Focus Group Interview as a Means to Determine School Effectiveness Indicators

Sueb Ibrahim[1], Parmjit Singh Aperapar Singh[2], Ng Kui Choo[3] and Ramilah Boje[4]

[1,3]Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Jalan Meranek, Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia
[2]Faculty of Education, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Puncak Alam Campus, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia
[4]SMK Abang Hj. Openg, Jalan Malindo, Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia

[1]ebraiz@sarawak.uitm.edu.my; [2]parmj378@salam.uitmedu.my;
[3]ngkuichoo@sarawak.uitm.edu.my; [4]ramilah18@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The growth of interest in school effectiveness has been striking and is gaining momentum. Similarly in Malaysia, school effectiveness has become a dominant theme in contemporary educational reform and development. Thus, the growing concern about educational reform has resulted in a wide variety of school effectiveness interventions, initiatives and strategies. Although school effectiveness has become the central focus in most schools, there is still a strong need to determine the constructs or dimensions that are suitable to measure school effectiveness in Malaysian secondary schools. In this study, a focus group interview consisting of eight selected excellent and senior school principals were conducted. The findings from the focus group interview indicated 5 indicators for school effectiveness which comprised academic performance, school programme, organizational effectiveness, learning environment and school achievement. The findings also indicated 15sub-indicators for school effectiveness consisting of curriculum, public exam, student assessment, academic programme, co-curriculum programme, student development, resource management, technology advancement, data and information management, teaching and learning, community relation, staff professional development,, award and recognition, innovation and niche area.

INTRODUCTION

School effectiveness is viewed as a concise measure that captures the instrumental functions of the underlying school effectiveness dimensions. It is to identify both means and ends and both objective and subjective criteria (Uline, Miller & Tschannen-Moran, 1998). In less than a decade, school effectiveness has become an expectation of all schools across many countries. Besides, school effectiveness has also become a dominant theme in contemporary educational reform and development and Malaysia is not an exception. Since Malaysia is moving forward in achieving Vision 2020, its educational change has also been a constant element of the educational system and institution. Thus, this growing concern about educational reform has resulted in a wide variety of school effectiveness interventions, initiatives and strategies, planned by the Malaysian government especially the Ministry of Education. In fact, some of these have been government-directed while others have been locally - initiated and developed by non-government bodies, local educationists and even scholars.

In the context of Malaysian educational systems, school effectiveness also has a huge influence on national educational policies and this school effectiveness discourse runs through the educational policies of the present government. Since the beginning of the 1980s, the Malaysian government has also taken enormous efforts in building the nation, particularly in the field of education, so as to provide a system of education that will provide better schools of world class standard. Furthermore, numerous programmes and strategies were also implemented in order to enhance students' academic achievement and performance. Unlike in western countries, school effectiveness efforts in Malaysian schools are usually implemented by agencies external to schools such as the Ministry of Education and universities. Some evidences of the government's efforts are the Educational Development Plan (2001 – 2010), the Education Development Blueprint (2006 – 2010), High Performance School (SBT – 2010), with the latest being the National Education Development Blueprint (2013 – 2025).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The need to measure the level of school effectiveness in Malaysian schools is more pressing considering the challenges and expectations that are being demanded from Malaysian schools, principals , teachers and the community. School principals in high achieving schools serve as developers of a school culture and they are considered the main source and driving force for continuous educational effectiveness. The problems that need to be addressed by the Ministry of Education at present are: Is there any measuring instrument on school effectiveness that suits the school setting? If the answer is no, how do the Ministry of Education and the State Education Department determine and justify whether a school principal has brought effectiveness to a school? If yes, do these existing measuring instruments cover all the dimensions of school effectiveness? and, do these instruments measure qualitatively or quantitatively?

