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KATA ALU-ALUAN  
DEKAN PUSAT PENGAJIAN ILMU PENDIDIKAN



Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh dan salam 1 Malaysia. Saya mengucapkan syabas dan tahniah kepada semua Jawatankuasa dan warga yang terlibat dalam menjayakan kolokium Pasca Siswazah 2010 untuk kursus PLG 516 ini. Selaras dengan hasrat Negara ingin melahirkan insan yang berkualiti dan ilmuan, sesungguhnya segala pengalaman untuk mengendalikan kolokium ini amat berguna kepada para sarjana supaya lebih matang dalam mengendalikan sesuatu program bercorak ilmiah.

Dunia ilmiah begitu sinonim dengan penulisan dan penerbitan. Seseorang ilmuwan menjadi tersohor dan lagenda hanya disebabkan mata pena yang lancar dan curahan minda yang tajam serta bernas yang disumbangkan dalam bentuk penulisan kemudian diterbitkan menjadi sumber ilmu yang tiada ternilai hebatnya. Seminar sebegini mampu membangkitkan tradisi ilmu yang dikembangkan sejak sekian lama dalam pelbagai tamadun. Kita mengenali Al-Ghazali dengan karyanya Ihya Ulumuddin, Ibnu Sina dengan ketokohnya dalam dunia perubatan, Elbert Einstein dengan teori kerelatifan ilmu fizik, Isaac Newton dengan hukum gerakan graviti yang sehingga kini sumbangan penulisan mereka masih dikagumi dan diterokai telah membuktikan bahawa setiap penulisan ilmiah yang diterbitkan adalah satu sejarah yang tidak terhitung nilainya. Maka para ilmuwan dan para sarjana seharusnya meletakkan ilmu penulisan yang diterbitkan adalah satu hala tuju pembinaan minda kelas pertama dan mampu meningkatkan daya intelektual yang lebih bitara.

Saya yakin dan percaya melalui kolokium ini, para siswazah mampu membina ilmu pengetahuan, ilmu kehidupan dan pengalaman yang lebih bermakna bagi melengkapkan diri sebagai guru yang berjasa, rendah hati, berinovasi dan berkualiti bagi menghasilkan generasi didikan yang lengkap selaras dengan Falsafah Pendidikan Kebangsaan. Mungkin kerjaya pendidik tidak sehebat jurutera yang mampu membina menara, namun pendidik juga adalah seorang yang luar biasa dalam mencipta bangsa berjaya dalam membina manusia berjasa dan seterusnya menyumbangkan kegemilangan pada Negara tercinta.

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Kepada semua yang terlibat dalam menjayakan kolokium ini, sekali lagi tahniah dan syabas diucapkan.

*"Produksi Ilmiah wadah Keberkesanan Sekolah"*

  
.....  
**PROF DR. ABDUL RASHID MOHAMED**  
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PRODUKSI ILMIAH WADAH KEBERKESANAN SEKOLAH

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*"Seorang guru yang jujur harus berniat agar muridnya lebih pintar daripadanya, manakala seorang murid yang jujur harus pula mengakui kepintaran gurunya"*

*Bersama-sama kita memastikan....kelestarian hari esok.....*

# A STUDY TO INVESTIGATE TEACHERS PERCEPTION TOWARD SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS

Mohamed-Shujau, Abdul Raheem,

Idris Umar, Wang YuanYuan

## Abstract

*This paper reports on a study conducted to understand the perceptions of teachers on school effectiveness. Four teachers with considerable experience from four secondary schools in Penang were conveniently selected for the study. An open-ended questionnaire developed by the researchers was used for data collection. Data were analyzed using simple summary analysis. Result revealed that teachers' perceptions are vital tools in determining school effectiveness as most of their perceptions cover the general context of school effectiveness. In their perception, students in an effective school show eagerness to learn well and they are disciplined. Teachers control the class without employing any type of punishment and they are finding new approaches to improve learning. Curriculum is appropriately and strictly implemented. Principal is an excellent manager possessing sound management skills. School environment has to be conducive for learning activities. We hope that the findings of this study will provide school effectiveness research with a clear understanding and more ideas.*

**Key words:** School Improvement, Teachers' Perceptions.

## Introduction

In every nation, education is ~~the~~ regarded as the most important fundamental aspect of a society and country. From a broad perspective, a country is strong when the people who live in it are able to work productively, which is inseparable from a good education system. The school is the primary venue for the implementation of education. In their own perspective, parents hope their children can learn more knowledge in school, and students also want to enrich themselves in school. Therefore, we need to do our utmost to nurture talent, which means we need to improve the school effectiveness.

