

Assessment Reform in Malaysia: Policy into Practice in Primary Schools

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Declaration

I declare that I have composed this thesis myself and that it embodies the results of my own research. Where appropriate, I have acknowledged the nature and extent of work carried out in collaboration with others included in the thesis.

Marcelina John

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Abstract

This qualitative case study draws upon the empirical data drawn from two case study schools conducted in Malaysian primary schools that have responded to the new assessment practices related to School-Based assessment (SBA) in the new curriculum (KSSR) policy. This study investigated how English language teachers make sense of and enact SBA in the new English curriculum in Malaysia. This study also examined the contextual and individual/teacher factors in schools that influence the changes, the external factors that are influencing the changes, and the alternative or further support that schools and teachers feel they need to effectively implement the new assessment practice. Using Priestley's (2011) Social Interaction model, derived from Archer's (1995) Morphogenesis/Morphostasis (M/M) model, this study focused on the cultural, structural, material and individual attributes which helped to understand how and why teachers were implementing the new policy around assessment. Semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, document analysis and field notes were used in collecting the data. The data were analysed in two stages. The first stage involved within-case analysis from the two primary schools. In the second stage of data analysis, the themes that emerged from the two case studies were analytically categorised into the four elements suggested in the Social Interaction model, by referring to the generic questions proposed by Priestley (2007). The striking findings of this study suggest that the accountability mechanism in the Malaysian education system was seen as being morphostasis in nature, in that it impeded the new assessment policy to penetrate the culture in schools. In addition, the material and individual factors had also influenced the SBA practices in being effectively implemented and enacted by teachers.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Term	Translation
3Rs	Reading, wRiting and aRithmetic	
4Rs	Reading, wRiting, aRithmetic and Reasoning	
AfL	Assessment for learning	
AoL	Assessment of learning	
BERA	British Educational Research Association	
CERF	Common European Framework of Reference	
CfE	Curriculum for Excellence	
CR	Critical realism	
DETA	District English Teachers' Association	
EMK	Elemen Merentas Kurikulum	Elements Across the Curriculum
EPU	Economic Planning Unit	
ETeMS	English Teaching for Mathematics and Science	
GPMP	Gred Purata Mata Pelajaran	Subject Grade Point Average
GPS	Gred Purata Sekolah	Average School Grades
GTP	Government Transformation Programme	
HPS	High-Performing Schools	
ICT	Information and Communication Technology	
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement	
IEPs	Individual Emergent Properties	
KBSR	Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah	Primary School Integrated Curriculum
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators	
KPLI	Kursus Perguruan Lulusan Ijazah	Postgraduates Teaching Courses
KSSM	Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah	Integrated Secondary School Curriculum
KSSR	Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah	Primary School Curriculum Standard
LEA	Local Education Authority	
LINUS	Literacy and Numeracy Screening	
M/M	Morphogenesis and morphostasis	
MBMMBI	Memartabatkan Bahasa Malaysia Mengukuhkan Bahasa Inggeris	Upholding the Malay language and Strengthening the English Language

MEQS	Malaysian Education Quality Standards	
MOE	Ministry of Education	
NEP	New Economic Policy	Malaysian government policy that was formulated to eradicate poverty and, to restructure Malaysian society.
NKRA	National Key Results Area	
NSEP	Native Speaker Expert Programme	
OEDC	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment	
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association	
SBA	School-Based Assessment	
SBAMS	School-Based Assessment Management System	
SBOEA	School-Based Oral English Assessment	
SEAS	School Exam Analysis System	
SEDs	State Education Departments	
SGMM	Suara Guru-Masyarakat Malaysia	the ad-hoc group of teachers in Malaysia
SISC+	School Improvement Specialist Coaches	
SK	Sekolah Kebangsaan	National School
SPIIn	School Performance Index	
SPM	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia	Malaysia Certificate of Examination
SRJK	Sekolah Rendah Jenis Kebangsaan	National Type Primary School or Vernacular school
SRK	Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan	National Primary School
STPM	Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia	Malaysia Higher School Certificate
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language	
TGAT	Task Group on Assessment and Testing	
TIMSS	Trends in International Maths and Science Study	
UK	United Kingdom	
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	
UPSR	Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah	Primary School Achievement Test

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Brief background of SBA in Malaysian schools

In 2011, the Ministry of Education in Malaysia (MOE) introduced school-based assessment (SBA) as a component of the assessment that will be combined to constitute the national exam; namely, the Primary School Achievement Test, or Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah (*UPSR in the Malay acronym*), which is taken at the end of Year 6 in primary education. SBA was implemented in parallel with the curriculum change, from the Primary School Integrated Curriculum (*Kurrikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah* or *KBSR in the Malay acronym*) to the new Primary School Curriculum Standard (*Kurrikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah* or *KSSR in the Malay acronym*). It was initiated as an effort to restructure and improve the current curriculum to ensure that pupils have the relevant knowledge, skills and values to face the challenges of the 21st century by emphasising the development of critical literacy (Ministry of Education, 2015a). SBA is aligned with the standard-based English Language Curriculum to assess pupils' achievement, using criteria that are linked to the content standard and learning standards, in skills such as Speaking and Listening that cannot be easily assessed by national examination. Therefore, the purpose of SBA is to move away from the high-stakes exam into a more holistic assessment focusing on continuous assessment in order to improve pupils' learning outcomes through teaching practices (Evans, 2012).

Under the new assessment system, there has been an assessment shift, from the long tradition of norm-referenced, high-stakes examination to classroom assessments that assess-pupils against criteria rather than against other pupils. Teachers are authorised to carry out the assessment tasks to suit the different levels of pupils' language proficiency and needs. Both formative and summative assessments are used to gauge and enhance pupils' performance. Formative assessment is carried out by teachers as an on-going process, while summative assessment is conducted at the end of the school term. The assessment is conducted continuously over a period of time that will allow teachers to provide immediate feedback to inform pupils' future learning. The information from feedback is also used for teachers to make changes to their teaching, for instance, changing their teaching approaches in order to further improve pupils' learning in the classroom (Ministry of Education, 2015a). As outlined

in the circular letter (KP.LP.003.07.14 (3)) issued by the Ministry of Education (2011a), SBA in Malaysian schools complements the national exam, with a weighting of 40 percent. Figure 1.1 summarizes how the 60:40 ratios of national exam and SBA models are interrelated and are designed to work in the Malaysian assessment system.

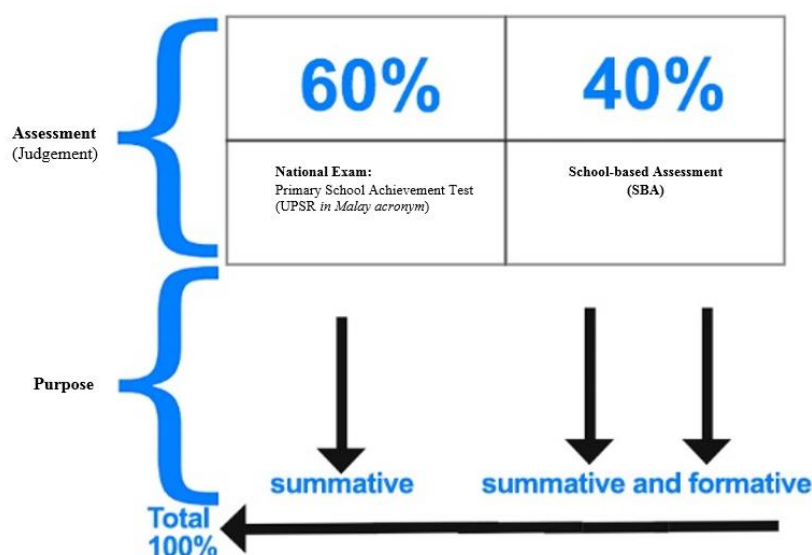


Figure 1.1: Weighting ratios for national exam and SBA

SBA in Malaysian primary schools explicitly states these summative and formative functions. This is designed to help the subject teacher identify what areas of learning are needed by the pupils to improve their learning. It is also designed to help teachers modify the type of classroom assessments they use in order to help pupils to master the language skills they lack by using different types of assessment tasks. At the end of each school term, the pupils' overall performance is tested using summative assessment, that is to say, internal exams, before they sit the national exam.

1.2 Rationale for SBA in English KSSR

The recent curriculum reform in Malaysia encompasses all subjects, including English. The English KSSR embodies a vision of preparing young Malaysians to be able to communicate effectively and emphasises the development of higher-order thinking skills (Ministry of Education, 2015a). The introduction of SBA has brought about a 'big' change for the Malaysian education system. The implementation of SBA in Malaysian schools was proposed as an attempt to replace the current public examinations, which focus on academic excellence

and parents' concerned about their children's grades, with public examinations, which encourage teachers to teach to the test (Tuah, 2007). In SBA, the culture of conducting Assessment for Learning is focused on improving learning and teaching. It was also suggested that the SBA would reduce the over-reliance on exams. SBA is thus designed as a platform for developing Higher Order Thinking Skills to support pupils' assessment based on their achievement and attainment of competencies, rather than only in academic and cognitive accomplishment, as outlined in the previous curriculum.

The SBA was initiated to complement the national exam conducted at the end of Year 6. The English component of SBA was aligned with the English KSSR syllabus. In this regard, a formative assessment was focused to be carried out during classroom teaching and learning to assess pupils based on the criteria for defined skills and competencies, including Listening and Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Grammar, as specified in the English Curriculum Standard and Assessment Document (Ministry of Education, 2015a) that leads to promoting lifelong learning. In SBA, each subject teacher is authorised to conduct the assessment because they are able to;

- I. continuously monitor pupils' progression;
- II. provide constructive feedback to improve pupils' learning;
- III. better understand how to assess their own pupils in most conducive manner; and
- IV. assess and provide feedback to pupils based on each subject's Curriculum Standard.

(Ministry of Education, online, n.d.)

The new curriculum requires teachers to develop new knowledge and understanding to equip them to develop new assessment practices in order to evaluate students. The new SBA also requires teachers to take up roles as assessors of the pupils' progress and to provide feedback to improve pupils' learning. This means that each subject teacher must plan the assessment programme to identify and/or develop the appropriate assessment programme and report their final judgement using an MS Excel template provided by the MOE. To ensure that the teachers will be equipped in developing new assessment practices that are benchmarked against performance standards, teachers are given training regarding the KSSR so that they will have the relevant delivery skills in conducting lessons to meet the different levels of their pupils' performance within the same classroom (Ministry of Education, 2015b). However, for

those teachers who have been trained to teach and grade their pupils in a traditional exam-dominated culture, such a shift in role and practice is not easy. The following sections will briefly discuss what SBA intends to achieve in the Malaysian education system and outlines the differences between SBA and the previous assessment approach, some of which led to the challenges and problems encountered in implementing SBA in Malaysia.

1.3 The concept of SBA in the Malaysian education system

SBA in the Malaysian education system is defined as a holistic form of assessment that measures different aspects of pupils' progress and achievement, such as their cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills, which encompasses the aspects of intellectual, spiritual and physical goals affirmed in the National Education Philosophy (Malaysian Examination Syndicate, 2012). The new KSSR curriculum was formulated particularly to address these aspects (see Section 2.5). The SBA component, which functions as an assessment *for* learning and an assessment *of* learning, is emphasised in the new KSSR curriculum (Malaysian Examination Syndicate, 2012). The subject teachers are required to plan, organise and administer, these assessments, and also to record the results of the assessments and report them to the different authorities. SBA consists of;

- a) Formative assessment, which is conducted as an on-going process during the teaching and learning activities, in or outside the classroom. For instance, teachers may use different assessment tools, such as worksheets, observations, giving quizzes, checklists, homework and tests to assess pupils' progress in learning. The subject teachers are required to carry out different assessment methods to provide feedback on their pupils' learning. This will also provide teachers with the necessary information regarding their pupils' learning growth and development so that they can make changes to their teaching by changing their pedagogical approaches in order to further enhance pupils' learning in the classroom.
- b) Summative assessment, which is conducted at the end of every topical unit of learning and at the end of school term in order to gauge pupils' performance and to complement the exam grading.

In SBA, pupils are assessed in both academic and non-academic components of the KSSR curriculum, including the English curriculum. This system is designed to help teachers to

focus more on the development of competencies with the 21st century skills necessary for the pupils to compete globally in real-world situations. It is also designed to reduce teachers' over-reliance on exams, which often led them to teach to the test. For example, Evans (2012) reports that the existing examination systems in Malaysia had led teachers to focus on teaching the English subject mainly on the components of reading and writing that were tested in the National Exam. However, the other aspects, such as communicative skills, which comprise an integral element in promoting competitive human capital, seemed to be neglected. Therefore, SBA is seen by the MOE as a platform that will help the Malaysian education system to move away from its traditional culture of high-stakes exam preparation to an assessment that will focus on both assessment for learning and assessment of learning (see the discussion in Section 2.5.1 and Section 3.5.1). This means, in SBA, pupils will be assessed both from their learning outcomes and through their learning process.

1.3.1 SBA and English KSSR curriculum

The SBA in the revised KSSR curriculum encompasses the entire range of subjects, including the English language curriculum. The English language curriculum is divided into five modules (see Section 2.4.1), each with its own content standards, learning standards and band or performance standards (see Section 2.5.2) to help teachers to implement effective SBA. The terms are briefly explained as follows;

- a) Content Standards specify the essential knowledge, skills and understanding that must be acquired by pupils by the end of Year 6.
- b) Learning Standards detail the specific skills and knowledge that need to be attained by pupils in order to fulfil a particular Content Standard on a year-to-year basis (Year 1 until Year 6).
- c) Performance levels or standards specify the criteria or descriptors for each of the learning standards. They serve as a guide for teachers in assessing pupils' progress and development based on the specific skills outlined in the learning standards. Teachers should refer to this document to help them ascertain the level of their pupils' acquisition of the various learning standards. The levels have been designed to help teachers gauge the level of their pupils' understanding and their acquisition

of the skills taught. With this knowledge, teachers may change their teaching approaches to help their pupils master the intended learning standard.

By way of example, Table 1.1 below (relating to Listening and Speaking skills) provides guidance for teachers on how the three terms above are related and how they are meant to be used in the SBA system.

Listening & Speaking Skills			
Content Standards	Learning Standards	Performance Standard	
		Performance Level	Descriptor
1.1 By the end of the 6-year primary schooling, pupils will be able to pronounce words and speak confidently with the correct stress, rhythm and intonation.	1.1.2 Able to listen to and respond to a given stimulus by using appropriate words, phrases and expressions with the correct stress, rhythm and intonation.	1	Can respond to a given stimulus but with a very limited level of fluency and accuracy
		2	Can respond to a given stimulus but with a limited level of fluency and accuracy
		3	Can respond to a given stimulus with a satisfactory level of fluency and accuracy
		4	Can respond to a given stimulus with a good level of fluency and accuracy
		5	Can respond to a given stimulus with a very good level of fluency and accuracy
		6	Can respond to a given stimulus with an excellent level of fluency and accuracy

Table 1.1: Sample of Listening and Speaking module for Year 5 (Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 30)

Based on the assessment guide illustrated above (Table 1.1), teachers are expected to carry out different assessment activities in order to monitor pupils' growth and development in relation to the content standards for a particular year. The SBA guidelines do not explicitly state how

the assessment is to be completed in the classroom. However, the following section explains how SBA assessment *should* be conducted by teachers, based on my critical reading of the KSSR document (Ministry of Education, 2014) and the SBA policy (Malaysian Examination Syndicate, 2012).

1.3.2 How the MOE expected SBA to be conducted

Step 1 - Teachers have to refer to the English Curriculum Document, which is organised according to the Content Standards and Learning Standards.

Step 2 - The performance levels relating to the Content Standards and Learning Standards are determined by the descriptors outlined in the Performance Standards. Teachers must refer to each of these documents in order to conduct an assessment and when providing evidence (e.g., checklists and worksheets) for recording and reporting purposes.

For example, in the Listening and Speaking Skills module (refer to Table 1.1 above), if a pupil is able to pronounce words and speak confidently with the correct stress, rhythm and intonation by taking part in listening and speaking activities, such as role-play and group presentation, teachers will have to refer to the Performance Standards to record the band or level achieved by the pupil. Teachers are also given the authority to present any activities of their own choosing as evidence of assessing the pupils.

Step 3 - To record the SBA scores, teachers must key-in pupils' band or level in an offline system using the Microsoft Excel Template called the SBA Management System (SBAMS) (see Appendix A) four times a year.

1.3.3 The ideal SBA classroom practices

In line with the government's policy on strengthening English skills, the English curriculum has been designed to equip pupils to be proficient in the language. The content and learning standards that have been developed in the curriculum are designed to help pupils acquire the language so that they can use it in their daily lives, to further their studies, and for employment purposes.

For example, in the Listening and Speaking module, teachers may use different assessment activities that will help to develop their pupils' ability to listen and respond to stimulus with guidance, participate in daily conversations, listen and demonstrate understanding of oral texts, and speak confidently on related topics with guidance (e.g., poem recitation, role-play, and action songs). Pupils should be taught how to listen carefully and should be encouraged to speak with the correct pronunciation, stress and intonation in various situational contexts. Therefore, for an ideal SBA classroom practices for instance in Listening and Speaking module, teachers may;

- use checklists to record pupils' progress in their language acquisition as part of the assessment activity
- conduct a classroom observation during group discussions or role-play to observe pupils' engagement during the activities and their ability to communicate
- observe the social conventions (pupils' ability to listen, speak and share thoughts, ideas and feelings) in listening and speaking activities, such as turn-taking, politeness and courtesy, where viewpoints and opinion are exchanged
- use feedback in helping pupils to identify whether they have met a certain band or level in the various learning standards
- discuss with pupils their language acquisition, and how to improve their speaking performance to a higher desired band or level
- conduct a continuous and on-going assessment to help pupils to improve their communication skills

The SBA scoring and recording process is discussed in detail in Chapter Two (see Section 2.5.4).

1.4 The differences between SBA and the current practice

In the previous curriculum (KBSR), the assessment used was largely summative. Pupils were evaluated at the end of Year 6 in a National exam, known as the Primary School Achievement Test, for subjects such as Malay Language, English Language, Mathematics and Science. This test focused on academic and cognitive aspects of the 3Rs (Reading, wRiting and aRithmetic) and results were presented as letter grades. This high-stake exam culture led teachers to train their pupils for exam preparation and thus neglected the development of human capital as a

whole (MOE, 2008). Furthermore, pupils were unable to relate what they had learned in school with real-life situations because learning was more focused on drilling and memorisation in order for them to pass the National exam (MOE, 2008). For example, the MOE (2008) also reported that pupils were not able to relate the subjects they had learned in primary school with the same subjects they have to learn in secondary school. This is because the over-emphasis on exam preparation had led teachers to teach to the test and to train the pupils to learn to pass the test. As reported by Rahim (2012), the norm of publicly highlighting and comparing the grades obtained by schools and students in examinations in Malaysia had neglected to address cognitive development and knowledge construction in the learning process because teaching was focused on pupils' achievement and performance in the National exams.

This over-reliance on exams was one of the weaknesses in the former curriculum. Therefore, in the new KSSR curriculum, this new assessment system (SBA) was designed to reduce the culture of exam-dominated practices in Malaysia. In SBA, pupils should be assessed using both summative and formative assessment, that is to say, to have a balance between both assessment for learning and assessment of learning. As explained earlier in Section 1.2, the subject teachers are required to conduct a continuous assessment in class for their pupils' progression. Teachers are given the authority to choose what kind of classroom assessment they are to use, and when and how to conduct it by referring to the Performance Standard to help them ascertain the level of their pupils' acquisition of the various learning standards and also to plan their lessons and assess their pupils. Formative assessment should be carried out during the teaching and learning process and pupils' achievement levels are recorded and reported quarterly. In contrast, in the former curriculum, pupils were tested through examinations and results were presented using letter grades.

In the new KSSR curriculum, pupils' results in the National exam will no longer rely completely on the Primary School Achievement Test that is taken by the pupils at the end of Year 6. In the new assessment system, 40 percent of the total marks are derived from SBA, whereas the Primary School Achievement Test will only carry 60 percent. However, the SBA guidelines do not explicitly explain how SBA marks are to be combined with the National Exam result. In addition, the documents for SBA (the English KSSR and the SBA policy) are separated because they were prepared by two different government bodies; The Malaysian

Examination Syndicate prepared the SBA policy, and the English KSSR was prepared by Curriculum Development Division. Therefore, the training relating to these two SBA documents was conducted separately. This led to teachers' initial confusion about how these different standards were related (MOE, 2013). I will further expand on this issue in Chapter Three. The MOE (2013) further reported that subsequent training has been improved through better coordination between the Curriculum Development Division and the Malaysian Examination Syndicate, but upfront collaboration remains an area for improvement.

1.5 The problem

Malaysia is one among many Asian countries that are reported to have a long tradition of having high-stakes, norm-referenced examinations (Evans, 2012; Berry, 2011a). The high-stakes summative examinations are conducted from primary right through to the end of secondary education (see Section 2.5.4, and Table 2.1 in Chapter Two). The traditional culture and structure of high-stakes exam preparation (or 'teach-to-the-test') in the Malaysian education system has been a prominent feature of schooling for many years. This over-reliance on exams was one of the factors that then led the Ministry of Education to introduce the holistic SBA model. SBA entails a major change for the Malaysian school culture, its structures and also the pedagogic practices among teachers, pupils, school administrators, and also parents. Nevertheless, in Asian systems, cultural factors are seen as playing a greater role in teaching practices, which often constrains teachers from becoming assessors and assessment designers in their own classrooms. For instance, Yu (2010) reported that SBA in Hong Kong is seen by teachers as being irrelevant and is perceived as being a bureaucratic paperwork exercise that adds to their already overloaded schedules. In addition, these teachers did not subscribe to the rationale for SBA in improving their student learning outcomes due to the "washback effect" (Wyse, Hayward and Pandya, 2016) of high-stakes exam in the Hong Kong education system. Similarly, Evans (2012) observed that teachers see SBA as just another exam paper that requires them to prepare students for exams in Malaysia.

In its early implementation stage in Malaysia, SBA received different reviews, highlighting different issues identified by teachers. The teachers' association (the ad-hoc group of teachers in Malaysia, or Suara Guru-Masyarakat Malaysia (SGMM)), started to raise several issues concerning SBA. These include the difficulties in recording the pupil's band using the online system, and the increased amount of workload in administering the new assessment

(Hamilton, 2014). In addition, the curriculum documents were prepared by two different government bodies: the English KSSR was prepared by the Curriculum Development Division; while the SBA policy, which outlines the content standards for English KSSR, was prepared by the Malaysian Examination Syndicate. Moreover, the training sessions in 2011 were not conducted together (Ministry of Education, 2013). Therefore, all of these factors together led to initial confusion amongst teachers regarding how these two policy documents were related (ibid.). These mainly resulted from a lack of training and the lack of time provided to teachers for making sense of the English KSSR and SBA at school level. The initial feedback on the rollout of SBA suggests that the magnitude of this change has not been fully grasped by the teachers (Ministry of Education, 2013). Some teachers and schools were reported to have difficulties in “developing their own assessment tasks and assessment and instruments for the school assessment component” (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 4.4). The review by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2013) also reported that there was little evidence on teachers’ understanding about the new curriculum and how it might be implemented within their own classroom practices. School administrators and teachers were also reported to have faced difficulties with the new policy due to insufficient information available on SBA (Hamdan, 2009).

Previous research regarding SBA in Malaysia mainly reported teachers’ lack of understanding about the new curriculum, especially on the assessment aspect and how it might be implemented within their own classroom practices. Among other reasons listed, these issues were due to:

Lack of school facilities and teaching materials (e.g., Fook and Sidhu, 2006; Rahman, 2014);

Lack of training (e.g., Hamdan, 2009); and

Poor dissemination strategy (e.g., Rahman, 2014).

Majid (2011) reported that the teachers were concerned about their ability and suitability to perform this assessment role and to meet all the SBA requirements, especially in relation to the assessment aspects. Accordingly, Rahman (2014) observed that teachers did not demonstrate understanding of how to assess pupils’ progress using the assessment criteria outlined in the English Curriculum Standard Document (Ministry of Education, 2011b). Various issues were also highlighted from teachers and parents about the implementation of

SBA, which included criticism about both the amount of planning and research conducted before the Primary School Curriculum Standard (KSSR) was implemented, and about School-Based Assessment (SBA) (e.g., Hassan and Talib, 2013).

The issue of having to key-in pupils' performance on an online system was reported to be problematic due to the poor information technology systems in general, which could not support the online system in all schools in Malaysia (Ghavifekr et al., 2017). Therefore, the implementation of SBA was postponed until April 2014, at which time the offline system began to be used to record pupils' performance. This change resulted in confusion among teachers and school administrators as they were now required to assess the pupils and record their achievements in two different ways (ibid.).

To date, there has been little specific research on teachers' enactments of SBA in Malaysia. Most of the research conducted was mainly on teachers' readiness, beliefs and perceptions, or on the effectiveness of the SBA's implementation. However, in implementing any educational change, teachers and schools have to mediate the nature of the reform (Davison, 2007). It is not just about how the policy is put into practice or how well the implementation is carried out, but it is about "the whole complex that make up the policy process" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 6). This existing research in Malaysia suggests that there is a need to find out why the SBA implementation is happening in the way it is, for instance, why has it become problematic for teachers? There is a need to understand why the policy is implemented differently when it enters the schools. The Scottish schools study conducted by Priestley et al. (2014, p. 190) showed that;

- Teacher anxiety about CfE (especially in respect of assessment and the new National Qualifications);
- Highly variable approaches to implementation;
- A lack of fit between teachers' implicit theories about knowledge and learning and the new curriculum; and
- Considerable tensions in policy and practice (particularly between the putative developmental thrust of CfE and a culture of accountability still prevalent in Scottish schools).

These issues acted as a starting point for my study, providing possible reasons for the poor implementation of SBA in the Malaysian context that often led to unchanged classroom practices. These possible reasons also drove my interest to understand not only how the assessment system is changing but also to understand the whole process, as suggested by Ball et al. (2012), and to explore the challenges faced by teachers when a mandated policy is given to them to make sense of, at topic that I will now turn to.

1.6 Rationale for the study

I worked as a primary school teacher for eight years before beginning my PhD study at the University of Stirling in 2014. I experienced teaching using the former and the recent curriculum introduced in 2011. As a teacher, I experienced difficulties in understanding what we were required to do in the new curriculum and in the new assessment system. I felt deprofessionalised by the burden of the increased bureaucratic overload, such as having to prepare the assessment tasks, to key-in marks and to do the filing of the assessment evidence for each pupil for inspection purposes. I also felt demoralised, as the implementation of SBA resulted in so much general chaos among all school staff, leading to problems such as time constraints and anxiety. At the same time, the biggest challenge was having to do all of these tasks without fully understanding their purpose. It made me feel deskilled as I started to feel as though I was doing more of a technician's job rather than a professional job. I was not alone in this confusion. In fact, most of the teachers I knew encountered the same problems, in addition to the several other factors explained in the previous section. Therefore, when I was offered a scholarship from the Malaysian Ministry of Education to pursue my study on Curriculum Evaluation, I was motivated to use the opportunity to dig at the roots that contribute to the challenges of putting SBA into practice. I was eager to find out what was actually happening in the process of implementing the assessment change in the context of Malaysian primary schools. My original proposal was relatively broad, using a quantitative approach as my methodology to explore the implementation progress in the new assessment system in Malaysia. I had planned to use questionnaires, paper surveys, and focus group interviews for my data collection methods. Throughout the course of my study, the method gradually changed to suit my topic in that I use the qualitative approach of multiple case study (Yin, 2014) which allows me to do more in-depth data collection and analysis in order to obtain rich explanation of policy enactments. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how primary English teachers make sense of and enact the new assessment system in the new curriculum.

This study will seek to shed light on relevant contextual factors that influence the ways in which teachers interpret and implement School-Based Assessment (SBA) and also to increase understanding of teachers' assessment practices and their deeper conceptions of their knowledge of the current curriculum in Malaysia. The overarching aim consists of three main subsidiary aims:

- to examine the contextual and individual/teacher factors in schools that influence the changes;
- to explore what external factors are influencing the changes; and
- to explore what alternative or further support schools and teachers feel they need to effectively implement the new assessment practice.

This study aims to address the following research questions:

1. How are teachers and leaders enacting the new curriculum?
2. What are the contextual and individual/teacher factors in school that influence the change and the way it is implemented?
3. What out-of-school factors, e.g., external materials, resources, and programmes, are shaping/influencing the changes?
4. What alternative or further supports do schools and teachers feel they need to effectively implement SBA in the KSSR?

In order to understand these issues, I employed a case study approach with various research methods, including document analysis, semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom observation and field notes for the data collection. As for the data analysis, I adopted the social interaction model outlined by Priestley (2011), and derived from the Morphogenesis/Morphostasis (M/M) framework conceived by Archer (1995) to make sense of my findings. The findings in this study could be used as a resource for decision-making among members of the Malaysian Examination Syndicate, school administrators, and teachers. It may also have implications for other education systems in similar contexts.

1.7 My own background

I attended a one-year course in teaching college as a Postgraduate teacher. I started my teaching career using the former curriculum, the Primary School Integrated Curriculum

(KBSR) for four years and then taught for another four years within the recent curriculum, the Primary School Curriculum Standard (KSSR). At the teaching college, we were trained about different pedagogical strategies and also in preparing the rubrics for exams. In my first year of teaching, I was appointed to teach a Year 6 class (pupils who will sit for a National exam) in the English Language subject and I remembered our Yearly School Plan was full of strategies to promote a programme for excellence for the pupils who would sit the national exam at the end of Year 6. I was struggling to teach the extra class (teaching different classes for ‘weak’ and ‘potential A’ pupils) and I saw that my ‘weak’ pupils were struggling and seemed to be disengaged with the lessons as well. I grew up in a culture that drove me to place a great deal of emphasis on my own self-performance. I started teaching with the already established Gred Purata Mata Pelajaran (GPMP) or Subject Grade Point Average to be achieved in the English Language subject in the national exam. I was in a dilemma: I truly believe that teaching and learning is about helping a child to become a lifelong learner; that was one of the reasons that really motivated me to become a teacher. However, under real teaching conditions, labelling whether I am a ‘good’ teacher based on what results my pupils achieve in the national exam caused me to have self-doubt. What aspects did I need to prioritize first? I believe in lifelong learning and I really want my pupils to understand the knowledge they obtain and not just to deliver the knowledge according to the syllabus. When the new curriculum was introduced in 2011, I was so relieved that one the focus of the reform was placed on holistic assessment. Beginning in my fifth year of teaching, I had a chance to attend a short training session on KSSR in 2012, a year after the curriculum was introduced.

As far as I remember, the course I attended was three days in length. During the first day, the new curriculum reform was briefly explained to us. The main difference highlighted was that the new assessment required us to assess pupils continuously, with evidence of which needed to be documented in every pupil’s file. On the second day, we were briefed about how assessment is supposed to be conducted and recorded, but there was no hands-on training, including how to key-in the marks, due to difficulties in connecting to the online assessment database. The last day of the course was fully used for preparing lesson plans and conducting the teaching for the lesson plan we had prepared (micro-teaching) because it was stressed during the training course that the language skills in the new English Language curriculum are no longer integrated, but each lesson instead focuses on only one skill. Therefore, we were required to prepare different lesson plans that related specifically to individual skills: the

Listening and Speaking Module, Reading Module, Writing Module, Grammar Module, and Language Arts Module. Overall, I personally found that the introductory course was inadequate for me to understand what we were expected to do with the new curriculum. I understood that the new holistic assessment aims to move away from the exam-oriented culture in our existing education system, but I started to feel ‘hopeless’ again when I failed to appreciate the idea behind the new curriculum. I felt confused because there were lots of different versions of how it should be done. The new assessment method occupied most of our time because we had to try to log into the online database in order to key-in the bands for our pupils. At the same time we need to prepare different worksheets as evidence of having assessed our pupils. Some teachers completely refused to do this. But we were given deadlines, so we had to do it. And because I was also the Secretary of the Board of Exams in my former school, I had to make sure that all marks from each different subject were entered on the system. Sometimes this required me to complete this task for other teachers because they did not have an internet connection. This made me feel extremely anxious and tired, and also made me feel as though I was deskilled, as I was not sure what I was doing. The online system received numerous complaints from other teachers in Malaysia, so its initiation was postponed until April, 2014, when the offline system to key-in the marks was introduced. At that time, I was also granted a scholarship from the Ministry of Education to do my PhD. I chose the new assessment method as the focus on my research by taking into account the sense-making I had encountered from many primary school teachers. I was motivated to contribute to the teachers’ understanding of their assessment practices and their deeper knowledge of this reform.

1.8 Thesis outline

This thesis consists of eight chapters. A brief explanation of each chapter is outlined below.

Following on from this introductory chapter, the thesis is set out as follows:

- **Chapter Two:** The chapter begins with a brief historical background about the Malaysian Education system. I found it necessary to include this section in this chapter to deepen my own understanding about the difference between education aims during the occupancy of British colonial rule in Malaysia until the recent curriculum reform was implemented, namely, the Primary School Curriculum Standard (KSSR). This

chapter provides insights about the development of the Malaysian educational setting, leading to the pressure to change its assessment system, the introduction of School-Based Assessment (SBA), which is my main interest in conducting this research.

