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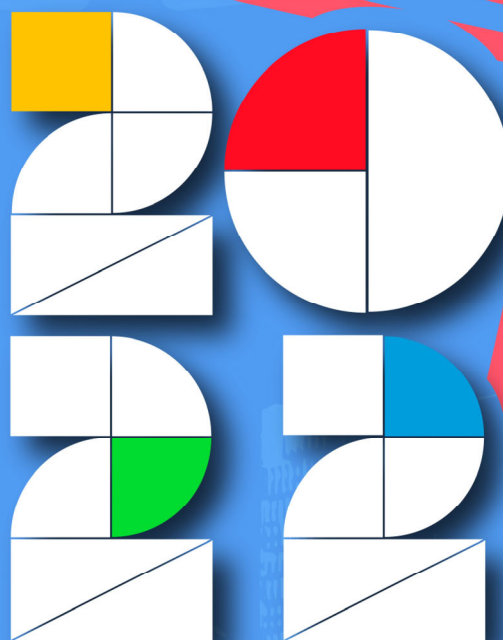
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Reengineering
Knowledge &
Creativity for
Global Excellence

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TeSSH 2022***

**Reengineering Knowledge and Creativity
for Global Excellence**

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UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA CAWANGAN KEDAH

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Foreword

The papers compiled in these e-proceedings are papers presented online at Technology, Science, Social Sciences and Humanities International Conference 2022 (TeSSH I 2022) held on 30 June 2022 at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Kedah, Kedah, Malaysia. With the theme, ***Reengineering Knowledge and Creativity for Global Excellence***, the conference has brought together presenters of diverse background who shared their conceptual and empirical papers in broad areas that are subsumed under the fields of Technology, Science, Social Sciences and Humanities. These e-proceedings comprise current researches that were undertaken with the rigorous endeavour of knowledge enhancement to ensure that the world of academia will continue to flourish. It is thus hoped that readers will significantly benefit from knowledge contained in these proceedings.

TeSSH I 2022 and these e-proceedings would not have been possible without the great efforts from the presenters, and the generous support from the TeSSH I 2022 committee members and the Rector of UiTM Cawangan Kedah, Prof. Dr. Mohamad Abdullah Hemdi. A heartfelt gratitude is extended to all involved. It is hoped that these e-proceedings will be an impetus to stimulate further studies and research that benefit the society at large.

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The Implementation Of National Education Assessment System In Malaysian Primary Schools

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ABSTRACT

The National Assessment Assessment System (NEAS) is a holistic assessment system conducted in schools to assess the cognitive, affective, spiritual, and psychomotor aspects of the students which is in line with the Malaysia's National Philosophy of Education principles. This study is an instrumental case study which explores the factors that influence the implementation of NEAS and looks at how do these factors impact upon its implementation. The samples involved are teachers and head teachers which are selected purposively. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews and observations. Results of data analysis revealed that factors such as relationship, leadership and teachers' beliefs are the factors which influence the NEAS implementation and they overlapped for both schools, SAGA and WIRA Primary Schools. These factors generate the theoretical framework which demonstrates the flow of approaches that emerged in facilitating the implementation of NEAS successfully.

Keywords: National Education Assessment System (NEAS), instrumental case study, primary schools, teachers' beliefs.

INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, the assessment reform is typical of international trends of changing assessment practices from being dominantly, centrally regulated and regimented into a more dynamic, holistic, and integrative system. Examples of policies that embody such changes can be observed in the United States via their National Assessment and Progress Education (2001) and in the United Kingdom through their Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA, 2007). In relation to this, many educational policy makers claim the introduction of school-based assessment in Malaysia will create more balance in the approach of assessment in the system (Malaysian Education Council, 2012). The Ministry of Education, like many other educational counterparts in other countries, has been concerned with the way in which the changes and reforms in the implementation of educational assessment could improve the teaching and learning processes in schools. Any change in the education system invariably affects the delivery end of the system which is the schools and specifically the teachers. This is where the individual involved plays a significant role in the implementation and ultimately the success of the system. The study of change process may be analyzed at two levels which are the individual level and the

organizational level (Zaltman et al., 1973). According to Hall and Hord (2006) the significance of the individual level is as follows:

“Although everyone wants to talk about such broad concepts as policy, systems, and organizational factors, successful change starts and ends at the individual level. An entire organization does not change until each member has changed. Even when the change is introduced to every member of the organization at the same time, the rate of making the change and of developing skill and competence in using it will vary individually. Leaders of organizational change processes need to devise ways to anticipate and facilitate change at the individual level” (p. 7)

However, organizations can rarely afford to develop strategies based on changes of any one individual. As such, many researchers have put forth a more synergetic and collaborative model for any intended organizational change process to be better introduced, internalized and well embraced from the top down to the individual level. The Parent Action Group for Education (PAGE) of Malaysia chairperson, Datin Noor Azimah Abdul Rahim has put forward her views.