What is the meaning of school effectiveness? Until now, we still discuss the concept of school effectiveness, but it seems that there is no unique definition to explain it. (Corcoran, 1985) gave us a broad meaning which is the general "goodness" of a school. There are some other concepts which are only the synonyms of effectiveness such as the efficiency, productivity. In fact, different disciplines have different definition and also different people have different concepts about school effectiveness.

In this paper, our main focus is on the teachers' perception towards school effectiveness. Teachers play an important role in teaching. More than that, they can also effect students' character orientation. How to teach well and how to improve the school effectiveness are particularly important for teachers.

Teachers are the backbone of the school, and play an indispensable role in the school. It seems clear that teachers maintain to have a lot to propose a comprehensive guidance program, so, not only do they need to know the operation of the school process, but also need to understand the characteristics of the students and their individual characteristics. Students are the subject of learning, while teachers are the subject of teaching. Teachers effect students directly. They have more opportunities to communicate with students. Teachers are also the key members to improve the effectiveness of school. An effective school can improve students to perform at a high level.

What are the characteristic of the school effectiveness? That is a problem that we should know. Many studies focused on the principals' leadership and his leadership style on school effectiveness and the school climate effect on school effectiveness. Such studies have ignored the

teachers' important role. Thus, it is necessary to study teachers' perceptions on school effectiveness.

Therefore the objective of this study is to understand teachers' perceptions of what an effective school? In their opinions, what are their students' expectations of an effective school? If there is an appropriate curriculum, can we then call it an effective school? Also, in an effective school, how would teachers manage their classroom?

### Related Literature

There have been many research studies done on school effectiveness. Effective School Research represents a body of research accumulated over the past 30 years (Vaughn, Gill, & Sherman). A number of studies on effective schools have yielded information about classroom and school attributes associated with educational success (Griffith, 2003).

As cited in (Ninan, 2006) a school is called 'effective' when it achieves what it sets out to achieve. In other words, a school is effective when its processes result in observable (not always quantifiable) positive outcomes in its student population consistently over a period of time (Reynolds 1985). (Ninan, 2006) also states:

*"It is to be acknowledged that schools do show considerable variation in terms of student attendance, behaviour, curricular and co-curricular performance, social and civic values, moral character, attitude to life, inter-personal skills and so on."*



The community concern is rising to get quality education for their kids. Every parent is looking for quality education and which is good for their kids. There have been many studies done to evaluate the school effectiveness. In a study carried out by (Duchnowski, Kutash, & Oliveira, 2004) they express their conceptual framework with six key subject of school enhancement performance. They are: Governance, Accountability, Curriculum and Instructional Reform, Inclusiveness, Parent Involvement, Pro-social Discipline. (Ubben, Hughes, & Norris, 1992) have developed assessment instrument where they have integrated very important aspects such as: Time, Climate, Basic Commitment, Staff Development, Curriculum, Leadership, and Evaluation. Time management in a school means everything is done in a set time frame which is one of the signs of any improvement process. The manner in which organizations structure the time space of the work environment can provide useful clues regarding underlying organizational assumptions (Schein, 1992).

School climate and student achievement is among the variables that are often used to measure school effectiveness (Zulkifli A. Manaf, 1998). As (Winnan, 2006) noted that the students are highly influenced by the school climate. He also mentioned in his study that, the school climate has a positive impact on children will manifest in their better learning and responsible behavior, which finally makes them, accomplished human beings. (Bulach & Malone, 1994) in their research on 20 schools found,

"a significant difference in student achievement between schools with a good school climate and those with a poor school climate."