Even though there are existing instruments abroad in the market, (for example: Connecticut School Effectiveness Interview and Questionnaire, 1981; Measuring School Effective Instrument, 1993; San Diego County Office of Education Effective Schools Survey, 1986; School Effectiveness Analysis Instruments, 1990; School Effectiveness Questionnaire, 1995, it seems that these instruments are not locally-based and the sub-scale compositions may not be relevant to the Malaysian context. Yet, the importance of the sub-scales as constructs are not known as performance indicators to measure the level of school effectiveness in Malaysian schools.

Furthermore, the measurement scales of the existing instruments (for example: Classroom Level Effectiveness Instrument, 1983; Indicators of Quality Schools Instrument, 1993; Profile of School Excellence Instrument, 1983, School Learning Climate Instrument, 1983 are Likert-type forced-choice response questionnaires which could not be numerically quantified as the scales used are in the form of Likert scales which are more likely to be very subjective and being subjective, a lot of interpretations could be made and assumed. Moreover, the questionnaires consist of qualitative variables. Hence, there is a need for Malaysian school principals to have an instrument to measure quantitatively the level of school effectiveness particularly in the Malaysian educational setting.

It is undeniable that we do have instruments to measure certain aspects of school effectiveness in Malaysia such as Instrumen Kompetensi Pemimpin Sekolah (KOMPAS) – 2011, Instrumen Penilaian Kompetensi Kumpulan Kepimpinan Sekolah (IPKKK) – 2014, School Performance Index (SPIN) – 2011, Standard Kualiti Pendidikan Malaysia (SKPM) – 2010, Standard Kualiti Pendidikan Malaysia – Sekolah (SKPMS) – 2004, and Instrumen Pemeriksaan Peningkatan Standard Tinggi Kualiti Pendidikan (IPPSTKP) – 2001, but the issues here are "what" is being measured, "how" it is measured, and what are the dimensions or indicators used to measure school effectiveness. For instance, KOMPAS and IPKKK measure the competency of school administrators while SPIN, SKPM, and SKPMS measure the performance of a school. Thus, developing other measuring instruments would not be an issue as we would then have a lot of options and alternatives to choose from to suit our purposes and objectives. In short, having another developed School Effectiveness Indicators (SEI) would be an alternative for the Ministry of Education and State Education Departments to use l as a means to measure the level of school effectiveness apart from the existing tools in Malaysia.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW AS A DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Focus group interview is frequently used as a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of social issues. It is a qualitative research method that consists of a carefully designed "discussion" which allows people to express their points of view in a group setting and provide researchers with indicators of program impact (Patton, 1990). Greenbaum (1993) added that focus group interview is the most productive when used to determine information on new proposals or programs, determine the strengths and weaknesses of a program, assessing whether a program is working and evaluating the success of a program.

It is a technique used to gather data from individuals in a group setting. The method aims to obtain data from a purposely selected group of individuals rather than from a statistically representative sample of a broader population. It also nurtures different perceptions and points of view and are used to gather information for discovery, bench marking,

evaluating, verifying perceptions, feelings, opinions and thoughts (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick & Mukherjee, 2018).

The purposes are to gain information, to allow in-depth probing and to explore unexpected concepts, ideas and insights (Agan et al., 2006). Such criteria used are needed because this population of interest might have as stable a perception on the topic or issue and hence might provide accurate and reliable information (Werbel & Gould, 1984). In addition up meeting with the population of interest enables the researcher to capitalize on the group dynamics and social processes that occur in the focus group (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010).

It is also defined as a group discussion about a given topic selected by a moderator (Chiu & Knight, 1999). According to Morgan (1998) in a focus group "you talk to people and you report what they said". The technique is generally thought of as a group of six to nine individuals who are brought together with a moderator to discuss a selected issue or topic. The number of groups in a focus group varies, from a few to many, depending on the aims of the study and the available resources (Chiu & Knight, 1999). The participants in the focus group interview are brought together because they possess certain characteristics related to the subject under study. Hence, the group members can influence each other by responding to ideas and questions that may not otherwise be brought out in measuring the quality and impact of a current or potential program (Nyumba et al., 2018).