“Teachers can easily exercise favoritism and leak questions to their students — we need independent and standardized national assessments. The MES also mentioned this form of assessment will produce more complex report cards; I personally feel that this will not be useful to parents if it is hard to make sense of how their children are progressing in school. Plus, the resulting paperwork will just be another burden to teachers” (The Star, 2013).

Thus, the change is seen as an added burden to the teachers, not attributes and not favorable to some parents. In addition, according to Abdul Rahman Arshad, the former Education Director-General, the success of any program at the school level depends to a large extent on the quality of leadership there (The Star, 2013). Therefore, there is reason to assess how the context in these case study schools that implement the NEAS, particularly ‘the successful’ and the ‘in progress’ category, may facilitate the successful implementation of the new policy. It is particularly important at this juncture when many scholars are talking about educational change and formative assessment, and how the role and responsibility of the teachers need to be changed. All these are crucial to identify the successful factors in implementing the new policy and they are certainly worth considering via further studies. Based on this realization or such context and realities, this study is undertaken to explore all possible aspects which come into play in the ways the actual practitioners namely the schools and the teachers actually embrace the change and how they mitigate the new emerging demands via their practices. The following section will highlight how my background in education and my job designation and my work tasks at various bureaucratic strata in the education ministry enabled me to have an objective view and rich insights into the local assessment change phenomenon.

THE STUDY CONTEXT

The Malaysian Educational System follows the British Education System (Ong, 2010). There are four levels of schooling in Malaysia which are primary, lower secondary, upper secondary and post-secondary level which needs 11 years to cover. The Malaysian education system has embarked upon a series of assessment reforms into becoming more integrated and holistic. The perception of assessment in schools and colleges previously carries with it a vision of only tests or examinations, certificates and grades or lists of marks. A change has been introduced in the Malaysian education system in the form of a new assessment system for schools which is from a conventional centralized examination to a dynamic combination of centralized examination and school-based assessment. NEAS has launched a new assessment system in 2007 based on the National Educational Philosophy with a focus on academic, character development and involvement in extra-curricular activities (Education, 2007). The NEAS concentrates on school-based assessment, and examinations will remain in the system but at a lower stake at primary

and secondary education. It has put less emphasis on evaluating learners based on their ability to pass an examination. In NEAS, students would be assessed according to their achievement, profile, development, and involvement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is an extensive body of literature on formative assessment which is the main components of NEAS. Formative assessment is a process used during instruction to provide feedback so that teachers could improve their teachings and students could improve their learning (Popham, 2008). Feedback provided during assessment must be constructive feedback. What is constructive feedback? Constructive feedback is feedback which should be in a descriptive phrase, clear in terms of goals and standards, well-timed as agreed between teachers and students, respectful supportive, motivating, action and solution oriented, strictly confidential in order to maintain trust, specific to observable behavior and informative. It should avoid generalizations or assumed intentions and interpretations (Hamid & Mahmood, 2010). The introduction of formative assessment seems to be core to a change in assessment system in Malaysia. If we were to look at a wider view in educational change, we could start with the nature of educational change.

The anatomy of educational change could be viewed and scrutinized from four essential aspects namely the intended goal of the change, the system and processes, the beliefs, values and perception of the implementers and the change in work culture, status quo, leadership, and support mechanisms (Levin & Fullan, 2008). This anatomy of change not only occurs at individual and institutional level, but also takes place in the societal as well as the nation's level. The first aspect is the intended goal of the change. The core objective of educational change is to discard former structures, practices and programs and then bring innovative changes that are timely (Fullan, 2005). Next is the change of system, processes, and work culture. The change of system, processes and work culture can come in many forms. The change could be a completely new procedure which seeks to change the status-quo, or a procedure designed to improve the effectiveness of a current procedure. Change involves workplace culture where a 're-culturing' process takes place whenever a change such as from a previously highly centralized educational affair into a more autonomous nature occurs (Fullan, 2001).

