

## SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT : A STUDY ON TEACHER'S KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES

**Rohaya Talib<sup>1</sup>, Hamimah Abu Naim<sup>2</sup>, Nor Sahidah Mohamad Ali<sup>3</sup> and Mohd  
Aisamuddin Mat Hassan<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1,2</sup> Faculty of Education, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, MALAYSIA.  
(E-mail: rohayatalib@utm.my, hamimahnaim@utm.my)

<sup>3,4</sup> Faculty of Education, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, MALAYSIA.  
(E-mail: qsha88@gmail.com, aisamuddin87@hotmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

School-Based Assessment is a new policy venture in the highly centralized education system of Malaysia. The traditional system of assessment no longer satisfies the educational and social needs of the third millennium. In the past few decades, many countries have made profound reforms in their assessment systems. Since then, there have been only a few studies that looked into the implementation of SBA in Malaysia. Therefore, this study is conducted to investigate the knowledge and practices of Malaysian primary school teachers who directly involved in the SBA implementation. This study is deemed timely and crucial as it could provide a relevant picture for scholars, practitioners and policy makers in relation to testing and assessment. Descriptive research design was employed to examine the level of knowledge and practices of 400 school teachers in Johor Bahru that has been selected randomly using the Teacher Assessment Knowledge and Practice Inventory (TAKPI). The data were validated using Rasch Measurement Model and analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. Result showed that 68% from the total respondent scored was in moderate level in SBA knowledge while 75.5% of the teachers seldom applied Assessment *for* Learning (AfL) practices in SBA context. In regard to the result, teachers still have insufficient knowledge in implementing SBA and inconsistent on applying AfL practices. Implications on the teachers' competency and further recommendations for future research will be discussed.

**KEYWORDS:** *School-Based Assessment; Assessment knowledge; Assessment for Learning;*

### INTRODUCTION

Education in Malaysia is going through a transformation process as in most parts of the world. This study takes as a starting point of five-year strategic plan in the Tenth Malaysian Plan (2011-2015) and examines in which the new assessment system, the National Education Assessment System (SPPK) might make a great contribution to the future Malaysian society. It is expected that the SPPK, aligned with the new curriculum,

the Primary School Standards Curriculum (KSSR) could help education system reform to improve students' performance as stated in the core strategies of the plan.

Under this system, teachers are given greater responsibility to design quality assessments that align with the learning outcomes as they are the most suitable people to assess their students and they have a better understanding of the context of the subject area. This system also provides opportunities for teachers to continuously monitor their students and to give constructive feedback to improve students' learning abilities (Brown, 2001; AACU, 2011). The change in the summative evaluation focuses on tests and exams for formative assessment recommended by SBA drew numerous complaints from teachers. There seems to be a sense of insecurity among teachers to conduct a formative evaluation during the process of teaching and learning. The application of formative assessment is still low, as teachers are less qualified, especially in integrating formative assessment techniques in the process of T&L (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hall & Burke, 2003; Brookhart, 2007). In the early implementation of Integrated Curriculum for Primary Schools (KBSR), teachers do not fully understand the concept of evaluation of SBA, and they lack expertise in evaluating their students (Adi Badiozaman, 2006). Adi Badiozaman Tuah (2006) also stated that it is a fact that to carry out the SBA is not an easy task. He pointed out that there were three contributing factors of unsuccessful assessment which are, i) The schools unable to interpret and understand broader assessment in operational terms that bring improvement in the learning and teaching of the school, ii) Schools will abandon short term instructive responsibilities, such as SBA, to accomplish the interest of the public in the accomplishment of good results in public exams and iii) There is the human factor where teachers are not preparing or equipping themselves with the knowledge and skills that make SBA as an integral part of the School-Based Curriculum development process.

Investigations into the practices of teacher evaluation revealed that the teachers were not well prepared to meet the demand for evaluation in class due to insufficient training (Hills, 1991 and O'Sullivan & Chalnack, 1991). In terms of standardized tests, teachers frequently reported involved in teaching test items, an increase in test time, giving clues, and change student responses (Hall & Kleine, 1992; Nolen, Haladyna, & Haas, 1992). Teachers also struggled to interpret the results of standardized tests (Hills, 1991; Impara, Divine, Bruce, Liverman & Gay, 1991) and the results of tests (Plake, 1993). Many teachers incorporated non-achievement factors such as effort, attitude and motivation grades (Griswold, 1993) and they often do not have applicable weight in the ranking to reflect the importance of the different gap (Stiggins *et al.*, 1989).