- **Chapter Three:** This chapter provides a discussion of the key themes within Malaysian curriculum reform. The literature on curriculum change, and the challenges encountered in implementing any reform, are presented here. The literature around assessment, particularly formative assessment and summative assessment in relation to assessment reform in Malaysia, is also discussed. This is followed by an overview of the factors that need to be considered in curriculum reform, as they play great roles in influencing teachers' assessment practices.
- **Chapter Four:** I start the chapter by presenting my ontological and epistemological stance in relation to why I have adopted a critical realism approach in analysing my data. The research questions, the research methodology, including the methods of data collection, its stages and procedures, and the data analysis process adopted in the study, are clearly justified in this chapter. This chapter also highlights why my research is different from any other past research conducted in Malaysia, and how it therefore makes a novel and original contribution to the knowledge that has value for the Ministry of Education, the Examination Syndicates, and also teachers in Malaysia. It also discusses the ethical considerations of the research and how I address them, and I end the chapter with some reflections made during the process of reporting the findings.
- **Chapter Five:** This chapter describes the details of the first case study school. These include its policy implementation and emerging practices at administrative and teachers' level, teachers' understanding of the English KSSR philosophy and SBA policy. The factors that shape and/or hinder their enactment of these practices are also explored in this chapter.
- **Chapter Six:** This chapter discusses the details of the second case study school. As in Chapter Five, this chapter also reports SBA practices at administrative and teachers' level. I then present the factors that help with teachers' engagement with SBA and the factors that hinder their enactment with SBA.
- **Chapter Seven:** This chapter presents the key themes emerging from the two case study schools. It discusses the second stage of my data analysis using Archer's (1995)

Social Theory. I clearly present the complementarities and contradictions of the two schools using the analytical separation of individual, structural, cultural and material attributes by referring to the generic questions and the Social Interaction model presented in Chapter Four. I then conclude the chapter by bringing all four elements together to demonstrate how the interplay between the four elements within the social interaction influence and/or impede teachers' engagement with SBA. This helps me to draw conclusions on how the SBA policy is understood, mediated and put into practice.

- **Chapter Eight:** This concluding chapter summarises and makes recommendations based on the findings reported in this thesis. I start the chapter by briefly discussing the key findings of the study. The contribution that the study makes to the literature, its practical implications, and its strengths and limitations are also discussed. I include a brief commentary sharing my own reflection throughout the research process as a final section to conclude this closing chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

MALAYSIAN CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

In the 21st century, the demands and the challenges of globalization require that education systems produce high-quality human capital for the national economy to be competitive in the world-wide context (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010). Therefore, the existing Malaysian education system needs to include a new set of skills and competencies, such as higher-order thinking skills, to prepare pupils with the necessary 21st century skills that will ensure their competitiveness in the global economy. To meet these challenges, the transformation of the curriculum was announced in June 2010 with the aim to “produce wholesome, resilient, curious, principled, knowledgeable and patriotic pupils who have thinking, communicative and collaborative skills” (Ministry of Education, 2015a, p. 9) that are necessary to compete at an international level. The new curriculum emphasises the “application of knowledge and the development of critical, creative, and innovative thinking skills” (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 4.1), using a new more holistic assessment scheme; namely, the School-Based Assessment (SBA) system. In order to fully understand curriculum reform in Malaysia, I will begin this chapter by presenting the development of the education system in Malaysia, from the British colonial period to the present situation, which led to the emergence of the SBA. In this chapter, I will also briefly describe the new revised Primary School English Language Curriculum and the changes in assessment dimensions that require the teachers to change their assessment practices.

2.2 The background

Malaysia is a federation with an estimated population of 32 million in 2017 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2017). It is an upper-middle-income economy with multi-racial communities that comprise Malays, Chinese, Indians and other indigenous groups in Sabah and Sarawak. Malays and the indigenous ethnics groups are termed ‘bumiputera’ or ‘sons of the soil’ (Mukherjee and Singh, 1985, p. 300). In 2017, the bumiputera comprised 68.8 percent of the total population, 23.3 percent were Chinese, 7 percent were Indians, and 1 percent comprised a group that was labelled ‘others’ (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2017). There are also other immigrants residing in Malaysia. Malaysia consists of two regions, covering an

area of 329,900 square kilometres, separated by the South China Sea; West Malaysia occupies the Malay Peninsula south of Thailand (formerly known as Malaya), and East Malaysia consists of Sabah and Sarawak, which is located on Borneo Island.

The official religion of Malaysia is Islam, with the remainder of the population belonging to other religious groups, such as Buddhists, Christians and Hindus, and some groups that are still practising animism and ancestor worship (Mukherjee and Singh, 1985). Bahasa Malaysia, or Malay Language, is the national language for Malaysians, with English as a second language, despite the use of other languages by Indians, Chinese and other indigenous groups in Sabah and Sarawak. The independence of Malaya was gained from the British in 1957. The forming of Malaysia as a federation was ratified in 1963, when Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak joined Malaya to form Malaysia. However, Singapore exited from the alliance to form its own republic in 1965 (ibid.). To date, the federation consists thirteen states (Perlis, Kedah, Penang, Perak, Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Malacca, Johor, Sabah and Sarawak), and three federal territories; Kuala Lumpur (the capital city of Malaysia), Labuan and Putrajaya, as shown in Figure 2.1 below.



Figure 2.1: Map of States and territories in Malaysia

Source: adapted from <http://malaysiamap.facts.co/malaysiahighresolutionmap.php>

2.2.1 A brief historical background

The changes to and development of educational policy in the Malaysian education system are closely related to socio-political factors (Mukherjee and Singh, 1985). The occupation by Great Britain in the nineteenth century created a plural society due to the economic interests of Great Britain in Malaya at that time (Rahman, 1987). Therefore, the provision of education for the various ethnic communities was geographically segregated among the three major ethnicities; Malays, Chinese and Indians. The education system was varied; while Malays' education was mainly based on religious matters, Chinese and Indians, with their curricula brought from China and India, were taught in their respective languages as the medium of instruction. The main focus of education during that time was to sustain loyalty to the country of origin. The segregation of ethnic communities by location resulted in varying levels of participation by the different ethnic groups in the economy sectors; Malays were mainly employed in agricultural activities, Chinese in tin mines, and Indians in rubber estate plantations (Mukherjee and Singh, 1985). Some citizens, especially the Malay elite and the Chinese and Indians residing in urban areas who were educated in English education provided by the British, were reported to have a much greater chance of obtaining work in modern employment sectors, such as in the lower administrative services. Due to these economic segregations, Malays were reported to be predominant in the rural areas and were mainly employed in the agricultural sector and thus remained the lowest earners with the highest level of poverty. These economic and social structures, developed in the colonial period, continued even after independence was gained in 1957 (ibid.).

As a result of these economic and social imbalances, a race riot took place in May 1969, placing dramatic pressure on the government to restructure and reshape the social systems (ibid.). This led to the formulation of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1971. The focus of this policy was to eradicate poverty and, in restructuring Malaysian society, to “eliminate the identification of race with economic function and geographical location” (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. A-2). In terms of the education system, the NEP brought significant changes, for instance, the introduction of the Civic Education subject, which was designed to “develop an understanding and appreciation of Malaysia’s history, its people, its cultures, and its values” and to emphasize “that students are able to understand and embrace the commonalities and the differences that make Malaysia unique” (ibid., p. 7.18). However, for the current curriculum, Islamic Education, Moral Education and History and Local Studies

were introduced to replace the Civic Education subject. The NEP also introduced the same curriculum and examinations for all pupils with Bahasa Malaysia or Malay Language (the national language) as the medium of instruction in all schools, so as to remove the segregated curricula inherited from the British, namely religious Malay, Chinese and Indian education systems. The aim was to achieve unity among all ethnic groups and this was implemented in stages. However, because parents from the non-Malay population were concerned about their children losing the ability to speak their mother tongue, the Ministry then allowed the use of Chinese or Tamil as the medium of instruction in schools (Mukerjee and Singh, 1985). From 1983 until the present day, Malay language was fully used as the only medium of instruction in all national schools, including the English-medium schools. Vernacular schools conducted the lessons using Chinese or Tamil, but the Malay Language was made a compulsory subject, with a national exam. To ensure the nation's aim of building a united and progressive society is achieved, the National Education Philosophy was written in 1988 in line with the Rukun Negara, or the National Principles, such as a Belief in God, Loyalty to King and Country, Supremacy of the Constitution, the Rule of Law, and Good Behaviour and Morality. The effort to make Malay language the national language for all Malaysians was one of the successful contributions made by the education system towards promoting national integration in Malaysia (ibid.). Thus, for a plural society such as that of Malaysia, the National Education Philosophy serves as a manifesto to achieve an educational goal among a multi-racial society for the betterment of all of its citizens (Ministry of Education, 2001). The Principles are described as follows:

Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving high levels of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large.

(Ministry of Education online, n.p.)

In order to achieve the national mission, that is, to produce united and progressive citizens, the Integrated Primary School Curriculum (KBSR) was then formulated in 1983, followed by the Integrated Secondary School Curriculum (KSSM) in 1989. A vast change took place in the last decade of the 20th century; the introduction of the Vision 2020 statement, in parallel with the World Bank initiative, launched by Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia in the Sixth Malaysia Plan in 1991. The education policy was strengthened to meet the demands of the rapid development of globalization and information and communication technology (ICT) era. New education legislation was amended to address these current needs and new acts were formulated and existing acts were amended to be relevant to achieving the status of a fully developed country by 2020 (Ministry of Education, 2013) according to the World Bank classification. The main focus of the initiative is to promote “national unity with a sense of shared destiny along with moral and spiritual maturity based on democratic principles entailing tolerance and respect for diversity in the practice of cultures, customs and religious beliefs” (ibid., p. 3). To meet the aspirations of Vision 2020, more education facilities and programmes, such as improving leadership qualities and the empowerment of learning through service training development, were introduced as an effort to provide and implement an efficient education programme for the nation.

To further expand the quality of education, especially in rural areas, and to strengthen the prospects of realizing Vision 2020, the Malaysian Government launched the National Key Results Area (NKRA) under the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) in 2010. The objectives of this initiation were to:

- Increase preschool enrolment;
- Ensure literacy in Bahasa Malaysia (Malay Language) and numeracy;
- Develop High-Performing Schools (HPS); and
- Introduce the New Deal (Bai’ah) for principals: a performance incentive programme to reward principals and schools that have made significant gains in short time frames and sustained high level of performance in teacher development and student performance.

(Ministry of Education, 2013, p. A.4)

The previous Malaysian curriculum was focused only on the 3Rs (Reading, wRiting and aRithmetic), which are no longer seen as being as relevant in achieving international benchmarks, such as those measured in the Trends in International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS) league tables and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Malaysia has participated in TIMSS since 1999 and from 2010 as part of the 2009 PISA assessment cycle. Between 1999 and 2009, Malaysia is reported to be ranked in the bottom third among all the participating countries in PISA and performed poorly in TIMSS (Ministry of Education, 2015b). The Ministry of Education (2013) reported that the analysis of English examinations at UPSR level in 2010 and 2011 showed that 70% of the English language UPSR papers tested only on basic skills of knowledge and comprehension. Therefore, Malaysia recognizes that there is a need to realign the curriculum and the current assessment system for the effective implementation and assessment of Higher-Order Thinking Skills and to promote continuous lifelong learning (Ministry of Education, 2015a). For this purpose, the new revised curriculum, namely, the Primary School Curriculum Standard (KSSR), was announced in 2010 and was implemented in all primary schools in Malaysia in stages in 2011, and was in place in all primary school years by 2016. In parallel with the KSSR, the Malaysian Examination Syndicate rolled out the new assessment system, namely the School-Based assessment (SBA) system, which is designed to be more holistic and robust, and more aligned to the new English KSSR, in order to prepare the pupils to be “globally competitive citizens” (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 4.4). As for the secondary schools, the Secondary School Curriculum Standard (KSSM) was rolled out in 2012, starting with Form 1 students (grade 7). The new curriculum emphasizes the application of knowledge and the development of skills and competencies in a more holistic assessment system. These include:

- Redesigning the primary and secondary school curricula to align with international standards;
- Upgrading assessment frameworks to increase items and test higher-order thinking skills and to move towards standard-referencing in School-Based Assessment (SBA);
- Intensifying teacher support to ensure the written curriculum is accurately translated into classroom teaching through better teaching resources, and an expanded School Improvement Specialist Coaches (SISC+) role; and

- Introducing Literacy and Numeracy Screening (LINUS) 2.0 with an expanded scope to address English literacy.

(Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 4.1)

The SISC+ role is situated at each District Education Office as a “single point of contact between the Curriculum Development Division, the Examination Syndicate, and the teachers” (ibid., p. 4.4). The role is designed to allow the written curriculum to be directly translated and delivered into the taught curriculum, by providing grounded training from the experts among teachers to the teachers in school level. SISC+ coaches are responsible for coaching teachers in pedagogical skills and to monitor the implementation of the new curriculum and assessments. The SISC+ serves as a mentor to facilitate and coaching schools identified as under-performing schools based on the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and each school’s performance band in each NKRA (Ministry of Education, 2013). KPIs were developed by the Ministry of Education and were implemented nationwide at the end of 2013 as a monitoring system for each school’s performance, and are evaluated on a yearly basis. Each District Education Office is ranked based on their performance against KPIs and school performance bands in the School Performance Index (SPIn), based on four dimensions: leadership, organizational management, educational programme, and pupils’ performance in National Exam as a whole to identify under-achieving schools so that more support can be given to improve school performance. Under this system, schools that fall under Bands 1 and 2 are classified as good schools, Bands 3, 4 and 5 as average schools, and Bands 6 and 7 as poor schools. Based on the classification of schools, the school inspection ranges from normal inspections, to full inspections, follow-up inspections and special inspections, which are conducted by the School Inspectorates as an indication of problematic school (Othman and Rauf, 2009). In order to avoid further inspection, some low performing schools ranked their schools as average (ibid.). These performance results are published publicly every year (Ministry of Education, 2013). In addition, a programme called the District Transformation Programme was introduced to accelerate school improvement, particularly for underperforming schools. However, this performance measure is in contradiction with the initiated change to Malaysian new holistic assessment scheme because it might lead to adding more pressure for the schools and administrators to focus more on the school’s performance,

which will result in teaching to the test in order to become high performing schools and to avoid the school inspections.

Lower level primary teachers must conduct the LINUS 2.0 programme (Literacy and Numeracy Screening) that was introduced in 2013 (in stages) in the English Language subject and diagnostic tests are conducted twice a year by the subject teachers. The instruments, each having 12 constructs, are prepared by the Malaysian Examinations Syndicate and are passed on to the district education offices to be distributed to schools. Pupils who fail the screening test will be enrolled in remedial classes with 10 periods per week for remedial literacy instruction and seven periods per week for remedial numeracy instruction. In this programme, pupils are grouped together and taught relating to their needs. The purpose of conducting the assessment is so that every child will be able to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills after three years of mainstream primary education. The main focus is to improve pupils' outcomes in NKRA under the tutelage of the Ministry of Education (World Bank Group, 2017). This programme is facilitated by a professional facilitator, called a FasiLINUS, at every District Education Office and is monitored by the Schools Inspectorate and Quality Assurance authority (Ministry of Education, 2015b).

The administration of the educational programme in Malaysia is highly centralised and is structured in four distinct hierarchical levels. However, for the eastern region of Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak, most of the schools are isolated and are not easily accessible due to its vast geographical area. Therefore, for these two states, the administrative functions of the State Education Department are assisted by the Residency or Division Education Office. The Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for formulating and translating guidelines relating to education policies for the implementation of its plans, programmes, projects and activities at school level in all fourteen State Education Departments (SEDs). The MOE also prescribes the curriculum syllabus and examinations in all schools in Malaysia. At the state level, the SEDs are responsible for monitoring and providing feedback for the programmes, projects and activities conducted in schools. To promote more effective control and efficient management, the schools and the SEDs are linked through the District Education Office. Figure 2.2 illustrates the administrative structure in the Malaysian education system.

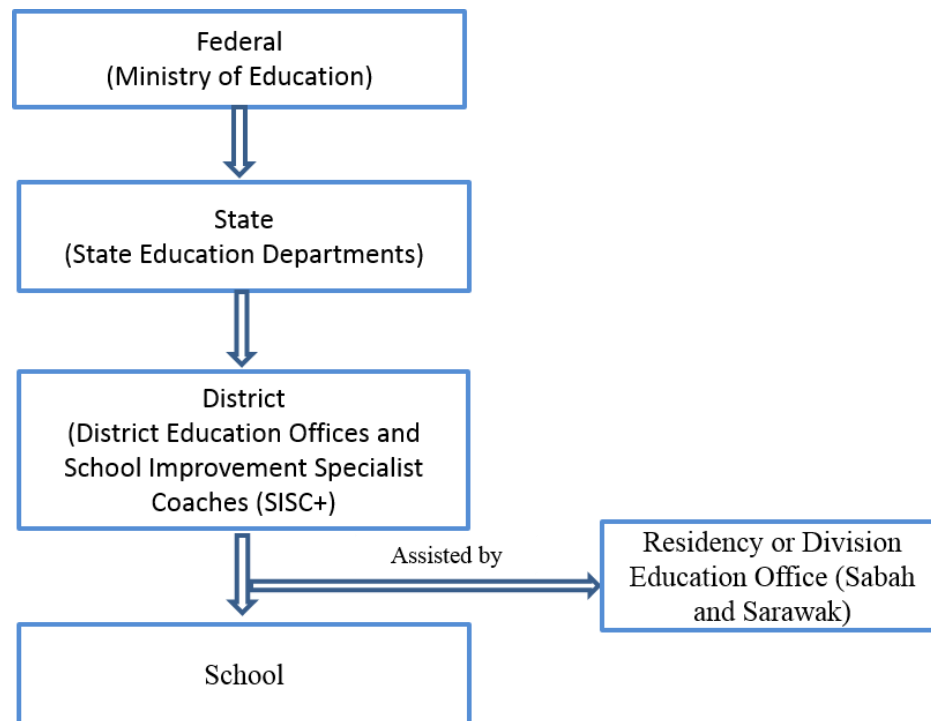


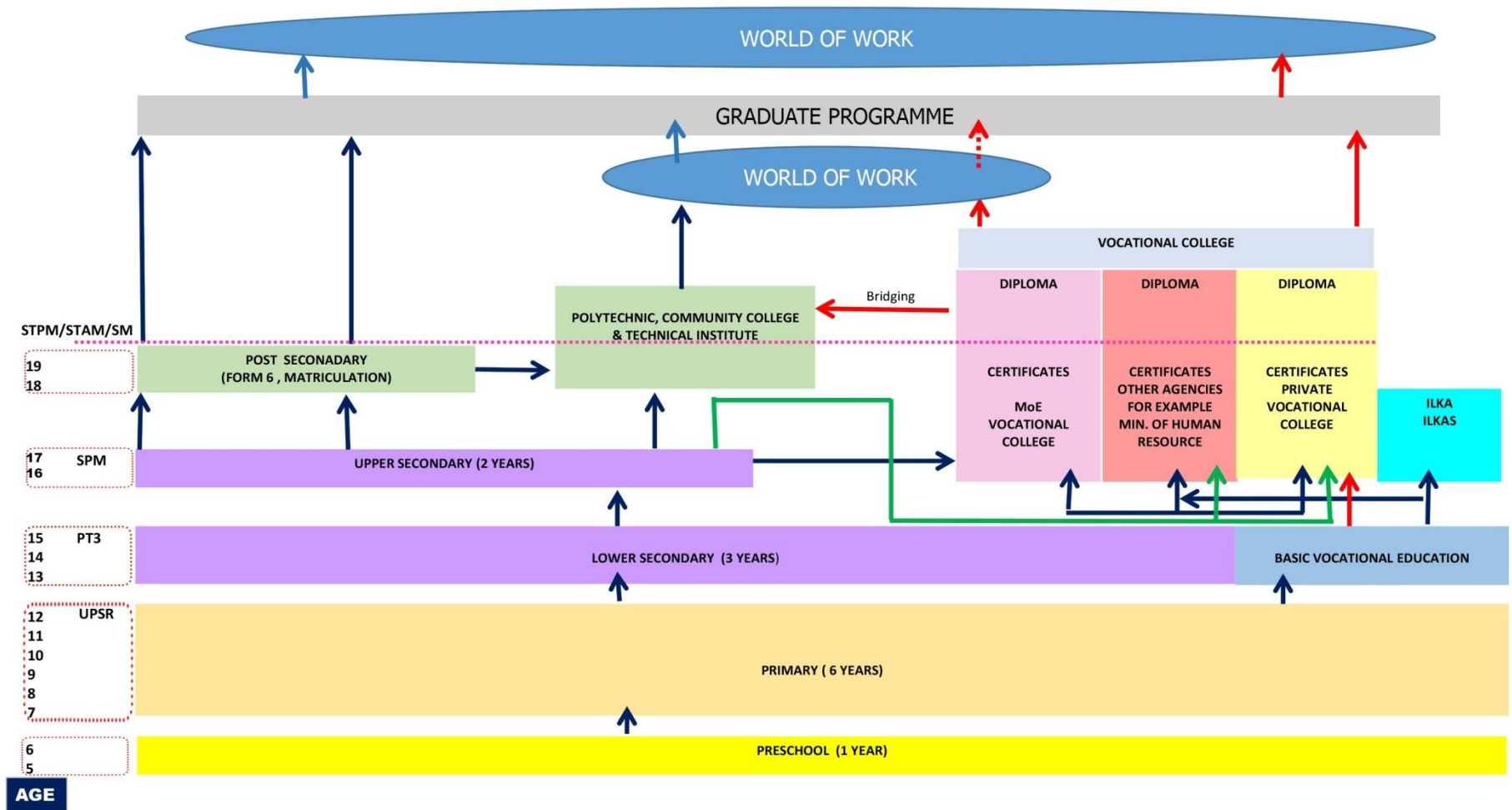
Figure 2.2: The administrative structure in the Malaysian education system

Source: Ministry of Education, 2004

2.3 The National Education System

There are two categories of public schools in Malaysia; the National Schools, and the vernacular schools (national-type schools), which comprise Chinese-Type Schools and Tamil-Type Schools. There are also government-supported religious schools, semi-aided mission schools, and private schools. The medium of instruction for National Schools is the Malay Language, and Chinese or Tamil languages are used in the vernacular schools. The Malay Language is a compulsory subject in both types of schools; English is taught as a second language and is also a compulsory subject; and Chinese, Tamil and other indigenous languages are offered as subjects in national schools.

Figure 2.3 illustrates the education structure and assessment programmes in Malaysia.



Source : MoE, 2015

Figure 2.3: Education Structure and Assessment Programmes in Malaysia

There are five phases of education in Malaysia; pre-school, primary, secondary (lower and upper), and post-secondary. Formal education begins at age 4, followed by compulsory education in primary school for 6 years, as outlined in the Education Act 550 (Ministry of Education, 2015b). Before children reach the age of 6, all parents must register them at the nearest school and they must remain in primary school for 6 years. For the purpose of this research, I will be focusing only on primary education.

Primary education comprises Years 1 to 6, and begins at the age of 7 to finish by the age of 12. A public examination, known as the Primary School Achievement Test (Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah or UPSR in the Malay acronym), is conducted to assess the pupils' performance at the end of Year 6. Those pupils who attend Vernacular schools and who do not obtain the required grade for the Malay Language subject in UPSR at the end of Year 6 must enrol in a one-year catch-up programme, known as a 'remove class', to improve their mastery of the Malay Language prior to their commencement of lower secondary education. Table 2.1 outlines the national assessment programmes taken in primary, secondary and pre-university levels in the Malaysian education system.

Table 2.1 Education system and assessment programmes in Malaysia

School level	Length of study (years)	Assessment (administered by the Malaysian Examinations Council)
Primary	6 years	Primary School Achievement Test (UPSR)
Secondary	Lower 1–3 (3 years)	Lower Secondary Evaluation (PT3)
	Upper 5–6 (2 years)	Malaysia Certificate of Examination (SPM)
Pre-University	1–2	Malaysia Higher School Certificate (STPM)/ A-Level/ Diploma

2.4 Overview of English Language teaching in the Malaysian education system

The English language subject is taught as a second language in government and Vernacular schools and is a compulsory subject for all primary school pupils in Malaysia. The challenges of globalization trends (UNESCO, 2003) and the high demands of the international market,

especially in the field of science and technology (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010), has since become an additional challenge for countries such as Malaysia to meet the skills necessary in the 21st century curriculum. In parallel to the Vision 2020 initiative, to become a developed country, the Malaysian government has taken up this challenge by introducing a new policy, known as English Teaching for Mathematics and Science (ETeMS), which uses English as the medium of instruction in Mathematics and Science (UNESCO, 2003). This policy was implemented in 2003 with the aim of promoting and cultivating human capital in the globalization era (Rashid et al., 2017). In 2012, ETeMS was replaced with another policy, known as *Memartabatkan Bahasa Malaysia Mengukuhkan Bahasa Inggeris* (MBMMBI), or ‘Upholding the Malay language and Strengthening the English Language’ for the mastery of both Malay and English language among Malaysian pupils (Ministry of Education, 2015b). Under the MBMMBI policy, the Ministry introduced the SISC+ programme, to provide training for teaching English, Mathematics and Science subjects, and monitors schools under their care four times a week. The deployment of native-speaker English teachers in a Native Speaker Expert Programme (NSEP) was also implemented in 2011 until September 2015 to train the local English teachers in primary schools and also at selected teacher training colleges (Kepol, 2017). Each native speaker worked with Malaysian English teachers in their classrooms and also conducts training and workshops, especially on pedagogy.

The more recent reform, which has brought significant changes to how the English language subject is taught and assessed in Malaysia, is the introduction of the new curriculum, known as the Primary School Curriculum Standard (KSSR), which was designed to “produce knowledgeable, competent and globally competitive human capital” (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. A3) to meet the challenges of the vast development of ICT and the knowledge economy (ibid.). The teaching allocation for English was extended to 300 minutes; from 240 minutes for upper primary, and 270 minutes for lower primary per week, and uses the international benchmark of the Common European Framework of Reference (CERF) in English Language teaching (MOE Circular letter KPM.600-5/2/32 Jld. 5(78), 2017). English was made a compulsory subject to achieve a pass in the Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM) exam taken at the end of upper secondary school. The School-Based Oral English Assessment (SBOEA); an on-going oral assessment, is also conducted in English Language teaching to assess and improve pupils’ communication skills (Kamal et al., 2013). The

following section discusses the new policy in brief and the significant change it brought to the assessment system in Malaysia.

2.4.1 Overview of the English language (KSSR) curriculum

The English language curriculum aims to “equip pupils with basic language skills to enable them to communicate effectively in a variety of contexts that are appropriate to the pupils’ level of development” (Ministry of Education, 2015a, p. 2). The curriculum focuses on the development of literacy to provide the pupils with a strong foundation for the language at the secondary school level, which will then allow them to communicate effectively using this international lingua franca, within and outside Malaysia. The model for spelling, grammar and pronunciation uses Standard British English as a reference. The objectives of the English Language Curriculum (KSSR) for primary schools are to:

- I. Communicate with peers and adults confidently and appropriately in formal and informal situations;
- II. Read and comprehend a range of English texts for information and enjoyment;
- III. Write a range of texts using appropriate language, style and form using a variety of media;
- IV. Appreciate and demonstrate understanding of English language literary or creative works for enjoyment; and
- V. Use correct and appropriate rules of grammar in speech and writing

(Ministry of Education, 2015a, p. 2)

Primary education uses the Standard-based English Language Curriculum, which is based on a modular approach, as illustrated in Figure 2.4 below. This modular approach is divided into two stages; Stage One for lower primary years, and Stage Two for upper.

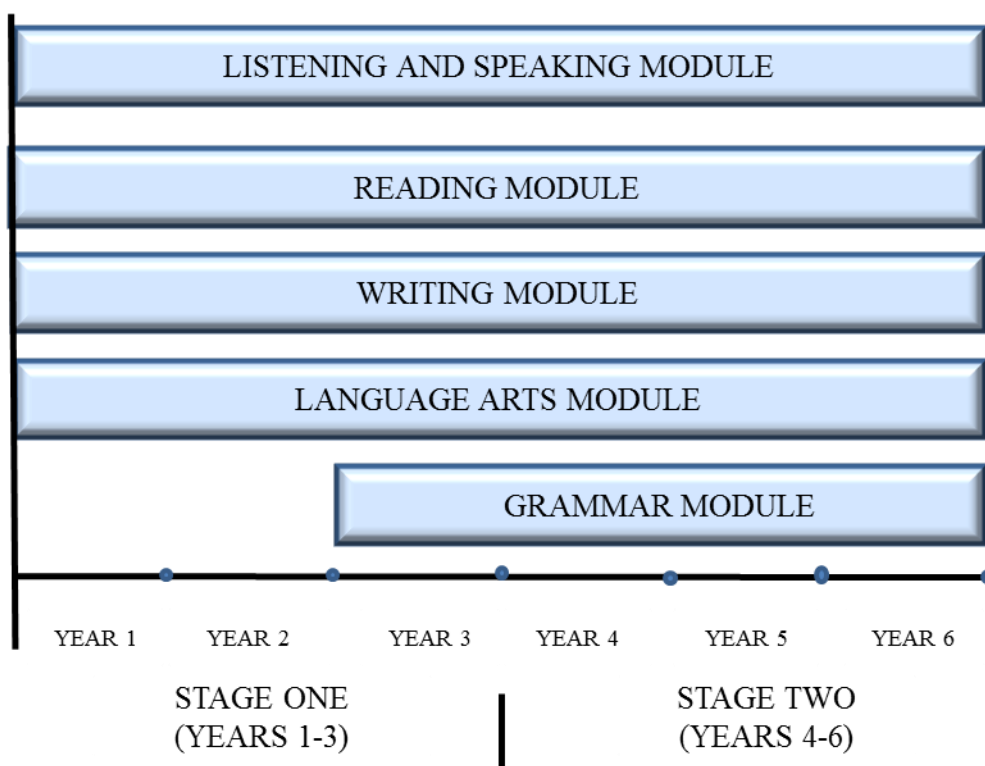


Figure 2.4: Organization of English Language Lessons based on a Modular Configuration

Adapted from: Ministry of Education, 2015a

2.4.2 Underlying pedagogical principles of the curriculum

Each module focuses on the development of salient language skills or sub-skills (Ministry of Education, 2015a) through various learning strategies and activities that help to develop pupils' personal learning. The new English language curriculum is underpinned by six principles as follows:

i. Back to basics

It is essential for teachers to begin with basic literacy skills in order to build a strong foundation of language skills. Basic listening and speaking skills are introduced to help pupils enrich their understanding of the language. The strategy of phonics is introduced to help pupils read while a good foundation in penmanship will help pupils acquire good handwriting.

ii. Fun, meaningful and purposeful learning

Lessons which are contextualised and meaningful help pupils to learn more effectively. Lessons should be made fun and interesting through purposeful pupil-centred learning activities.

iii. Learner-centred teaching and learning

Teaching approaches, lessons and materials must suit the differing needs and abilities of pupils. It is important that appropriate activities and materials are used with pupils of different learning capabilities so that their full potential can be realised. Pupils will master all learning standards using the Mastery Learning strategy to help them to acquire the language.

iv. Integration of salient new technologies

In line with growing globalization, technology is used extensively in our daily life for a variety of purposes such as communication, to gain information and knowledge and to be connected globally. Hence, emergent technologies can be used in language teaching and learning to engage pupils in more visual and interactive activities. Information available on the Internet and other electronic media will be vital for knowledge acquisition.

v. **Assessment (emphasized in this current study)**

Assessment for learning is an integral part of teaching and learning which enables teachers to assess whether pupils have acquired the learning standards taught. The feedback gained on pupils' progress in learning will inform teachers on the best approach or strategy for enhancement in the classroom teaching and learning. All language skills should be assessed using appropriate assessment tools. **Formative and summative assessments should be used to gauge pupils' performance. Formative assessment is conducted as an on-going process, while summative assessment is conducted at the end of a term.**

vi. Character-building

An important principle which needs to be inculcated through the curriculum is character building. Lessons based on values have to be incorporated in teaching and learning in order to impart the importance of good values for the wholesome development of individuals.

(Ministry of Education, 2015a, p. 4–5)

The English language (KSSR) curriculum offers a comprehensive range of subjects, including science, social science and humanities, aligned with the international benchmarks. As for the KSSR subjects, the Elements Across the Curriculum (EMK) initiative was also first applied in 2017 in the teaching and learning process. This programme was designed as a value-added element to strengthen human capital skills and competencies to prepare pupils to cope with the present and future challenges they might face (MOE Circular letter KP/KKPM/6 Jld.2 (22), 2016). The elements include: accuracy in the medium of instruction; environmental sustainability awareness; values of spirituality, humanity and citizenship; integration of science and technology; patriotism; creativity and innovation; entrepreneurship; and application of ICT skills in a lesson. In order to realise the aims of the new curriculum, KSSR, the Malaysian Examination Syndicate introduced a new assessment system, namely, School-Based Assessment (SBA), which emphasises the development of Higher Order Thinking Skills, the point to which I will now turn.

2.5 School-Based Assessment (SBA) in the Malaysian education system

In 2011, in parallel with the KSSR, the Board of Examination Syndicate in Malaysia has rolled out a new assessment system that is intended to evaluate pupils holistically and is aligned with the new standard-referenced curriculum. Under the new transformational assessment system, there has been a shift from having only a national exam to a combination of a national exam and school-based assessment which focuses more on the aspects of Higher-Order Thinking Skills, as shown in the following table (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Comparison between KSSR and KBSR

KBSR (the former curriculum)	KSSR (the new curriculum)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The mastery of the 3Rs (Reading, wRiting and aRithmetic) focusing on analytical and creative thinking skills based on learning outcomes. ▪ 3 pillars: communication, interaction with the society, personal development. ▪ National examination (UPSR) only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The mastery of the 4Rs (Reading, wRiting, aRithmetic and Reasoning) with additional elements of creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship based on content and learning standards. ▪ 6 pillars: communication, spirituality attitude and values, humanities, science and technology, physical and aesthetic development, and self-efficiency. ▪ National examination (UPSR) + school-based assessment (SBA)

In SBA, the pupils will not be assessed based on the individual performance only, but based on four components, as shown in Figure 2.5 below. These changes aim to reduce teachers' emphasis on teaching to the test and to focus more on the development of competencies to be applied in real-world situations, as specified in the new curriculum.