One important reason why an innovation fails to be adopted or implemented by schools is that teachers' concerns about the encouragement of innovation are not given the full attention it deserves and addressed throughout the whole process of educational change (Cheung, 2001). Change must also consider the process of people transforming their beliefs and values as these are not a product of dissemination; rather individuals recognize them through experience. It is since like academics in universities, teachers are also individual practitioners, whose general perspectives, beliefs, and skills are influenced by educational change. The beliefs and commitments that the members of an educational organization such as universities or schools hold are based on the prevailing paradigm for themselves and for their existing ways of thinking and acting might conflict with desired goals for change. When change involves a change of paradigm, transformative learning may be necessary. Because of this, it is important to make explicit the nature of our existing beliefs and practice to understand how our existing worldview relates to a change that we are seeking.

Next is on leadership. Leadership is central to any educational transformation at a social level occurs at both, institutional and individual levels. That is why it has been confirmed by Goodson (2001) leadership and management need to have the essential understanding of the individual as it is significant in a change process with regards to educational innovation and change. In addition to this, "an educator is a change agent, and must perform his duties in an effective manner" (Fullan, 2001, p.13). Therefore, the educational process needs immense contribution and participation from all the individual particularly good leadership and management practices. Finally, is the status quo retention. Another significant reason for people to be less receptive to innovations, according to Cunningham (2003), is their will to maintain the status-quo i.e., people tend to remain in the comfort zones with what they normally do and do not usually like that status-quo being changed due to an innovation that requires them to change the way they operate. One of the reasons for this

reluctance and apprehension towards change is the nature of human adaptation. Due to the adaptive nature of humans, people tend to blend in with their surroundings and environment and thus become comfortable. This comfort factor is due to the certainty and predictability of the affairs; thus, people do not like innovations that have the potential to disrupt that certainty in their lives.

Educational change impacts education policy, curriculum reform and a host of issues at schools such as leadership, new pedagogy and actual implementation and practices (Fullan, 2001). It must also provide teachers as implementers with a conceptual and analytic understanding of the goals and processes of the educational change. For instance, since the onset of the technological revolution and the information technology revolution, it is not uncommon to see new innovations being brought in the market only to be replaced by even newer innovations. Similarly, the principals and teachers have also been faced with rapidly changing innovations. Given the fact that principals and teachers are not usually taken on board when it comes to restructuring of the operations of an academic institution, they predictably are hesitant in adopting these new procedures and innovations (Hargreaves, 2010).

METHODOLOGY

This study is an instrumental case study of two primary schools. It is said that a case has to have a system and a boundary. In this study, the system involves the school's system and the boundary involves the school culture and the school regulations. Whatever happens in the schools seems to be an instrumental to understand the assessment reform. The sample are teachers and head teachers. Data is collected using semi-structured interviews and observations. Data is analyzed using the constant comparative method whereby the raw data from the first informant is compared to the second informant. The context of each case study is unique and one of a kind; as such there is no comparison between one case with another, and the data interpretation is related to the case in its own context. Although findings from qualitative method for case studies cannot be generalized, they may generate insights in the form of transferability and extrapolation as discussed by Silverman (2001). The intent of qualitative research is to understand the importance an individual attaches to actions.

For this, the following research questions were posited:

1. What are the factors which influence the implementation of NEAS?
2. How do these factors impact upon the implementation of NEAS?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

What are the factors which influence the implementation of NEAS?

From the analysis of the data, these emerging factors do have an effect to the implementation of NEAS. Participants interviewed in both schools have different views and practiced a different culture on the implementation of the NEAS guidelines. The factors which influence the implementation of NEAS in the first school (SAGA Primary School) are relationship, leadership, teacher beliefs, super working culture and culture of respect. Moreover, for the second school (WIRA Primary School), the factors are relationship, leadership, teacher beliefs, students' attitude, and low staff morale. Analysis of data indicated that factors such as relationship, leadership and teachers' beliefs overlapped for both schools. The overlapping factors however do not portray the same emotional and intellectual exchange among the subjects involved even though their goals for both activities is the same, that is to facilitate the successful implementation of the NEAS. The following are the explanation of the emerging factors for each school that affect the implementation of NEAS.

How do these factors impact upon the implementation of NEAS?

How the factors found in SAGA Primary schools and WIRA Primary schools' impact upon the implementation of NEAS? This is shown in the theoretical framework generated from both schools (Figure 1).