Due to the recent problem arise in this new assessment system, the main focus in this study is to evaluate teachers' knowledge based on five dimensions of SBA knowledge constructs and identify the level of teachers' Assessment *for* Learning (A*f*L) practices after 3 years of implementing the SBA system at school.

This qualitative survey design study were conducted on 400 primary and secondary school teachers in Johor Bahru that has been selected randomly using multi stage clustered sampling. Teacher Assessment Knowledge and Practices Inventory (TAKPI) questionnaire was developed to measure the teachers SBA knowledge and A*f*L practices and distributed to respondents and it has been validated using Rasch Measurement Model and analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS.

## MAIN RESULTS

### Analysis of SBA Knowledge

Analysis of the teachers SBA knowledge as shown in Table 1 is based on the findings of the data collected according to the test items which are true or false question and multiple choice questions. This study revealed that teachers knowledge in SBA is still in a moderate level. Apart from this, teachers are still inadequate implementing the SBA. It undeniable that the assessment of students without any contribution from the classroom teacher who directs the learning activities are incomplete Airasian (1994). This result of teachers SBA result in this study is parallel with Chan (2011) study who also indicated that teachers possessed limited knowledge in a number of aspects such as interpreting test scores, conducting item analysis and forming a test bank. The findings in this study also reveals that the teachers had limited knowledge in analyzing the score and conducting item analysis. This can be seem clearly by the result of summarizing SBA result and grading construct where the 25% teachers score 0 to 39 marks. The score reflected that they are not familiar in calculating the mean, standard deviation, z-score and t-score. Furthermore, they most probably did not have practice in interpreting the score. This result were supported by Chan *et al.* (2009).

**Table 1.** Level of Teachers' SBA Knowledge Based on SBA Knowledge Construct

DIMENSION OF SBA KNOWLEDGE SCORES	CONCEPT		ASSESSMENT PLANNING		ASSESSMENT METHOD SELECTION AND INSTRUMENTATION DEVELOPMENT		CONDUCTING SBA		SUMMARIZING RESULT AND GRADING		TOTAL SCORE	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
<b>0-39</b>	93	23.25%	70	17.50%	94	23.50%	63	24.50%	100	25.00%	52	13%
<b>40-60</b>	242	60.50%	252	63.00%	247	61.75%	239	59.75%	130	32.50%	272	68%
<b>61-100</b>	65	16.25%	78	19.50%	59	14.75%	98	15.75%	70	17.50%	76	19%
<b>TOTAL (N):</b>											400	100

### Analysis of AfL Practices

Analysis of research question three was based on answer given by a total of 400 respondents through 14 items related to their AfL practices in SBA context is shown in Table 2. This study reveals that teachers rarely used AfL practice in SBA with 2.75 mean value. This finding is relevent with Brookhart's (2002) finding which indicate the teachers have limited skills at gathering and using classroom assessment information for improving student learning. This study also indicate findings that teachers always apply the critical influence of assessment as motivation and self-esteem practices. However, rarely use the teachers' feedback and studentw involvement AfL practices in their lesson. This finding is supported by Hattie and Timperley (2007) that found teachers tend to focus on the correctional rather than instructional aspects of feedback. Studies of the impact of feedback on student learning achievement indicate that the feedback has the potential to have a significant effect on student learning achievement (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). Hattie and Timperley (2007) also note that feedback is more effective when it addresses achievable goals and when it does not carry high threats to self-esteem. At this point, once a task has been assessed, proper feedback needs to be given so that both teaching and learning can be enhanced (Black *et al.*, 2003). It is almost impossible that teachers spend

hours on assessments if less than half of the respondents manage to give proper feedback while the majority said that they only manage to give feedback occasionally. Teachers also should use group discussion technique to help enhance the students' communication and interpersonal and intrapersonal skills (Hamm and Adams, 2009).

**Table 2.** Level of Teachers' AfL Practices

Responds	f	%		DIMENSION of AfL PRACTICES	
				Critical Influence of Assessment as Motivation and Self-esteem	Teachers Feedback and Student Active Involvement
<b>1 (NEVER)</b>	6	1.5%	<b>MEAN</b>	3.00	2.40
<b>2 (SOMETIME)</b>	302	75.5%		<b>STDV</b>	.40
<b>3 (ALWAYS)</b>	91	22.75%	<b>Total</b>		400
<b>4 (OFTEN)</b>	1	0.25%			