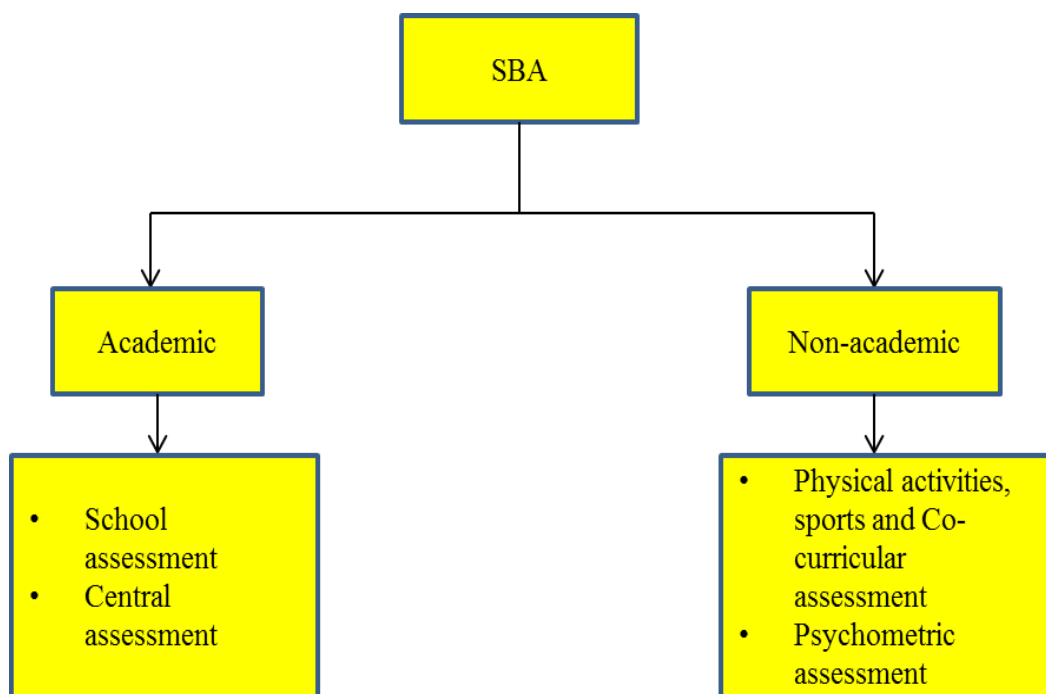


Figure 2.5: The academic and non-academic components of SBA

Adapted from: Malaysian Examination Syndicate, 2012, p. 4

The various components of the SBA model are detailed below:

- School assessment is conducted by teachers as formative assessment to gauge pupils' mastery in a subject in order to improve teaching and learning and as summative assessment at the end of school terms.
- Central assessment is developed by the Board of Examination Syndicate and administered and marked at school level based on the guidelines provided by the Examination Syndicate.
- Psychometric assessment comprises aptitude tests (pupils innate and acquired abilities) and personality inventory test (identify the key traits and characteristics that make up the pupils' personality). The instruments and guidelines are provided by the Examination Syndicate.

- Physical activities, sports, and co-curricular assessment are conducted at the school level based on the guidelines provided by the Board of Examination Syndicate. It is used to assess pupils' physical endurance and body mass index, and their participation and performance in co-curricular activities.

(Malaysian Examination Syndicate, 2012)

In order to implement the SBA effectively, each school must have their own organizational structure for SBA operationalization, as suggested by the MOE and outlined in the Guidelines for SBA. Figure 2.6 shows the lists of members in the SBA organizational structure for all primary schools in Malaysia.

Chairman	:	Headteacher
Vice Chairman	:	Head of Curriculum Head of Pupils' Affair Head of Co-curriculum Afternoon Session Supervisor (if applicable)
Secretary	:	Board of Exam school secretary/ SBA secretary
Members	:	Head of panel (appointed for training) Head of Panel (appointed for coordinating) Head of Panel (appointed for mentoring) Head of Panel (appointed for monitoring) Head of Panel (appointed for programme effectiveness) High performance teacher Head of School Discipline Counselling Teacher Assistant teacher (appointed) Head of Panel (each subject)

Figure 2.6: List of members in the School-Based Assessment (SBA) organizational structure for primary schools in Malaysia

Source: Malaysian Examination Syndicate, 2012.

The SBA guidelines also state that one teacher is allowed to hold more than one role (in the organizational structure). However, the guidelines on how SBA components should be conducted in classrooms are not clearly explained. Instead, they mainly outline the responsibilities and tasks for each role within the structure at school level in order to ensure the effective implementation of SBA. The guidelines also stress the importance of the teachers' role in keeping SBA documentation in the schools. The Star Online (Hamilton, 2014) reported that teachers only implement SBA as lip service to the Ministry of Education Malaysia rather than for its intended purpose. As further revealed in Chapters Five and Six of this thesis, the SBA documentation seemed to be prepared to avoid the threat of school inspection. The next section explains how SBA was expected to be implemented in Malaysian primary schools.

2.5.1 The SBA test administration, recording and reporting

The SBA is recorded offline using MS Excel templates (see sample in Appendix A) provided by the Ministry four times a year. The template requires teachers to complete each individual pupil's progress and the system will then automatically generate the pupil's achievement report. The resultant printout of each individual pupil should be kept in SBA files and a copy given to parents. Assessment is completed and recorded for all four language skills: Listening & Speaking, Writing, Reading, and Language Arts, and "assessed by a combination of formative and summative methods" (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 15). SBA's summative function is conducted by marks being aggregated, which then contributes to the national exam results. It is conducted continuously, as an on-going assessment from Year 1 to Year 6. This means that pupils will be assessed during the teaching and learning activities, for instance, through worksheets, class presentations, quizzes and exercises using activity books. The purpose is mainly twofold; to help teachers to improve teaching and learning based on the pupils' progression and to promote pupils' responsibility for their own learning. The recording of pupils' progress using the MS Excel template is only done once every three months. This means that pupils' progress is recorded after completing the unit/topic in the textbook, with the duration of three to five weeks for each unit. This strategy is designed to improve the pupils' language skills, and the initiated change in the assessment scheme was introduced to provide a balance between formative and summative assessment. However, the pupils must still prepare for and demonstrate the ability to pass mid-term and year-end examinations. As explained earlier in Chapter One, 40 percent of marks from the SBA will contribute to the

results of the national exam at the end of Year 6. However, the policy does not explain how SBA is to be conducted in the classroom and how the collective marks from SBA will be combined in the national exam. In addition, the SBA concept was not clearly communicated during the training, leaving the teachers to think that SBA is only a formative assessment. This unclear policy led to different interpretations and understanding of SBA among the teachers. I will discuss the details and evidence relating to this issue in Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis.

2.5.2 English SBA Curriculum content

The English SBA Curriculum was originally introduced in 2011 as part of the KSSR by the Ministry of Education. There were originally three components (Content Standards, Learning Standards, and Performance Standards) outlined in the English SBA Standards within two separate documents, as follows

a. **The Content Standards and the Learning Standards document (Ministry of Education, 2011b):**

The Content Standards specified the specific knowledge, skills, and values that must be acquired by pupils, while the Learning Standards specified the degree of proficiency that must be attained in relation to each of the content standards. Together, these criteria demonstrate each pupil's achievement level on a year-to-year basis.

b. **The Performance Standards Framework document (Ministry of Education, 2011c):**

The original Performance Standards Framework document (Ministry of Education, 2011) outlined the criteria relating to the level of pupils' performance, stratified into bands (see Table 2.3). Each band level relates to a set of criteria for which the pupils must achieve the relative standards in order to progress through the various stages of primary school.

Table 2.3 Statement of Performance Standards Framework

BAND	STANDARD
6	Know, understand, able to do in exemplary manner
5	Know, understand, able to do in appraisal manner
4	Know, understand, able to do in orderly manner
3	Know, understand and able to do
2	Know and understand
1	Know

A detailed description of the standard criteria for each band in the English KSSR is outlined in Table 2.4 below:

Table 2.4 The description of the standard criteria for each band/level

BAND/LEVEL	STANDARD
6	Appreciate literary works by performing and presenting ideas using exemplary manners.
5	Demonstrate well the ability to apply knowledge of listening, speaking, reading and writing for various purposes using admirable manners.
4	Apply knowledge obtained through listening, speaking, reading and writing in various situations using good manners.
3	Know, understand and apply knowledge obtained through listening, speaking, reading and writing.
2	Know and understand words, phrases and sentences heard, spoken, read and written.
1	Know basic skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Source: Malaysian Examination Syndicate, 2012.

The Performance Standards document (Ministry of Education, 2011c) mapped each individual pupil's performance and learning progression over the course of their studies for each subject, including English. The standards were designed to be used as a reference for teachers in assessing pupils, and to inform parents about their children's learning progress. However, as briefly discussed in Section 1.3, teachers found it confusing to relate the content standards to the Performance Standards in order to conduct the assessment, primarily because they were prepared by different government bodies, and also because the training sessions were conducted separately. This need to refer to two separate documents might be confusing, because the short training session was inadequate in allowing the teachers to understand and make sense of the rationale for connecting and integrating each document concurrently. In addition, the Guidelines for SBA implementation were only released in 2012, a year after the KSSR began to be implemented. The complexity of these guidelines is surprising, particularly as research conducted prior to the implementation of KSSR suggested that the SBA in Malaysia needed to be improved, especially in its grading format, and also in the need to outline a clear criteria to assess pupils (Malakolunthu and Hoon, 2010).

In 2015, the Ministry of Education updated and re-drafted the curriculum documents, combining the original KSSR Curriculum Content with the Performance Standards for all subjects to form the Standard Curriculum and Assessment Document (Ministry of Education, 2015b). For the English SBA Performance Standards criteria, these bands were then graded as Level 1 to level 6, but are still designed to serve as a guide for teachers to assess the pupils' development and growth in their acquisition of the learning standards (Ministry of Education, 2015a). This new document was first used in schools as a reference in 2017. However, at the time this research was conducted (2016), the teachers were still using the 2011 Performance Standards Document (Ministry of Education, 2011c) to practise SBA in schools. The terms and functions of the new (2015) English Curriculum Standard and Assessment Document (Ministry of Education, 2015a) are outlined below.

2.5.3 Conceptual terms and references used in SBA

2.5.3.1 Standard Curriculum and Assessment Document

The criteria outlined in this document are used as a reference for teachers to report pupils' performance. It is not to be used to compare pupils' achievement with other pupils but as a reference to determine pupils' growth; to what extent they know, understand and are able to do

according to the Performance Standards stipulated in the Standard Curriculum and Assessment Document (Ministry of Education, 2015a).

2.5.3.2 Performance Standard framework

The Performance Standard Framework provides a description of the statement of standards regarding pupils' learning progression, labelled by bands, or level of performance. This document also maps the descriptors that are observable and measurable to determine the performance level of each pupil in their learning. The statement of standards is shown in Table 2.5 below:

Table 2.5 The terms and the descriptions used in Standard Performance Document

Term	Description
Band	A level arranged in a descending hierarchical manner to differentiate pupils' level of performance.
Standard	A statement used as a reference to show pupils' performance
Statement of standard	The statement of standards that are used throughout the learning process (Year 1 until Year 6)
Descriptor	The skills that pupils supposed to know and able to do based on the specification in Curriculum Standard Document. It is written as D1 (Listening and Speaking), D2 (Reading), D3 (Writing), D4 (Grammar) and D5 (Language Art)
Evidence (pupils)	Statement that details how pupils do the assessment tasks based on the descriptor.
Evidence (material)	Any assessment materials as evidence that show pupils' work.

At the same time, SBA requires teachers to administer the assessment tasks from the planning stage right through to the reporting of the results. However, the root of the problem in SBA implementation in Malaysia is that there was no explicit guidelines or instruction on how SBA should be implemented and what SBA is meant to look like. The only information available about how to conduct SBA was described in general in the SBA Guidelines. In addition, every school was only given one copy of the SBA Guidelines, and only in 2012. It is the responsibility of every school to make copies for the teachers who are involved in the SBA implementation when KSSR was first introduced in Malaysian primary schools in 2011. However, many schools lack the resources to comply with this demand. The following section briefly describes how classroom assessment is to be conducted by individual teachers, as outlined in the SBA Guidelines prepared by the Examination Syndicate.

2.5.4 SBA and classroom assessment

- i. Teacher chooses a topic and prepares the lesson plan based on the topical or unit of learning in curriculum document.
- ii. Teacher plans the teaching approach and the assessment tasks. Various teaching aids are necessary to promote the teaching and learning activities.
- iii. Teacher then assesses pupils' performance about the learning is taught, using different assessment techniques.
- iv. Teacher evaluates pupils' performance based on the Curriculum Standard Document. The evidence of pupils' work needs to be documented and stored in pupils' profile files.
- v. For those pupils who have not mastered the standard, teacher will have to deliver remedial activities to help them to master the learning standards.
- vi. Teacher will have to record and report pupils' performance if they have mastered the learning standard.
- vii. Different topics for teaching and learning will be planned and completed. The same process taken from steps (i) to (vii) is repeated.

(Malaysian Examination Syndicate, 2012)

In SBA, pupils are assessed on a broader range of achievements, continuously, over a longer period of time. This strategy is designed to enable teachers to plan appropriate learning activities for their pupils when necessary. However, as discussed briefly in Chapter One, in the

Malaysian examination-driven culture, teachers are more accustomed to teaching to the test and to preparing pupils for their examinations. For those teachers who have been trained to grade their pupils in the exam-oriented system but are now required to be ever-ready to measure pupils on a daily basis with different assessment skills, such a task is not easy. Therefore, there is a tension between continuous formative assessment and the high-stakes summative practices that, as observed by Black (2005) in the UK, greatly influences teachers' favour towards and practices of formative assessment. This has contributed to the problems in implementing SBA in Malaysian primary schools.

SBA is considered to be a fairly new mode of assessment reform in the Malaysian education system. So far, most of the research conducted on the new curriculum has mainly used a quantitative approach; for instance, Jaba et al. (2013); Che Md Ghazali et al. (2012); Majid (2011); Othman et al. (2013); Che Md Ghazali (2015) and Chew and Muhamad (2017). Relatively little is known about the concerns of the teachers who would directly be involved in the implementation system, especially regarding their enactments. Thus, the present study is seen as necessary due to the fact that some teachers may have concerns which deserve due attention from the Ministry. It is hoped that this study might be used as a resource for decision-making among the Malaysian Examination Syndicate, school administrators, and teachers.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter discusses the history of education in Malaysia, from the British colonial period to the present education system, by taking into account the effect of globalization. The literature clearly shows that the Malaysian education system has always aimed for national unity. However, the period from the reformation of the system in the past to the formulation of the new curriculum has also seen the interconnectivity of globalization in how the educational policy is developed to meet the requirements of the global economy (Ministry of Education, 2013) in Malaysia. This chapter also discussed the relevance of implementing the new English Language curriculum (KSSR) in achieving the goals of Vision 2020. In realizing the vision, the change in the assessment system, designed to prepare pupils to compete in a global world, is also discussed as a background to teachers' enactments of the new assessment that will be reported in detail in Chapters Five and Six. Chapter Three will investigate the existing

literature regarding curriculum change and assessment, and will explore several issues encountered in meeting such a challenge.

CHAPTER THREE

KEY THEMES IN CURRICULUM REFORM

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the existing theoretical and empirical literature on curriculum change and will explain some of the key themes drawn from this literature. I will first look at the concept and nature of curriculum and assessment reform, the factors influencing and/or challenging its implementation, and how teachers might change their assessment practices when they encounter such change. This is followed by an overview of the dissemination strategies for reforms and the factors that influence teachers in changing their assessment practices, which then shape and/or distort their enactments of the new assessment system.

3.2 What is the curriculum?

In the context of education, the most obvious interpretation of the word ‘curriculum’ is that it signifies a course of ‘learning’ or as a ‘plan for learning’ (Thijs & van den Akker, 2009), or the implementation and evaluation of an educational programme (Finney, 2002). It is also regarded as “a set of activities and content planned at the individual level, the programme level, or the whole school level to foster teachers’ teaching and students’ learning” (Cheng, 1994, p. 26), inside or outside the school. Kelly (2004) categorizes the curriculum with two different distinctions; the official or planned curriculum, and the actual or received curriculum. The official or planned curriculum refers to the prospectuses and syllabuses, while the actual or received curriculum refers to the reality of the pupils’ experiences. Thijs and van den Akker (2009) classify curriculum as three different forms, as illustrated in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 Forms of curriculum

Intended	Ideal	Vision (rationale or basic philosophy underlying a curriculum)
	Formal/Written	Intentions as specified in curriculum documents and/or materials
Implemented	Perceived	Curriculum as interpreted by its users (especially teachers)
	Operational	Actual process of teaching and learning (also: curriculum-in-action)
Attained	Experiential	Learning experiences as perceived by learners
	Learned	Resulting learning outcomes of learners

Reproduced from: Thijs and van den Akker (2009, p. 10)

Based on the definitions of curriculum proposed by Kelly (2004) and Thijs & van den Akker (2009), each suggests that curriculum includes a set of plans as guidelines for teaching and learning activities in the real classroom. In the context of the Malaysian education system, the new curriculum, namely, the KSSR, is “the knowledge, skills and values that form the content, outlining what is to be taught by teachers” (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 4.2). It focuses on developing pupils holistically by addressing the “intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical dimensions” (ibid., p. 4.1) of each pupil.

At a more specific level, I will first present the different levels of curriculum products and their representations in the Malaysian education system, as shown in Table 3.2 below, according to Thijs & van den Akker (2009).

Table 3.2 Curriculum levels and curriculum products

Level	Description	Examples
Supra	International	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) OECD's Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS) for assessment; and Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for English Curriculum
Macro	System, national	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Core objectives, attainment levels• Examination programmes
Meso	School, institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School programme• Educational programme• District Education Office Programme (e.g., SISC+)
Micro	Classroom, teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teaching plan, instructional materials• Module, course• Textbooks
Nano	Pupil, individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal plan for learning• Individual course of learning

Adapted from: Thijs and van den Akker (2009, p. 9)

It is extremely important to understand the different levels of the curriculum (see Sections 3.4.1, 3.4.2, 3.4.3, and 3.4.4) as the top level of curriculum plays a big role in influencing the lower levels, “especially if they have a mandatory status that limits the room to manoeuvre for larger target group” (Thijs and van den Akker, 2009, p. 10).

3.3 The concept of educational change or reform

There is abundant literature on the subject of educational ‘reform’ and, for this study, I will use the terms “change”, “innovation”, “development” and “restructuring” interchangeably, while acknowledging that other authors see these terms as being distinct from one another. Educational change or reform has been conceptualised in a variety of ways. For example, Fullan (1991) suggests that the purpose of educational change is “to help schools accomplish their goals more effectively by replacing some structures, programs and/or practices with better ones” (p. 15). Rizvi and Lingard (2010) note that the reforms in curriculum are linked

with the challenges and opportunities precipitated by globalization; the curriculum is reframed to produce human capital to participate in a global economy in order to enhance national competitiveness. For instance, the curriculum reform in Malaysia was benchmarked by adopting high-performing systems such as PISA and TIMSS, with the aim of producing globally competitive citizens to meet the challenges of the 21st century economy (Ministry of Education, 2013).

Globalization has exerted great influence and impact on educational change (Carnoy and Rhoten, 2002) and this shift is characterized by the increased incidence of planning and preparation in curriculum development (Kelly, 2004). As Altrichter describes:

A new curriculum may be described as an attempt to change teaching and learning practices which will also include the transformation of some of the beliefs and understandings hitherto existent in the setting to be changed. It is usually strong on the material side by providing a written curriculum, text books, recommendations for teaching strategies, working material for students, and probably also new artefacts for learning. It is usually less explicit on the organizational side but may also advocate the use of changed time tabling and new social structures, such as peer group interaction, decision making in the subject group, etc.

(Altrichter, 2005, p. 36)

When discussing educational reform, the confusion between the terms ‘change’ and ‘progress’ is rarely recognized (Fullan, 1991). This causes problems such as “faddism, superficiality, confusion, failure of change programs, unwarranted and misdirected resistance, and misunderstood reform” (ibid., p. 4). Any educational reforms are “not without problem and controversies” (Lee, 1999, p. 91); reform is a dynamic process (Fullan, 1991) that involves “a certain amount of chaos associated with ... implementation” (Waugh, 2000, p. 363), in all of the different curriculum levels, as shown in Table 3.2 in the previous section. As schools are confronted with educational restructuring, the real challenge for the theoretical and practical interpretation of such change often results from the different directions in which change moves, which are often unclear, uncertain, contested and conflicting (Helsby, 1999). An innovation depends on the attitudes and values of the teachers. However, as Priestley and Sime

(2005) observe, the power of teachers to mediate change is often disregarded, due to the top-down approach in implementing the innovation. Therefore, for innovation to be successfully implemented, it is very important to take into account “the process of adaptation, combining central impetus with active engagement by practitioners” (Priestley and Sime, 2005, p. 476) especially the teachers. This means that the education reform needs to focus on the “initiative and the context for enactment” (ibid., p. 476) in order for the innovation to be understood well and implemented better, especially in the school context.

3.4 Factors influencing and/or challenging the implementation of educational reform or change

Levin (1976 cited in Fullan 1991, p. 17) stated that there are three broad ways in which pressure to implement educational policy change may arise:

- 1) through natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, famines, and the like;
- 2) through external forces such as imported technology and values, and immigration; and
- 3) through internal contradictions, such as when indigenous changes in technology lead to new social patterns and needs, or when one or more groups in a society perceive a discrepancy between educational values and outcomes affecting themselves or others in whom they have an interest.

Cuban (1988, p. 342, cited in Fullan, 1991) categorized innovations into first- and second-order changes. First-order changes are those that improve the efficiency and effectiveness of what is currently done, “without disturbing the basic organizational features, without substantially altering the way that children and adults perform their roles”. Second-order changes seek to alter the fundamental ways in which organizations are put together. These include new goals, structures, and roles (e.g., collaborative work culture), according to Cuban, and are most likely to fail because they were “either adapted to fit what existed or sloughed off, allowing the system to remain essentially untouched” (Cuban, 1988, p. 343, cited in Fullan, 1991). Therefore, the challenge of educational change is in dealing with the second-order change; “changes that affect the culture and structure of schools, restructuring roles and reorganizing responsibilities, including those of students and parents” (Fullan, 1991, p. 29) in order to improve the education system overall. Moreover, the way in which the reforms are promoted depends on the “historical, cultural and social context” (Helsby, 1999); however, “a

cardinal fact of social change is that people will always misinterpret and misunderstand some aspect of the purpose or practice of something that is new to them” (Fullan, 1991, p. 199) and thus this might result in superficial change.

In the Malaysian education system, the norm of adopting a top-down approach in curriculum development (e.g., El-Okda, 2005; Rahman, 1987; Airini et al., 2007) minimizes the involvement of teachers and results in a sense of a lack of ownership (Rahman, 2014) that consequently affects teachers’ understanding of the new curriculum (Bantwini, 2010). It is thus important to engage teachers in all phases of curriculum development to promote a greater sense of professionalism and empowerment (Ramparsad, 2001) and to create a sense of belonging amongst teachers (Carless, 1997) in accepting and practising the mandated policy for the successful implementation of the reform.

The implementation gap between policy intention and classroom practice, for instance, in understanding the purposes and philosophy of CfE, is reported to be a major issue faced by teachers in Scotland’s schools in a mandated reform process (Priestley and Minty, 2013). Sometimes, “policies are poorly thought-out and/or poorly written and become ‘rewritten’ or ‘retro-fitted’ as government objectives change or ministers move on” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 8). Therefore, policies need to be reasonable and to be communicated carefully by including in the account the expertise and experience of school staff (Ball et al., 2012), as schools produce their own ‘take’ on policy, drawing on aspects of the cultural, structural and individual, as well as the material contexts that make the process of “putting policies into practices” more complex and constrained (Braun et al., 2010, p. 586). In addition, by the time the policy intentions are implemented in the classroom, they can become “transformed”, which has important implications for realistic policy-making” (Morris and Adamson, 2010, cited in Berry and Adamson, 2011, p. 10). The following sections explain four levels of curriculum development: the supra level, macro level, meso level, and micro level, as outlined by Thijs & van den Akker (2009), each of which is involved in the process of educational change.

3.4.1 Supra (international level)

Due to the continuous flow of information and harmonization of education policies, education reforms in different countries share similar assumptions, values and characteristics through increased global policy borrowing and lending (Sahlberg, 2006), while taking into account

their own culture, history and local context (Baird and Hopfenbeck, 2016). Globalization has also been “manifest in political forces of performativity” (Wyse et al., 2016, p. 5), which has had the effect in education policy of placing the emphasis on the production of human capital for economic prosperity. The force of globalization that drives educational reform is thereby adjusted to meet these new realities “by creating structures in education systems that allow assessing, comparing and rank-ordering national and regional education performance” (Baird and Hopfenbeck, 2016, p. 259).

To prepare knowledgeable and skilful citizens, many countries reform their education system to enable them to engage actively in democratic societies and dynamic knowledge-based economies (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2000; Riley, 2004, cited in Sahlberg, 2006). “Market values like productivity, effectiveness, accountability and competitiveness are increasingly being embedded in global reforms” (Sahlberg, 2006, p. 262). Similarly, in the Malaysian context, the recent reforms aim to develop global citizens by producing effective human capital, according to the aspirations and objectives of the National Education Philosophy in order to transform the country into a fully developed nation by 2020 (Maarof and Munusamy, 2015).

In the field of assessment, “policymakers around the world now respond to a nation’s results on international tests, in comparison with others” (Baird and Hopfenbeck, 2016, p. 826), which further leads to ‘policy borrowing’ where ideas from afar are adapted by countries according to their local context (Phillips, 2004, cited in Baird and Hopfenbeck, 2016). For instance, curriculum prescription varies between countries depending on the political context, and any adjustments that are made will place more focus on local culture. The use of common indicators and the international comparisons of pupils’ achievement to differentiate the variance between the features of education systems are becoming more evident as a result of international benchmarking (Sahlberg, 2006). For instance, in Malaysia, the international comparisons and educational indicators, such as the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS), have influenced the government to reframe education policy reform to act as a strategy to produce human capital for national economic competitiveness (Ministry of Education, 2013).

3.4.2 Macro (national level)

At macro level, the focus of curriculum development tends to be on a generic curricular framework as guidelines, for educational objectives and content at national level (Thijs and van den Akker, 2009). The national-level framework includes core objectives and examination programmes that need to meet the different demands of education from various expectations within that particular society; “the parents and parents’ associations, religious groups, trade and industry, lobby groups, or social organizations” (ibid., p. 21). The different visions that each group has for education and their social expectations for education result in “growing diversity and dynamics in society” (ibid.), which increases the pressure on schools and teachers to meet the curricular requirements because teachers are the ones who will have to implement the changes in their classrooms.

In addition, policy is not generated at one point in time; it changes from the outside in and the inside out, which is referred to as “a process of becoming” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 4). It is not a straightforward and rational process, as “it is not easy (and sometimes impossible) to identify which implementation practices will lead to the desired outcomes and what unintended, and undesired, outcomes will emerge” (Mussella, 1989, p. 100, cited in Ball et al., 2012, p. 141). Moreover, the process of designing and implementing education policy is not only negotiated and renegotiated (Goodson, 1990) at the macro level, but also by actors at the meso and macro levels (Mahmood, 2014), which could lead to different interpretations of policy at all levels.

3.4.3 Meso (school level)

Ball et al. (2012) define policy enactments as sets of “embodied” practices that are attached to different types and groups of policy actors (p. 121). Putting policy into practice is a constrained process; rather than simply being implemented, policies become “iteratively refracted” (Supovitz and Weinbaum, 2008, cited in Ball et al., 2012, p. 4) and are often interpreted and translated by different policy actors in schools (Braun et al., 2010). In the context of school reform and school improvement, different schools have different capacities for coping with policy reform. The degree of enactments depends on to what extent the policy is mandated, recommended or suggested (Wallace, 1991) and how well the policies fit with the culture and ethos of the school (Braun et al., 2011). Schools and teachers are expected to be able to implement multiple policies (Braun et al., 2010) that were designed by others to raise standards by reforming schools (Moss, 2009).

However, change will not work if the focuses are placed only on curriculum and teaching methodologies without the involvement of the whole system (Skilbeck, 1990). In fact, because “the core of teachers’ work” informs their “logics of practice” (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p. 94) it is crucial for the teachers to be aware of the implications of the policies on their work. Thus, it is necessary to build and understand the phenomenology of change; “that is, how people actually experience change as distinct from how it might have been intended” (Fullan, 1991, p. 4). The importance of seeing change as a system-wide affair was also the concern of many other educationists. For example, Sarason (1990) defines ‘system’ as a concept to indicate that, in order to understand a part, one needs to study it in relation to other parts because boundaries exist between a system and its surrounds, which themselves are interrelated, thus, change needs to be considered holistically. The implementation of educational change involves “change in practice” (Fullan, 1991, p. 37), one that requires giving full attention to the content and the process of educational change by individuals and groups at all levels (Fullan, 1991; Barth, 1990; Schlechty, 1990).

Accordingly, the introduction of the KSSR curriculum policy and its new assessment system in Malaysia would inevitably diverge enactments in different contexts because every school is unique and has different resource environments; “schools have particular histories, buildings and infrastructures, staffing profiles, leadership experiences, budgetary situations, and teaching and learning challenges” (Braun et al., 2011, p. 586) that affect the policy enactments in each school. Moreover, “policies mutate as they migrate from setting to setting, as they are mediated (Osborn et al. 1997) by professionals in differing ways that reflect their skills and prior experiences, their values and attitudes towards the policy in question, the contingencies of the setting into which the policy is to be introduced, and the social interactions that accompany this translation from policy to practice” (Priestley, 2011, p. 2).

3.4.4 Micro (teacher level)

Teachers are ‘meaning makers’; they bring creativity and commitment, their enthusiasm, to policy enactment, but this creativity and commitment involve working on themselves, their colleagues and their students in order to ‘do’ policy and to do it well.

(Ball et al., 2012, p. 138)

Teachers are the crucial elements in the development and implementation of education policies. Therefore, the success of an innovation in the school depends on the capacity of the teachers “to act as agents of innovation and change” (Priestley et al., 2012, p. 194), as they play a critical role in curriculum reform and how it is implemented at the local level. However, implementing and enacting intended policy, especially at the micro level, is not a simple process. It involves “negotiation, contestation or struggle between different groups” (Ozga, 2000, p. 2) that will certainly involve different interpretations of policy, for instance, those of teachers and pupils. In England, for example, Helsby (1999) observed that the changes in National Curriculum that have been introduced with minimal consultation have been suggested to lead to the deskilling of teachers’ work (Helsby, 1999) as teachers have lost the opportunities for professional development in the process of reform movement. In addition, the encroachment of technical control procedures into the curriculum in school have also been suggested to lead to the prospect of teachers being deskilled (e.g., Apple, 1986, and Wong, 2006).

In the context of the recent reform in the Malaysian education system, the recently introduced SBA focuses mainly on the concept of Assessment for Learning (AfL). However, it is dangerous to assume that the implementation and understanding of the new policy, which requires skills and knowledge about the new assessment system and its rationale for classroom practices, has been the same in every school. The policy might be implemented differently, according to the “uniqueness” of every school (Mahmood, 2014). This can be problematic: if the understanding of the rationale for the techniques is not established, “there is a risk of the teachers using them somewhat mechanically” (Gardner et al., 2008, p. 10) because, “when decisions need to be made about when and how the techniques can be used, the lack of a fundamental understanding of the purposes may lead to confusion and ultimately to rejection of the techniques” (ibid., p. 10). For instance, a lack of understanding of AfL might lead teachers to use formative assessment summatively.

Therefore, to be able to implement the change, teachers, as key players in the curriculum implementation process, need to understand the change and how it works. However, the process of making sense of the new curriculum and assessment requirements is ‘complex and contested’ (Helsby, 1999), as it also involves shifts in the personal, professional and power relationships between teachers and their immediate colleagues, as well as with the other levels

and requires that teachers perform a “major reconstruction of their self-identity” (Stone, 1993, p. 188, cited in Acker, 1997, p. 43). Moreover, policy enactments involve many combinations and interplays (Ball et al., 2012) and thus “modifications of the original policies are bound to occur as they are shaped and stretched to fit realities of school and classroom life” (Acker, 1997, p. 47). Therefore, teachers need to be active meaning-makers who are prepared to allow themselves to be changed by policy. The next sections explain the concept of assessment and the recent trend in assessment practices that places demands on teachers to make great efforts to cope and manage change more effectively.

3.5 Assessment

Assessment is a crucial component in the education process (Rust, 2002): it “describes a range of actions undertaken to collect and use information about a person’s knowledge, attitudes or skills” (Berry and Adamson, 2011, p. 5). “Every assessment is grounded in a conception or theory about how people learn, what they know, and how knowledge and understanding is processed over time” (National Research Council, 2001, p. 20). The functions of assessment are mainly twofold: (1) for making judgements of the performance of individuals or the effectiveness of the system; and (2) for improving learning (Berry, 2008a, cited in Berry and Adamson, 2011, p. 5). Assessment is an important foundation in the teaching and learning process as the information it generates will be used for decision-making for the teachers in the classroom (Rahim et al., 2009) and also acts as a tool to inform pupils about their progress in learning (Nitko and Brookhart, 2007).

Assessment is usually carried out using different techniques of gauging pupils’ achievement and can be used for more than one purpose; for both formative and summative purposes. Data and information from the assessment are not only beneficial for teachers and pupils, but also for parents and other stakeholders for the development of policy related to education. On a macro level, for example, the global ranking of pupils’ performance by country places pressure on national governments to rate the effectiveness of their own education system, as have several programmes and comparative studies of pupils’ performance, such as “the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) programme, the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), among others (Berry and Adamson, 2011, p. 5).

Large-scale standardised testing as a method of assessing pupil performance emerged in the early 1980s in many countries. These methods were influenced by international forces (Baird and Hopfenbeck, 2016), for instance, the rising power of assessments in shaping “educational experiences and their stakes” (ibid., p. 821) and were used extensively to measure pupils’ learning and the extent to which educational objectives were being achieved. In time, most countries became aware of the drawbacks of these high-stakes examinations which then contributed to “the call for reform in educational assessment” (Gipps, 1994; 1999), emphasising the Assessment for Learning agenda (Berry, 2011a). This agenda has highlighted the use of assessment to support learning and to improve teaching by reducing the over-dependency on tests and examinations.