Effective classroom management is an important integral part of professional teaching. Classroom management too determines the climate of the classroom in order to maximize learning environment. Teachers are instructed that the mark of a good teacher is that the teacher is in control of the class (Taylor, 1987). In a study of classroom strategies (Brophy, 1996; Brophy & McCaslin, 1992) researchers examined how effective classroom teachers interacted with specific types of students. The study found that the most effective classroom managers did not treat all students the same; they tended to employ different strategies with different types of students. In contrast, ineffective classroom managers did not appear sensitive to the diverse needs of students.

Research has shown us that teachers' actions in their classrooms have twice the impact on student achievement as do school policies regarding curriculum, assessment, staff collegiality, and community involvement (R.J Marzano, 2003). In their research (R.J Marzano & Marzano, 2003) they found that out of all the variables they used in their research, classroom management had the largest effect on student achievement and they interpret this as the students cannot learn in a chaotic, poorly managed classroom.

(McCombs & Whisler, 1997) declare that, all students appreciate personal attention from the teacher. (R.J Marzano & Marzano, 2003) also state that, programs like Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement emphasize the importance of the subtle ways in which teachers can communicate their interest in students (Kerman, Kimball, & Martin, 1980). This program recommends many practical strategies that emphasize equitable and positive classroom interactions with all students. Teachers should, for example, make eye contact with each student,

allow and encourage all students to participate in class discussions and interactions, and make sure to call on students who do not commonly participate, not just those who respond most frequently.

Students' behaviour is influenced by the way the teachers behave and organise their teaching and learning activities. (Ninan, 2006) mentioned that, the teaching strategies employed by a teacher, and his or her interpersonal skills are two major influences on student behaviour. He noted that, pupils' classroom behaviour was much better when the teacher arrived on time to class, had prepared the lesson thoroughly and planned the teaching strategies thoughtfully. He also mentioned that the, research findings also suggest that a teacher who spends too much time dealing with the problems of individual children distracts the attention of the class, spoiling the teaching-learning atmosphere.

In his study (Ninan, 2006) also talk about students expectations and standards and states:

*"Pupils are very quick to pick up their teachers'/parents' expectations about their learning and behaviour. If a teacher labels a pupil as 'dull' or 'stupid', this would in all probability upset his/her sense of self-worth and confidence. Conversely a teacher's appreciation and praise will go a long way in boosting the confidence and the morale of pupils."*

He also revealed that the students are likely to work better in an atmosphere of confidence where they believe they will succeed and the feedback they receive has a very powerful influence in

their life's formation. He cited that the students have a strong tendency to copy the behaviour of their elders, especially people in positions of authority whom they like and respect and they recognise their values and norms and consciously or unconsciously imitate those traits of behaviour. Importantly the values practised by the teachers are being watched, more forcefully negative models, are attracted by the pupils.

In a recent meta-analysis of more than 100 studies (R. J Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003) they found that the quality of teacher-student relationships is the keystone for all other aspects of classroom management and they state:

*"In fact, our meta-analysis indicates that on average, teachers who had high-quality relationships with their students had 31 percent fewer discipline problems, rule violations, and related problems over a year's time than did teachers who did not have high-quality relationships with their students."*

Comprehensive classroom management encompasses efficient organization of material, seating plans and charts, keeping an up-to-date grading system, effective instruction, being aware of the students' needs and characters, assessing one's work and performance, managing the students' behavior, and having a positive attitude (Reed, 1991; Scully, 1996; Wragg, 1995). Moreover, (Martin & Baldwin, 1993) suggest:

*“research efforts to explore the effects of classroom management are limited by the quality of instruments presently available to measure teacher perceptions and beliefs”.*

(Ford) develop a process called the Process Responsible Thinking (RTP). It is based on Perceptual Control Theory (PCT),

*“What brings about the growing belief in students that they can make things better for themselves? What promotes change within another person, and what makes change possible?”*