The primary purpose of a focus group interview in the context of evaluation tool is to explore the perceptions of members of the group about a broad range of problems and opportunities on the selected topic or issue. Information gathered from a focus group can stand its own merit or be used to supplement quantitative data on the same topic or issue. In addition, the open-ended questions of focus group adds qualitative depth and understanding to the participant's perspective (Ekblad & Baarnhielm, 2002). The purpose of focus group interviews is also to promote self disclosure among participants in a group(s) by ascertaining their perceptions, feelings, opinions and thoughts, focus group interviews are not intended to help groups or researchers reach decisions, gain consensus or establish how many people hold a particular view like statistics (Krueger, 1988). Greenbaum (1993) added that the other advantages of

conducting a focus group interview are the flexibility in questioning, the encouragement of dialogue and exchange of ideas, the generation of hypotheses, being relatively fast and inexpensive and producing findings in a form that most users fully understand.

THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SESSION

In determining SEI, a focus group interview was conducted with the population of interest. The focus group interview consisted of eight school principals as respondents. These school principals were consulted because it was one of the primary ways of developing the construct of interest of the researcher. Only school principals who had served for at least 5 years in the school were considered. Such criteria used are needed because a more senior principal might have a stable perception of the school organization and hence might provide accurate and reliable information. In addition, setting up a focus group meeting with these excellent and senior principals enables the researcher to capitalize on the group dynamics and social processes that occur in the focus group. Moreover, these principals were consulted because it was one of the primary ways of developing the construct of interest of the researcher (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010).

These school principals were brought together to discuss the matters pertaining to the development of the SEI. Apart from that, they were also informed about the objectives of the focus group interview. One of the main objectives was to determine the dimensions and indicators which could be considered relevant, significant and suitable to be used in the context of the educational settings. Consideration in using a structured interview was given to the possibility that the focus group might be unfamiliar and uncomfortable with the focus group process (Agan, Deeb-Sossa & Kalsbeek, 2006).

During the focus group interview session, the topic or issue to be discussed was addressed. Open-ended questions were also used to guide the group discussion and engage g them in making collective responses and feedback. Besides, decisions could be made unanimously. The interview format was flexible enough to allow in-depth probing and to explore unexpected concepts, ideas and insights.

Multi-media aids such as the LCD projector and screen were also used during the focus group session. This enabled the participants in the focus group to visualize any displayed content and information more effectively. Moreover, amendments and changes were done on the spot without any delay; any additional information was added on during the session; any irrelevant information was omitted, and any misinterpretation of facts and missing links of information were avoided. A tape recorder was also used to record all the discussion during the focus group interview sessions. By recording the discussion, the researcher was free to focus on the discussion, without having to worry about trying to write down everything brought up in the discussion.

FINDINGS FROM THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentages were used to describe the profiles of the focus group interview respondents. They were also employed to answer the research questions from the focus group interview.

Profile Of The Focus Group Interview Respondents

In terms of gender breakdown, more than half of the respondents were females (a total of 5, or 62.5%). The other 3 respondents (37.5%) were males. In terms of the ethnicity breakdown, 6 of the respondents were Malays (75%) whilst the other two respondents were a Chinese (12.5%) and a Melanau (12.5%). In terms of age group breakdown, almost all the respondents were over fifty years old; with the exception of one who was 50 years old or younger (12.5%).

50% (4) of the respondents (50.0%) or 4 respondents were between 54 to 56 years old; 2 respondents (25.0%) were between 51 to 53 years old; and only 1 respondent (12.5%) was 57 years old or older. In terms of salary grade breakdown, half (4) of the respondents were DG 52/54 salary grade officers, 2 respondents (25.0%) were DG 48 officers and the other 2 respondents (25.0%) were DG44 officers. In terms of the highest qualification, 62.5 percent (5) of the respondents were degree holders. The other 3 respondents (37.5%) were masters degree holders. None of the respondents were PhD holders.