Government reforms of education systems have been driven strongly by national and international assessment data (Kellaghan and Greaney, 2001). Entire education systems are being judged and ranked based on “the outcomes of student performance on standardised tests and public examinations” (Masters, 2013, p. iii). Consequently, “test results which are lower than expected relative to other countries, or lower than on previous occasions of testing, are taken as an indication of system failure” (ibid., p. iii), which then causes “pressure at every level of education systems” (ibid.). The nature and effects of education policies, such as those related to the effectiveness of schools and teachers, vary between each country. Malaysia, for example, is currently using the Standard Quality of Education Malaysia (SQEM) system as its School Self-Evaluation (SSE) programme, which serves as an inspection body of the MOE (World Bank Group, 2017). This performance measurement needs to be conducted by every school based on “the students’ academic results in both schools and public examinations, students’ performance in co-curricular activities and also the quality of teaching and learning” (Hamzah and Tahir, 2013, p. 52).

For countries such as England, the United States and Australia, their national or local education targets are set based on international tests in order to raise their ranking performance with PISA (Masters, 2013). However, for improvement purposes, the rank position is inappropriate, because “national rankings can be influenced by quite small differences in student cohort scores” (ibid., p. iii). Moreover, standardised tests are deemed to be insufficient as measures of achievement, as pupils are assessed on a limited range of instructional objectives (Shepard, 2000). This view is supported by Linn and Miller (2005, cited in Rahim

et al., 2009), who suggest that the global educational assessment context is moving away from a culture based on examination and testing towards one that is more flexible, “as a wider range of assessment methods is being implemented in the classroom” (Rahim et al., 2009, p. 2). For example, there was increased interest in the UK in the early 1990s in the idea that “assessment could support education as well as just measuring its result” (Wiliam, 2014, p. 10). As made clear by the Assessment Reform Group, “all assessment should be assessment for learning” (ibid.), which subsequently “has become a force for change in classroom practice in national assessment systems” (Gardner et al., 2008, p. 5).

In today’s educational scenario, the purpose of assessment is not only to monitor pupils’ performance, but also the performance of teachers, when compared to the previous purpose, which was for the teacher to monitor the quality of teaching and learning (Popham, 2008). The Global Educational Reform Movement (Sahlberg, 2006), including systems such as PISA and TIMSS, has brought about change to the purpose of assessing pupils’ learning as well as the methods of assessment being used by teachers (Shepard, 2000). Therefore, the real challenge in assessment is “to develop assessment systems that can satisfy these laudable aims, while at the same time providing the kinds of information about students’ progress that traditional assessments have always supplied” (Wiliam, 2014, p. 11).

3.5.1 Purpose of Assessment

This section uses the terms ‘formative assessment’ and ‘assessment for learning’ (AfL) interchangeably. Similarly, ‘summative assessment’ equates to ‘assessment of learning’ (AoL). In England and Wales in 1988, the Task Group on Assessment and Testing (TGAT) report categorised assessment into four different purposes; formative, diagnostic, summative, and evaluative (DES/WO, 1988a, cited in Harlen, 2006, p. 104) as outlined below. However, for the purposes of this study, I will be focusing only on formative assessment and summative assessment, as the new assessment system in Malaysia emphasises the use of both summative and formative assessments to enhance and gauge pupils’ learning.

Formative, so that the positive achievements of a student may be recognized and discussed and the appropriate next steps may be planned;

Diagnostic, through which learning difficulties may be scrutinised and classified so that appropriate remedial help and guidance can be provided;

Summative, for the recording of the overall achievement of a student in a systematic way;

Evaluative, by means of which some aspects of the work of a school, an LEA [Local Education Authority] or other discrete part of the educational service can be assessed and/or reported upon.

(TGAT, 1988: para 23, cited in Harlen, 2016, p. 697)

3.5.1.1 *Formative assessment*

Formative assessment is “assessment which is part of the process of teaching and learning – assessment ‘for’ learning” (Weeden et al., 2002, p. 13). Black and Wiliam (1998, p. 7) defined formative assessment as “encompassing all those activities undertaken by teachers, and/or by their students, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged”. Priestley and Sime (2005) suggest that formative assessment has the potential to enhance the learning environment, reduce a sense of pressure and open up more space to learn. Formative assessment is used during the learning process and is designed to provide pupils with feedback about areas in which they need to achieve additional learning so that they have an opportunity to correct or improve their final product or result. It is used as a tool to assess teachers’ instructional practices (Wininger and Norman, 2005) that focus on feedback during the learning process in order to improve pupils’ performance (Wiliam and Black, 1996). It will also open up a broader range of desirable changes in classroom learning because the quality of interactive feedback is a critical feature in determining the quality of learning activity as a central feature of pedagogy (Black and Wiliam, 1998). Brookhart (2007) illustrates the expanding concept of formative assessment, as the learning process that the teacher can use for instructional decisions and that the pupil can use for their own performance, which will in turn motivate pupils. Black and Wiliam (1998) add that assessment is considered as formative only when it is integrated with teaching and learning in providing teachers with information to adjust instructions for pupils’ need in order to improve their learning. In the United Kingdom, the Assessment Reform Group argued that using assessment to improve learning required five elements to be in place:

1. The provision of effective feedback to students;
2. The active involvement of students in their own learning;

3. The adjustment of teaching to take into account the results of assessment;
4. The recognition of the profound influence assessment has on the motivation and self-esteem of students, both of which are crucial influences on learning; and
5. The need for students to be able to assess themselves and understand how to improve.

(Wiliam, 2011, p. 39)

AfL must also be embedded within the complex cultures of classrooms, schools and the education system for its effective implementation (Berry and Adamson, 2011). Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to have a complete understanding of the pupils' learning progress so they can meet the pupils' needs by adjusting and improving their teaching skills and approach (Sardareh, 2014) in order to provide pupils with a "foundation for lifelong learning" (Sadler, 1998, cited in Berry and Adamson, 2011, p. 9).

3.5.1.2 Summative assessment

Summative assessment, or AoL, is referred to as "the process of summing up or checking what has been learned at the end of a particular stage of learning – assessment 'of' learning" (Weeden et al., 2002, p. 13). Summative assessment is useful "to certify or record end of course performance or predict potential future attainment" (ibid., p. 20). It is used to summarize and report what has been learned at a particular time (Harlen, 2016); not only for the students, but also for the educational systems as a whole (Hagstrom, 2006).

Summative assessment is part of teachers' required tasks, which are established at either school or national level, and is used to support the process of formative assessment (Harlen, 2016). Summative assessment is often associated with having high stakes and is often very exam-oriented in nature, but it has an impact on the content of the curriculum and on pedagogy; for instance, it has the potential "to limit or distort what is taught if the assessment tools used do not adequately reflect intended goals" (ibid., p. 702), as well as in shaping students' experience of learning in drastic ways (Berry and Adamson, 2011). However, as argued by Mansell et al. (2009, cited in Harlen, 2016), it is more useful to consider the difference between the intended uses of assessment and what is actually done with the results, because it is difficult to maintain a distinction between uses. For instance, "learners' scores can be manipulated easily by subtly adjusting task demands without teaching differently" (Brown and Knight, 1994, p. 18). Therefore, it is important to emphasise the purposes rather

than the methods of formative and summative assessments. Three further terms, explained in the following section, are helpful in demonstrating this scenario.

3.5.1.3 Assessment benchmarks

Brown and Knight (1994, pp. 18–19) further describe the three terms as follows:

- (a) Norm-referenced assessments: describing where performance lies in relation to other students' performances. It rates a learner's ability in relation to another group of learners, often of unknown characteristics.
- (b) Criterion referencing: learners are assessed against pre-defined criteria. In the context of the new assessment system in Malaysia, School-Based assessment (SBA), the Performance Standards document used to assess pupils comprises competence and skills and is described in terms of criteria. Pupils' competence is achieved if they met the criteria. Therefore, it focuses on continuous assessments in order to obtain full descriptions of what the pupils have achieved.
- (c) Ipsative assessment: present performance is compared to past performance and must be criterion-referenced. Therefore, it is important to maintain a consistent level of activity for pupils to have continual improvement in their performances.

It is very important to highlight the implications of moving from the previous curriculum in Malaysia, in having only norm referencing, to a new curriculum where both norm referencing and criterion referencing are used, as this will involve a considerable cultural and psychological shift. Therefore, the Ministry of Education needs to carefully consider the importance of this factor, particularly as previous research (e.g. Rahman, 2014), and the findings from my research (revealed in Chapters Five and Six), clearly report that there seems to be a cultural attachment to norm referencing among teachers and parents. For instance, while parents are more likely to ask, "Where is my child ranked in his/her class?" the new assessment policy clearly aims to shift this focus to criteria referencing, which asks "How is the child developing in relation to his/her previous learning?"

3.6 Assessment reform in Malaysia

The recent reformation in educational practices around the world drove the Malaysian Government to revamp its national educational assessment system to meet the demands of an

increasingly globalised world. Several changes were instituted by the Minister of Education to improve the assessment system, and assessment for learning was situated as the major focus of the change (Ministry of Education, 2015b). The development of a new national assessment system for schools was initiated in 2006 with the focus on moving away from the highly centralised examination system to a new system that combined centralised examination and school-based assessment (Tuah, 2007). School-based assessment (SBA) was then expanded in 2007 by the Malaysian government in order to be more holistic and to provide accurate judgements of pupils' performance.

The proposed changes in the Malaysian assessment system include promoting a balance between summative and formative assessment, reduction in over-reliance on scores obtained through the national examinations, due recognition of the importance of school assessment, assessment of all aspects of the curriculum, and an increase in the use of various methods to gather information about pupils' learning (Tuah, 2007). The new assessment system, which is discussed earlier in Section 2.5, would be a step towards a more holistic assessment system. Although part of the teaching and learning process has always been integrated with formative assessment, for instance, the teachers' comments on pupils' work, "it is only very recently it has become an explicit focus for attention" (Weeden et al., 2002, p. 14). It is therefore not surprising that "the educational community is much more confused about what constitutes formative assessment and how it may best be conducted than it is in relation to more familiar forms of assessment practice" (ibid., p. 14). For instance, the unclear SBA policy reported earlier in Section 2.5.1 had led teachers to conflate SBA and formative assessment.

Research conducted by Fook and Sidhu (2006) in Malaysia suggests schools to move toward the establishment of a network of professional personnel with various levels of responsibility in each school, which includes the involvement of a central examining board and trainers to help implementers at the school level. In line with the continuous and formative training, school administrators must ensure regular SBA coordination meetings are held to monitor and evaluate SBA practices. This means that teachers must be properly trained and given meaningful and relevant input in regards to the new assessment, because the effectiveness of an educational assessment is based upon its implementers' knowledge and skill in its successful implementation (Talib and Najib, 2008). However, changing practice in the classroom needs time and support for those undertaking the change (Weeden et al., 2002). For

the effective use of assessment, especially formative assessment that requires “many teachers to reconsider their approach to teaching and learning and to re-evaluate their working practice” (ibid., p. 127), such a change in practice is not easy. It is a process that requires “schools and teachers to become researchers in their own classrooms, to identify problems, seek solutions, try them out and analyse the outcomes” (ibid.).

The complexities of applying the ideas of formative assessment in classrooms continue to sustain debate in the field of education (Hayward, 2015). For instance, a research study conducted by Black and Wiliam (1998), on assessment for learning, outlines the issues arising from the current testing regime in Malaysia;

1. There is a mismatch between teachers’ stated beliefs about effective learning and the assessment methods they use.
2. There is clear evidence that there is a negative side to assessment which results in many students under-achieving or failing to have their knowledge, skills and understanding recognised.
3. There is a danger that assessment purposes are being swamped by the managerial role of the assessments.

(Black and Wiliam, 1998, cited in Weeden et al., 2002, pp. 41–42)

Similarly, when the new assessment system was introduced in Malaysian schools, those teachers who were trained to teach in a very exam-oriented education system face the same challenges. Moreover, it has been reported that Malaysia has the norm of publicly highlighting the number of ‘A’ grades obtained by schools and students in all the major examinations (Rahim, 2012). Prioritising and publicising students’ achievement, which is largely measured by standardised tests, not only at the school level but also at national level, has created a classroom environment where teachers teach to the test (Perryman et al., 2011) and where students learn for the test rather than focusing on more general and sustained cognitive development and knowledge construction. With continuous assessment, teachers have the “opportunity to assess skills and set questions that might be difficult to ask in an examination” (Cohen and Deale, 1977, cited in Ipinge and Kasanda, 2013, p. 437). Therefore, in order for real change to occur, it takes a continuous commitment to re-examine teachers’ ways of working and their underlying beliefs about teaching and learning, which definitely “requires

more than the ‘quick-fix’ solution of the inspirational educational ‘guru’ or the educational recipe book” (Weeden et al., 2002, p. 127).

In light of recent changes in the Malaysian education system and a move towards School-Based Assessment (SBA), several challenges were perceived as contributing to the successful implementation of the reform in Malaysia (Ong, 2010) and Hong Kong (Lam, 2016), including resistance to change due to lack of understanding of the principles by the teachers who are the assessors, and the resource implications of the change. Insufficient materials to reference when supporting SBA when teachers encounter problems or uncertainties in implementing the assessment were also reported in contributing to the opposition of SBA in Malaysia (Fook and Sidhu, 2006). A study by Hashim et al. (2013) also reported in their findings that teachers’ lack of relevant training on how to use the rubric to conduct the assessment has further led to subjective evaluation among teachers in measuring students’ achievement. In addition, as observed by Rahman, (1987), despite being given the autonomy to implement the new curricula, teachers, school heads and school administrators still rely on specific instructions from the top level rather than making independent decisions in order to “avoid the risk of being accused of doing something wrong” (Lee, 1999, p. 92). Therefore, new policy is mainly implemented for reasons of compliance.

3.7 Coping with change

As education is ‘reformed’ and schooling ‘restructured’, new responsibilities and demands and new terms and conditions of services in teachers’ work are being imposed to meet the perceived needs of the twenty-first-century (Helsby, 1999). Educational change is “facilitated by the outcomes of learning programs” (Sheehan and Kearns, 1995, p. 8), and is needed to help schools to accomplish their goals more effectively by overhauling some structures, programmes and practice with better ones (Fullan, 1991). Fullan (1991, 1994) stresses that implementing any new curriculum not only involves the use of new or revised materials and new teaching approaches, but also the alteration of beliefs. It “consists of the process of putting into practice an idea, program, or a set of activities and structures new to the people attempting or expected to change” (Fullan, 1991, p. 65). However, as change is complex, it will not happen spontaneously without the “struggle over the definition of meanings and the adoption of particular social identities” (Helsby, 1999, p. 3) in order for the teachers to be changed by the new policy. Similarly, in educational change such as the introduction of

School-Based Assessment (SBA) in Malaysia, the implementation could be difficult and may take time and depends on the existing beliefs and practices of teachers. A research conducted by Priestley and Minty (2013) on how teachers make sense of Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) differentiates two levels of engagement on curriculum change; "first and second order engagement" (ibid., p. 40). I will use these analytical categories with detailed examples in my two case study schools in Chapters 5 and 6. The first order engagement is related to superficial engagement with theory or policy by teachers, and the second-order engagement relates to whether there has been a complete engagement with the ideas in the new curriculum. This research suggest that in the first order, Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) was greatly welcomed by the teachers, however, for the second order, there exist apparent contradictions in their engagement with the new curriculum.

A recent study conducted by Rahman (2014) in Malaysia found that one of the main challenges faced by the primary English teachers in her study was lack of understanding of the new curriculum and the principles underpinning the English KSSR. If teachers have to adopt a new curriculum, great effort is needed to change their knowledge, attitudes and instructional practices, and such expectation itself makes them feel uncomfortable (Fook and Sidhu, 2006) because, at the same time, they do not want to be labelled as being incompetent in teaching the new curriculum (Sulaiman et al., 2015).

A curriculum innovation needs to be preceded by changes in behaviours and beliefs, which encompasses new skills, new activities, new practices, new understandings, and new commitments (Fullan, 1992). Cohen (1992, cited in Levin and Riffel, 1998) believes that changes in learning require voluntary changes in people's behaviour, so that nobody is able to impose change in practice. In addition to this, Cohen clarifies that changes in educational practice depend on changes in teachers' knowledge, their professional values and commitments, and the social resources of teaching practice. This stance is supported by Hargreaves (1989), who is concerned that change in the curriculum will not take effect without accompanying change in the teacher: "what the teacher thinks, what the teacher believes, what the teacher assumes – all these things have powerful implication for the change process, for the ways in which curriculum policy is translated into curriculum practice" (p. 54). Teachers play a key role in classroom innovation because they are a constant factor in the education system (Havelock, 1970, cited in Altrichter, 2005). As stressed by Marris (1975,

cited in Ng, 2009, p.189), “any innovation cannot be assimilated until its vision and meanings are shared and unless its values and assumptions are accepted”. Therefore, to ensure that the curriculum change is successfully implemented, teachers should be committed to any changes that occur in the curriculum and to implement the new curriculum (Ornstein and Hunkins, 2014) because the success of an innovation in the school depends on the quality of teachers as the central implementers (Fullan, 1991). However, the process of putting the policy into practice and enacting that policy in schools involves complex interpretations and translations (Ball et al., 2012), which then makes policy enactments much more complicated, as explained in the following section.

3.8 Policy enactment in schools

For this research, it is noteworthy to point out the focus of the implementation of educational change at teacher and school level, because teachers are those working closest to instruction and learning and are the ones who directly implement the changes. Braun et al. (2011) argue that school-specific factors such as school history, school ethos and culture, and external environments, for instance, pressure from league tables, greatly shape and influence policy enactment in schools. Policies can be superficially incorporated for compliance and accountability purposes without commencing any major or real pedagogical or organisational change. Teachers therefore engage in two contrasting levels of understandings of the new curriculum in what can be described as first order and second order engagements, according to Priestley and Minty (2013). The teachers are initially eager to accept the philosophy and ideas behind the change (first order engagement), but are not able to take the necessary time to make sense of these ideas and to determine whether they are congruent with their own philosophical beliefs in relation to their teaching practices (second order engagement) (ibid.).

Ball et al. (2012) see policy enactment as a complex process that “involves ad-hockery, borrowing, re-ordering, displacing, making do and re-invention” (p. 8). Therefore, “putting policy into practice is a creative and sophisticated and complex process” (ibid.). However, the complexity of the environments to enact policy, such as the different school contexts mentioned earlier in this section, are likely to be neglected by the policy makers. Instead, schools and teachers are expected to be able to implement and enact the planned policy without taking into account the complexities each and every school might have. This then will lead to fitting the policy into the school culture for the purpose of school documentation that is

closely related to “performativity” (Ball, 2003; Perryman, 2006). School performances are thereby judged and challenged by “the terrors of performativity” (Ball, 2003, p. 216), such as having to display the “quality or moments of promotion or inspection” (ibid.) as a result of monitoring systems instead of teachers changing their pedagogical practices.

As policy is normally dictated from a top-down direction and must be implemented in schools, it is likely that schools implement policy due to the threat of inspection, or that schools and teachers might perform according to what they think will be inspected, in order to appease the regime. This response is termed by Perryman (2006) as “panoptic performativity” (p. 155). Teachers and schools are judged based on the outcomes and performance. As a result, performativity is ranked according to increased “accountability and surveillance” (ibid., p. 150), thus, policy enactment in schools “may superficially map on to current practices” (Ball et al., 2012) without enacting real change in the ethos and culture of the schools (Braun et al., 2011). While Perryman (2006) also argued that accountability can also be a good thing, it is important to remain critical and continuously reflect on the implications of how performance is measured in schools. Because “the mechanisms through which accountability is achieved are increasingly accepted as a part of the education system, with any critics of the regime seen as being against progress” (ibid., p.149), there is a risk that all critical engagement will be disregarded, some of which might be important to consider.

3.9 What influences teachers to change their practice?

According to Fullan (1991), there are three sets of factors that shape teachers’ behaviours and their practices and responsiveness to change or to implementing any new policy:

1. The possible use of new or revised materials (direct instructional resources such as curriculum materials and technologies);
2. the possible use of new teaching approaches (i.e., new teaching strategies or activities); and
3. the possible alteration of beliefs (e.g., pedagogical assumptions and theories underlying particular new policies or programs).

(Fullan, 1991, p. 37)

It is crucial that, in order for the change to happen, all three dimensions stated above must occur simultaneously, because there is a tendency that any teacher may implement either one,

all, or none of the three dimensions without the presence of the beliefs underlying the change itself. Fullan (1991) further explained that innovation, as a set of materials and resources:

is the most visible aspect of change, and the easiest to employ, but only literally. Change in teaching approach or style in using the new materials presents greater difficulty if new skills must be acquired and new ways of conducting instructional activities established. Changes in beliefs are even more difficult: they challenge the core values held by individuals regarding the purposes of education; moreover, beliefs are often not explicit, discussed or understood, but rather are buried at the level of unstated assumptions. (p. 42)

As mentioned in Section 3.4, superficial changes in roles and culture are more likely to happen in second-order changes because, as Fullan says, “they may get transformed, further developed, or otherwise altered during the implementation” (ibid., p. 38). This might result from the inspection regime for accountability that demands that teachers and schools to comply with the policy, as discussed in Section 3.8 above.

Helsby (1999) stressed that the works of teachers “are shaped by the interplay of imposed structural changes with the active agency of teachers in accommodating, ignoring or adapting such changes within particular contexts and cultures of schooling” (p. 13). Besides the social and political context within which educational policies are developed, the range of cultures which profoundly shape teachers’ responses to the changes must be called to account. Accordingly, these cultural contexts within which people (central policy makers, educational managers or teachers) live and work affect the structure and agency of the social construction of educational reality (ibid.), which greatly shape teachers’ responses to policy implementation in the classroom. Moreover, the complexity of policy and the frequent changes in policy not only put pressure on teachers with the reform contexts, but, as Hargreaves (1994, cited in Helsby, 1999) suggests, the effect of “the sheer cumulative impact of multiple, complex, non-negotiable innovations” has a detrimental effect on teachers’ “time, energy, motivation, opportunities to reflect, and their very capacity to cope” (p. 27).

In addition, individual factors inevitably play a part in how teachers feel about their work and how they shape their practice. At the initial stages, teachers often view change as something

that requires them to do more work, which adds up to their already overloaded schedule (Loucks and Hall, 1979; Othman et al., 2013). As reported by Sulaiman et al. (2015), curriculum change requires teachers to do extra work that demands their time, energy and money. Therefore, it is unlikely for them to accept change as they do not get or, at least, perceive, any reward for the efforts they make to cope with the new curriculum demand. In fact, many teachers view that new curriculum programmes signify new teaching skills to be learned, or new competencies to be developed (Mansell, 1999), “which demand them to attend extra courses and workshops” (Sulaiman et al., 2015, p. 495). These, therefore, lead teachers to adopt strategies ranging from “compliance (complete acceptance), through incorporation (fitting the changes into existing means of working), creative mediation (filtering change through their own values), and retreatism (dropping out of teaching or submission to change without any fundamental change in values) to resistance” (Pollard et al., 1994, cited in Osborn et al., 1997, p. 56) in response to change. At the implementation stage, teachers are reported to have a lack of clarity; change is not very clear in relation to what it means in practice (Fullan, 1991), due to a lack of emphasis on involving teachers and other education personnel in the change process (Rahman, 1987). Thus, teachers are unable to identify the features of the innovation they are using (Gross et al., 1971). Moreover, the dramatic increase in teachers’ workloads raises questions about “how teachers were to find the time, energy and will for the substantial reskilling implied by the new curricula” (Helsby and Knight, 1997, p. 146). For example, Carless and Harfitt (2013), examining secondary education curriculum reform in Hong Kong, reported that SBA added additional workload for teachers in terms of preparation and implementation tasks. Similar findings were reported by Osborn (1992) in her Primary assessment Curriculum and Experience (PACE) project, suggesting that the implementation of the National Curriculum had resulted in teachers’ “pressures of time, intensification of workload, and a loss of satisfaction in the child-centred aspects of the job” (p. 148).

A study conducted by Yan (2012) in China found that secondary English teachers faced difficulties in carrying out the teaching practices required by the new curriculum due to inadequate teacher training, lack of skills and knowledge, and lack of school support. Similarly, Bantwini (2010) reported a lack of understanding of the curriculum reform among primary school teachers in South Africa due to the confusing and overloaded paperwork that accompanied the new curriculum. Many teachers are not ready to meet the challenge (Sarason, 1990) of reform, as they are not adequately equipped before they are ready to teach the new

curriculum (Sulaiman et al., 2015), and in-service training programmes seem to have had very little effect in removing this constraint (Rahman, 1987). A study conducted by Charalambous and Philippou (2010) in Cypriot schools found that several teachers were not sufficiently informed about the reform, lacked information about the underlying philosophy and the goals of the reform, and that they were provided only minimal guidelines as to how the reform could be realized in practice. The Ministry of Education in Malaysia (2013) also reported that school administrators and teachers have difficulty in accepting the changes in the new policy because of a lack of relevant training. The cascade model of training to deliver the new curriculum is often conducted over a shorter period (Rahman, 1987) due to budgetary constraints (Sulaiman et al., 2015). In addition, “there is the likelihood that the new curriculum is implemented after a short notice” (Sulaiman et al., 2015, p. 495) and that implementation is influenced prematurely by political demand rather than directed by educational reasons (Rahman, 1987).

The inconsistency between the policy goals and examinations is another challenge in implementing a curriculum policy (Fitzpatrick, 2011). As noted by Loucks and Halls (1979, cited in Fullan, 1991), teachers are often more concerned about how the change will affect them personally at the initial stages (e.g., in-classroom and extra-classroom work) than the goal and supposed benefits of the change. Lortie (1975) further explained that “the teacher ethos is conservative, individualistic, and focused on the present” (cited in Fullan, 1991, p. 35). Moreover, “there is little room, so to speak, for change (ibid., p. 35) and there is also a strong tendency for people to change “as little as possible – either assimilating or abandoning changes that they were initially willing to try, or fighting or ignoring imposed change” (ibid., p. 36). In the case of the teachers who participated in my research, it is essential that the challenges that they face in their enactments of the new assessment system are addressed, because, if the proposed changes are not presented in understandable way or do not fit with the school culture (Finnan and Levin, 2000), it will result in superficial change (ibid.) or might only be adopted and implemented superficially (Carless and Harfitt, 2013).

In the Malaysian education system, the culture of performativity, the use of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and the Malaysian Education Quality Standards (MEQS), such as the application of School Performance Index (SPIn) in monitoring the schools’ performance, has led the teachers to teach to the test and learning to focus on pupils’ performance (Perryman et al., 2011). This has limited teachers’ enactments of the new policy due to “the pressures of an

accountability agenda” (Priestley et al., 2015, p. 118) and performativity “that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change – based on rewards and sanctions” (Ball, 2003, p. 216). A similar case has been reported in Scotland, where the implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) has influenced practice in that teachers’ achievement of agency is shaped by the culture of performativity in their schools (Priestley et al., 2015). This has further resulted in “a lack of serious engagement with policy” (ibid., p. 126), and thus diminishes teacher agency. The following sections will explain some of the factors that might enhance and/or impede teachers’ enactments with a new curriculum.

3.9.1 Teachers’ beliefs

Priestley et al. (2015) suggest that teachers’ beliefs “are instrumental in shaping teachers’ practice and that such beliefs may be relatively immune to efforts from teacher educators and policy maker to change them” (p. 37). These beliefs are essential, not only in the aspects of teaching, but also in helping the individual teacher to make sense of the world. This in turn influences how they perceive that their experiences and knowledge (Maarof and Munusamy, 2015) are helping to implement the intended policy in their classroom. However, there is a tension between the necessary enrolment of teachers’ beliefs in promoting reform and the aims of educational change itself, as “individual beliefs and preferences seem to present an indistinct, elusive and seemingly inefficient target for school reformers” (Atkin, 2000, p. 75).

School improvement and educational change are closely related to teacher beliefs. According to Priestley et al. (2015), “beliefs and aspirations play out in present-day contexts, providing cognitive and affective resources as teachers deal with situations and enact their practice” (p. 131). Remarkable changes in school culture can take place when schools are provided with both pressures for change and the tools to transform their culture (Finnan, 1992, 1996, cited in Finnan and Levin, 2000) that will include not only “the set of beliefs, values and norms of behaviour developed within a particular group but also the habitual patterns of relationship and forms of association within that group – the ‘content’ and ‘form’ of culture” (Hargreaves, 1992, cited in Helsby, 1999, p. 31). As reported by Priestley et al. (2015) in their research on the implementation of Scotland’s Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), “the existing policy and practice environment appears to have exerted a significant influence on the teachers’ beliefs” (p. 58). Therefore, the interplay between structure, culture, individual and material factors

(which I will explain in detail in Chapter Four) is very important, as it helps to determine the outcomes of educational reforms in the world of teachers' work.

3.9.2 Teachers' professional development

Stepping into the twenty-first century, educational systems around the world are facing and coping with changes and promising educational reforms. It has been acknowledged that teachers are the most significant agents in educational reform (Fullan, 1991). Priestley et al. (2015) illustrated that some literature and much policy are over-emphasizing the importance of the teacher and neglect the significance of the contexts in which they work. As a result, many teachers simply work in contexts that make enacting new policy very difficult, even if they have the will and capacity to do so. Therefore, continuous development for improvement is needed throughout their careers (Fullan, 1991). However, as stressed by Priestley et al. (2015), such policies have also “de-professionalized teachers by taking agency away from them and replacing it with prescriptive curricula and limiting and sometimes oppressive regimes of testing, inspection and bureaucratic forms of accountability” (p. 2). Moreover, teachers are tied by “practicality ethics” (Doyle and Ponder, 1977): “what they choose to do must work practically with their students in their classrooms and in their schools” (Helsby, 1999, p. 26). In addition, they must also build upon “existing practice and relationships” (ibid., p. 26), elements that are often neglected by the policymaker. Helsby (1999) further added that “whilst some teachers may be active agents in continuously constructing their own versions of educational practice, others may simply replicate traditional classroom routines in an unthinking way and so be more amenable to direction from outside” (p. 27). The field of teacher professional development is growing and is challenging in this era, as teachers are functioning as the subjects and objects of change and also the determinants of student achievement.

Professional development was previously thought of as a short-term process where teachers gather information on a particular aspect of work. However, in recent years it has been thought of as a process which is long-term and one that includes regular opportunities and experiences planned systematically to promote growth and development in the profession. Hoyle (1982, p. 164) identified two concepts of teacher professional development: firstly, it can be conceived as “a process in which a teacher continues to develop the knowledge and skills required for effective professional practice as circumstances change and as new responsibilities are

accepted”; and secondly, as “knowledge acquisition and skills development which should to a greater degree than in the past be more directly related to substantive problems faced by teachers”.

Nevertheless, most professional development activities do not lead to changes in practice (Fullan, 1991, p. 331), due to the failure to see improvement in practice as an outcome, which then results in the reduction of budget and resources for staff development to be allocated for other school activities that are seen as priorities and able to produce immediate outcomes. As a matter of fact, the diminished resources for professional development will in turn reduce the opportunity for continuous staff development. This view is supported by Vulliamy and Webb (1991, p. 232, cited in Helsby 1999, p. 156) in relation to primary teachers in England, in that they suggest that “the amount and unfamiliar content of National Curriculum subjects is serving to deskill teachers and, in some schools, may be generating a collective lack of confidence rather than confidence”. Any changes in an educational system can result in teaching becoming “deprofessionalized”, with some suggestion that the role is changing “into a technical job” (Helsby and Knight, 1997, p. 147). Therefore, teachers should constantly be engaged in on-going professional development programmes that “aim for a change in understanding” (Gardner et al., 2008), in order to contribute to meaningful and effective reform rather than merely superficial change by ensuring that they have “grasped the requirements of the new curriculum” (Helsby and Knight, 1997, p. 146). As Loucks-Horsley et al. (1987, p. 7, cited in Fullan, 1991, pp. 318–319) state,

Teacher development is a complex process whose success depends upon a favourable context for learning and practical, engaging activities. Availability of resources, flexible working conditions, support, and recognition can make all the difference in the desire of teachers to refine their practice. Similarly, staff development experiences that build on collegiality, collaboration, discovery, and solving real problems of teaching and learning summon the strength within a staff, instead of just challenging them to measure up to somebody else’s standard. The focal point for staff development is the individual, working with others, trying to do the best possible job of educating children. When staff development emphasizes an

idea or an approach without considering the person(s) who will implement it, the design and results are weakened.

For effective professional development to happen, it is important that administrators and teachers at school level work together within collaborative work cultures so the time and expertise of others can be used to create and generate pedagogical and assessment practices more effectively. Strengthening professional development programmes and building teachers' capacities are therefore what the senior management should consider doing first to ensure that the curriculum reform is a success (Ng, 2009).

3.9.3 Leadership and change

Fullan (1991) described how school principals found it problematic taking on the role as an agent of change, especially when it is not clear to them exactly what that role entails or what the reform entails. "Generalities, such as 'the principal is the gatekeeper of change' or 'the principal and the school is the unit of change', provide no practical clarity about what the principal could or should do" (ibid., p. 152). Commitment is important at all levels of educational hierarchy, especially among the personnel at the top, as "they are in the position to give resources and impose both rewards and penalties, and they provide well-observed images for how seriously the innovation is to be taken" (Altrichter, 2005, p. 44).

However, "the degree of implementation of the innovation is different in different schools, because of the actions and concerns of the principal" (Hall et al., 1980, p. 26 in Fullan, 1991, p. 153), and "many principals are diffident about their change leadership role because they do not feel prepared or clear about change and the change process" (Fullan, 1991, p. 167). Fullan (1991) observed that serious reform does not only include the implementation of single innovations, but also involves changing the culture and structure of the school. If the principal does not lead the change of culture in the school, or simply leaves it to others, improvement will not happen. "In any case, teachers know when a change is being introduced by or supported by someone who does not believe in it or understand it" (Fullan, 1991, p. 105). Educational leaders need to convince the teachers to accept the curriculum and implement it as intended, because change will be unsuccessful if they cannot convey their meaning of it to others. However, Schlechty (1990) argued that "not all who occupy positions of authority have the capacity to influence others" (p. xix). Any adopted changes will also not have traction on

any scale unless educational leaders provide specific implementation pressure and support (Huberman and Miles, 1984, cited in Fullan, 1991, p. 198). Thus, when improving in-service teacher development, for instance, considerable emphasis has been placed on “the spread of professional development schools, of professional networks and of work-time agreements” (Helsby, 1999, p. 30), in order to enable teachers to engage in the new work order by empowering them to “take responsibility for the achievement of pre-specified organizational goals” (ibid.).