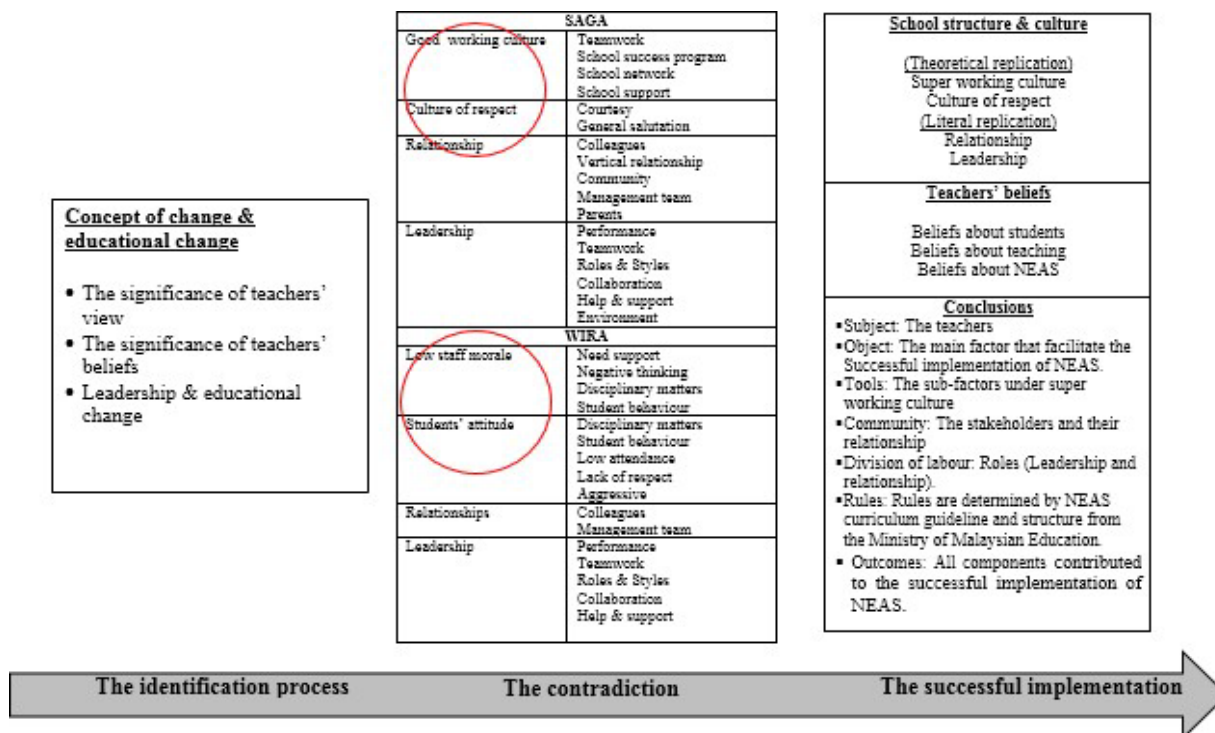


Figure 1: The theoretical framework for Malaysian NEAS

The theoretical framework generated from SAGA and WIRA Primary schools (Figure 1) demonstrates the flow of approaches that emerged in facilitating the implementation of NEAS successfully. The fluid and complex nature of activity makes analysis of the process in the activity systems simultaneously easier and more difficult. As said by Engestrom (1996), things which occupy the position of object may also be seen in other areas of the activity system model under different circumstances, for example as the mediating tools or rules. An attempt was made to untangle (as much as such complex empirical data would allow) the different aspects of each activity system: SAGA and WIRA Primary schools. What is done here is to try to demonstrate, in the linear fashion demanded by academic norms, how context is important in collective - and in this case, expansive - learning (Engestrom, 1987). In order, to explain this phenomenon in this case, these aspects must now be re-considered as the fluid and dynamic whole activities and activity systems of which they are constituent parts (Engestrom, 1996). To clarify this, the same examples identified through the related object exercise will continue to be drawn upon.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Factors that were found to have facilitated or inhibited the development in this study are similar to those found in other studies with little exceptions. The representation of the schools as an activity system provided a holistic view of all those factors and their dynamic relationships with each other and the context in which the school was situated. Emerging themes from the analysis using the framework were then identified to inform the approaches and factors that can facilitate a successful implementation of NEAS. There were multiple approaches or factors that mutually interact, or overlap emerged through the analysis; relationships, leaderships and teachers beliefs. Engestrom (2001) in his study models his activity system with unit of analysis which mutually interacts as 'interacting activity systems with partially shared object'.