### Analysis of Teachers' SBA Knowledge and AfL Practices

**Table 3.** Level of Teachers' SBA Knowledge and AfL Practices Based on Teaching Experience and Training

		SBA KNOWLEDGE	AfL PRACTICES	TOTAL
<b>TEACHING EXPERIENCE</b>	0 - 5 YEARS	50.27	2.72	119 (29.8%)
	6 -10 YEARS	50.25	2.71	154 (38.5%)
	11 - 15 YEARS	48.28	2.75	73 (18.2%)
	MORE THAN 15 YEARS	<b>51.01</b>	<b>2.85</b>	54 (13.5%)
<b>TRAINING</b>	YES	49.94	2.77	281 (70.3%)
	NO	<b>50.14</b>	2.69	119 (29.7%)

Table 3 showed that the teacher's teaching experience were grouped into four groups of teaching experience. The findings from this study shows that teachers who have more than 15 years of teaching experience scored the highest from all the group of teaching experience for SBA knowledge and AfL practices. These findings are supported by Housner and Griffey (1985) which stated that experienced teachers have more understanding of the how and why of student success, are more able to reorganize their problem solving in light of ongoing classroom activities, can readily formulate a more extensive range of likely solutions, and are more able to check and test out their hypothesis or strategies. For SBA training, 70.3% of teachers had attended SBA training but the result shows that 50.14, the highest mean score for SBA knowledge were scored by teachers without SBA training. The mean score for teachers that already attended SBA training is 49.94. This is most probably because the SBA training does not meet the required objective of training. Reyneke *et al.* (2010) explained that participants experienced the following when it comes to training that are not enough chance to learned, training were done in a chop, chop way, insufficient of time for training, facilitator that were not expertise course conducted and the training was boring with lack of practical training. These lead them to a confusing state were they had to implement a new system that they do not fully understand it. The international literature made it clear that it is impossible to successfully implement change in the education system if serious investments are not made in the professional development of teachers (Hargreaves, 2003; OECD, 2005).

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings on the study have indicated that teachers still have insufficient SBA knowledge and lack of A/L practices. Here are some recommendations which could help in the implementation of more effective than SBA. Any form of training in the SBA would be welcome. One has to understand the fact that any change in the policy would require intensive training available to all interested parties. For the effective implementation of the SBA, training should be continued in the form of briefings, sessions or workshops. Respondents in this study who had gone for training in SBA lamented on the fact that the course and exposure offered at school level was insufficient as the Ministry used the Cascade Model for training which trained the trainer to ensure that knowledge is transferred from experts and specialists to the teachers themselves (Dichaba and Mokhele, 2012). Cascade approach failed to prepare either officials or school-based teachers for the complexity involved in implementing the new national curriculum. Ono and Ferreira (2010) documented how teachers frequently complained that even the district trainers themselves did not always understand the curriculum. The result was the misinterpretation of crucial information (Fiske and Ladd, 2004). Those who went for training at the national level were exposed to a week long training stint whereas at state level training was held for three days and at school level, training ranged from 1-day to 1 hour. It is recommended that the training held in appropriate gap of time to delivered the information and do practical on conducting SBA. Here, it is a crucial need of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for Malaysian teachers as it can improve the educational vitality of our institutions through attention to the competencies needed by individual teachers and to the institutional policies required to promote academic excellence (Wilkenson, 1998).

Good evaluations are those that focus on students and their learning. Mitchell (1992), stressed that the use of the SBA can have a significant impact on teaching pattern and the student. Instead of just the traditional written tests, teachers need a number of different ways to evaluate each product and process student learning in class. Good knowledge acquired by the teachers and best practices certainly enhance teaching and learning of the specific SBA subjects. It is evident that the teachers' knowledge and ability in implementing SBA is still inadequate despite the guidelines and objectives provided by the Malaysia Ministry of Education. More hands-on sessions such as workshops and open discussions on the challenges and issues in implementing the assessment need to be carried out. Other than that, the large class size are crucial challenges of effective implementation of SBA (Sheu *et al.*, 2012). With this statement, it is important to reviewed back the suitable class size to implement SBA. The feedback gathered from the teachers as well as the students should be able to provide relevant information to the Ministry in their attempt to decide on the necessary changes and modifications to the existing assessment policies and guidelines. From now on, there is a need for the Ministry of Education to ensure adequate exposure and provide an in-depth courses for all the teachers. Cascade current training models do not work well and the teachers need to be hands-on experienced in testing and evaluation in order to ensure the sharing of best practices and implementation of SBA. As for further research, it is suggested to use a qualitative approach for depth understanding on the issues in SBA by interviewing the teachers and observing the SBA implementation at school level. Future study can also be broadened in the aspects of the study to acquire a broader perspective about the smoothness of SBA implementation for the improvement of overall Secondary and Primary School Standard Curriculum

implementation by looking at conceptions, beliefs and assessment anxiety that can be considered as a new variable.

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