In addition, teachers’ motivation to accept changes can be significantly affected by the quality of school leadership. Hallam (2009), and Kennedy and Kennedy (1996) suggest that teachers are more likely to respond positively to new policies when they are convinced of the need to change in the first place, if they trust that a new policy has been thoroughly researched, and if they believe that it will be of benefit to children and young people. When teachers feel overwhelmed with new policies and proposals coming in from the outside, barriers arise for teachers to change their professional practice. Staff feel overwhelmed and stressed by what they perceive as an increased workload if support given to schools to implement a change does not last long enough or is inadequately funded (Hallam, 2009; Goodson, 2006; Day and Gu, 2009). This promotes the perception and attitude that ‘the more things change, the more they remain the same’ (Sarason, 1982), thus the result is “the illusion and disillusion of reform” for school staff (Fullan, 1991, p. 61). Schlechty (1990) further added that change can be effectively implemented, when those who are implementing it have the “energy, commitment, and goodwill” to support the change. Furthermore, they must “believe in and understand the change” (p. 8) because educational change involves change in structures and requires a “system of authority to be altered, system of reward to be redesigned, and the symbols of power and prestige to be rearranged” (ibid., p. 9), which also requires cultural change. This means that those people at the bottom of the hierarchy need to be encouraged about the change by those at the top, rather than gaining their compliance by simply exercising their authority without commitment (ibid.). Therefore, to promote a meaningful engagement with policy, it is important to build and maintain a good network of relationships within the school in order “to create a strong collaborative culture” (Priestley et al., 2015, p. 103) in enabling teachers to carry out their policy enactments.

3.9.4 Cascade Model as a dissemination strategy

Another factor that contributes to the success of educational change is an effective dissemination process. Training and professional support are needed not only for the success and effective implementation of curriculum reform (O’Sullivan, 2002), but also to ensure that the theoretical and practical aspects of the reform are well clarified (Karavas-Doukas, 1995). “Policy change is inevitably a top-down process but the same top-down approach may not serve so well in relation to rolling out change in classroom practice” (Gardner et al., 2008, p. 5).

The cascade model of dissemination is widely used, especially in the translation of curriculum reform. This model involves the delivery of top-down training “through layers of trainers until it reaches the final target group” (Elder, 1996, p. 13). For example, the cascade model was used as a central approach to the dissemination of innovation practices at Key Stage 3 in England (Stobart and Stoll, 2005, cited in Gardner et al., 2008). In Malaysia, the cascade model has also been used in disseminating the KSSR because of its advantage in providing training for a maximum number of teachers in a cost-effective way (Dichaba and Mokhele, 2012; Suzuki, 2011, cited in Rahman, 2014). It also helps to reach the teachers, especially those in remote and rural areas where most of the schools are isolated and resources are limited (Elder, 1996).

The cascade model of training is conducted on several levels (Hayes, 2000), adopting a ‘top-down’ and ‘centre-periphery’ approach (McDevitt, 1998, cited in Rahman, 2014) “until it ripples across the final level, the whole community of teachers” (Gardner et al., 2008, p. 6). However, despite being widely accepted as the way of disseminating information for most in-service training programmes, this model also appears to have failed in improving teachers’ performance (Dichaba, 2013). Abundant literature on the implementation of educational change suggests that it is much easier to propose new curricula than to accomplish curriculum implementation (Rahman, 1987). This is especially true because problems such as dilution and distortion, or simply the loss of the messages as they are translated (Rahman, 2014) during the training, might be encountered and may therefore lead to the dilution of the training; less understanding, miscommunication, different interpretations of the messages and misinterpretation of crucial information as they go further down the cascade (Dichaba and

Mokhele, 2012; Hayes, 2000; Rahman, 2014; Dichaba, 2013; Janse van Rensburg and Mhoney, 2000).

Similarly, in the case of KSSR in Malaysia, a recent study by Hardman and Rahman (2014) reported that the cascade training programme was provided over a short period of time. The training started with workshops delivered over five days at the national level for state-level trainers. Having completed this training, the state-level trainers, or State Facilitators, then provided three days of training to a representative from each primary school in their state. These trained teachers were then required to cascade their training to all the teachers in their school in a three-hour session using all the materials provided from the State Facilitator. These strategies led to the possibility of the reinterpretation and dilution of information, as training is given in short exposure courses (Rahman, 1987), which does not fully equip teachers and does not fit with the realities of the classroom (Waters and Vilches, 2005, 2008). “Schools and teachers are expected to be familiar with, and able to enact, multiple (and sometimes contradictory) policies that are planned for them by others and they are held accountable for this task” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 9). However, the complexity of policy enactment environments are often neglected by the policy maker; “it is simply assumed that schools can and will respond, and respond quickly, to multiple policy demands and other expectations” (ibid.). When policy is hastily implemented, it will not lead to immediate school improvements (Leithwood et al., 2002) because enactments are not easily translated, especially when teachers have different interpretations of the policy that lead to different understandings of how they implement that policy.

3.9.5 Curriculum model of change

I mentioned earlier in Chapter One (see Section 1.3) that the KSSR/SBA policy documents were prepared by two different government bodies; the English KSSR by the Curriculum Development Division, and the SBA policy, which outlines the content standards for English KSSR, was prepared by the Malaysian Examination Syndicate. Having two separate government bodies involved in constructing these policy documents in Malaysia and conducting different forms of training programmes at different times relating to these documents could be contributing factors in teachers failing to understand and to make sense of how the two documents are related. As supported by Ball et al. (2012), unclear policies are interpreted and translated differently and this often causes teachers to comply with the policy

without any real engagement. In addition, the existing policy documents provided as a reference in schools (up until this research was conducted in 2016) are not clear and are poorly written, and appear to be problematic and confusing for teachers to understand, especially when they need to refer to them in conducting SBA. The separate training relating to these two policy documents had added more confusion among teachers (Ministry of Education, 2013). Hayward et al. (2013) suggest that curriculum and assessment should not be separated when it comes to learning. To ensure an effective outcome in education planning, policy makers should take note that any implementation of new assessment processes should come only after the curriculum has been made a priority. Once the curriculum and its assessment processes have been clearly distinguished and understood, teachers will have a clear idea of what they are required to do and to achieve in the new curriculum.

A research conducted by Hayward and Spencer (2010) in Scottish schools suggested an Integration Model of change in helping meaningful and sustainable change. For instance, a Research Report on CAMAU projects conducted in Wales where this model was applied reported a better quality of assessment and its implementation. The research also suggests that it is important to focus on;

- Educational integrity (a clear focus on improving learning)
- Personal and professional integrity (participants have a significant role in the construction of the programme, rather than being passive recipients of policy directives)
- Systemic Integrity (coherence in development at all levels of the education system)

Hayward et al (2018, p.7)

Similarly, to ensure the successful implementation and enactment of SBA in Malaysia, it is important to consider the three main areas suggested by Hayward and Spencer (2010); not only in supporting teachers to accomplish a better quality of assessment and its implementation, but also to sustain SBA in Malaysian schools. Although numerous difficulties are faced by teachers in implementing the SBA in their daily teaching activities, and they have no option but to use the policy given to them, teachers should be more focused on promoting learning and understanding and should consistently have the urge to develop new strategies in their work. This should increase their attentiveness to students' learning needs and reduce the reliance on strict teacher-controlled activities. Hayward and Spencer (2010) further suggest

that improving the quality of students' learning experiences could then motivate the teachers and create a more exciting working environment for them.

However, as discussed in the previous section, the cascade training relating to the new curriculum was ineffective for allowing teachers to understand and implement the new policy. Teachers should be able to perform their teaching duties with confidence, but a lack of understanding about the new curriculum may have led the teachers to implement SBA superficially. Thus, a sufficient amount of time should be allocated for training, especially relating to SBA, to enable teachers to grasp a good understanding of the duties assigned to them. Teachers should be empowered to have control over their own classroom programme and activities. This will give them a sense of pride in their duties, which is vital in ensuring effective development in their pupils' learning.

Therefore, in order to fully implement and sustain SBA in Malaysia, it is crucial that all of the stakeholders and key players in the whole system are fully committed, to ensure their understanding in the process of planning and implementing the curriculum and its associated assessment processes, as well as in appropriate pedagogies (Hayward and Spencer, 2010), to promote learning and in understanding the purposes and potential of SBA in Malaysian schools.

3.10 Summary

Through the trial and error of constantly experiencing attempts at school reform, we have learned that the process of planned educational change is much more complex than had been anticipated.

(Fullan, 1991, p. 16)

The above discussion clearly shows the complexity in educational change process. It is important to explore what is happening at all levels of the education system: the micro, the meso, the macro, and the supra, in order to understand and cope with educational change (Fullan, 1991), as any change will not be successful if the authority cannot convey the meaning of it to others. Accordingly, as implementers of curriculum change, teachers' understanding of the reform is essential because they are the ones who put the change into

practice. Commitment is therefore crucial at all levels of an educational hierarchy in order to develop an appropriate understanding of the reform (Bantwini, 2010).

The literature also highlights the fact that, often, “educational changes are adopted piecemeal without any thought as to whether the sum total of what is expected can feasibly be implemented” (Fullan, 1991, p. 26). This indicates that, “when change is introduced, whatever the cultural and learning milieu” (Rahman, 1987, p. 416), similar problems will arise due to the contradictions of the political motives with the educational purposes (Fullan, 1991). Policy is also “subject to different interpretations” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 2) among those who enact it.

This chapter reviewed the existing literature regarding curriculum change and assessment and explored some issues regarding its implementation. The review has established that curriculum reform is a very complex, multi-faceted process, one that always meets resistance, and one in which teachers must be fully immersed before it can progress in a meaningful and effective way. Reform is a cyclical process (Tyack and Cuban, 1995); the educational policies will continue to emerge and, as in any development, the teachers will continue to play their key role in improving education (Helsby, 1999). Therefore, in investigating the change in the recent curriculum reform in Malaysia, I propose that the Social Interaction model, developed by Priestley (2011), derived from Morphogenesis/Morphostasis (M/M) theoretical framework, as suggested by Margaret Archer (1995), will aid me in observing the details of the practices that are taking place in the schools and that are affecting the enactment of the change. I will analyse these observations using the generic questions presented by Priestley (2007). I will explore the suitability of my choice of research methodology in detail in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses my theoretical framework and provides a detailed discussion of the methodological design used, including: the methods of data collection, its stages and procedures; and the data analysis process adopted in the study. I will start this chapter by justifying the relationships between ontology, epistemology and methodology, and I will do so by drawing upon critical realism. Critical realism is a philosophical positioning that meets at the intersection of natural and social worlds; it rejects both positivist and constructivist notions of reality, and instead establishes that a single reality exists separately from our experience and knowledge of that reality. I will explore this underlying concept as it relates to my personal ontological and epistemological positioning and how that relates to this research. I will also explore the theoretical framework I have adopted in my research, one which Priestley (2011) proposes as being a suitable social theory for examining enactments relating to educational change, and which is derived from the concept of Morphogenesis/Morphostasis (M/M) proposed by Archer (1995). I will then conclude the chapter by presenting the methodological tools used for my data analysis and the ethical issues that raised when I conducted this research.

4.1.1 Rationalising my personal ontological and epistemological positioning

As explained in Chapter One, my research involves the analysis of teachers' views and beliefs about the new curriculum and how the assessment system in the new curriculum is understood, mediated and put into practice. This research was thus conducted within the interpretive case study approach, holding the principle that human beings interpret and make sense of the world in which they live (Schwandt, 1998), supported by observation and interpretation (Hammersley, 2013), in order to develop understanding from different teachers' views in my study. However, instead of accepting the understanding that the world is made up of multiple realities, I am interested in multiple interpretations of a single reality, as informed by critical realism.

Critical realism (CR) holds the view that “the world exists independently of our knowledge of it” (Sayer, 2004, p. 5), therefore, “the study of the social world should be apprehensive with the identification of structures that produce the world, sequentially to change them” (Mcimicata, 2011, n.p.). It embraces the concept of epistemological relativism; the world is made up of many different interpretations, but at the same time it accepts a notion of a single external reality. It also attempts to affirm the notion that, with the proper use of methods, the single reality, in my case, via social interactions, can be understood. In addition, this view assumes that there are deeper structures which lie beneath social interaction. CR allows me to identify some of the causal mechanisms in order for me to understand and make rational judgements (Fletcher, 2016) on how these different components of reality interact to produce new realities. The interpretive approach used in this study helps to construct this understanding based on the individuals’ views of the specific social context being investigated (Creswell, 2007); thus, I accept the principle of CR that multiple perspectives will act back on a single reality, which then leads to social transformation or reproduction. My position is to attempt to develop an understanding of teachers’ different views and beliefs pertaining to the implementation of KSSR in their own school context, as their beliefs influence what they do in the classroom (Anderson et al., 2005; Yates, 2006); thereby contributing to the progression of different strategies of policy enactments within the two case study schools. Therefore, CR is deemed to be a useful and appropriate tool in helping me to analyse the contextual factors that emerge in implementing the new assessment and in suggesting solutions for the change (Fletcher, 2016). Table 4.1 outlines the rationales for using critical realism in an interpretive approach, which are appropriate for this study.

Table 4.1 Ontological and epistemological positioning

Feature	Description
Research purpose	To understand and interpret teachers’ views and beliefs that shape their enactments of the new curriculum.
Ontology	There is one reality with multiple interpretations that “is socially constructed but not entirely so” (Easton, 2010, p.120). This reality needs to be understood and explained. This could be done in a natural setting; my informal conversations and extensive field notes taken during the fieldwork could develop an understanding of how and why teachers are implementing the new policy around assessment.
Epistemology	Focusing on the understanding of constructed meanings (Creswell,

	2007) and construe them based on the individuals' views of the specific social context being investigated. This current study is concerned with single reality, but one with multiple interpretations of how teachers enact and make sense of the new curriculum.
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The next section explores a relevant social theory related to educational change, which I have adopted in this study.

4.2 Social Interaction

This section explains the relevant social theory that is consistent with the method of analysis that I employed in exploring my research data. I will first present how cultural, structural, individual and material attributes are conceptualised in my analysis. I will briefly explain each attribute and the relationships of these four aspects with the notion of socio-cultural interaction. I will start with the model developed by Priestley (2011), derived from Archer (1995), as shown below (Figure 4.1) to illustrate how the interplays of cultural, structural, individual and material within human activity are entangled and disentangled in any given social situation.



Figure 4.1: Social interaction

Adapted from: Priestley (2011).

4.2.1 Social Theory

The interplays of actors (individual), culture, and structure (including material) are described in Archer (1988, cited in Priestley, 2007) as a socio-cultural process which produces the reproduction and transformation of culture and structure due to the interactions that take place within that process. This notion of socio-cultural interaction, which is the relationship between cultural, structural, material and individual factors, will then allow me to reveal those factors that influence the morphogenesis (change) or morphostasis (non-change) relating to policy enactments among teachers in this current study. This positioning is helpful in situating my research, as it assumes that people, as they go about engaging in social activity, “must not only make social products, but make the conditions of their making, that is reproduce (or to a greater or lesser extent transform) the structures governing their substantive activities of production” (Bhaskar, 1998, p. 218). This is important in the context of Malaysian education reform, because, in introducing the new curriculum, the teachers will participate in enacting those interactions to make the social products that will contribute to the transformation of the assessment practices.

4.2.2 Morphogenesis/Morphostasis (M/M)

Morphogenesis and morphostasis (M/M) are very closely related to the notions of transformation and reproduction (Archer, 1998, p. 360), offering a framework for understanding social change through concepts such as emergence and a set of methodological tools for investigating change contexts; including practitioners, policy makers and academic researchers (Priestley, 2011). M/M (Archer, 1995) provides a framework for understanding the processes that lead to change (morphogenesis) and non-change (morphostasis) in the cultural and structural systems of society (Priestley, 2007). The four key principles underpinning this model are as follows:

- There exist logical relations between the components of the cultural and structural systems (e.g., contradiction and coherence);
- There are causal influences exerted by the cultural and structural systems on the socio-cultural level;
- There are causal relationships between groups and individuals at the socio-cultural level;
- The cultural and structural systems are elaborated because of socio-cultural interaction, modifying current logical relationships and adding new ones.

(Priestley, 2007, p. 71–72)

This theoretical approach helped me to examine some of the underlying mechanisms, and how the curriculum is understood, mediated and put into practice by conducting an analytical separation of structure, culture, individual and material forms. It also allowed me to analyse why certain things are happening in this particular social interaction and what happens as a result of that by looking at the relative weight from the causal factors, focusing on “whose activities are responsible for what and when?”(Archer, 1975, p. 361) in order to tackle the problem pertaining to change.

4.2.3 Cultural

According to Archer (1996, p. 107), “culture is man-made but escapes its makers to act back upon them.” It contains “constrains (like the things that can and cannot be said in particular natural language), embodies new possibilities and introduces new problems through the relationships between the emergent entities themselves, the physical environment and the human actors” (ibid.). The interplays between culture and structure will influence the culture because they are situated parallel to each other (Archer, 1996). The morphogenetic perspectives allow us to make analytical separation. Archer explains:

how structure and culture intersect in the middle element of their respective morphogenetic cycles: through structural-interest groups endorsing some corpus of ideas in order to advance their material concerns but then becoming enmeshed in the situational logic of that part of the cultural domain; and through ideal-interest groups seeking powerful sponsors to promote their ideas but then immediately embroiling cultural discourse in power-play within the structural domain. Using the same conceptual framework thus enables one to pin-point the mechanics of the inter-penetration between structure and culture.

(Ibid., p. xxviii).

4.2.4 Structural

Porpora explains that social structure has been differently defined by social theorists as:

1. Patterns of aggregate behaviour that are stable over time;
2. Lawlike regularities that govern the behaviour of social facts;

3. Systems of human relationships among social positions; and
4. Collective rules and resources that structure behaviour.

(Porpora, 1989, p. 195)

For the purpose of this study, social structure refers to “systems of human relationships among social positions” (Porpora, 1989, p. 195). It comprises the cause and effect resulting from relationships among humans with their actions, which are inter-related. For instance, as Porpora suggests, the “causal effects of the structure on individuals are manifested in certain structures interests, resources, powers, constrains and predicaments that are built into each position by the web of relationships” (ibid., p. 200). These comprise the material circumstances which are necessary for people to act and which motivate them to act in certain ways. However, individuals affect the structural relationships in intended and unintended ways, therefore there exists a “dialectical causal path that leads from structure to interests to motives to action and finally back to structure” (ibid.).

4.2.5 Individual

According to Archer (1995), an individual attribute is never solely determined by the culture and structure of the social setting in question, but instead is subject to the capacity of actors to “critically shape their responses to problematic situations” (Biesta and Tedder, 2006, p. 5, cited in Priestley, 2007, p. 62). Therefore, in this present study, by looking at the interplay between individual teachers in their social interactions, it also allows me to understand the way in which teachers interact with their social and school environment, therefore helping me to analyse the causal factors that enhance and/or constrain their enactment of the policy change.

4.2.6 Material

Material constitutes structural form. It refers to the “physical aspects of a school” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 29). It is important to take into account the material aspect of a school, such as the school building and budget, the infrastructure, the facilities and the building layout, because these play a considerable role in affecting how policy is enacted in a school. For instance, a lack of school facilities, such as not having a computer room, might hinder the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the teaching and learning activities,

thus neglecting the curriculum aim of promoting the integration of salient technology to help pupils learn better. The inadequate school budget might also hamper the SBA practices, as assessment materials must be printed out for every pupil to provide evidence of SBA documentation.

4.3 Overview of the research

4.3.1 Research aims

The objective of this study is to investigate how English language teachers make sense of and enact the new assessment system in the new English curriculum in Malaysia. This evaluative study sought to shed light on the relevant contextual factors that influence the ways in which teachers interpret and implement a new School-Based Assessment system and also to increase understanding of teachers' assessment practices and their deeper conceptions of their knowledge of the current curriculum in Malaysia. The overarching aim consists of three main subsidiary aims:

- To examine the contextual and individual/teacher factors in schools that influence the changes
- To explore what external factors are influencing the changes
- To explore what alternative or further support schools and teachers feel they need to effectively implement the new assessment practice

Thus, the research addressed the following research questions:

1. How are teachers and leaders enacting the new curriculum?
2. What are the contextual and individual/teacher factors in school that influence the change and the way it is implemented?
3. What out-of-school factors, e.g. external materials, resources and programmes, are shaping/influencing the changes?
4. What alternative or further support do schools and teachers feel they need to effectively implement SBA in the KSSR?

These questions are further developed in the analysis discussion in Chapter Seven. The next section discusses the methodological tools that were employed in exploring my research data.

4.4 The design of the study

4.4.1 Qualitative Approach

This study adopted qualitative methods in gathering data on teachers' enactments of the new assessment system, focusing on two primary schools in Malaysia as cases (Yin, 2014; Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2012). This is a suitable method for the investigation of a phenomenon in the context of the educational reform or change and a change in an assessment practice (Creswell, 2007). For my research, adopting a qualitative research design provided a “deeper” understanding of social phenomena” (Silverman and Marvasti, 2008, p. 146), regarding the implementation of the new assessment system in the new curriculum in Malaysia, and also in revealing the contextual factors in schools that influence the change as a result of implementing the new assessment system. Given the nature of my study, the methods used in this approach allowed me to seek the factors that enhanced and/or restricted the enactments of the new curriculum from the views of the primary English teachers who are directly involved in the implementation of the new assessment practice. It also allowed me to collect data in the field at the site where participants (English teachers) experience the issue or problem under study (Creswell, 2009, p. 175) and on the lived experiences of people (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). My study aimed to develop a greater understanding about teachers' experiences and beliefs about assessment change in Malaysia, thus, the use of a qualitative approach was deemed to be the most appropriate approach to meet the purpose of this current study.

4.4.2 Case study design

A multiple case study design by Yin (2014) was adopted in this research, as it can provide a rich and detailed account of the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 2009; Punch, 2009). This provided advantages over the originally proposed approach to quantitative research, as it provides in-depth explanations of the case under investigation. The data were collected from multiple sources (Creswell, 2007), including semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, relevant documents (national and school-level policies, lesson plans, assessment forms and meeting agendas), and field notes, which contributed to my in-depth understanding of the teachers' enactments of the new assessment system. It also allowed me to develop a rich description of the investigated phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 1994). In this case, the

phenomenon is the implementation of the new educational policy changes in primary schools, and how the English Language teachers make sense of and enact the new assessment system. The unit of analysis in this study was the individual school, and the individual cases being two primary National Schools in Sabah, Malaysia. This approach allowed me to understand the research issue from different individual teachers' perspectives within the two separate institutions (Yin, 2014). The choice of two case study schools, each with contrasting features (ibid.), and, diversity in their philosophies, resources, population and socio-economic backgrounds, provided me with rich and interesting information (Lightfoot, 1983, cited in Malakolunthu, 2007). In addition, I was able to compare these contrasting features across the two settings to reveal a better understanding of the differences in their enactment of the new SBA system.

In the Malaysian context, there is little information about teachers' enactments of the new assessment system. School-Based Assessment (SBA) was recently introduced in Malaysian schools in 2011 and is considered to be a fairly new innovation in the Malaysian education system. So far, most Malaysian researchers, for example existing studies by Jaba et al. (2013), Che Md Ghazali et al. (2012), Majid (2011), Othman et al. (2013), Che Md Ghazali (2015), and Chew and Muhamad (2017), have used a quantitative approach, using questionnaire surveys as the main method of collecting data regarding teachers' readiness for SBA implementation. However, studies relating to the enactments of teachers involved directly in the implementation system in Malaysia have rarely been investigated. This current study aims to explore the relationship between the national educational policy change and the relevant contextual factors that influence the way in which teachers interpret and implement the new assessment system. This study differs from those of the previous studies, in that it has adopted a case study approach, which provides the opportunity to examine in detail and to understand "a real-life case" (Yin, 2014, p. 34), drawing on the experiences of those who are directly involved in the implementation of the educational policies within the schools setting. Therefore, this research has the potential to contribute novel and original knowledge about the implementation of new education policy that could be used as a resource for decision-making among the Malaysian Examination Syndicate, school administrators, and teachers.

In summary, the chosen qualitative case study approach is deemed to be appropriate as it offered rich and detailed data in understanding the curriculum change in Malaysia that might

be difficult to convey quantitatively (Hoepfl, 1997). It allowed me to interpret the values and beliefs of the teachers, the contextual conditions in the schools and the wider educational system, and the teachers' practices, which helped me to obtain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon in the context of the practical implementation of educational changes, specifically, in the introduction of a new assessment system. The following section explains in detail the rationale for using this approach.

4.4.3 Research methods

In generating the data, multiple methods were used, as outlined below.

4.4.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

The main method of data collection in this study is semi-structured interviews, which were designed to be conducted in sets of two: one to be held sometime before the classroom observations took place; and one after. This method was employed with nine English teachers, two Head teachers (one from each case study school), two SBA Coordinators from each school, the Senior Teacher from the first case study school, and one State Facilitator in order to discover their understanding about the new curriculum, especially in relation to assessment change. The use of semi-structured interview enabled me to probe for more information and to clarify the responses given by the person being interviewed (Johnson and Christensen, 2008; Patton, 2002; Marshall and Rossman, 2011; Wellington, 2000; Rahman, 2014) and contributed to the gathering of rich and thick data (as it allows participants to express their views and speak for themselves) that I might not have obtained from using structured interviews. I was interested in the extent to which teachers make sense of the new assessment system and the factors that might enhance and/or hinder their enactments of the new assessment procedure and its practice. Therefore, this in-depth semi-structured interview method allowed me to obtain insightful information about teachers' attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, knowledge and feelings of a problem being researched (Dörnyei, 2007). This method also allowed for an open response in participants' own words (Longhurst, 2003) to be obtained, and enabled me to discover teachers' opinions and understandings about the new curriculum. I initially considered conducting the interviews with only the English teachers and the Head teachers, however, during the fieldwork, I found it necessary and useful to also gather details and information from the SBA Coordinators from the two schools, the Senior Teacher, and also the state facilitator, which contributed to my obtaining more rich data from different groups of

participants. In addition, the interview with those who were not English Language teachers also allowed me “to cover a more limited area of the same ground but in more depth” (Mason, 1994, p. 91, cited in Mahmood, 2014), which supplemented the data gathered from the main participants in this study, that is, the English teachers, as they were also directly involved in the implementation of the new assessment system in the new curriculum. The total number of semi-structured interviews conducted is shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Total number of interviews

Schools	Head teacher	English teacher	SBA Coordinator and Senior Teacher	Number of English teachers interviewed twice	State facilitator
Case Study 1	1	6	2	5	
Case Study 2	1	3		3	
Total	2	9	2	8 (out of possible 9)	1
Grand Total	22 interviews				

For the purpose of conducting the semi-structured interviews, separate interview schedules were prepared, not only as a guide to ensure that similar questions could be pursued with each person interviewed (Patton, 2002), but also to help me to build a conversation by focusing on the particular predetermined subject (ibid.). The interview guide for the state facilitator was aimed at discovering his views and understanding of KSSR and what he perceived was actually required of the teachers in the new curriculum, as he was in charge of providing the cascade training for the teachers before the implementation of the new curriculum. English teachers who participated in the study from both schools were interviewed in Malay in order to put the participants at ease and to encourage fluent and clear ideas (Rahman, 2014) by using the national language. Moreover, conducting interviews in the Malay language created a more conducive atmosphere to building up good rapport and established trust between the researcher and participants (e.g., Drew, 2014; Andrews, 1995). Table 4.3 illustrates the

contents of the interview schedules for the different groups of teachers who participated in this study.

Table 4.3 Interview schedule

Participants	Main questions
Head teacher	Teacher's background Values and belief Training and support School's administration system View about KSSR, challenges and recommendation
English Teachers	Teacher's background Values and beliefs Training and support Views on KSSR and SBA Challenges and recommendations
Non-English teacher (SBA coordinator and Senior Teacher)	Teacher's background Values and beliefs Training and support Views on KSSR and SBA Challenges and recommendations
State facilitator	Teacher's background Training and support Views on KSSR and SBA Challenges and recommendations

The pre-interview with the English teachers was conducted in order to build clear ideas about teachers' views on the implementation of KSSR, their values and beliefs, and their understandings of the practices relating to the new assessment process. The follow-up interviews after the classroom observations were more unstructured, as these were derived from the information gathered during the observations. This strategy was adopted mainly to probe for more information and to clarify any information that they had provided during the pre-interview, and also to expand on what I actually observed them doing during their

classroom teaching; in other words, to indicate whether what they had said during the first interview matched with their classroom practices. These helped me to obtain in-depth explanations about teachers' practices. It also provided me with an inside view of what the teachers perceive is happening, thus allowed me to make informed judgements about what is actually happening. In addition, interviews are seen as a conversation and how the data that are generated might be considered as a co-construction (Mann, 2016) between the participant and their experiences and me, as a researcher, as well as my own experiences of implementing KSSR in my teaching practices. Although conducting semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to provide diverse ideas and responses, it also helped to open up room for the participants to negotiate and discuss the topic further (Mann, 2016), thus reducing the power imbalance between me, as the researcher, and the teachers in my study. The responses from the follow-up interviews did contribute greatly to the richness of the data.

Each interview session lasted between 40 minutes and one hour. All of the interviews were audio-recorded and were first piloted with two English teachers in Sabah prior to conducting those in the main study for the purpose of modifying the interview questions accordingly. As the interview schedules were originally written in English, and the interviews were conducted in Malay, I first translated the questions into Malay and had them revised by the Senior English Language Lecturer from one of the public universities in Sabah Malaysia to ensure the accuracy of the translation. The number of interviews varied from each case study school depending on the number of English teachers and the different types of teachers' roles available in the individual schools.

In one case study school, I had the opportunity to interview the Senior Teacher, who provided valuable information about the nature of the school and the overall implementation of the new curriculum, particularly in relation to the assessment aspect, as practised by the teachers in that school. All interviews were then translated into English and transcribed for the analysis. To build rapport with the teachers, prior to the pre-interview, I explained that careful attention would be paid in writing the report to ensure anonymity and to protect the confidentiality of all of the participants by using pseudonyms. The complete interview schedule is presented in Appendix B.

4.4.3.2 Classroom observations

As advocated by Wragg (1994), to maintain my position as a non-participant observer, I sat at the back of the classroom to minimise the intrusion. This allowed me to carry out the classroom observations with the English teachers to complement the interview data. Adopting this strategy gave me the opportunity to record first-hand data (Dörnyei, 2007) in a natural setting and to record actual behaviour or intended behaviour, because people do not always do what they say they do (Johnson and Christensen, 2008). This strategy also reduces the teachers' distraction of having an observer in the class. Because observations were conducted mainly to see the assessment practices as they are enacted in the classroom, this strategy is appropriate as it focuses on the teachers' teaching practices in the real classroom. Non-participant observations during staff meetings and in weekly school assemblies as well as informal participant observation of the daily life of the school community in each case study school were also made in order for me to establish and build up relationships with the teacher and the school community and also as part of "the processes of 'presenting yourself', 'gaining trust' and 'establishing rapport' that are important in facilitating a successful research project" (Fontana and Frey, 1998, cited in Priestley, 2007, p. 88).

The extensive field notes taken during the classroom observations also contributed to the thick description about the way in which the English KSSR is transferred into teaching and learning practices (Rahim, 2012). Without the presence of any recording equipment, the classroom observation helped to reduce the level of disruption, thus lessening teachers' anxiety of being recorded, and minimizing any interference with the teaching and learning activities. In observing the class, I sat at a pupil desk, maintaining my role as a non-participant observer (Wragg, 1994), even when the pupils addressed me or asked me questions. However, there were some occasions when interacting with the pupils, especially in Primary One, was unavoidable, as they were really happy with my presence in their classroom and personally came to me to ask questions when the teacher was facilitating other pupils' learning during the lesson. Other researchers have also reported encountering such experiences in their observation work (for example, Rahman, 1987; Hammersley, 1984). In order to maintain my non-participant role, I tried not to respond to them as much as their teachers would normally have done, so it helped to reduce their attempt to engage in conversations with me. To maintain my focus when observing the class, I looked at how the teachers were implementing the English KSSR lesson, the teaching aids that they used, and their assessment practices,

which then allowed me to generate interview guides for the follow-up interviews, which can be considered as an additional source of information about what was said and done (Mercer, 2007). The classroom observations revealed discrepancies between the things that the teachers say they do and what they actually do in classrooms. The purpose of doing the observations was not to monitor and evaluate the teachers, but instead to determine the nature of those discrepancies or to reveal what the teachers want to be seen to be doing and what they actually do. Therefore, this method helped me to use a stimulated recall method (Mackey and Gass, 2013) as a tool to employ in the second phase of my interviews with the teachers.

Conducting classroom observations in this research also demanded that I was flexible (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003), as teachers seemed not to feel comfortable being observed. Some even said during the pre-interview that they had to prepare the ‘best’ lesson plan and teaching aids first, only then was I allowed in the classroom for observation. However, as I stayed for four weeks in each school from Monday to Friday, from morning until the school session ended, this enabled me to establish good relationships within the school community and helped in reducing the perception of having a stranger in their schools. The good rapport built with the teachers made it easy for me to negotiate a suitable time with the class teacher for when to conduct the classroom observation. In fact, towards the end of my stay in one school, several teachers asked me personally when I would be observing their class as they were concerned that my data would not be sufficient because it was agreed in the pre-interview session that the classroom observation from each teacher would be conducted twice. This aspect of the research also proved to be challenging because of difficulties in setting the time with the availability of teachers in schools, as teachers were occupied with work other than English Language, or the timetable for the English lesson was conducted simultaneously with other English classes. Therefore, I often had to re-schedule or had to wait for the availability of the English teachers. However, I made full use of my free time to record descriptive field notes from informal conversations with other teachers and staff, which also contributed to my collecting the most relevant and important information to my research, and also any relevant documents and records regarding KSSR.