A total of 4 respondents (50.0%) had between 13 to 20 years of administrative experience; and followed by 3 respondents (37.5%) who had between 5 to 12 years of administrative experience prior to being appointed to the present school headship. Only of 1 respondent (12.5%) had more than 21 years of administrative experience before being given the latest responsibilities. The duration of doing administrative work indicated a quite large spread of administrative experience among the respondents.

75% (6) of the respondents had been working in their current schools between 6 to 10 years; and 2 respondents (25.0%) had been working in their current schools for more than 10 years. The pattern of the working periods indicated that the majority of the respondents had been working in their current schools for at least 6 years and above.

Analyses of the Research Questions from The Focus Group Interview

1. Do you think the following items can be considered significant as indicators for School Effectiveness?

Feedback from the focus group interview, the school principals agreed that the following items could be considered as significant indicators for school improvement. The items were: professional and strong leadership, shared vision and goals, curriculum, student assessment, academic performance, teaching and learning, learning culture, staff professional development, community relations technology advancement, student discipline, school achievement, organizational management, innovation, high expectations, accountability, school programme, recognition and award, data and information management, quality of courses, resource management, and ethos – organizational attitudes and beliefs, teacher collegiality, organizational climate, positive reinforcement and physical environment (See Table 1).

2. Are there any other indicators that you consider significant for School Effectiveness?

The school principals proposed the following indicators to be considered as additional significant indicators for school effectiveness.

The indicators were academic programme, co-curriculum programme, student development, and niche area (See Table 2).

Table 1: Indicators that can be Considered Significant for School Effectiveness as Perceived by the Focus Group Interview Respondents

No.	Indicators
1.	Professional and Strong Leadership
2.	Shared Vision and Goals
3.	Curriculum
4.	Student Assessment
5.	Academic Performance (Public Exam)
6.	Teaching and Learning
7.	Learning Environment
8.	Staff Professional Development
9.	Community Relation
10.	Technology Advancement
11.	Student Discipline
12.	School Achievement
13.	Organizational Management
14.	Innovation
15.	High Expectations
16.	Accountability
17.	School Programme
18.	Recognition and Award
19.	Data and Information Management
20.	Quality of Courses
21.	Resource Management
22.	Ethos – Organizational Attitudes and Beliefs
23.	Teacher Collegiality
24.	Organizational Climate
25.	Positive Reinforcement
26.	Physical Environment

Table 2: Additional Indicators that can be Considered Significant for School Effectiveness as Perceived by the Focus Group Interview Respondents

No.	Indicators
1.	Academic Programme
2.	Co-Curriculum Programme
3.	Student Development
4.	Niche Area

3. Do you think the following items could be considered as School Effectiveness indicators for Malaysian Schools?

The school principals agreed that the following items could be considered as significant school effectiveness indicators for Malaysian schools (See Table 3). However, none considered quality of courses as one of the school effectiveness indicators. According to them, since our education system is centralized, all courses offered in schools are set and decided by the Ministry of Education , as the policy maker. Their duties are to make sure the courses offered are carried out and implemented successfully in schools and this is considered mandatory. They do not have the authority or the autonomous power to make any amendments or changes to the syllabus or the course content of any courses offered by the schools.

4. According to Cameron (1986, 1981, 1978); to measure School Effectiveness; the indicators have to be quantified. Identify the indicators that you think can be quantified to measure School Effectiveness.

The school principals agreed that the following items could be quantified to measure school effectiveness for the Malaysian schools. The items were: curriculum, student assessment, academic performance, teaching and learning, learning environment, staff professional development, community relation, technology advancement, school achievement, organizational management, innovation, school programme, recognition and award, data and information management, resource management, academic programme, co-curriculum programme, student development, and niche area. They also agreed that some of the indicators should be omitted because they could not be quantified quantitatively in measuring the level of school effectiveness. The indicators were professional and strong leadership, shared vision and goals, learning environment, students discipline, high expectations, accountability, ethos, teacher collegiality, organizational climate, positive reinforcement, and physical environment (See Table 4).

