with teachers to discuss student progress	2.4118	1.22774	17
18) Discuss academic performance results with the faculty to identify curricular strengths and weaknesses	2.6471	1.41161	17

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	2.490	2.412	2.647	.235	1.098	.018	3

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
8) Point out specific strengths & weaknesses in teacher's instructional practices in post-observation feedback	5.0588	6.309	.863	.779	.890
17) Meet individually with teachers to discuss student progress	5.0588	6.184	.892	.810	.868
18) Discuss academic performance results with the faculty to identify curricular strengths and weaknesses	4.8235	5.654	.818	.675	.934

1c. Instructional leadership reliability analysis – Developing the school learning climate (School 2)

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	17	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	17	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.933	.935	6

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
10) Encourage teachers to use instructional time for teaching and practicing new skills and concepts	2.8824	1.26897	17
13) Use assemblies to honour students	2.8235	1.38000	17
14) Contact parents to communicate exemplary student performance or contributions	2.5882	1.32565	17
15) Encourage teachers to recognise and reward student contributions to the accomplishments in class	2.8824	1.26897	17
16) Develop pathways for leaders and teachers alike to grow professionally	2.8235	1.18508	17

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	2.804	2.588	2.882	.294	1.114	.012	6

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
10) Encourage teachers to use instructional time for teaching and practicing new skills and concepts	13.9412	32.809	.824	.760	.918
13) Use assemblies to honour students	14.0000	31.000	.879	.804	.911
14) Contact parents to communicate exemplary student performance or contributions	14.2353	33.941	.693	.586	.935
15) Encourage teachers to recognise and reward student contributions to the accomplishments in class	13.9412	33.184	.794	.891	.922
16) Develop pathways for leaders and teachers alike to grow professionally	14.0000	33.000	.881	.924	.912
19) Inform students of school's academic progress	14.0000	32.000	.768	.677	.926

2. Distributed leadership reliability analysis (School 2)

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	17	100.0
	Excluded^a	0	.0
	Total	17	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.960	.960	4

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
3) Discuss with teachers in developing the school goals	2.6471	1.36662	17
6) Distribute various tasks to staff to lead & achieve the school priorities	3.5294	1.41940	17
7) Encourage open collaboration among the teachers, students & parents	3.3529	1.36662	17
9) Provide opportunity for others to share ideas and drive initiatives to improve student outcomes	2.7647	1.25147	17

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	3.074	2.647	3.529	.882	1.333	.188	4
Item Variances	1.829	1.566	2.015	.449	1.286	.036	4

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
3) Discuss with teachers in developing the school goals	9.6471	15.243	.842	.774	.964
6) Distribute various tasks to staff to lead & achieve the school priorities	8.7647	13.941	.957	.930	.930
7) Encourage open collaboration among the teachers, students & parents	8.9412	14.934	.880	.871	.953
9) Provide opportunity for others to share ideas and drive initiatives to improve student outcomes	9.5294	15.390	.931	.872	.940

3. Transformational leadership reliability analysis (School 2)

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	17	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	17	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the
procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.940	.941	5

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
1) Develop a focused set of annual school-wide goals	2.8824	1.31731	17
2) Develop goals that are easily understood and used by teachers	2.6471	1.27187	17
4) Effectively motivate the teachers to achieve the school goals	2.7059	1.26317	17
11) Take time to talk informally with the teachers and students during recess and breaks	3.0588	1.39062	17
12) Participate in extra- and co-curricular activities	2.8235	1.38000	17

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	2.824	2.647	3.059	.412	1.156	.026	5

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
1) Develop a focused set of annual school-wide goals	11.2353	23.066	.844	.804	.926
2) Develop goals that are easily understood and used by teachers	11.4706	23.515	.839	.867	.927
4) Effectively motivate the teachers to achieve the school goals	11.4118	23.507	.848	.816	.925
11) Take time to talk informally with the teachers and students during recess and breaks	11.0588	22.434	.844	.942	.926
12) Participate in extra- and co-curricular activities	11.2941	22.721	.826	.940	.929