4.4.3.3 Document analysis

Relevant document analysis was another valuable source of data (Punch, 2005), which was used to compare the official document policy from the Ministry of Education with the school

documents. Because “school documents differ from school to school, that is, in their content and form, and in the uses to which they are put” (Priestley, 2007, p. 88), the purpose of this method was mainly to add to contextual knowledge as it contributed in understanding the school culture and practices in each case study school. In addition, by analysing the official documents, such as policy statements and circular letters from the Ministry of Education at the macro level, along with the school documents at the meso level, the extent to which the implementation of policy and practices was realised at school level could also be determined (Fitzgerald, 2007). The documents were not analysed in detail, but were read carefully in order to allow me to understand the intended content of the document and how these were translated in practice in the schools. For instance, the way in which teachers interpret the policy, that is to say, how they conduct the assessments, can be seen from the classroom observations. The information gathered from these documents also contributed rich information that led to my inquiry about the implementation and practices of SBA in each school, which I describe in detail in Chapters Five and Six.

4.4.3.4 *Field notes*

Field notes were compiled during the classroom observations, non-participation observation during staff meetings, and participant observation in staffroom and canteen conversations as a record of what was observed during the course of the observation (Creswell, 2007). Keeping field notes helped to explain and support the data gathered from the observations and interviews by describing the “situations and events of interest in detail” (Emerson, et al., 1995, p. 14, cited in Silverman and Marvasti, 2008, p. 230).

I found it challenging to write extensive field notes during observations and interviews. As cautioned by Emerson et al. (2001), researchers tend to be selective when writing fieldnotes. They might be inclined to write only things that seem significant to them, which is clearly subjective and tends to be biased (Copland, 2018). However, jotting down notes as a memory aid, as suggested by Lofland and Lofland (1995), and expanding them as soon as possible (Spradley, 1979) after each observation, were a great help to me for making “deeper and more general sense of what is happening” (Silverman and Marvasti, 2008, p. 231). The notes taken during my visits to the two schools also helped me to perform my own stimulated recall and self-reflection in making sense of the data. The written field notes also helped me to obtain deeper understanding of my participants’ perspectives, as they provided “situated,

contextualised accounts of lived realities” (Copland, 2018, p. 251). Being reflexive about my own ideas, feelings and weaknesses throughout the course of conducting my research also helped to enhance its trustworthiness.

4.4.4 Location of the study

The research was carried out in two national primary schools in Sabah, Malaysia. As described more fully in Chapter Two, Malaysian primary schools can be categorized into two types: National schools (with a mix of ethnic groups in the student enrolments and divided into government and government aided schools) and Vernacular schools, which consist of National Chinese-type schools and National Tamil-type schools. Because national schools are the largest proportion of primary schools in Malaysia, the two primary schools in this study were selected under the category of National schools.

The two case study schools in this study are located in Sabah, Malaysia. Sabah is located on Borneo Island, the eastern part of Malaysia. Figure 4.2 illustrates the location of the present study on a map of Malaysia.



Figure 4.2: Location of the study

Source: adapted from: <http://malaysiamap.facts.co/malaysiahighresolutionmap.php>

The rationale for conducting the study in Sabah, Malaysia was due to my familiarity with the local context as well as in consideration of logistical convenience and feasibility. The location of each school was close enough to allow me to spend whole days in each school and made it possible for me to collect data more efficiently. A purposive sampling strategy (Creswell,

2012) was adopted in the selection of the two case studies and these were determined by considering their location and infrastructure in order to meet the appropriate criteria for those participants who are able to provide information that is most relevant to the research questions (Bryman, 2008). Purposive sampling allowed me to choose a case because it illustrates some feature or process in which we are interested (Silverman, 2001, p. 250). The two National primary schools were selected as a representative of two categories of schools that fall under the National schools: a government school, and a government-aided school; one located in rural area, and one in an urban (town) area. In addition, I intended to find the complementary and contradictory factors that shape the degree of teachers' enactments of the new curriculum based on these two different school types and their locations.

For access to conduct this study, I was aware that there is a need "to respect the participants and the sites for research" (Creswell, 2009, p. 89). Therefore, I followed the formal procedure by applying written official permission from the Malaysian Development Institute, Economic Planning Unit (EPU) (see Appendix C), to conduct my study in schools in Malaysia. When I received the official approval from the MOE, I applied for permission from the state level, that is to say, from the Sabah State Education Department (see Appendix D), for reasons of feasibility. At the district level, I made a similar request and met directly with the Head teachers from the two selected schools on the basis of convenience. As I had official approval from the Ministry of Education Malaysia and the Sabah State of Education Department, gaining the approval to enter the two case study schools went very smoothly. For this study, my initial plan was to start my fieldwork at the beginning of the school year, which was in the first week of January. However, in the first school, selected based on the recommendation of a gatekeeper from the District Education Office, all of the English teachers refused to participate. Gaining access to that school was very easy, as I was fully supported by the Head teacher, but this research also proved that even though trust had been gained from the Head teacher, it can still be very fragile (Fontana and Frey, 2000). Given the limited time I had to conduct my fieldwork, I then had to choose another school that was close and convenient for me to visit, based on the convenience of the research locations. I was therefore only able to begin my fieldwork in the third week of January, 2016, at the first case study school in another division in Sabah.

4.4.5 Population and sample

The main participants in this study are primary school English teachers, who I believe “can provide rich and varied insights into the phenomenon under investigation” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 126) as they are involved in the implementation of the new assessment system. The English teachers were selected using purposive sampling in order to provide information-rich cases for in-depth study, which is most likely to illuminate the questions under study (Patton, 2002). The rationale for selecting these teachers was; 1) they had taught English Language for more than five years, and 2) they had seen the change from only summative exams to both summative and formative assessment in the new curriculum. For the State Facilitator, I considered that the interview data obtained from this key informant were helpful in providing me with information to best understand the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009), as he was the one who was directly involved with the professional training provided to the English teachers in the division where this study was conducted. Table 4.4 below summarizes the demographic information of the teachers included in the two case study schools, followed by a summary of data sources in Table 4.5.

Table 4.4 Teachers' profiles

Teacher pseudonyms	Gender	Teaching experience (years)	English teaching experience (years)	English KSSR teaching experience (years)	Qualification
Will	M	11–20 years	16	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor Degree in Social Science • Diploma in Education
Seeva	M	more than 20 years	5	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor Degree in Education • Certificate of Teaching
Neil	M	less than 10 years	6	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor Degree in Social Science • KPLI: Diploma in Education
Kelly	F	11–20 years	15	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor Degree in TESL • Diploma in Education
Marilyn	F	11–20 years	17	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postgrad Master • Bachelor Degree in TESL • Diploma in Education
Betty	F	11–20 years	13	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor Degree in TESL • Diploma in Education
Wahid	M	11–20 years	2	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor degree in Social Science • KPLI: Diploma in Education
Farah	F	more than 20 years	24	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor Degree in TESL • Diploma in Education
Jaden	F	11–20 years	14	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor Degree in TESL • Diploma in Education
SBA Coordinator	M	more than 20 years			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor Degree in Social Science • Diploma in Education
Senior	M	more than			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postgrad Masters • Bachelor Degree in Social Science

teacher		30 years	• Diploma in Education
Head teacher 1	M	more than 20 years	• Diploma in Education
Head teacher 2	F	more than 20 years	• Diploma in Education
State Facilitator	M	less than 10 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor Degree in Social Science • KPLI (Diploma in Education)

Note: TESL refers to Teaching English as a Second Language, KPLI refers to Postgraduates Teaching Courses

4.5 Data sources

As previously explained, this research employed a different range of data generation methods. Table 4.5 outlines how these four methods relate to the research questions.

Table 4.5 Overview of data source, and methods in relation to research questions

Research questions	Data sources	Methods/instrument			
		Interview	Observation	Document analysis	Field notes
How are teachers and leaders enacting the new curriculum?	Teachers	✓	✓		✓
	Facilitator	✓			
	Head teacher	✓			
	School documents			✓	
What are the contextual and individual/teacher factors in school that influence the change?	Teachers	✓	✓		✓
	Head teacher	✓			
	facilitator	✓			
What out-of-school factors, e.g. external materials, resources and programmes, are shaping/influencing the changes?	Teachers	✓			✓
	School documents			✓	
	Facilitator	✓			
What alternative or further supports do schools and teachers feel they need to effectively implement SBA in the KSSR?	Teachers	✓			
	Head teacher	✓			
	Facilitator	✓			

I conducted my fieldwork in two phases. The first phase took place between 21st January and 2nd March in St. Dominic school and the second phase was conducted in Sarayo Primary School from 12th April to 13th May, 2016 (pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity

of the schools and teachers). I conducted a total of fourteen interviews across the two schools, including one with the state facilitator. Information about the case study schools will be presented in detail in Chapters Five and Six, however, a summary is provided below:

- St. Dominic School is a large government-aided school located in an urban (town) area with a mixed socio-economic profile. It comprises a large number of pupils and teachers from different ethnic groups in Sabah.
- Sarayo Primary School is a small government school located in a rural area. The socio-economic profile of this school ranged from lower to middle level.

Each phase of the data collection was conducted in three stages. Stage one involved a pre-interview with English teachers in each school for the purpose of obtaining preliminary information about teachers' values and beliefs regarding the new policy. In this stage, all English teachers were informed face-to-face about their roles and were given an information sheet (Appendix E) describing the nature and the purpose of the study, the procedures the study would follow, the duration of the study and the time commitment that would be required for interviews. Additionally, the information sheet also informed them about their right to refuse at any stage for whatever reason and to withdraw data supply because their participation is considered to be voluntary. All of the information included in the sheet was reviewed verbally with each participant and I confirmed with them that they had understood. The participants then signed the consent form (Appendix F). All of the participants I approached in the two schools agreed to participate.

Stage two comprised making two classroom observations with each English teacher as they conducted their lessons using the new English curriculum. I conducted the classroom observations a week after interviewing the teachers so that the conversations during the pre-interview had less influence on the naturalness of their actions during the classroom observation. Over both schools, I only managed to observe eight out of a total of nine English teachers interviewed in Stage One, due to the difficulty in setting the best times. In addition, the one English teacher also held an important position in his school, and this limited his availability to be in the school at all times and I was only able to interview this participant once. However, the other paired interviews with the eight teachers did provide me with rich data. Stage three consisted of conducting follow-up interviews with the eight teachers after the classroom observations and also collecting the relevant school documents. The interviews with

the Head teachers and the non-English teachers were conducted only when they were not occupied with other school tasks. Despite facing the challenges of teachers' busy and tight schedules, all the participating teachers in this study were very cooperative and helpful. Table 4.6 provides a summary of the participants' backgrounds for both schools, followed by a summary of the types of data collected from the nine English teachers from each case study school in Table 4.7.

Table 4.6 Summary of data collection

Background Aspect	14 Research Participants
Gender	
Male	9
Female	5
Age Range	
27–37	4
38–48	4
49–59	6
Qualification	
Diploma	4
Bachelor	7
Master	3
Professional development on KSSR	
With	12
Without	2
Teaching Experience	
Less than 10 years	2
10–25 years	6
26–40 years	6

Table 4.7 Summary of data collected from each school

Participant pseudonyms/school	Total number of	
	Interviews	Classroom observations
St. Dominic School		
Kelly	2	2
Lillian	2	2
Betty	2	2
Neil	2	2
Will	1	-
Seeva	2	2
Sarayo Primary School		
Wahid	2	2
Jaden	2	2
Farah	2	2

4.6 Data analysis

Chapters Five and Six provide the overview of analysis for each case study school. I adopted the thematic analysis method suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) in analysing the first stage of analysis from the two case study schools. Thematic analysis is a process by which interview data are transcribed, the researcher becomes familiar with the texts and begins to recognise and devise relevant codes emerging in the data. These codes are then gathered together in similar themes until common themes can be grouped into overarching themes present in the data. This process was conducted for one teacher first and then applied to the other teachers. I completed the coding manually, using a variety of colours to identify the initial codes. The use of the different colours in the table helped me to do the coding systematically. The process of completing the analysis is detailed in Table 4.8 below.

Table 4.8 Phases of Analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarising myself with the data:	I started by transcribing the interview data obtained from one teacher. This involved re-reading the data several times for the purpose of searching for meanings and patterns. I also re-checked the text against the original audio recording to verify the accuracy of the translations from Malay language to English language.
2. Generating initial codes:	I used tables in which I recorded the different codes from the individual transcripts. I highlighted the potential patterns with different colours and coded them with different codes, e.g., school inspection, school performance etc. (See Appendix G for a coding sample).
3. Searching for themes:	I then completed the analysis to find potential themes by sorting the different codes and collating all of the coded data extracts within the identified themes. For instance, the codes identified as 'school inspection', 'KPIs pressures', 'accountability measure' and 'school performance' were combined to form an overarching theme, namely, 'result-based pressure.' I labelled some initial codes that did not fit into the main themes as 'other'.
4. Reviewing themes:	Two steps were taken here; a) Verify whether the themes in Step 3 above really do fit within their themes or whether they should be re-grouped to form another coherent theme. b) Reread the entire dataset to ensure the accuracy of the representation of the themes and to code any additional data that has been missed in the early stages of the coding process. This is an on-going process as it requires me to review and refine the coding to identify the potential of forming new themes.

5. Defining and naming themes:	The process of telling the overall story of the data started here. For each individual theme, I wrote a detailed analysis of what the data extracts presented, focusing on which ones are interesting and why. I used my research questions in considering each of the themes and the story they carried. For instance, the final theme for the codes defined as ‘school inspection’, ‘KPI pressures’ and school performance’ that I initially grouped into a ‘results-based pressure’ theme, was finally identified as ‘Ministry of Education (MOE) pressures’ to be used in the final analysis (See Appendix H for an analysis sample).
6. Producing the report	The process of weaving the results gathered from the rich data into a logical, coherent and interesting story about what the data say. Here I gathered the necessary extracts to serve as an example of each issue or description to make my argument in relation to my research questions.

By starting the analysis process with one individual teacher in the first case study allowed me to identify initial codes that were used to inform the analysis of the rest of the data for all of the teachers, as the first participant had provided me with rich and detailed data. The same process of analysis was repeated for all of the participating teachers in the same school and also in the second school by referring to the themes emerging from the first individual teacher from the first school. In order to ensure that I had sufficiently analysed the data, I made sure that the extracts adequately represent and support the analytic themes so that the reader will best understand these issues. This strategy was also followed for the purpose of avoiding any mismatch between the data that I obtained and the analytic claims that I have made about them. In doing so, I re-read the data several times to make sure that the interpretations and analytical themes were constant with the data extracts. All these considerations were also taken into account during the process of writing the analysis of the data gathered from the two case study schools. Continuing this procedure throughout the entire analysis process also provided me with a strong foundation in ensuring that the interpretations of the data were

consistent with the Morphogenesis/Morphostasis (M/M) framework applied in the second stage of my analysis.

I used the school as the unit of analysis, because teachers do not work in isolation; they work in an institutional culture, which is important to consider in the context of this research. So, choosing a school as a case study allowed me to examine teachers within their institutional setting because those settings are a big part of why teachers act as they do. The school setting relates to the social interaction and is situated at the core of what I am interested in. I am not necessarily interested in the individual and the policy, but I am interested in how the school, as a site of social interaction, is a place in which these enactments of policy are mediated. After the initial thematic analysis was completed, the final themes derived from the two case study schools were then analytically separated using the M/M framework by paying attention to these following aspects:

- Complementary cases where particular theme was common to teachers across the case studies; and
- Contradictory cases where new codes were applied to the data as the findings were not apparent in the analysis of the initial case.

Analytically separating the four elements of the social interaction model for each school provided understanding in multiple ways. Firstly, it helped me to identify the causal mechanisms and enhanced my understanding of why teachers are implementing the policy differently in each school setting. Secondly, it allowed me to make judgements about which elements are the most important in influencing how policy is enacted between the two schools. Lastly, it enabled me to draw conclusions as a result of the comparison between the social interaction interplays within the two different schools.

Certain “generic questions” (Priestley, 2007), as shown in Figure 4.3 below, were adopted as a reference to categorise the themes into either morphogenesis or morphostasis (M/M) or a hybridisation of the two. These questions are related to M/M and were applied in the second stage of my data analysis by completing the analytical separation using the various themes from the data in relation to change.

- Questions concerned with culture; relate to the kind of knowledge that inform everyday practice and shape teacher values.
- Questions concerning social structure; relate to the webs of relationships in which teachers are involved, and what are the emergent properties of these relationships?
- Questions relating to individual ontogeny; for example, what biographical factors affect the teachers and their practices?
- Questioning relating to material; how might geography of school, resources and facilities affect enactment?

(Adapted from Priestley, 2011, p. 6)

Social Interaction			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do teachers and managers react to the new ideas? • Do the new ideas stimulate dialogue? • What new systems and structures develop as a result of the new ideas? • How is new knowledge constructed as a result of the engagement with the ideas? • How do individual motives translate through interaction into group goals? • What new artefacts develop as a result of such engagement? • What constraints do school and external systems place upon social interaction? • How do relationships between the various actors impact on enactment? 			
Culture/Knowledge	Individual/Agency	Social Structure	Material
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What existing notions of practice exist in this area? • Do these constitute a collective tradition? • What new ideas does the change initiative introduce? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which individuals interact within the change context? • What views do teachers and managers hold about teaching and learning? • What biographical details of individuals might influence the reception of the new ideas? • What motives and goals do individuals have? • How much knowledge do individuals possess about the issues involved? • What capacities do individuals have for self-reflection and reflexivity? • What individual elaboration (learning) takes place? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What relationships exist within the change context (roles, internal and external connections)? • What existing systems may influence enactment of the new ideas (including external systems such as exams)? • What structural elaboration is taking place? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might classroom and school geography affect enactment? • How might school facilities and resources affect enactment?

Figure 4.3: Generic questions for analysing social interaction

Adapted from: The Social Practices of Curriculum Making (Priestley, 2007)

Analysing the interview data proved to be very time-consuming as I had to translate the relevant extract into English first and then complete the transcriptions. In carrying out the translation itself, I had to deal with the issue of translating certain words from Malay into English. I had to ensure that the “cultural meaning the language carries” (Simon, 1996, p. 137, cited in Temple and Edwards, 2002, p. 5) will not lose its meaning in translation (Filep, 2009). Therefore, for some words in the interview, I directly wrote the teachers’ original quote in the Malay language and transcribed their meaning as loose translation. Full translations were completed only when any extracts from these interviews needed to be quoted while writing the analysis. I listened to the audio recordings several times, revisited the original recorded data, and read and reread the data carefully to ensure that all the important and relevant information in relation to the research questions was recorded. The field notes I took during the interviews also helped me to reveal greater depth in understanding the data. I presented the interview data according to the three different groups of participants mentioned earlier in this chapter (see Table 4.3) so as to enable me to categorize them into themes.

A summary of the analysis process in this study is shown in Figure 4.4 below.

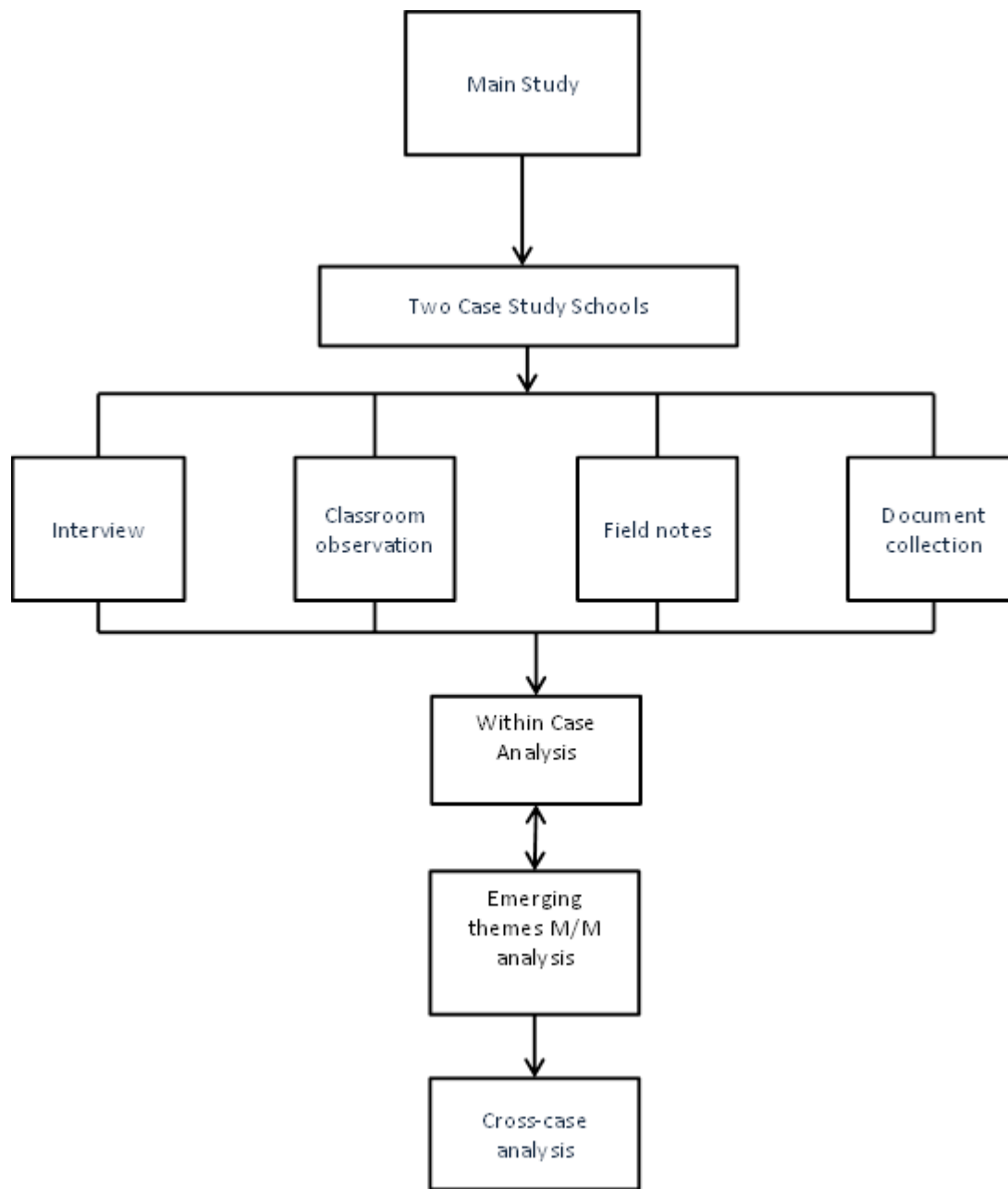


Figure 4.4: Analytical process

4.7 Validity and reliability

Hammersley (1990, p. 57) defines validity as “the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers.” Maxwell (1992) suggests that the term ‘understanding’ is more suitable in qualitative study. I adopted Maxwell’s (1992, cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p. 179) suggestion for ensuring validity in this research:

- Descriptive validity; In this study, validity was “addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participant approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 179). My major interest in conducting this research is to reveal teachers’ enactments of the new assessment system. Issues such as gathering the opinions, understanding, and the process of making sense of the new curriculum from all teachers who are directly involved with the change would not be ‘truly’ addressed if I employed quantitative methods.
- Interpretive validity; the adopted case study method, using semi-structured interview and classroom observations, has contributed to the validity of this research. These methods have helped me to understand the scope of my study by collecting detailed data from the teachers in their natural setting (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992).
- Generalizability: For this current study, generalization is not possible, but there will be points of comparison, where findings from a case can be extrapolated from that case and which may provide insights which are applicable to other settings. It could also offer the basis for further research to see whether the phenomena observed are more widespread by providing “a clear, detailed and in-depth description so that others can decide the extent to which findings from one piece of research are generalizable to other situations” Schofield (1992, p. 200, cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p. 179).

In addition to this, the amount of time spent in each case study school has also helped me to build good rapport with the school community, which resulted in greater naturalness of the data collected. The stability of observations, as suggested by Denzin and Lincoln (1994, cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p. 191), was addressed by conducting the same number of classroom observations and interviews in each school, and complementing these by taking extensive field notes during my stay in each school, which contributed to the reliability of my research. Moreover, while completing this research, I had also referred to and cited other past case studies research regarding curriculum change. This helped me in constructing my interview questions relating to policy enactments.

4.8 Ethics

The nature of working in small case studies exposes participants to the risk that the characteristics of individuals and place might be recognised (Ryen, 2004). Three ethical issues were considered in conducting this research; informing participants of the nature of study, reducing the risk of harm, and protecting the information about the participants and their schools. Therefore, every reasonable effort was made to adhere to the principles of maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the teachers and the schools who participated in this study. It is not possible to completely eliminate all of the possible risks mentioned above, but the aspirations of non-traceability will contribute to lessening those risks. The following steps describe how the ethical issues were addressed in conducting the research:

a) Before the empirical research:

- Gaining approval to conduct research in Malaysia from the School of Education, University of Stirling Ethics Committee, the Malaysian Economic Planning Unit (EPU), and the State Education Division in Sabah.

b) During the fieldwork:

- Informed consent: Written voluntary informed consent was provided by all of the participants prior to their commencement in this study. The purpose and nature of the study was also explained to them face-to-face, and their understanding of their role in the research was confirmed before asking them to complete the consent form. Initial consent to approach the teachers was obtained from the Head teachers at each school. All participants were provided with a copy of the research information sheet.
- Anonymity: Due to the nature of my project and the type of permission I was given from the Ministry of Education in Malaysia, any of the participants who read my thesis might be able to identify themselves. Nevertheless, it was important to ensure, where possible, that participants could not be identified by other readers. Therefore, I explained to all participants before I began the fieldwork that careful attention would be paid to ensure anonymity and that any reporting of the findings “should in no way reveal their identity” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 73). Any identifiers are replaced with pseudonyms in order to protect all the participants, unless, in accordance with the

BERA Ethical Guidelines (BERA, 2011), any inappropriate practices relating to child protection were observed.

- Potential of harm: Prior to signing the informed consent form, participants were guaranteed that they would not be put under the risk of any adverse consequences due to their participation in the study. Therefore, in the information sheet, I made sure that all of the teachers were fully aware of the aims and objectives of the research and the guarantee I was making to protect them.
- Pre-existing relationships: As I worked as a teacher prior to beginning my PhD studies, I acknowledged the power relations that exist between me and other members of the English teachers' network in Malaysia. I acknowledged that teachers might be wary of responding to my questions or apprehensive during the classroom observations. However, the information sheet helped teachers to understand the nature and purpose of my studies. In addition, staying for a total of four weeks on a daily basis in each school helped to build a good rapport with the teachers. The way I conducted the interviews, especially in probing to get more information, helped me to take into account the importance of putting teachers at ease and allowing them to feel that the information they give is important and that there are no wrong answers.

c) After the fieldwork;

- Reciprocity: I acknowledge that teachers make a great sacrifice by giving me time in their precious and hectic schedule to help me in obtaining rich information during my stay in each school. Therefore, before leaving the field, I left each teacher in each school with a souvenir gift as a token of my friendship and to show my appreciation for the help and time they dedicated to me during my stay in their schools. This was to express my gratitude within a practice that is central to Sabahan culture (the state where I conducted the fieldwork) to say thank you and farewell at the same time, or to practise "*tungkap kasarahan*", as it translates in Kadazandusun.

d) In writing the report:

- Confidentiality: Pseudonyms were used for each school and all the participants. Unique roles or identifiers of individuals were also removed to keep the information as confidential as possible. Special care was been taken in the way I reported the findings

so that no individual participants or schools would be identifiable to others in the writing of the thesis.

e) As for the data protection:

- Data confidentiality was maintained by ensuring that the data were kept separately from identifiable individuals (through, for example, not using direct quotations or directly attributing comments when sensitive views were aired by participants). Data were not be shared with anyone other than between my supervisors and me. The views of individuals were not passed on to others (e.g., teachers to teachers, or teachers to Head teachers), unless issues of harm to children or child protection concerns were raised. No such issues were revealed in the course of the research process.
- Written texts and audio recordings were securely stored in a locked filing cabinet and any electronic records were encrypted and password protected and stored on a secure server for which I am the only person able to access the files. Any information that the participants did not wish to be included in the research were not used, and all of the hard copies of the transcribed data will be securely destroyed at the end of the research project as suggested by Corti et al. (2014). The electronic recordings will be retained in secure storage on a password-protected server at the University of Stirling for a period of 10 years, in accordance with the policies of research data retention governed by the University of Stirling.
- Any files prepared on the researcher's personal computer (e.g., field notes) were password protected on an encrypted hard disk and were moved as soon as possible to the University's secure network. Hard copies were stored in a locked cabinet in the University's doctoral student's office. Electronic versions of this hard copy were produced as soon as possible and any hard copies of the data will be destroyed when appropriate.

This study conforms to the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research by British Educational Research Association (BERA) and these were referred to at all times while the research was conducted (BERA, 2011).

4.9 Some reflections

“In doing case study research, you must work hard to report all evidence fairly” (Yin, 2014, p. 20). As briefly mentioned in Section 4.4.3.1, completing the translation process sometimes raised doubt as I found it challenging to understand “the way language is tied to local realities, to literary forms and to changing identities” (Simon, 1996, p. 137). I had to make sure that the transcribing process was not just about “changing the words” (Gau et al., 2008, cited in Filep, 2009, p. 60), but that the translated words also carried the same meanings to the target language; from Malay Language into English Language. I also attempted to ensure that I transcribed the interview data as clearly as possible. Listening to the audio-recording several times helped me to complete the interpretation of the translation, although it is commonly accepted that many words and phrases will not have an exact meaning in another language (Filep, 2009).

I also found a dilemma in the possibility of putting my participants at risk of potential harm in their critique of the organisation in which they are employed. On the one hand, I have attempted to report all of the evidence fairly, but on the other hand, the way in which I reported the findings might restrict the “truthfulness” in supporting my arguments. However, I did try to be reflexive and took great care in translating the participants’ responses so that crucial information would not be lost while respecting the honesty of the participants. Despite these dilemmas, I should reiterate that the chosen case study method in this research is the most appropriate approach because it offers me an in-depth understanding and obtained rich data from the teachers who are the real implementers of the new curriculum in Malaysia. It is clear to me that I may not have obtained the same deep type of research, had I adopted the quantitative approaches that other researchers have (e.g., Jaba et al., 2013; Ghazali et al., 2012; Majid, 2011; Othman et al., 2013, Che Md Ghazali, 2015; Chew and Muhamad, 2017).

4.10 Summary

This chapter discussed the theoretical framework that helped in situating the research and provided an overview of the methodology employed in the research. Chapters Five and Six will discuss the two case studies, highlighting the emerging key themes that will then be discussed in detailed analysis in Chapter Seven.

CHAPTER FIVE

CASE STUDY ONE: ST. DOMINIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results obtained in the first case study school. It examines how the teachers interviewed viewed the recent reform of the primary English Language curriculum under the new curriculum, KSSR. The issues of how the school implements the new policy and the extent to which teachers understand the new curriculum will be addressed by taking into account on first order engagement and second order engagement proposed by Priestley and Minty (2013). The factors that contribute to shaping and/or distorting teachers' policy enactment, that is, the emerging Morphogenesis/Morphostasis (M/M) themes will also be reported in the final section of this chapter. I first present a vignette, which describes the case study school in detail.

5.2 The school

The first case study was conducted in a primary school located in a town area in the state of Sabah, Malaysia. Established in 1930s, upon opening, the school was only for girls. However, in the 1960s, this school merged with another mission school for male pupils and was then categorised as a National Type Primary School (SRJK). Starting that year, the school accepted boys and girls and was administered by the missionary for eleven years until the school was again re-categorised as a National Primary School (SRK). Due to rapid changes and developments in education in Malaysia, and after having been administered as a missionary school for more than 80 years, the school's category was again changed in the 1990s and it was re-designated as a National School (SK) and placed under the category of a government-aided school. Some of the management aspects of this partially government-aided school, for example, the school funds, are still managed and controlled by the Missionary Committee.

These very old school buildings are equipped with various facilities, including an administrator's office, staff room, school resource room, music room, library, meeting room, school canteen, and assembly hall. The school comprises more than 20 old wooden classrooms, housing Year One to Year Six, and is equipped with basic amenities such as chairs and desks for pupils and teachers and a whiteboard in order to conduct teaching and

learning activities in the classrooms. The administration office is located on the first floor, away from the staff room. The administration office is very conducive to its own purposes, but the staff room is very congested with more than 30 teachers having to share the small space.

The school comprises more than 350 pupils. The teaching staff number more than 40. The majority of the teachers and pupils are members of the various indigenous ethnic groups in Sabah. In regards to the socio-economic background, most of the parents are drawn from lower to middle socio-economic backgrounds and work as farmers, businessmen and government officers. This school is located near an area where the church, a convent and an orphanage were also built. The Orphans' Home is provided by the mission and administered by a nun and also functions as a hostel in that district for those pupils who come from families whose parents are divorced or have died. In this school, there is a small number of pupils who fall under that category. Thus, for those pupils who reside in the hostel, the nun will act as their legal guardian.

Results published from the past five years by the Sabah State Education Department (School Record, 2015) for the 2015 Primary School Achievement Test showed that this school's passing rate was below the average level of national achievement and ranked as one of the low performing schools in its district. According to the Deputy Head Teacher, despite their poor academic performance, the pupils in this school excelled in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities and had participated in several competitions and sports games, winning awards and certificates at district and state level. Table 5.1 shows a summary of the attributes of the participating teachers in this study.

Table 5.1 Summary of research participants

Background Aspect	Research Participants
Gender	
Male	5
Female	3
Age Range	
27–37	3
38–48	4
49–59	1
Qualification	
Diploma	-
Bachelor	6
Master	2
Teaching Option	
English	4
Others	4
Teaching Experience	
Less than 10 years	1
10 – 25 years	5
26 – 40 years	2
English Language teaching experience	
Less than 10 years	3
10 – 20 years	3
20 – 30 years	-

5.3 Policy implementation and emerging practices

In this section, I shall present evidence of KSSR implementation based on the analysis of the KSSR Curriculum Document and the Performance Standards Document, the textbooks and teachers' guides, the school timetables, the Management Guidelines for School-Based Assessment, the field notes written during the classroom observations, and the interview data obtained from the teachers. I will first look at the emerging practices at administrative level, followed by the KSSR and SBA practices emerging among teachers.