Table 3: School Effectiveness Indicators that can be Considered Significant for Malaysian Schools as Perceived by the Group Interview Respondents

No.	Indicators
1.	Professional and Strong Leadership
2.	Shared Vision and Goals
3.	Curriculum
4.	Student Assessment
5.	Academic Performance
6.	Teaching and Learning
7.	Learning Environment
8.	Staff Professional Development
9.	Community Relation
10.	Technology Advancement
11.	Student Discipline
12.	School Achievement
13.	Organizational Management
14.	Innovation
15.	High Expectations
16.	Accountability
17.	School Programme
18.	Recognition and Award
19.	Data and Information Management
20.	Resource Management
21.	Ethos – Organizational Attitudes and Beliefs
22.	Teacher Collegiality
23.	Organizational Climate
24.	Positive Reinforcement
25.	Physical Environment
26.	Academic Programme
27.	Co-Curriculum Programme
28.	Student Development
29.	Niche Area

5. The following indicators on school effectiveness were adopted from the literature review conducted by the researcher. Which of the following indicators do you think can be considered significant for School Effectiveness Indicators for Malaysian Schools? Identify the indicators that you think can be quantified to measure School Effectiveness. Please tick (✓) your choice in the corresponding boxes provided.

In determining the significant indicators, three stages were involved. In stage 1, the focus group interview respondents were asked to determine 10 indicators that they considered significant. The respondents

were also informed that the indicators that they wanted to choose should not be based on any order or ranking.

Table 4: Indicators that can be Quantified to Measure School Effectiveness as Perceived by the Focus Group Interview Respondents

No.	Indicators	Yes	No
1.	Professional and Strong Leadership		✓
2.	Shared Vision and Goals		✓
3.	Curriculum	✓	
4.	Student Assessment	✓	
5.	Academic Performance	✓	
6.	Teaching and Learning	✓	
7.	Learning Environment		✓
8.	Staff Professional Development	✓	
9.	Community Relation	✓	
10.	Technology Advancement	✓	
11.	Student Discipline		✓
12.	School Achievement	✓	
13.	Organizational Management	✓	
14.	Innovation		✓
15.	High Expectations		✓
16.	Accountability		✓
17.	School Programme	✓	
18.	Recognition and Award	✓	
19.	Data and Information Management	✓	
20.	Resource Management	✓	
21.	Ethos – Organizational Attitudes and Beliefs		✓
22.	Teacher Collegiality		✓
23.	Organizational Climate		✓
24.	Positive Reinforcement		✓
25.	Physical Environment		✓
26.	Academic Programme	✓	
27.	Co-Curriculum Programme	✓	
28.	Student Development	✓	
29.	Niche Area	✓	

As depicted in Table 5, 8 indicators were perceived as the most significant for school effectiveness. They were academic performance (100%), learning environment (100%), school achievement (100%), organizational management (100%), school programme (100%), academic programme (100%), community relation (87.5%) and resource management (87.5%). As for the least significant, they were student

development (62.5%), organizational climate (50%), curriculum (25%), technology advancement (25%), and recognition and award (25%).

Table 5: School Effectiveness Indicators that can be Considered Significant for Malaysian Schools as Perceived by the Respondents (Stage I)

No.	Indicators	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	%
1.	Professional and Strong Leadership									
2.	Shared Vision and Goals									
3.	Curriculum	✓						✓		25.0
4.	Student Assessment						✓	✓	✓	37.5
5.	Academic Performance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**100**
6.	Teaching and Learning									
7.	Learning Environment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**100**
8.	Staff Professional Development									
9.	Community Relation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	**87.5**
10.	Technology Advancement							✓	✓	25.0
11.	Student Discipline									
12.	School Achievement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**100**
13.	Organizational Management	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**100**
14.	Innovation									
15.	High Expectations									
16.	Accountability									
17.	School Programme	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**100**
18.	Recognition and Award						✓		✓	25.0
19.	Data and Information Management									
20.	Resource Management	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		**87.5**
23.	Organizational Climate		✓	✓	✓	✓				50.0
24.	Positive Reinforcement									
25.	Physical Environment									
26.	Academic Programme	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**100**
27.	Co-Curriculum Programme									
28.	Student Development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				62.5
29.	Niche Area									

In stage II, the focus group interview respondents were once again asked to determine 7 indicators that they could considered significant. They were also informed that the indicators that they wanted to choose should not be based on any order or ranking.