The readiness of many other conditions in the focal schools is also important. The application of representing activity system in the frame proposed in this study thus, has facilitated the understanding of the process of change. In addition, the identifying of the reasons why teachers adopted or resisted the change by looking at the different components of the system in a particular period and taking into consideration the historical development of it helped too. There is an extreme pressure in today's world of education to carry out a change program (Buchen, 2003; Desimone, 2009; Gerstner, 2004; O'Brien & Christie, 2008) requesting for a change in the education system may sound simple but implementing it will be a great challenge. There are factors that will have to be considered and investigated seriously before these changes are made. The process of changing will take long. It is the responsibility of the teachers, management team and the educational clients (the students, parents and community) to ensure that success of any new rule or procedure developed for the educational sector must incorporate the inputs from the faculty and the pupils. This is favoured by several current literatures that in order for a change to be implemented in an educational system then active participation from teachers is important (Fullan, 2007; Gersten & Dimino, 2001; Guskey, 2002).

From the results of this instrumental case study, there are clear indications that active participations from a few quarters besides the teachers are very much needed in implementing a successful change. The relationships among the teachers, management team, students, parents, and community are crucial to facilitate the implementation of the NEAS. In addition to that, leadership quality of how each play a role in disseminating ideas and rules and also teachers' beliefs that shape the school's implementation of NEAS are overlapped factors that emerged which create a driving force for the change in the educational system (implementation of NEAS). A few other factors that should be taken into account are 'super working culture', 'culture of respect', 'low staff morale' and 'students' attitude' which did not interact in the activity systems of the two case studies. The dimensions of change suggested by Fullan (1993) did present a checklist of characteristics for locating the focal schools according to the different scales in measuring the levels of implementation. It is impossible to follow a checklist for implementing change since change is dynamically complex and is non-linear (Fullan, 1993). Rather, it is an instrument to understand the present situation. It is advisable to use the characteristics on the checklist as check points for planning further development. It is also important to know how to prepare an environment favourable for change. In addition, having a tool to evaluate the situation and facilitate the planning for a step forward is very favourable. The process of change in this study by the framework proposed could be a tool for this purpose.

According to educational change literature, concept of change and educational change are assumed to have a significant influence on any attempts in implementing major changes successfully in schools, in particular in teachers' pedagogical practice (Fullan 2007; Silverman (2001)). This case study can be treated as the opening step towards continuous aspects of implementing the process of change in the Malaysian National Education curriculum. I would suggest that the study could be better done by strengthening the validation process in data analysis. This could be done by putting more effort into triangulating the process, such as co-checker validation or expert validation, which the researcher had very little opportunity to carry out due to time constraints. From my perspective, I would recommend for a further study to be conducted on the rural schools so as to compare the findings with the urban schools. Parallel or contradictory results of both urban and rural schools regarding the facilitation of a successful implementation of NEAS will help; a) the academicians - this research could further contribute to researchers of education and not for profit education in Malaysia. It will give a more in-depth understanding in theory building, contexts of educational change particularly where NEAS is concerned, b) the Ministry of Education Malaysia - to use the results of the study as a basic communication channel for decision-making among the Malaysian Examination Syndicate, school administrators and teachers. It also could be applied as the path to decide whether to revamp or redesign the current NEAS policy and c) the researchers - to help initiate other similar studies in the field of educational change and assessment, which would further contribute to the resource base and be of benefit to many people that may be interested in doing research into this topic.

In conclusion, this case study can serve as an example of studying the implementation of an educational change in schools. It assists the teachers to do evaluations and planning as well. Though results of this case study cannot simply be generalized to other schools, it can help the continuous development and improvement of the school and to be an example for others. The successful implementation of educational change requires an understanding of the process and the factors that determine its success or failure (Fullan, 2001). This study of teacher change represented by the activity systems is shown to be useful in understanding the change process and identifying the factors mediating the change through detail analysis of the components suggested by the theoretical framework. It has also been shown to be a tool for evaluating and understanding the stage of implementation of the educational change in the schools, thus helping to plan for further development and growth of the system. I stand to say that the theoretical framework is suitable to be used in a micro-level study of change of individual teacher as well as macro-level of change of an educational system.

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