5.3.1 Administrative level

My field notes reported that KSSR has been implemented at an administrative level. The data suggest that this school has interpreted the new curriculum as changes, not only in the pedagogical structure, but also in the administrative structure. For instance, the organizational chart for KSSR, as designated by the MOE, was displayed in the administration office, which is separate from the teachers' staff room. Displaying the organisational chart also indicates that the school leadership complies with the requirements of School Performance Index (SPIn) (see Section 2.2.1 in Chapter 2) that must also be publicised to the school community. The organizational chart illustrates clearly the flow of the teachers' roles and responsibilities to ensure that the SBA policy is implemented effectively. However, the layout of the school has affected the way in which the policy is enacted; some teachers did not appear to know the different roles or the delegation of tasks within the school, and this has led to confusion, especially when they have to submit any documentation relating to SBA. The separate rooms also gives the impression that a barrier exists in communication between school administrators and staff. From the informal conversations that I had with teachers in this school, there is a strong sense that there is a gap between some of the administrators and the teachers due to their perception of the 'formality of roles' and this thus affects the relationships among the school community.

All pupils are registered in the national online database, namely, the SBA Management System (SBAMS) for the purpose of recording and storing the assessment data related to pupils' achievement within SBA, and also the School Exam Analysis System (SEAS), which is related to pupils' summative assessment for internal exams. The results of the SBA are recorded offline and are documented four times a year, as stipulated by the MOE. The copies of the pupils' results are kept by the subject teachers, the Subject Heads, and also in the SBA

Coordinator's file, which is stored in the administration office. The main school timetable, displayed in the administration office, confirmed that the school is aware of the changes in the amount of time allocated to teach English language; this was increased to 300 minutes a week for all pupils, from 240 minutes (Lower Primary) and 270 minutes (for Upper Primary) in the new curriculum. However, this timetable is not displayed in the staff room and teachers only have a copy of their own class timetable. This seems to affect the efficiency of the teaching times, especially when some of the classes are left unattended when the teachers are not sure who is supposed to be in that class at that time. Analysis of the teachers' lesson plans suggest that all the teachers who participated in the study wrote their lesson plans as mandated by the KSSR (see Appendix I for a sample lesson plan). I will now turn to the existing teachers' practices relating to the new assessment system.

5.3.2 Teachers' School-Based assessment (SBA) and pedagogical practices

One of the important features that the KSSR introduced is a focus on holistic assessment. There is clear evidence that this school is conducting SBA as intended by the KSSR. There is an appointed coordinator for SBA who is responsible for monitoring and administering the implementation of the SBA system. Records of pupils' assessment are also kept by every teacher and a copy of these are kept by the English Head. The summary of the pupils' assessment is prepared by the teachers and a copy is kept in the SBA Coordinator's files. As for the filing system, each teacher in this school has two files: one in which to store a record of their pupils' performance for SBA; and one in which to store their summative assessments (internal exams). According to the SBA coordinator, the rationale for adopting this system was to make it easier for the school to refer to KSSR document, especially when there is an inspection made by the relevant authority. However, this was also seen as a factor that led to teachers' poor engagement with the policy; too much documentation to be prepared for the same purpose that only added to their already overloaded workload.

Despite hinting at their disapproval of the additional workload associated with the new SBA system, most of the teachers appeared to be engaged with the underlying pedagogical principles of the curriculum. Extracts taken from the interviews with the teachers regarding their perceptions of the KSSR are presented below:

SBA is more holistic. During the introductory course, it was mentioned that 40% of the school-based assessment will be contributed in the final

centralized exam in Year 6. So all teachers must do and record the assessment for the pupils.

(SBA Coordinator)

KSSR is more holistic and not focusing on exam. Data will be keyed-in offline 4 times in a year. Assessment is done every day to check whether or not the pupils have passed the tasks in each descriptor. Once they have passed, they continue to the next stage.

(Kelly)

KSSR focuses on well-rounded pupils and does not solely depend on exams. Assessment is done anytime. It is more on mastery learning. Pupils need to master the learning standards required before moving on to the next learning standards. The teachers need to make sure that pupils pass the standards for they are the criteria to be recorded in the assessment.

(Will)

The interview extracts above revealed that teachers in this school were aware that the KSSR implementation changes their pedagogical approach and their assessment practices. However, it is interesting to note that none of the teachers I interviewed mentioned anything about the differences between formative and summative assessment in SBA. They seemed to have a lack of clarity about these concepts as they are situated within of the new SBA system. The emerging practices tell us little about teachers' understanding of the new assessment.

In addition, the highlighted text in the excerpt from an interview with the Senior Teacher below provides a strong sense that SBA might not be effectively implemented in this school.

The new assessment is more holistic and well-rounded. Pupils are assessed in all aspects – in and outside the classroom. **If only teachers are doing it properly, it will be really good because the new curriculum does not focus on the exam.**

(Senior Teacher)

The section that follows explores this issue further.

5.4 Teachers' Understandings of KSSR Philosophy and SBA Policy

This section will examine the extent of teachers' engagement with the new policy at two different levels, as proposed by Priestley and Minty (2013). Teachers' superficial engagement contributes a great influence on second order engagement; that is, on how they shift their practices into the classroom. I will first summarize the teachers' understanding of KSSR policy and SBA policy to make it easier to relate their levels of engagement to the new policy (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 Summary of teachers' understanding of KSSR policy and SBA policy

Participants	Teachers' understanding of	
	KSSR policy	SBA Policy
Senior Teacher	Pupils are assessed in all aspects; in and outside the classroom	More holistic and well-rounded, no exam
SBA Coordinator	More holistic	No exam in SBA
Kelly	Assessment is done every day, to check whether pupils have pass the tasks in each descriptor in Standard Learning	No exam in SBA
Lillian	Assessment is conducted anytime, anywhere	No exam in SBA
Will	Assessment is done anytime	Focus on well-rounded pupils and does not solely depend on exam
Neil	Assessment done in everyday basis	SBA is formative
Seeva	Holistic assessment	There is no exam in SBA
Betty	Continuous assessment	SBA is formative

Section 5.3.2 reported the evidence that teachers were conducting SBA. However, the interview data revealed that the majority of teachers appear to have no idea that summative assessment is itself a component of SBA. Table 5.2 above clearly illustrates teachers' lack of understanding of the idea behind the curriculum reform and SBA. The new English KSSR stresses the development of critical thinking; the SBA was designed using criteria linked to learning standards in English KSSR, and used as a reference to assess individual pupils to monitor their language development. However, Table 5.2 above clearly shows teachers' lack of clarity about see the whole concept of KSSR and the idea of SBA to realise the aims in KSSR. Therefore, they are struggling to enact the SBA because they do not seem to be able to relate English KSSR to SBA and the fact that SBA comprises formative and summative assessments, due to the training that was conducted separately, as discussed earlier in Chapter One (see Section 1.3). This has further affected their classroom practices and distorts their engagement with SBA.

The on-going assessments in SBA allow teachers to become more familiar with their pupils by focusing on the aspects of teaching that need more attention. However, the data from this school also illustrates that the majority of teachers did not seem to see the purpose of formative assessment in SBA. For instance, consider the interview extracts that follow:

The use of bands in formative assessment cannot really measure pupils' real performance compared to summative exam. Pupils' performance cannot be measured based on observation only. Some are good during the lesson but when it comes to paper and pencil test, those who seem 'passive' score good marks and perform better.

(Seeva)

In the case of Seeva, it seems that, due to a lack of understanding of the SBA concept, he appeared to view formative assessment as another exam paper to be used as a method of judgement to measure pupils' performance, just like summative assessment. This therefore led to teachers being concerned about the quality of the assessment because, according to them, even if the pupils know nothing, they should achieve at least Band 1, because Band 1 is the lowest category in the assessment for SBA. In this case, there is a lack of clarity around the concept of criterion referencing in SBA in that is not designed to compare pupils'

performance, but to monitor each pupil's learning progress. I would like to reiterate that teachers do not clearly understand the purpose of and the differences between formative and summative assessment; moreover, they are unaware that the SBA consists of these two types of assessment. The band system is used to record the pupils' progress to provide information to the teachers about the pupils' future learning. By addressing what areas need attention in their learning, this will eventually help pupils' performance during their exams. As a result of this misunderstanding, some teachers raised the issue of inconsistency in conducting assessment. Lillian provides an example of this misunderstanding:

pupils were evaluated with different tasks and different level of tasks' difficulty but they will get the same band just like what other pupils get.

The interview data indicate teachers' lack of understanding of the use of criteria to conduct SBA. They clearly indicate a lack of understanding of the use of the criteria referenced in the Performance Standards Framework Document (Ministry of Education, 2011c) to assess the pupils' development and growth in their acquisition of the learning standards in order to determine pupils' bands. The data provide a strong sense that SBA might be conducted when the teachers are documenting the reports, but their assessment is not based on the corresponding criteria to promote pupils' mastery of learning within the predetermined standards or criteria. However, as reported earlier in Chapter One, teachers' initial confusion about SBA derived from the two separate documents prepared by two government bodies. Therefore, the lack of clarity in the guidelines on the use of the Performance Standards, due to the different training regarding the use of the English KSSR document and SBA (Performance Standards) document, resulted in a lack of understanding in assessing pupils as well as in the relation between these two documents. The lack of clarity in defining the criteria in the Performance Standards had led to subjective evaluation among teachers. They merely use this perception to 'mark' their pupils' abilities by simply ticking the band based on pupils' attitudes in class and not on their learning and achievement. More evidence of this uncertainty is shown in the interviews with these teachers:

We observe our pupils every day, we know our pupils ability so when it times to record assessment, '*main ingat-ingat sajalah*' (try to recall pupils' name when recording the band for them).

(Kelly)

Normally pupils who are active are the fast learners, and those who are quiet normally do not take part in the teaching and learning activities. So it is easy to distinguish the pupils' ability when we need to record their performance because we know our pupils better.

(Lillian)

This also illustrates that teachers might record the assessment as documentation only because they are required to do so by the MOE, and because this is what they think they should do. This style of teaching practice is a good example of hybridization, in which the existing ideas are subsumed into the new ideas because of structural pressures from the Ministry of Education. This resulted in very little evidence of change in teachers' practices.

Teachers' first order engagement with the new assessment system seems to result from a weakness of communication during the KSSR training. As shown in the following excerpt from an interview with the state facilitator who was responsible for the cascade training for teachers at the district level:

I attended the courses for KSSR in state level twice for five days each. During the first introductory course, it was mentioned in short that 40 percent of the overall marks in the centralized exam will be allocated from the school assessment and another 60 percent will be from the centralized exam. But it was not confirmed yet since there is no circular letter stating the 40:60. We were told to wait for the official announcement from the MOE.

(State facilitator)

The allocation of assessment marks and information about the component of SBA was not mentioned during the state-level KSSR course. Based on the excerpts above, it is evident that the ratios of 60:40 were not clearly communicated to teachers during the training. Nevertheless, the MOE circular letter issued in February, 2011 clearly stated that 40 percent of the mark for the National exam result would be contributed by aggregating the results of the SBA that is conducted in schools. Therefore, the training for the state facilitator itself indicated that the procedures were poorly communicated, as it seems that they received the training before the circular letter was released. This led to further confusion among the

teachers nominated to attend the KSSR course in its early stages. The same teachers were required to cascade the training in their individual schools, so there is a strong sense that the policy might be translated based on their *misunderstandings* and are thereby interpreted differently among the individual teachers in schools. For instance, consider the various interpretations of SBA provided by these teachers:

At first, when the new assessment was introduced, we were told that there are no more exams for the pupils. But during the exam for the KBSR (the former curriculum), the pupils in Year One have nothing to do, so our school decided to conduct an exam for them as well.

(Seeva)

We were informed during the course that there will be only formative assessment in KSSR but at the end of the primary school level, the focus is still on pupils' achievement during the exam.

(Lillian)

The interview data clearly indicate poor communication in the dissemination process. It is interesting to note the similarity of the data gathered from seven individual teachers in this school. They each hold the perception that there are no longer any exams in the new assessment. They were aware that 40 percent of the overall mark for the National exam would be contributed by the results of the SBA, however, it seems as though teachers were confused and lacked understanding about the whole idea behind the KSSR and its relation to SBA. For instance, Lillian stated that KSSR is only comprised of formative assessment, which clearly shows her lack of understanding about SBA, the assessment used in KSSR. Nevertheless, there also exists a willingness to conform to the performative aspects of the curriculum without understanding and/or subscribing to its educational underpinnings. Several factors that led to teachers' lack of understanding of the SBA rationale will be discussed in more detail in Section 5.5 of this chapter.

Although the majority of the teachers emphasized that the assessment system was the major change in KSSR, evidence from the second order engagement appears to be more problematic. Apart from a lack of understanding of formative assessment and its role in SBA, teachers' attitudes in response to the policy might be derived from their different beliefs, which in turn

affected their assessment practices. Table 5.3 summarizes the results of the interviews relating to teachers' beliefs about their assessment practices.

Table 5.3 Summary of teachers' beliefs

Participants	Teachers' beliefs about SBA	Summary of teachers' beliefs
SBA Coordinator	Teacher believes that they are the implementers of a policy, so whatever given to them, they need to implement it without any complaints.	Belief about role as a teacher
	Holistic assessment is seen as good for pupils because it tends to evaluate overall performance of a pupils and not solely on exam.	Belief about young children
Senior teacher	He believes that resources and materials for SBA (now) can be easily found online, so there is no excuse for teachers not to implement SBA. It is also important that teachers must ensure that they are really conducting SBA, not just for the sake of recording the marks for documentation.	Role as a teachers
	SBA is more holistic and well-rounded. It will be beneficial for pupils because they are now assessed in all aspects; in and outside the classroom.	Belief about young children
Kelly	The teachers prefers to teach and prepare her pupils for the exam because she had been teaching Year Six pupils who will sit the National exam, so her main concern to help her pupils to pass the exam.	Belief about exam
Lillian	She believes that exam doesn't guarantee pupils' future. SBA is thus seen as good because assessment can be conducted anytime, anywhere.	Belief about well-rounded pupils
Will	In SBA, the criteria used to assess pupils allows teacher to see pupils' progress in learning because it clearly shows the ability of pupils to master the skills stipulated in the assessment document. Therefore, pupils' performance is not solely depends on the grade they achieve during the exam.	Belief about mastery learning
Neil	To him, exam is very important to determine the school performance. In addition, the District Education Officers also stress the school performance in National exam, and not the SBA.	Belief about exam
Seeva	Teacher thinks that the assessment system is still the same. The only difference is in SBA, they have more works to do. However, he believes that he needs to do whatever changes in education according to what the MOE wants, without fail.	Belief about role as a teacher
	Teacher believes that pupils' achievement can be truly measured based on their marks and grades they obtain during the final exam.	Belief about exam
Betty	She believes that having only summative is good because it takes time to prepare too much materials for conducting SBA. In addition, teacher is also teaching Year Six pupils, so she focuses on preparing her pupils for the exam.	Belief about exam

My classroom observations with Kelly and Betty provided an example of second order engagement. They excessively used the summative test exclusively to train their pupils to answer questions that will be tested in the National exam. These teachers teach at upper primary level and were both testing their pupils on their progress in writing using English Paper 2 (a written test comprising Higher Order Thinking Skills included in the National exam). As for Betty, in another class, she was giving a test with English Paper 2 for the pupils because the same format would be used in the National exam, as they felt that they had to train the upper primary pupils to pass this exam from an early stage. The teachers' assessment practices here clearly show that the purpose of assessment was to judge pupils' achievement. However, they also used English Paper 2 to test pupils' ability to think critically and this involves their communication skills, which are supposed to be sharpened during the teaching and learning activities in classroom. Therefore, instead of conducting a lesson with active participation of pupils in class, the example above illustrates very clearly that the classroom practices were still focused on teaching to the test, which is an example of morphostasis, in Archer's (1995) terms. At the same time, for lower primary pupils, drilling using a sample of questions drawn from the Literacy and Numeracy Screening (LINUS) test. This strategy could also be employed for the purpose of helping the pupils to pass the diagnostic test within the same LINUS test. As one teacher put it:

For lower primary, pupils have to pass the diagnostic test for LINUS (Literacy and Numeracy). The test will be conducted in March and September. We have to make sure that no pupils fail under this programme. I got confused which one is which because I have to teach according to the syllabus also and at the same time doing the LINUS programme to make sure pupils pass the test. Samples of questions are given for practices, so I need to juggle them to let pupils master these skills, not only for the English curriculum standards but also for the LINUS. It's like drilling them to memorize the lesson.

(Seeva)

These excerpts suggest that teachers attempted to embrace the changes, however, the interviews also show that the majority of the teachers hold strong beliefs on the importance of exams, due to the culture of performativity and the performative pressure in Malaysian

education system, and hence, this contributes to them favouring summative assessment. Most of the teachers were trained in an exam-oriented system; therefore they appear to have not fully engaged with the shift in their classroom practices. In addition, for those teachers who are teaching upper primary, the pressure of ensuring that the pupils achieving good marks in their national exams, and in sustaining a high ranking in the school's overall performance, has distorted their engagement with the new policy. For instance, consider the following interview extracts:

I am aware that we are supposed to teach to promote pupils' learning but there is still an exam at the end of primary school and we need to finish the syllabus as well so I still teach and drill the pupils to pass the exam.

(Kelly)

To me, the exam is still the important determinant for the school performance. Moreover, as I am also teaching lower primary and upper primary, the templates used for the assessment are different and I do not really know how to evaluate pupils using the bands up until now. At the same time, we need to have the exam as an indicator for the school performance in the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

(Neil)

The interview data above shows clear evidence that the concept of SBA was not fully implemented in teaching activities due to the challenges of using assessment formatively in an education system that places a high premium on school performance. Therefore, there exists a tension between the outcome-based approach proposed in the new curriculum and the accountability pressures of the national exam.

In addition, several teachers raised different issues that they found challenging in KSSR and provided more evidence of second order engagement. For example, Neil raised the concept of mastery learning, which led him to discuss the issue of classroom management.

Every three months, I have to record the pupils' progress in the system. It means, they need to master certain standards because it is the requirement for the assessment. However, the majority of my pupils are below average

and supposed to go for remedial class. There is no remedial teacher for English. Only Malay Language and Mathematics subject have a specific teacher for remedial and I have to teach them together with the other pupils in class. It means, for the lesson plan, I need have two different objectives with different worksheets. It was suggested during the course that we were supposed to write two different lesson plans for enrichment and remedial pupils. It seems easy but to practice it in a real classroom is almost impossible.

(Neil)

The message gained from the above excerpt shows the tensions regarding time and workload in preparing and implementing the tasks. Therefore, this heavy workload eventually affects the practices of formative assessment for pupils' performance among the teachers.

The emphasis placed on the 4Rs (Reading, wRiting, aRithmetic, and Reasoning) was also raised by one teacher as a further concern in the new curriculum. She distinguishes the old curriculum from the new one in the following excerpt:

The lesson is focused on only one skill and we must include the Higher Order Thinking Skills element in writing the lesson plan. Last time it was only 3Rs (Reading, wRiting and aRithmetic) but now there are 4Rs. This is to train the pupils to be more critical thinkers and the new paper in the UPSR in Year Six will also have more questions about Higher Order thinking Skills. The new curriculum focused on skill and the element of Higher Order thinking Skills must be included in every lesson plan.

(Betty)

Betty appears to understand what is required of her in her teaching approaches to meet the content of the new curriculum. She highlighted the importance of including Higher Order Thinking Skills in SBA. However, during the classroom observations, her classroom discourse was dominated by directed open-ended and closed-ended questions that only required Yes/No responses from the pupils; this strategy thus hampered their ability to practise interactive teaching. It made the lesson appear to focus more on drilling, repeating and copying practices,

rather than allowing pupils to express their own ideas and creativity in using the language. For instance, consider the field notes (see Appendix I for the lesson plan) recorded during my classroom observation with Betty, which are mismatched with Betty's opinion about the new curriculum described in the interview excerpt above.

The lesson Betty conducted was focused on the Listening and Speaking module. The teacher tried to use mostly the English language during the teaching and learning activity. If the pupils responded in Malay, the teacher encouraged them to say the word again in English. The same active pupils responded to the teacher's questions regarding the Superhero from their textbook. However, the questions that the teacher asked mainly required the pupils to answer Yes or No. Some of the pupils sitting at the back of the class seemed to be disengaged because only the academically strong pupils tried to respond in English to questions that needed them to explain more. For the classroom presentation activity for the speaking assessment, the teacher wrote three sentences on the board. The pupils were asked to fill in the blanks by replacing the necessary information according to the superhero that the pupils had chosen as an oral presentation by the pupils. The 'silent' and/or disengaged pupils did not participate in the oral presentation because the time needed to complete the activity ran out.

While the new English KSSR curriculum stresses the incorporation of Higher Order Thinking Skills in the lessons, what was happening in this classroom environment was more focused on drilling, memorisation and repetition, rather than on a communicative approach to teaching the language, which did not challenge the pupils to think and deliver their ideas confidently.

Suggested activities for SBA classroom environment:

1. The teacher may use different questioning techniques to engage more with pupils who seem to be disengaged with the lesson so that they can participate actively during the listening and speaking activity.
2. The teacher may also use checklists and classroom observations during the pair-work presentation to assess pupils' ability to communicate and their engagement during the speaking activities with their peers.

(First classroom observation, Betty)

Pandian (2002), in her study in Malaysian primary schools, reported that the tensions between examinations have over-shadowed the use of the communicative approach in the English curriculum. Teachers mainly drill their pupils using past-year examinations; thus, teaching methods were aligned toward exam preparation rather than to teach the language. Although in KSSR, the integration of Higher Order Thinking Skills is emphasized, because the Malaysian education system is exam-based, the English teaching “inadvertently promotes learning through memorization of chunks of information” (ibid., p. 44), thus neglecting the ability of pupils to think critically. In addition, because the questioning skills used during the communicative tasks seemed to be less challenging, these observations provided evidence of poor incorporation of Higher Order Thinking Skills elements in their teaching practices.

In addition, for this school, pupils are still seated in groups according to their ability although the new curriculum does not encourage this practice. Seeva complained that it is difficult to group the pupils for group work because the academically strong pupils will complete all the tasks without letting the weaker pupils participate.

What I did was I group the pupils according to the level of proficiency. I put these weak pupils in a group at the centre of the class because I do not want them to feel rejected. The weak pupils will be in different group so that it will be much easier for me to facilitate them. This will also ensure that they also do the tasks and not solely depend on the good pupils to finish and do all the group works because KSSR should be learner-centred. From time to time, other pupils from other groups could come easily to help them once they have finished their own tasks.

Seeva demonstrated a good example of hybridization when he grouped the pupils according to their ability. However, he also showed evidence of engaging positively with the policy. He attempted to develop pupils' responsibility for their own learning by seating them in groups according to their level of ability in order to increase their learning autonomy through group work. He also emphasised the use of the target language by encouraging the pupils to interact among their group members during the Language Games activity using English language to encourage more active and independent learning to enable the pupils to explore ideas for their own learning.

In Lillian's case, she seems to misunderstand the philosophical shift between the two curricula. She is perceiving a material obstacle (lack of ICT) when the curriculum is actually calling for a cost-free pedagogical shift. For instance, KSSR recommends the integration of new technology to help pupils to communicate and share knowledge. As Lillian put it:

The biggest change in the new system is that lessons should be interactive. For me that is one of the aspects that distinguish the old curriculum from the new. But we do not even have a computer lab here, and there are only 2 LCD projectors for more than 20 classrooms in this school. Pupils are not really exposed to technology.

Lillian stressed the concept of interactive learning such as using ICT in the classroom. However, the primary English curriculum demands an interactive learner-centred teaching method, emphasising the development of students' creative and critical thinking skills (Ministry of Education, 2010). Lillian clearly shows evidence of her misconception of the underlying pedagogical principles in the English KSSR. In addition, the teaching practices using interactive learning, especially those among the Upper Primary teachers, were very limited. As discussed earlier in this section, teachers' questions are only restricted to Yes/No answers, which further leads the pupils to become more passive and to disengage from the lesson.

5.4.1 Summary

Several issues were revealed in the interviews, based on the teachers' discussions about their understandings on KSSR philosophy and SBA policy. Teachers lack clarity in the underlying SBA concepts, which then leads to their lack of engagement with the policy. In addition, a lack of clarity in their understanding of the difference between formative assessment and summative assessment resulted in very little real change occurring in their classroom practices. Teachers also appear to have lack of clarity in how to use the criteria in the Performance Standards Framework document (Ministry of Education, 2011c) and in using it as a reference for measuring individual pupil achievement. The majority of teachers also hold strong beliefs that examination is the most effective method of assessment. The pressure to improve their KPIs in relation to the national exam results further impedes their engagement with SBA. Teachers in this school view SBA as formative assessment as a result of a lack of

clarity about the SBA concept and its components. Therefore, it seems that teaching was still focused on the test that carries the highest percentage of the overall marks allocated in the national exam results. This observation coincides with the findings of a study conducted by Berry (2011b) in mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, which highlighted that the implementation of AfL is constrained by mindsets that are strongly influenced by the traditional view of examinations.

The classroom observations also indicate that the majority of teachers did not demonstrate a clear understanding of the function of formative assessment to support the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Apart from that, teachers' limited knowledge and understanding of SBA poses another problem. At this juncture, it clearly shows that the lack of clarity about the assessment criteria in the English Curriculum Standard document (Ministry of Education, 2011b) and in the Performance Standards Framework document (Ministry of Education, 2011c) resulted in them having an inadequate understanding of SBA among teachers. At the time this study was conducted, these two documents were separated into two different documents, contributing further to the confusion, a strategy which was also reported as being confusing by the Malaysian Ministry of Education in 2013 (see Section 1.3). However, the two documents were re-drafted and compiled together into one (Standard Curriculum and Assessment Document), which was initially introduced in primary schools in January 2017. This might explain why teachers tend to make their own interpretations and judgements when conducting the assessments; they are not able to see the link between the two documents, therefore they lack the knowledge or skills to assess pupils systematically and meaningfully. Therefore, as suggested by Gardner et al. (2011), it is important for the teachers who lack assessment literacy to have support in professional development in order for the Assessment for Learning (AfL) to be implemented effectively. I will now move on to examine and categorize some of the key factors that help shape and/or hinder the teachers' enactment of the new policy.

5.5 Emerging Morphogenesis/Morphostasis (M/M) themes

Brain et al. (2006) suggest that the success of any education policy depends on how the practitioners, namely teachers, accept and mandate policy and adopt the desired practices. This section will report in detail some of the key factors that that help teachers to engage with the policy and the factors that might distort their enactments.

5.5.1 Factors that support teachers' engagement

a) *Peer collaboration and support*

Although there was lack of continuous training support from the Ministry of Education and the State Education Division, the teachers in this school received some support from the member-led organization called the District English Teachers' Association (DETA) and also from the English Panel in their school. DETA is an existing group of English teachers but had recently shifted its focus on discussing mainly on English KSSR issues and also on collaborating to prepare the assessment and teaching materials to be used in their respective schools. The electronic peer support systems, such as KSSR Online, made it easier for the group to discuss the English KSSR issue among them at any time. As put by the teachers:

I was among the first to attend the KSSR course because I am teaching Year 1. During that time, there were limited online resources available so I had to ask DETA teachers who were also teaching Year One from other schools in order to share the teaching materials and worksheets for assessment.

(Seeva)

I have never attended English KSSR course but I get help from other English teachers in this school for matters regarding this subject. I always refer to the English Head to check my assessment resources and also the relevant English resource books for the pupils. Moreover, resources and materials are available from the KSSR online posted by different teachers, so we can easily get them and amend them according to our pupils' level.

(Neil)

During the English Panel meeting, we will discuss what resource books to buy for our pupils. For other resources and materials for English, I asked from other teachers in this school and the DETA in that district.

(Betty)

Despite the short duration of the KSSR course conducted by the State Education and District Education organisations, the support received from the DETA and the English Panel groups in this school was reported to be a good way to enlighten teachers' uncertainties about the new

assessment system. This network allowed them to exchange ideas, discuss the issues regarding assessment activities and to share assessment materials for the pupils. It also helped to lessen the teachers' burden, especially in preparing the teaching aids and assessment materials that are used to conduct the assessment activities in class. Although the teachers attempted to implement the changes, the section that follows will report some factors that contributed to teachers' lack of engagement with the policy and thus resulted in changes that appeared to be implemented superficially.

5.5.2 Factors that hinder teachers' engagement

I will break this section into two categories: i) Factors in school that influence the changes; and ii) Out-of-school factors that influence the changes.

i) Factors in school that influence the changes

a) *Inexperienced teachers*

Teachers also commented that the courses they have attended were conducted by facilitators who had insufficient knowledge of SBA. However, based on my interview with one of the state facilitators, the materials shared during conducting the workshop with the teachers was exactly the same as what he received during the training. The following extract provides the feedback responding to the course:

The latest course I attended was in April 2015 but the content of the course was mainly the same. There was no hands-on training on doing the assessment. We were only shown the basic contents of the assessment templates and given the copy of the offline assessment templates. The rest of the course mainly focuses on the issues teachers might face in conducting the assessment and the use of the Document Standards as the main reference for teachers to prepare the lesson plan.

(State Facilitator)

It is important to point out that most of the subject teachers who attended a KSSR course and were then required to conduct in-house training in their school are inexperienced in facilitating such courses. There were also no clear guidelines provided for how to carry out the in-house training, thus, it was conducted either in informal discussions or in short briefing sessions. As described by Lillian:

We get the information from the teachers who have attended the course, but it depends on their input during that course. So what they get during that course will be the information we get in school. It is based on their understanding that will be shared with us.

Supported by the interview data from Kelly:

Whatever information they get from the course, they will share with us. But for sure, we will not get the full knowledge because they also attended the course for only 3 days and became two or one hour in-house training in school level.

Therefore, the understanding of policy in this school might be based on teachers' own interpretations, which further led to misinterpretation of the intended policy. As supported by Fiske and Ladd (2004), the chances of crucial information being misinterpreted are high when the intended message is transmitted to the next level. Moreover, there was no hands-on practice on assessment methods provided during the training. The syllabus for the subject was also not available during the course, so they used the current year's syllabus as a guide to write the lesson plan. The cascade training focused more on pedagogical practices rather than on hands-on assessment practices, which affected teachers' understanding of and commitment to their implementation of the new assessments into their classroom practices. As illustrated by these teachers:

The training in writing the lesson plan was clear but the assessment concept is not clear.

(Betty)

All the expectations and suggestions to implement the curriculum during the training, is almost impossible to be practiced in the real classroom. You just can't devote your time only for doing daily assessment when you need to finish the syllabus at the same time.

(Neil)

Teachers also brought out the issue of lack of further/continuing training from the relevant authorities, which would have given teachers feedback and confirmed how far their classroom practices were appropriate. Some teachers claimed that the course they attended was the one and only course they had the opportunity to attend. Therefore, they perceived that they needed more additional training to have a better understanding of what they are expected to do and what they been doing. As indicated by Betty:

I only attended the English KSSR course once but if possible further training should be conducted from time to time so that we know what areas we need to learn to improve our teaching practices and also to check whether we are doing it right or not.

This concern coincides with that of Robinson (2002), who documented that very little or no follow-up support structures were provided for teachers who have to deal with the long-term implementation of a new reform. It will be difficult to implement the changes, in terms of enactment, if there is no continuous training for the teachers. As Fishman et al. (2000) observe in their study on science curriculum reform in the USA, a lack of understanding of the new reform might encourage teachers to carry on with their more familiar practices rather than applying the underlying change in philosophy of teaching and learning.

b) Lack of school facilities

Interviews from the teachers also showed that all the teachers were concerned about having no computer lab in their school. One of the requirements of SBA is to key-in the results offline and to document evidence of the assessment by keeping copies in pupils' profile files. However, the school does not have adequate facilities, such as printers and a suitable room in which to store all of the pupils' files relating to SBA. The classrooms were also very old and very uncondusive to this purpose and were only equipped with basic amenities, such as desks and chairs for pupils and teachers, and a whiteboard. This had hindered the use of technology being incorporated in the teaching and learning process. During the afternoon class, the hot climate affected interactive learning because the warm classroom impeded pupils from being engaged with the lesson. Therefore, much of the learning activities involved answering questions from the Activity Book without any active participation from pupils, a practice that should be promoted, as indicated in the English SBA. For a semi-aided government school,

teachers need to personally bear the cost of printing every pupil's band results to be compiled in their files as evidence. Consider the following interview extract below:

For rural schools, insufficient facilities are the main reason why they cannot implement the policy well. We have to provide almost everything with our own cost. I think the current curriculum needs more improvement.

(Will)

As I have noted above, due to the school's poor physical condition and lack of facilities, teachers see the new curriculum as a burden. As a semi-aided government school, teachers have to prepare all the documentations at their own expense. Compared to other public National Schools, which are adequately equipped with facilities such as computer labs, science rooms, resource centres, and conducive classrooms, this school does not have all these facilities. Therefore, the absence of these facilities seems to be a crucial factor in implementing the changes as it led to the dissatisfaction among the teachers towards SBA.