Table 6: School Effectiveness Indicators that can be Considered Significant for Malaysian Schools as Perceived by the Focus Group Interview Respondents (Stage II)

No.	Indicators	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	%
1.	Professional and Strong Leadership									
2.	Shared Vision and Goals									
3.	Curriculum									
4.	Student Assessment									
5.	Academic Performance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
6.	Teaching and Learning									
7.	Learning Environment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
8.	Staff Professional Development									
9.	Community Relation	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	87.5
10.	Technology Advancement									
11.	Student Discipline									
12.	School Achievement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
13.	Organizational Management	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
14.	Innovation									
15.	High Expectations									
16.	Accountability									
17.	School Programme	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
18.	Recognition and Award									
19.	Data and Information Management									
20.	Resource Management	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	87.5
21.	Ethos									
22.	Teacher Collegiality									
23.	Organizational Climate									
24.	Positive Reinforcement									
25.	Physical Environment									
26.	Academic Programme		✓		✓					25
27.	Co-Curriculum Programme									
28.	Student Development									
29.	Niche Area									

As depicted in Table 6, 6 indicators were perceived as the most significant for school effectiveness. They were academic performance (100%), learning environment (100%), school achievement (100%), organizational management (100%) school programme (100%), community relation (87.5%) and resource management (87.5%). As for the least significant, it was academic programme (25%).

In stage III, for the purpose of the study, the focus group interview respondents were to confine the indicators to 5 indicators due to a number of reasons. The focus group interview respondents were once again asked to determine 5 indicators that they could considered significant for the SEI. Again, they were informed that the indicators that they wanted to choose should not be based on any order or ranking. As depicted in Table 7, 5 indicators were perceived the most significant for school effectiveness. They were academic performance, learning environment, school achievement, organizational management and school programme.

Table 7: School Effectiveness Indicators that can be Considered Significant for Malaysian Schools as Perceived by the Focus Group Interview Respondents (Stage III)

No.	Indicators	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	%
1.	Professional and Strong Leadership									
2.	Shared Vision and Goals									
3.	Curriculum									
4.	Student Assessment									
5.	Academic Performance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**100**
6	Teaching and Learning									
7.	Learning Environment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**100**
8.	Staff Professional Development									
9.	Community Relation									
10.	Technology Advancement									
11.	Student Discipline									
12.	School Achievement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**100**
13.	Organizational Management	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**100**

Cont.

14.	Innovation									
15.	High Expectations									
16.	Accountability									
17.	School Programme	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**100**
18.	Recognition and Award									
19.	Data and Information Management									
20.	Resource Management									
21.	Ethos									
22.	Teacher Collegiality									
23.	Organizational Climate									
25.	Physical Environment									
26.	Academic Programme									
27.	Co-Curriculum Programme									
28.	Student Development									
29.	Niche Area									

6. Identify and group the sub-indicators that you think suitable for each of the indicators.

At the initial stage of the group discussion, there were disagreements among the principals. Everyone had their opinions and reasons for the grouping of the indicators. To avoid any delay in the discussion, the principals were reminded that they had to come up with a consensus agreement with the grouping of the indicators. Finally, after a concerted effort, they managed to group the sub- indicators for each of the indicators (See Table 8).

7. Arrange according to priority (1-5) the following indicators of the School Effectiveness.

Even though there were initial disagreements among the principals regarding the ranking of the indicators, they finally managed to rank consensually the indicators according to their priority as the contributing indicators to school effectiveness (See Table 9). To avoid any delay in the discussion, they agreed and decided to follow the majority in the ranking of the indicators. The principals had ranked the academic performance indicator as the top ranking because according to them, good academic

performance was the top priority for every school. It was also the utmost expectation of the Ministry of Education and the stakeholders which include the education department, parents, community and the students themselves.