*First, it is the belief that someone cares, that someone really respects you and is willing to work with you until you can succeed. Second, it is the belief that somehow it is possible to succeed, to make things better, and to resolve our internal conflicts. The responsible thinking process, if properly used, is designed to teach educators how to teach students to develop a sense of responsibility for their own lives and to respect the lives of everyone around them. This unique classroom discipline process is both non-manipulative and non-punitive. It creates mutual respect by teaching students how to think through what they are doing in relation to the rules of wherever they are. This gives students personal accountability for their actions. The key component of this classroom discipline process is its focus on how students can achieve their goals without getting in the way of others who are trying to do the same thing. In short, it teaches students how to respect others.”*

Researchers believe that in an effective school the teachers and students feel that they belong to the school. Teachers are faithful towards their work and stay busy with their students. (Garvin, 1993) highlight "a commitment to learning" as the key to organizational improvement (Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell, & Valentine, 1999). (Presthus, 2006) described regarding to an interview he did and states:

*"I asked the pupils: Do you have a sense of belonging to the school? Is this 'Your' school? All the pupils I asked answered yes. When I asked why, the arguments differed and the pupils brought up: they had been at the school since they were six years, the teachers and the pupils were pleasant, the school was a good school, the buildings were nice."*

In his research (To-hung, 2006) argue that the staff development is widely considered as one of the essential factor for constructing a professional learning community. He also added that the willingness and the capacity for lifelong learning which we accept from students should also be reflected in our teachers. A cultural climate that promotes professional inquiry, risk taking among teachers, and rethinking leadership provides a fertile environment for professional community (K. S. Louis, Kruse, S. D., & Marks, H. M., 1996). According to (K. S. Louis, Marks, H. M., & Kruse, S., 1996), characteristics distinctive of and critical to professional community include:

- Shared norms and values: Collectively agreed-on professional beliefs (e.g., all students can learn at reasonable levels) support and sustain successful professional practice.

- Focus on student learning: Establishing students' intellectual growth as a prime professional goal is characteristic of professional communities.
- Reflective dialogue: Teachers reflect on and evaluate their professional practice through conversations with colleagues.
- De-privatization of practice: Continuous reflection on and improvement of practice requires interaction with and feedback from colleagues.
- Collaboration: In addition to sharing expertise, working collaboratively sustains reflective dialogue and de-privatization of practice.

(Scribner, et al., 1999)

In the education system the curriculum is very important. In their research (Baker, Lang, & Lawson, 2002) explain that, an objection teachers expressed is that adopted textbooks or curricula lock them into a specific schedule that they cannot modify. Teachers were concerned that the inflexibility of some programs did not allow them to alter the order of activities when the situation warranted. To solve this problem (Baker, et al., 2002) suggested that the teachers should isolate the theories that provide an accurate and adequate understanding of the discipline. Then, using an inquiry framework, find activities that help develop those theories. The curriculum also must match the needs and interests of individual students and community. (Commission, 2000) states:

*“The Ministry of Education has published curriculum policy documents that set out expectations for student learning in each grade and subject area. The expectations... describe the knowledge and skills that students are expected to*

*develop and to demonstrate in their class work, on tests, and in various other activities on which their achievement is assessed. To set a goal for improving the way curriculum is delivered, principals, teachers, school councils, parents, and other community members participating in the improvement planning process must understand the expectations set out by the ministry and how well the students in their school are achieving those expectations. Strategies to help schools set a curriculum delivery goal are described beginning."*

Leadership is very important in every school, because school success depends on the leaders' leadership skills. The term 'collaboration' is very important in school improvement as (Dufour, 2005) mentioned, "The purpose of school is to see to it that all of our students learn at high levels, and the future of our students depends on our success. We must work collaboratively to achieve that purpose, because it is impossible to accomplish if we work in isolation." According to (Stockard, 1992) a strong collaborative school leadership is one of the factors that could impact on school climate and student achievement. (Scribner, et al., 1999) stated that:

*"in 1997, Keefe and Howard developed the School Improvement Process - a process that attempts to develop organizations predicated on a set of shared values and norms, personal mastery, critical reflection, and collaboration." "At the heart of this process is a leadership team made up of several school faculties who guide the entire faculty in the development and implementation of a comprehensive school improvement plan."*



After their research (Scribner, et al., 1999) concluded that, although all principals felt the utmost respect for their faculty and concern for student well-being and achievement, their leadership styles played critical roles in the degree of professional community achieved. In his research (Presthus, 2006) described that the distributed leadership in relation to management in a successful school in which leaders of the school work as 'team' and the principal had meeting with the teachers union representatives at the school.