This was followed by the school programme indicator which was ranked second, organizational management indicator was ranked third and the learning environment indicator was ranked fourth by the principals. The student achievement indicator was ranked fifth because to them the indicator contributed the least compared to the other indicators with regard to student academic achievement and performance.

Table 8: Sub-Indicators for Each of the Indicators of the School Effectiveness as Perceived by the Focus Group Interview Respondents

No.	Indicators
1.	Academic Performance a. Curriculum b. Public Exam c. Student Assessment
2.	School Programme a. Academic Programme b. Co-Curriculum Programme c. Student Development
3.	Organizational Management a. Resource Management b. Technology Advancement c. Data and Information Management
4.	Learning Environment a. Teaching and Learning b. Community Relation c. Staff Professional Development
5.	School Achievement a. Recognition and Award b. Innovation c. Niche Area

Table 9: The Ranking for Each of the Indicators of the School Effectiveness According to Priority as Perceived by the Focus Group Interview Respondents

No.	Indicators	Ranking
1.	Academic Performance a. Curriculum b. Public Exam c. Student Assessment	1
2.	School Programme a. Academic Programme b. Co-Curriculum Programme c. Student Development	2
3.	Organizational Management a. Resource Management b. Technology Advancement c. Data and Information Management	3
4.	Learning Environment a. Teaching and Learning b. Community Relation c. Staff Professional Development	4
5.	School Achievement a. Recognition and Award b. Innovation c. Niche Area	5

DISCUSSION

From past literature, it could be deduced that the indicators and the sub-indicators were significant and could be quantified to measure the levels of school effectiveness. In fact, all these items were similar and were used as indicators to measure school effectiveness by past researchers either locally or abroad, school authorities and even educational institutions in other parts of the world. Moreover, the items seemed localized and had the feasibility to be used in Malaysian educational settings. To name some, they were the Charter School Support Initiative: Standards and Indicators for School Improvement (2008) ; Egan and Marshall School Effectiveness Framework (2007) ; CSIQ: Continuous School Improvement Questionnaire (2006), Michigan School Improvement Framework (2006), Standard Kualiti Pendidikan Malaysia – Sekolah (2004), AEL's framework for school improvement questionnaire (2002), Mortimore's Characteristics of Effective Schools (1995), Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore's Characteristics of Effective Schools (1995), Abdul Shukor Abdullah's

Characteristics of Effective School (1995), Scottish Office Education Department: School Improvement Project (1992) and Halton Effective School Project (1986).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Establishing the indicators and sub- indicators for school effectiveness maybe useful for the Ministry of Education and the Sarawak Education Department in terms of the sub-scale composition. The sub-scale compositions are more localized and relevant to local settings and thus they might benefit the principals in assessing their schools in relation to school effectiveness and improvement. Strategies and interventions could then be formulated and implemented for the success of their schools. The indicators and sub-indicators which have been determined from the focus group interview could be used as means to measure the level of effectiveness of a school by the Ministry of Education. From the findings, the ministry will be able to determine the level of school effectivenesst of the respective schools. Continuous monitoring can be done and a lot of programmes can be planned and implemented especially on the schools which are categorized as below the satisfactory level.

REFERENCES

Abdul Shukor Abdullah (1995). *Membina sekolah berkesan: Aplikasi dasar.* Seminar Sekolah Efektif. Anjuran Kementerian Pendidikan pada 13-14 Julai 1995.

AEL's framework for school improvement questionnaire (2002). Charleston, West Virginia: Edvantia.

Agans, R. P., Deeb-Sossa, N., & Kalsbeek, W. D. (2006). Mexican immigrants and the use of cognitive assessment techniques in questionnaire development. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 28,* 209-230.

Cameron, K. S. (1978). Measuring organizational effectiveness in institutions of higher education. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 23,* 604-632.