Evaluation is a fundamental to reach school goals of effectiveness. (Commission, 2000) recommend schools on how to plan for School Improvement, and suggested that, analyse the main features which emerge from the assessment of outcomes and quality (e.g. key strengths and areas to improve, relative performance of different key stages, areas, subjects and groups of pupils). They also states:

*"all teachers must understand the learning expectations for students and the achievement levels set out in the Ministry of Education's curriculum documents. When teachers have a common understanding of these standards, the data that they collect on student achievement and that forms the basis of decisions on school improvement goals and strategies will be reliable data."*

### **Methodology**

In order to know teachers' perception about school effectiveness we used the case study method. Case study research is a Qualitative research approach to conducting research on a unit of study or bounded system (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). Researches believed that Qualitative research have the ability to explore people's experiences of and the qualitative research allow us deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

We used criterion sampling in this study, where our criterion was anyone who works in the teaching field. Sampling strategy is, identify participants who meet the defined criterion; select a

group of participants to collect data from (Gay, et al., 2009). As our population was teachers, we have selected four teachers and from four different secondary schools located in Penang, which is one of the states in Malaysian. Two of them have more than twenty years of teaching experience. The third one has thirteen years of teaching experience. The fourth one, who has nine years of teaching experience, is teaching in a smart school. All these teachers were working in secondary urban schools. We administered the questionnaire to them which was pre validated by some expert teachers and contains open-ended questions. As (Gay, et al., 2009) states:

*“An open-ended question allows for a detailed response and elaboration on questions in ways you may not have anticipated. The information gathered through open-ended questions may be more difficult to make sense of, but this type of question allows the researcher to obtain important information that may otherwise be considered discrepant.”*

In this study we used the formal, structured interviews to collect data. We let them answer our interview questionnaire. Data from the questionnaires were analysed immediately. To get new understanding from the data, we analysed data, summarised them and explore it from every angle.

### **Data Analysis and Findings**

Data were collected from the administered questionnaire and were analyzed qualitatively being that the items were all open ended demanding many responses. From the four respondents so far summarized based on contents of each item.

### **Attitudes and Expectation of Students**

It was established that students in an effective school show eagerness and willingness to learn all the time in and outside the school. They also pay much attention to learning activities in general without responding to any distraction from studies. Students are well disciplined in all respect, for example they are found to be respectful, obedient, helpful, well behaved students as components of goals for school establishment. It was also perceived that the students are proud of their schools and always strive to see it's upliftment within the range of their abilities. They always expect and ask for the best knowledge from the teachers. In answering our question about the attitudes and expectation of students in an effective school, one teacher states:

*"students would be polite, humble, respectful, helpful to their teachers, would willingly love to help their teachers in organizing Sports Day, Prize Giving Day."*

### **Classroom Management and Professional Development**

According to the respondents, teachers in effective schools have excellent skills in classroom management for example they control the class without employing any type of punishment. They show firmness, orderliness and precision in their instructions. The interviewees quoted below say:

*"teacher make specific rules for students to follow so that class control is good. Make sure students understand teachers' expectations on them so that they know how to behave and what to produce for the teacher."*

*"Teachers would be at the door as soon as the bell rings, or at least would start walking to their respective classrooms."*

Effective school teachers are dynamic i. e. are constantly learning and developing from lower qualification to the highest. They are highly innovative interns of perfecting styles, finding new approaches to improve learning. They make students understand what are expected of them in the school and the community at large so that students set targets to such expectations. They are up to date that is to say they are always on research since they are the suppliers of knowledge to students; this is to prevent obsolete and inappropriate information to persist. Finally effective teachers always put things to practice but not accumulating basic skills and knowledge for merely memory.