Cameron, K. S. (1981). Domains of organizational effectiveness in colleges and universities. *Academy of Management Journal, 24*(1), 25-47.

Cameron, K. S. (1986). A study of organizational effectiveness and its predictors. *Management Science, 32*(1), 87-112.

Charter school support initiative: Standards and indicators for school improvement (2008).

Chiu, L. F., & Knight, D. (1999). How useful are focus groups for obtaining the views of minority groups? In R.S. Barbour & J. Kitzinger (Eds.), *Developing focus group research. Politics, theory and practice* (pp. 99-112). London: Sage.

Classroom level effectiveness instrument (1983). Halton District School Board.

Connecticut school effectiveness interview and questionnaire (1981). Connecticut District School Board.

Continuous school improvement questionnaire (2006). Charleston, West Virginia: Edvantia.

Education development blueprint (2006 - 2010). Ministry of Education. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia.

Educational development plan (2001- 2010). Ministry of Education. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia.

Egan, D., & Marshall, S. (2007). Educational leadership and school renewal in Wales. *Australian Journal of Education, 51*(3), 203-223.

Elblad, S., & Baarnhielm, S. (2002). Focus group interview research in transcultural psychiatry: Reflections on research experiences. *Transcultural Psychiatry, 39*, 484-500.

Greenbaum, T. L. (1993). *The handbook for focus group research.* New York: McMillan.

Halton effective school effectiveness project (1986). Halton District School Board.

High performance school (2010). Ministry of Education. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia.

Indicators of quality schools instrument (1993). Denver: Colorado State Department of Education.

Instrumen Kompetensi Pemimpin Sekolah - KOMPAS (2011). Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia.

Instrumen Pemeriksaan Peningkatan Standard Tinggi Kualiti Pendidikan (IPPSTKP), Jemaah Nazir Sekolah, Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia (2001). *Instalasi Standard Tinggi Kualiti Pendidikan dan Pelaksaanaan Audit Kualiti Dalaman.*

Instrumen Penilaian Kompetensi Kumpulan Kepimpinan Sekolah – IPKKK (2014). Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia.

Krueger, R. A. (1988). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research.* Newbury Park, California: Sage.

Morgan, David (1998). *The focus group guidebook.* Thousand Oaks. California: Sage.

Measuring school instrument (1993). Michigan School District. Michigan.

Michigan school improvement framework (2006). Michigan Department of Education. Office of School Improvement.

Mortimore, P. (1995). *Key characteristics of effective school.* Seminar Sekolah Efektif. Anjuran Kementerian Pendidikan pada 13-14 Julai 1995. IAB.

National education development blueprint (2013 – 2025). Ministry of Education. Malaysia. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia.

Nyumba, O., Wilson, K., Derrick, C., & Mukherjee, N. (2018). The use of focus group discussion methodology: Insights from two decades of application in conservation. *Methods in Ecology and Evolution, 9,* 20-32.

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Bustamante, R. M., & Nelson, J. A. (2010). Mixed research as a tool for developing quantitative instruments. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 4,* 56-78.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods.* Newbury Park, California: Sage

Profile of school excellence instrument (1983). Appalachian Education Laboratory.

Sammons, P., Thomas, S., & Mortimore, P. (1997). *Forging links: Effective schools and effective departments.* London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

San Diego County Office of Education Effective Schools Survey (1986).

School effectiveness analysis instrument (1990). San Diego County Office of Education.

School effectiveness questionnaire (1995). San Diego County Office of Education.

School learning climate instrument (1983). San Diego County Office of Education.

School Performance Index – SPIN (2011). Ministry of Education Malaysia. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia.

Scottish Office Education Department: School Improvement Project (1992). Scotland.

Standard Kualiti Pendidikan Malaysia (2010). Jemaah Nazir Sekolah. Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia.

Standard Kualiti Pendidikan Malaysia - Sekolah (2004). Jemaah Nazir Sekolah. Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia.

Uline, C. L., Miller, D. M., & Moran M. (1998). The underlying dimensions. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 34*(4), 462-483.