### **Appropriate and Well Defined Curriculum**

Curriculum should be well defined and flexible to cater for individual or learners' differences. Curriculum is appropriately and strictly implemented to achieve the educational objectives which mean teachers never deviate from their scheme of work and lesson plans and notes which are all derived from general curriculum. Teachers are well monitored to see absolute adherence to the curriculum implementation. Action research is frequently carried out for optimal curriculum evaluation and revision.

### **Roles of School Principal of an Effective school**

The school principal in an effective school is an excellent manager possessing sound management skills. He is an instructional leader supporting and directing instructions in the

school. Ensures good administrative atmosphere with division of labour among the staff as to ease and speed up productivity in the school. He is kind, morally solid, active and innovative. He is highly democratic participating in the school activities. He is rich in punctuality trustworthiness in his duty discharge. Always ensure the welfare of his staff and students. One of the interviewee described principal of an effective school:

*“Principal should be very bold in carrying out changes that would bring good to students, always discuss and get the opinion of the administrators and head of panels of any new ideas, get their feedback and make the necessary changes. Be caring for teachers who are in difficult situation at certain times, be understanding of problems face by teachers in carrying out their duties and try to solve them within his/ her means.”*

### **Effective School Environment**

The effective school environment should have excellent infrastructure not necessary the modern one rather the one in good shape an order. It has to be conducive for learning activities for example having enough lighting, water supply, good roads, important buildings etc. in every nook and corner of the school which will automatically facilitate teaching and learning in the school. Good, flowing and clear communication from top to down. It also has enough funding smooth running of the school. It is ICT compliant having adequate computers and internet services for the reach of staff and students. It has adequate and qualitative learning resources i.e. experienced teachers, up-to-date libraries, and laboratories. It is expected to have constant high attendance of students. The environment must free of any disturbances and distraction. Good rapport among administrators, staff and students in the school, less disciplinary cases or

problems are experienced, high academic excellence are attributable to effective school in the interviewee teachers perception. This is seen from following statements by them:

*“School would be generally quiet even when teaching is being carried out in classrooms. Less students would be walking out to toilet or just loitering around the corridor. Teachers would never leave classroom until the next teacher walks into the class to start the next lesson.”*

*“Less disciplinary problems, students generally abide by the rules. No or minimum cases of late comers, long hair/fashion hair, dressing code, and etc.”*

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Our findings show that they are really similar to the finding from other researches in the literature review. As one of the interviewee expressed:

*“All school could become effective school if only teachers are happy with their work environment, principal, conducive work environment, working colleague, distance of school from home and etc.”*

The above findings could summarize effective school variables as perceived by the teachers as follows: -

1. Attitudes and expectation of students: Eagerness to learn, attention, discipline, proud of school, intelligence, dedication, punctuality.
2. Teachers in effective school qualities – dynamic, current, excellent class management, assertiveness, innovativeness, good communication skills, practice, guidance.

3. Nature of curriculum- well defined and implemented, constantly evaluated, appropriate to the learners, flexible, productive.
4. Principal of effective school- excellent administrator or manager, disciplined, monitoring, democratic, participating, generous, alert, hard working, intelligent.
5. Effective school environment-excellent infra-structures, ICT compliant, good interpersonal relationship, good staff and students' welfare, adequate learning resources, conducive atmosphere, good record keeping, high and constant students' attendance, security, adequate fund and facilities.
6. Finally from the above analysis it is evident that teacher's perceptions contribute tremendously to the concept of school effectiveness because more variables are being identified. Additionally, all these perceptions cover the focuses on the school climate issues.

### **Limitation and Recommendations**

The research has sample and methodology limitations only four samples were used purposively throughout the study and no any empirical analysis provided rather everything is done qualitatively, and the questionnaire used is only having open-ended items that lack objectivity. It is highly recommended that more studies like this be carried out using empirical data so that the relationship among the perceived variables could be established using a well developed questionnaire.

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