According to the Head teacher, a mission school has to depend on the fundraising activities of the local community mission association to obtain additional school funding. However, there was evidence of a lack of support from the mission committee, especially from the parents' representative, in order to raise the issue about funding during the committee meetings I attended. This leads to material issues for the school. It also made a huge impact because this school has a lack of facilities and infrastructure and teachers sometimes have to fund teaching activities at their own expense (e.g., photocopying costs) because there is not enough funding in the school budget. The interview data also revealed that teachers have to buy activity books to assist in conducting the assessment of their pupils first, and then parents will later reimburse them because of the limited budget for each subject combined with the large number of pupils.

c) Leadership

Schlenchty (1990) suggests that a supportive head teacher helps to develop clear goals and policies for school performance that will then lead the schools to move in the right direction. However, the interview data revealed that the administration under the previous Head teacher devolved a lot of decision making to the SBA Coordinator. It is important to note the role of leadership here because, at school level, the head teacher and senior assistants would be the first to be given an introductory course to orientate them in KSSR to enable them

to supervise their teachers properly and also to properly cope with the related administrative matters. In the case of this school, there exists strong evidence that the new policy was not clearly communicated by the administrators. Based on the interview data and from my informal conversations with other teachers, there was no strong encouragement from the school administrators about the new curriculum, nor were the rules and requirements made clear. As explained by these teachers:

Last time, the administrator just “*lepas tangan*” (totally put all the responsibility of the implementation of the new policy) onto me. Because SBA was really new during that time, some teachers started to question my credibility because the order/instruction did not come from the administrative of the school but all from me as I was appointed to attend and expected to be responsible with any matters regarding the new curriculum. As for the administrators, they only know how to talk about it but the implementation is nil. **When there was inspection from the District Education, I had to come to the administrator’s office and explained about the implementation because the admin did not know anything about the KSSR.** At least, they should be responsible so that the input is not from me alone but also from the authority so that the other teachers will be more confident about the importance of implementing the new curriculum. I feel upset and threatened because there was no strong encouragement and official rules set from the Head teacher about the implementation of the new curriculum. Everything about the new policy seems to come from me alone and not from any of the school administrators.

(SBA Coordinator)

The problem to comprehend the new curriculum implementation in this school was because, in the last administration, the authority did not really make it compulsory for the teachers to hand in the assessment record. They did remind the staff but there was no black and white rules to ensure all the teachers do the work. There was no checklist whether teachers have submitted the record or not. The Head teacher was always not around and all the responsibilities were given to the teachers. There were no support and effort from the Head teacher regarding the changes. The SBA Coordinator had to handle everything about the new curriculum.

(Senior Teacher)

I know about the new curriculum but there was no pressure from the administration about the changes and I was teaching Upper Primary so I don't really know the new policy until it reaches the third year of the implementation.

(Neil)

Schlenchty (1990) suggests that being given the right directions from the leader will motivate people to implement the change. However, the interview data confirmed that the previous administration did not fulfill the implementation criteria and was ignorant about the change, thus some of the teachers continued to follow the same procedures as they had done in the former curriculum and only started to implement the changes when they had to teach the KSSR subjects. The highlighted section of the interview data in the SBA Coordinator quote above gives a strong sense that a gap exists between the principles of implementation and the reality of it. It also illustrates that school leaders see KSSR as an imposition, rather than a call to make a pedagogical shift. The interview data excerpt from Neil also shows that the school administrators are not seeking a culture change but compliance with policy, which is another good example of morphostasis. Therefore, the absence of a leadership role and appropriate practices to foster teachers' commitment to change had further distorted teachers' engagement with the new policy in this school. As for the new Head teacher, he appears to have a very close relationship with all the staff. During the staff meeting, he chaired and conducted the meeting in a very efficient way, giving chances for all teachers to raise any issues regarding the school. However, as recorded in my field notes, such formal meetings in this school are only conducted if they are initiated by the administrator. Other than that, teachers only have the opportunity to discuss issues regarding the school 'informally' among them. This is also seen as one of the factors that led to teachers' poor engagement with the policy implementation.

d) Workload

The teachers were preoccupied with lots of documentation that needed to be completed in different online applications, which led to the pressure of time constraints. In my classroom observation with Kelly, I noted that, as pupils were busy working in groups for their language art activities, she was also completing some of this documentation on her laptop, and, from time to time, she walked around to check and monitor the pupils. This also happened with Betty, who was entering documentation for the school while the pupils were having their

monthly test. Some teachers felt that the new curriculum had constrained their pedagogy and increased their workloads, therefore distorting their engagement with SBA:

Teaching the English KSSR means I have to prepare two different objectives for my lesson which required me to provide different worksheets for my pupils. Later I will have to record their performance and print them out and if you are teaching different subjects, you need to key in the band and print them out which is an extra burden.

(Neil)

The record and evidence collected during the lower primary was not used at all. It only increased teachers' workload because we have to print all the pupils' record every time we have finished recording it.

(Kelly)

We were asked to compile and keep all the evidence and assessment record for every pupil not only for English subject but for other subjects you are teaching.

(Seeva)

The paperwork in KSSR is burdensome. We need to key-in the marks and put in a file for documentation. Why do we need to have softcopy and hardcopy at the same time?

(Will)

It takes time to prepare assessment for different pupils and to key-in the band to record their performance.

(Betty)

These interview excerpts above indicate that teachers are facing the pressure of time constraints with the preparation, administration and the documentation of the assessment results, and this therefore contributed to teachers' poor engagement with the new curriculum. Although there was very little evidence of teachers' resistance to the new policy, an interview from one teacher who has been working for more than 25 years showed evidence of

‘retreatism’ (Osborn et al., 1997). He seems to comply with the policy, but at the same time the changes in practice had also led him to think about dropping out of the teaching profession altogether. As he explains:

To be honest, I was really enjoying my work as a teacher before. There was no pressure to prepare everything for inspections. Workloads are normal for me but you will not truly enjoy what you are doing if you are preparing it because of the fear of inspection. Sometimes I get stressed out and thinking of retiring earlier.

(Seeva)

The interview excerpts above also clearly show that the threat of inspection from the MOE might lead teachers to attempt to fit the new SBA into the school culture without making any real change in their practices, again, due to the “performativity” (see Section 3.8 in Chapter Three) issues related to the demands of the monitoring system. However, three teachers in this school also demonstrated compliance with the imposed changes. Will perceives the new assessment as a good way to improve teachers’ teaching and pupils’ learning through the mastery learning concept. He was highly engaged with the new policy as he believes that good grade achieved during exam will be useless if the pupils cannot apply it in the real workplace later. The SBA Coordinator and the Senior Teacher see the advantage of continuous learning as a tool to help them to improve their learning and do not perceive it to be an additional burden.

ii) Out-of-school factors that influence the change

a) Poor quality training

The majority of the teachers stated that they have insufficient training and one teacher indicated that they had never attended the English KSSR course since its introduction. Some teachers only came to know about KSSR in the fifth year of its implementation. This is because English KSSR was implemented in stages and is also conducted in stages. Thus, the introductory course was usually attended by the teacher who is teaching the subject for the following year. The teacher who attended the course would then be expected to conduct an in-house training for the other English teachers in their schools. For this school, which has a relatively large number of English teachers, there was only one opportunity to attend the

course. During the first introductory course provided by the State Education Department or District Education Office, the duration of the course was three days, and when it came to the fifth year of its implementation, the duration was shortened to only one day. The reason given for this change was that the introductory course was basically the same and it has been introduced for five years so teachers were expected to already know and understand the policy and it was assumed that teachers might have better knowledge of the policy compared to the first few years of its implementation. Some examples of teachers' responses are as follows:

When I attended the course, we were given the same input that we had from the in-house training in school. All the contents from the slide are just the same. The focus of the course was to write the lesson plan in the new way of writing it as we need to know how to use the Content and Learning Standards in our lesson plan.

(Kelly)

I attended the course for different subjects. All the input given was the same. The only difference is the session on writing the lesson plan which focuses on the subject you are attending. Every subject has a different way of writing the lesson.

(Neil)

b) Ministry of Education (MOE) pressure

Ahmad (2004) reported that the education system in Malaysia is very exam-oriented and school effectiveness is rigidly measured by pupils' performances in national examinations. Schools are judged to be successful by the number of pupils passing public examinations. The results of the performance of pupils and individual schools are compared among district, state, and national norms and by their achievement in previous years (Bajunid, 1995) and are made public and reported by mass media. As mentioned by the SBA Coordinator:

Our school is ranked as a low achievement school based on the previous National exam. So I have to make sure that all teachers do their tasks. This is because, when I attended any meeting regarding the implementation, the Education Officer will have to display the names of the school which have not completed the online templates. I felt obliged to maintain the reputation of the school. Moreover I have been appointed by the school to represent the school for anything to do with the new curriculum. Furthermore, during the

introductory course, we were told that the implementation of the SBA is a must and the filing and documentation need to be prepared because there will be an inspection from the MOE.

The culture of judging the schools based on outcome and performance has led to a focus being placed on performativity, which has resulted in “the exercise of school inspection” (Lonsdale and Parsons, 1998, p. 110, cited in Perryman, 2006, p. 147). The SBA Coordinator further described that, during the early stage of SBA implementation, all of the staff were making an effort to implement and follow the new policy as intended by the MOE because if they did not implement it, they would be “punished.” This situation describes the panoptic performativity regime in which the threat of inspection by the MOE leads to “teachers performing in ways dictated by the discourse of inspection in order to escape the regime” (Perryman, 2006, p. 148). The threat of punishment indicates that the school might “change their practices to conform to what they think the inspectors inspect” (Earley, 1998, p. 172), which further leads to only a short-term or superficial change that requires that the teachers “produce measurable and ‘improving’ outputs and performances, what is important is what works” (Ball, 2003, p. 222).

Being ranked as one of the low academic achievement schools in its district in Sabah, the school was often visited by the District Education Officers in order to help the school to come up with various programmes to improve their school KPIs during the current end-of-year public exam for Year 6. During my four-week stay in this school, officials from the District Education office visited, emphasising the poor performance of the school in the external National Examinations. This placed great pressure on the teachers who are teaching Year 6, because, while they must cope with the stress of an official visit, they are also struggling to finish the syllabus and to drill the pupils to pass the exam subject as well. It seems that they are not only being judged on performance, but also on compliance. I should mention that teachers did attempt to implement the changes by developing their practices within the new system, but they were also under pressure to improve their school performance. Teachers were coming under pressure, not only from their own desire to do their best for the children, but in some cases, from the children themselves, from the parents, and from the school policy, and the need to protect the reputation of the school, when the league tables of results were published (Osborn et al., 1997). As described by Kelly:

The first product of the reform is this year's Year 6 pupils. There is a new paper for English which was just introduced early this year, so my main focus is to teach the pupils to pass the exam and to improve the KPI for this school. Results for the school and the average grade of subject (GPMP) are displayed during the District English Panel meeting with other schools' representatives in this division. They (MOE) ranked the school based on the performance from the previous exam and it was like if the school's GPS and KPI are low, the blame is on the teachers who teach the subject. For them, they do not want to hear the excuse that the pupils are indeed weak (in the case of our school we have the Special Education Class which means the pupils who were diagnosed by doctors are all there) but still they need to sit for the National Exam together with the pupils from the 'normal' class. But they (MOE) do not see that fact, some were saying like it's impossible for the pupils to only learn A, B, C in a year ... which means, for them if the pupils fail, it's because the teacher is not good enough. In fact, we have so many other administrative work to do and not just teaching. If our task is at least 70 percent for teaching only ... yeah it might be worth saying that.

The teachers were under pressure to achieve the KPIs, which is considered to be the ultimate indicator of school performance, as their school is listed as one of the low performing schools in its district, which subsequently places demands on the teachers to teach the pupils to pass the National exam. The interview excerpts above also indicate that the MOE still tends to emphasise these elements and stresses the importance of achieving high scores in exams, despite the learning difficulties faced by the pupils. Therefore, the external pressures in producing excellent academic results is seen as a morphostasis factor, in which it becomes a barrier for teachers to fully engage with the new assessment, especially in relation to formative assessment, which focuses on pupils' learning progress.

c) *Parental engagement*

According to the participating teachers, parents have been briefed about the changes to the assessment system but they still want to see the rankings to indicate the level of performance of their child in comparison with other pupils. The majority of the parents also still have a strong belief that written exams are still the best indicator to measure their children's

performance because, for them, it represents and shows pupils' understanding of the lessons they have learnt in school. This is also due to the fact that, if they know their children's ranking in relation to their classmates, they will be able to determine their children's level of performance in comparison with other classes.

For the teachers, they do not see the point of printing the results for the formative assessment to be given to the parents because the parents do not understand the use of the bands. As illustrated by the SBA Coordinator:

We have conducted a meeting with parents to inform them about the change in the curriculum. We also informed them about the new assessment and the school provides the band report and Report Card during the Open Day, but they prefer to have the Report Card to check their children's performance and achievement in class.

In addition, for this school, teachers have to do the printing at their own expense. However, as the Report Card is the more preferred method of informing the pupils' academic progress, summative results become the main focus for the teachers to meet the demands from the parents. Because the priority is more on exams, it also illustrated how the results of SBA might be prepared only for the purpose of school inspection; as an indication that the school is implementing the mandated policy. Therefore, there is an entrenched cultural attachment to high-stakes tests which militates against effective SBA implementation.

d) Lack of support from home

Pupils from this school generally came from low to middle socioeconomic backgrounds. Some pupils come from families whose parents are divorced and who also reside in the mission hostel monitored by nuns. Two teachers raised the issue of experiencing difficulties in teaching children with this family background. Some parents are not cooperative in monitoring their children at home. They are also not concerned whether their pupils attend school or not. Besides the pressure to produce excellent examination results, further pressure also comes from the characteristics of the pupils who come from a very low socioeconomic group and those who have difficult home lives, which may also contribute to their school being ranked as one of the lower academic achievement schools in the state of Sabah.

It's problematic especially when we need to do the assessment because when we finish the topic, we need to evaluate the pupils. But if they are absent, it will be difficult to do the assessment for the next day because we have another module to finish which needs another assessment for them.

(Betty)

Johnson (1999, cited in Perryman, 2006, p. 151) stresses that the social background of the students is very important, for example, "if the majority of students in a school come from families in which three generations have been unemployed, it is unrealistic to expect those children to value the life chances that the education can bring." This statement is true in the context of this school. As one teacher put it:

Some parents in this school do not really care about their children. They did not appear to check and monitor their children's school works at home. For example, when the lesson is focusing on Language Arts, some pupils come with nothing and it will affect the smoothness of the lesson. Homework given is also not properly done at home. It's like everything is depend on the teacher alone. They totally put all the responsibility for their children's performance on us.

(Seeva)

From Seeva's interview excerpts, it seems as though parents in this this school are not really cooperating with the teachers to help improve their children's academic performance. However, as discussed earlier in this chapter, most pupils in this school have a difficult home life. Simon's (2017) study about the interactions of parents and primary school teachers in Malaysia reported that the majority of parents are not taking the initiative in participating with the school's educational programme because, most of the time, schools will only contact the parents when their children experience disciplinary problems or have learning difficulties. Simon (2017) also observed that parents are not interested in participating in any of the school programmes because of their perception of the teachers' attitudes, for example, they assume that the teacher is ignorant about the pupils' learning environment at home. However, at the same time, teachers are already preoccupied with numerous different tasks in school. Therefore, no matter how much effort the teachers put in to helping the pupils in their

learning, pupils' learning will not improve if parents do not really cooperate with the school. Nevertheless, as further suggested by Simon (2017), promoting good communication between teachers and parents will eventually help to increase their children's academic achievement and to reduce discipline problems, such as truancy, among the pupils.

5.6 Conclusion

The overall findings from this school suggest a lack of engagement with SBA by the teachers. Some teachers' practices demonstrate good examples of morphostasis and hybridization, but very little evidence of change. This is a result of a hybridized form of teaching, drawing on both the old and the new assessment practices. Teachers do not appear to understand the SBA concept and the different functions of formative and summative assessment. Based on the above discussions, the findings show that, although the teachers acknowledge the significance of SBA and that they have attempted to change their teaching approach, but there is also some evidence to support that this school did not indicate that there has been a fundamental change in teachers' classroom practices. There is a conflict between teachers' understanding of the SBA and the intended pedagogical principles of the new KSSR and the way in which it has been implemented. The levels of policy engagement were varied among all the eight participating teachers. The school's overbearing accountability mechanisms seems to be the main factor that distorts policy engagement, especially among upper primary teachers. However, other teachers were strongly influenced by the specific context of the school, for instance, a lack of facilities that led to poor enactment of SBA. Although the teachers' collaboration groups did contribute positively to the curriculum changes, the more negative factors outweighed these efforts and failed to support the policy implementation, and the external pressure for school improvement in this school, labelled as a low performing school, the findings from this school also give the impression that the majority of the teachers might only adopt the policy according to their own values in response to the changes. Therefore, the data give a strong sense that changes in this school have only been adopted, implemented and slotted in without commencing any real changes or real engagement with the policy. The following chapter will present the second case study school in detail. The data from the two case study schools will then be compared in Chapter Seven.

CHAPTER SIX

CASE STUDY TWO: SARAYO PRIMARY SCHOOL

6.1 Introduction

I will start this chapter by describing the case study school in detail, the policy implementation, and the emerging practices at both the administrative and teachers' levels. Thereafter, I will report the participants' deeper understandings of KSSR philosophy and SBA policy. The final section will then present the emerging Morphogenesis/ Morphostasis (M/M) factors that are categorized into two sections; factors that help teachers' engagement, and factors that hinder their enactment with the policy.

6.2 The school

The second case study was conducted in a primary school located in a rural area in the state of Sabah, Malaysia. This is a government school which is fully maintained by the MOE. Built in 1950s, this school looks worn, with some of the classrooms being made of wood, but is very well-maintained, and with a few cabin classrooms provided by the MOE. The administration office and the staff room are located on the same floor. The school is also equipped with a school canteen, library, assembly hall, computer lab, internet access, and teachers' flats. It is located in the heart of a small village, approximately 16 kilometres from the nearest town. This school shares a similar vision and mission to that espoused by MOE Malaysia; to realize the full potential of the individual and fulfil the aspirations of the nation. The MOE's vision and mission statement was clearly displayed directly in front of the entrance gate of the school and also at the administration office. This gives the impression that school performance and excellence is one of the main focuses for this school. Under the School Performance Index (SPIn), explained earlier in Chapter 2, the vision and mission of the school must be "publicised to everyone at the school" (Othman and Rauf, 2009, p. 512), as this forms one of the criteria under leadership category that is used to evaluate a school's performance in Malaysian schools.

This school comprises more than 150 pupils and more than 10 teachers. The majority of the teachers and pupils in this school come from the indigenous ethnic groups in Sabah. The pupils are drawn from lower to middle socio-economic backgrounds, where the majority of the

parents are farmers. Most of the teaching staff have been teaching in this school for more than 15 years. The length of teaching service appears to be a strong determinant for promoting a friendly environment in this school; pupils are respectful, and teachers are very approachable for pupils. A close relationship exists among the whole school community; this was clearly demonstrated in the way that they greeted each other, both in and outside the school compound.

The results published by the District Education Department show that this school was ranked as one of the top ten in their passing rate with an Average School Grades (GPS) of below 2.0, which is considered to indicate that this is a ‘good’ school with the potential of becoming a ‘high performing’ school (Ministry of Education, 2013). The school has very few discipline problems. It is also active in different co-curricular activities, such as sports, choral speaking, science innovation, and also sports, and has won awards and certificates at both district and state level. Table 6.1 shows a summary of the participating teachers in this school.

Table 6.1 Summary of research participants

Background Aspect	3 Research Participants
Gender	
Male	1
Female	2
Age Range	
27–37	2
38–48	1
49–59	-
Qualification	
Diploma	-
Bachelor	3
Master	-
Teaching Option	
English	2
Others	1
Teaching Experience	
Less than 10 years	1
10 – 25 years	2
26 – 40 years	-
English Language teaching experience	
Less than 10 years	1
10 – 20 years	1
20 – 30 years	1

6.3 Policy Implementation and emerging practices

This section will examine the policy implementation at the administrative level along with the emerging practices relating to the enactment of KSSR in terms of pedagogy and assessment.

6.3.1 Administrative level

The organization chart and the teachers' timetable are displayed on the wall inside the staff room and also in the administration office. The chart showed the flow of the SBA implementation process from the individual education authorities to each subject Head in the school. The wall in the staff room was fully used as an information centre where all of the important information relating to the school was posted. This school appears to regard the new curriculum as being very important; they display all aspects of the changes mandated by the policy to be easily seen, not only by the administrators and teachers, but by everyone who comes to this school. Therefore, this indicates that the potential to miss any recent information about the policy is unlikely to happen. It also provides a clear picture that every member of the school staff knows their own roles and responsibilities for the implementation of the new policy. It also provides evidence of the school's obligation to display the organization chart, which is one of the criteria stipulated in the leadership dimension under the SPIn measurement.

All pupils were registered in the School-Based Assessment Management System (SBAMS) for SBA and in the School Exam Analysis System (SEAS) for internal exams, as required by the MOE. The results of SBA are recorded offline in SBAMS, four times a year. Because this small school has a small number of teachers, the English Head also holds the role of the SBA Coordinator. The teaching timetable in this school also confirms the change in time allocation to teach English for 300 minutes per week for both lower primary and upper primary, according to the KSSR requirement. It is interesting to note that the main timetable for the whole school was not only displayed on the wall of the administration office and staff room, but also in every classroom. This demonstrates that, for this school, teaching and learning are the highest priority, so the chance of seeing any classrooms unattended is rare. For instance, my field notes reported one incidence where the Deputy Head teacher went into the staff room and informed the teachers that there was no teacher in the Year 4 class. She appeared to know who was supposed to be in that class, but she did not directly confront that particular teacher. This example provides an indication that the administrators do not want to be seen as 'bossy',

but as a leader, as the Head teacher attempted to infuse within the school culture. In addition, most of the time I was the only one in the staff room because the teachers spent all of their time in the classroom, or devoted their time to recording other school documentation or marking their pupils' work.

6.3.2 Teachers' School-Based Assessment (SBA) and pedagogical practices

Similar to the first school, each teacher in this school has two files in which they store the record of their pupils' progress in SBA and the pupils' achievement in summative assessment (internal exams). A summary of the overall performance is also prepared by each subject teacher and is given to the subject Heads, and later all of the subject Heads send a copy of the summaries of the pupils' assessment records to be compiled by the SBA Coordinator. However, for this school, there is a special room where the files and pupils' assessment records specific to SBA are kept. The rationale for adopting this practice was to make it easier for the administrator to check the file at any time and also for easy reference when there is an inspection from the District Education or State Education Departments. This school is regarded as 'sekolah contoh' or a school acknowledged by the District Education Office to act as an exemplar for the systematic filing system they developed to document assessment according to the KSSR. Every teacher has permission to access the KSSR file room; therefore, each teacher can update the KSSR document at any time, without having to wait for the deadline to submit marks for the SBA.

Based on the curriculum language used by teachers in the interview data below, it can be inferred that teachers appear to be engaged with the new assessment system.

The assessment in KSSR is continuous and every time after finishing a topic, pupils will be assessed.

(Farah)

In KSSR, assessment is done continuously and we need to record it four times in a year. The lesson plan is also more focused and pupils will be assessed according to the skills which are already stated in the textbook.

(Jaden)

The assessment in the new curriculum is using a band whereas the previous one is using grades. It required us to assess our pupils in a daily basis.

(Wahid)

It is interesting to note that none of the teachers has mentioned that the SBA employs both formative and summative assessment in promoting pupils' learning and to gauge and enhance pupils' performance. They did talk about the distinction between the two assessments, but the interview data indicate that they did not seem to see the purpose and the outcome that these formative assessments have on pupils' learning. For example, Farah seemed to perceive that the new assessment system is simply used to record pupils' performance rather than to help improve their future learning. This shows a lack of understanding about the English KSSR and its relation to SBA, and also a lack of clarity on the Performance Standards Framework document (Ministry of Education, 2011c) that is used as a reference to assess pupils. However, as mentioned earlier in Section 1.3, these two documents were prepared by different government bodies, and the training programmes relating to the use of these two documents were also conducted separately. This resulted in creating confusion about how the policy documents are related. The interview extract from Wahid above indicates his misconception about KSSR and SBA, upholding the principle that, in KSSR, there is only one form of assessment, and that is formative assessment. Wahid seems to have a lack of clarity about the underlying principles of English KSSR and the concept of SBA and its relation to English KSSR. The English KSSR document outlined the content standards and learning standards in the English KSSR document. The SBA document outlined the Performance Standards, and is used as a reference for teachers to assess pupils according to criteria stipulated in the English KSSR document. Again, this confusion derived from the use of the two separate documents issued by the Ministry of Education itself, and the poor dissemination strategy used in cascading the training regarding the two policy documents.

Teachers also see the new curriculum as effecting a change in their pedagogical practices. They perceived the aspects of "single-skill focus" and "using technology" as being important concepts in the new curriculum.

In the new curriculum, we need to teach the skill according to the learning standards stated in the textbook. When we write the lesson plan, we refer to the Content Standards and the Learning Standards. The former curriculum

used the term Learning Outcomes. It's almost the same but they change the term and, for the lesson, we only need to write one skill only which is more focused.

(Jaden)

The use of technology in the teaching and learning process is one of the important criteria in the new curriculum.

(Wahid)

In addition, all the participating teachers wrote lesson plans according to the standards stipulated in the KSSR requirements. For the English subject, for instance, the lesson plan should contain all the important elements, such as the theme, topic, focus of the lesson, learning standards, content standards, list of teaching aids, and added value in that lesson, the strategy of conducting the lesson, and their reflections at the end of the lesson. As stated by the Head teacher regarding the implementation of KSSR in her school:

I assume all the teachers understand the new policy. The KSSR file is complete and up-to-date and the way they write the lesson plan is like what is required by the new policy. Every subject has a slightly different way of writing the lesson plan.

(Head teacher)

KSSR brought changes to the teaching practices, not only for the English curriculum, but also for other subjects. The interview extracts above indicate that the Head teacher knows about the pedagogical changes necessary for all subjects. The Head teacher emphasised that she normally checked the lesson plans for every teacher, focusing on how they met the requirement for the way in which they wrote the lesson plans, as every subject has slightly different requirements in the KSSR. All teachers have to submit their lesson plans on Friday each week to be checked and signed by the administrator, so normally the Head teacher will walk around the school at some point during the following week to listen for whether the teachers conducted their lessons in accordance with what has been written in their lesson plans. According to the Head teacher, she did not enter the class for these observations because she thought that the teachers might only prepare the lesson plans because of the fear

of observation. She further added that, instead of wanting to be seen as a ‘boss’, she tried to act more as a leader, which meant that she would be the one who does the bulk of the work. Subsequently, she explained, the staff would eventually complete the tasks, not because they were asked to do them, but because their compliance would be derived from their own willingness to fit in with their school culture. However, this also indicates that there seems to be a tension between the collegial language she uses and the surveillance-oriented approach she takes in enforcing teachers in her school to implement the new curriculum. More evidence of this observation is presented in the following paragraphs.

The Head teacher was very proactive about the imposed changes in KSSR and showed her full support for SBA. For instance, the MOE has set specific KPIs to be achieved by all schools in the National exam and also targeted this school as a potential candidate for the Excellent School Award. However, instead of continuing with the culture of performativity, especially in academic performance, the Head teacher’s role here is seen as being very important in leading teachers to find positive motivation for their engagement with the new policy by not focusing on the school performance in the National exam. Adopting this strategy reduces the risk of stress for the teachers to perform well in preparing their pupils for the National exams. As the Head teacher explained:

Our school is targeted for higher KPI for this year and we were asked to prepare what kind of school programme to be carried out in order to achieve the target. However, as I said, I trust my teachers. I do not want to make them stress because of the KPI target. I’ve seen that in previous years, when we started the programme for excellence very early, teachers were under pressure and pupils were also tired. During the examination, pupils were seen as having lack of enthusiasm and only waiting to finish the exam. As a result, our results were among the lowest in the district. However, it gradually improved every year and this is not because of the programme but because we started to emphasize more on the enjoyment of teaching for the teachers and learning for the pupils.

The relationship between the Head teacher and the teachers was based on trust. The interview excerpt above indicates that the Head teacher might not focus only on the pupils’ academic performance, but also, that there is an acknowledgement at the same time that the KPIs must

be achieved. She therefore tried to create a stress-free school environment within which the teachers are able to work with enjoyment, thereby contributing to a positive teaching and learning context, and eventually leading to improvement in the school's performance. The interview with the Head teacher also confirmed her commitment to the imposed curriculum change and she demonstrated her full support for the change. My field notes also recorded that the rest of the school staff seemed to be enthusiastic and committed to the change. However, the different opinions expressed about the assessment aspect provides a sense that some teachers' existing practices and beliefs do not match the assessment aspect in the new curriculum. This clearly shows that the dictatorial practices of the Head teacher in enforcing KSSR to be effectively implemented in her school and the fact that teachers know they are being observed all the time by the administrators had led teachers to behave in ways that resemble what Perryman (2006) terms "panoptic performativity." The following section will further examine these issues, taking into account the two levels of teachers' engagement with the new policy, as proposed by Priestley and Minty (2013).

6.4 Teachers' Understanding of KSSR Philosophy and SBA Policy

I will first summarize teachers' understanding of KSSR policy and SBA policy to relate to their levels of engagement with the new curriculum.

Table 6.2 Summary of teachers' understanding of KSSR policy and SBA policy

Participants	Teachers' understanding of	
	KSSR Policy	SBA Policy
Head teacher	Continuous assessment	Formative and summative
Jaden	Useful to see pupils' progress in learning	Holistic but still focus on exam
Wahid	Focus on mastery learning	Holistic, using bands instead of grade
Farah	Continuous assessment, need to assess the pupils when finish the topic.	No exam

Despite having evidence that the intended KSSR environment was clearly seen in this school, Table 6.2 above does not indicate that teachers fully understood the concept of KSSR and SBA (see Appendix B for the full interview schedule). Only the Head teacher demonstrated an understanding about SBA and mentioned the components constituting SBA, whereas the others seem to think that SBA comprises only formative assessment. The Head teacher never attended any KSSR training, so it is crucial to point out that the KSSR training might be poorly communicated during the course. However, it is also worth considering whether there was a change in the Head teacher's own practices, because, at the same time, she was also receiving pressure from the Ministry of Education to implement the KSSR/SBA in her school. The following interview excerpt demonstrates considerable evidence that teachers only achieved surface engagement with the policy. The interview indicates that this teacher lacked sufficient understanding of SBA:

I do not see the rationale for using two things (grade and band) at the same time. It's because, in the end, the band is only for documentation. According to the course I attended recently, the record for the formative assessment for Year 1 to Year 5 will be only kept as a record for the school. Only Year 6 pupils will have to take the record to secondary school later. It is too complicated to use two things at the same time. Why don't we focus on only one? There is no logic behind recording and compiling the band because in the end, they are not used at all.

(Jaden)

As explained in Chapter One, the MOE circular letter (KP.LP.003.07.14(3)) stated that there are two components assessed in SBA; the academic (central assessment and school assessment) and the non-academic (psychometrics, and assessment of physical activities, sports and co-curriculum), with a weighting a ratio of 40:60, respectively, for school assessment and central assessment. However, the interview data obtained from Jaden reveals that she conflates SBA with formative assessment. The data presented in Table 6.2 also provide evidence that these teachers, except the Head teacher, did not appear to have any clarity in their understanding of the components that constitute SBA. It also illustrates how teachers seemed to think that SBA comprises only formative assessment and that meant that the pupils no longer need to sit exams. The interview extracts presented above convey a strong

sense that teachers might still focus on the component that carries more marks, that is, the National exam. Some of this misunderstanding might be attributed to the different methods of documentation and the reporting of assessments, for instance, teachers referred to SBA as formative assessment that is to be recorded in School Based Management System (SBMS) and indicated that the summative test is recorded in School Exam Analysis System (SAPS). This might also be a result of the way in which the KSSR was implemented in stages. For instance, when the KSSR was implemented for Year One pupils in 2011, the Year Two to Year Six pupils were still using the former curriculum (KBSR). The SAPS application was used to record pupils' marks in internal exams in the former curriculum. The understanding that this information is gathered and reported separately supports the evidence of teachers' lack of understanding of the concept of SBA. For Jaden, there was clear evidence that she monitored her pupils' learning progress; she kept a record of her pupils' band achievement according to the skills in the textbook, to check whether they had passed the learning standard. However, the interview data above also indicate that she might cope with these requirements by using the strategy of 'incorporation' (Osborn et al., 1997); conducting formative assessment without seeing the purpose of this assessment – an element that is embedded in their teaching and learning practice due to the 'managerial role' that assessment plays (Black and Wiliam, 1998).

Existing literature on formative assessment suggests that continuous assessment practices encourage pupils to learn on an on-going basis, but it seems that the different purposes of formative assessment overlap with the pressure of preparing students for the National exam at the end of Year 6. The aim of SBA to be holistic seems to conflict with the demands stipulated by the MOE, and the expectation that schools must perform well in the National exam further results in confusion and an inability of teachers to understand the rationale for using SBA. Teachers' beliefs might contribute to different teachers' practices in this school. For example, each participant's beliefs are summarised in Table 6.3 below.

Table 6.3 Teachers' beliefs

Participants	Teachers' beliefs about SBA	Summary of teachers' beliefs
Jaden	Teacher believes that she is the transmitter of knowledge. She need to carry out whatever tasks and roles given to her regarding KSSR and SBA.	Belief about role as a teacher
	Teacher also believes that teaching is not simply based on what the syllabus ask them to deliver but she needs to make sure that she helps to prepare her pupils with real-life lesson which means the pupils will be able to apply the knowledge in their lives.	Belief about pupils' wellbeing
Wahid	He believes that in order to teach, he need to learn as well. Despite the increased workload in SBA, he still needs to make sure that he carries his responsibility in teaching and doing administrative tasks diligently.	Belief about role a s a teacher
	This teacher concerns about what the pupils learn in school and apply the knowledge in future. He also believes that grade in exams will not represent somebody's future.	Belief about pupils' wellbeing
Farah	She believes that pupils' performance and achievement can be measured by looking at their scores in final exams. But in SBA, if pupils are assessed every day, they will only remember what they have learnt for a short term only.	Belief about exam
	She used to be the only English teacher in her former school. Therefore, she believes that she was the one who is responsible in improving the Average Subject Grade for English subject in National exam. Her aims for teaching was then focused on improving pupils' grade for English every year by aiming for more A's in English subject.	Self-appraisal based on pupils' results

The interview extracts from Farah promotes the sense that she is resistant to the changes, as she did not appear to understand the concept of SBA. As she explains:

I do not see the relevance of assessing pupils every day because at the same time they still have to sit for an exam. Moreover, it is impossible to do assessment every day because teachers have lots of things to do and also need to attend courses. If the policy continues, I hope there will still be an exam, not fully abolish the exam.

The perception that SBA consists only of formative assessment, and the weighting ratio of 60 percent for National exam, seems to extinguish her engagement with the assessment for learning practices. Farah has been teaching for more than 20 years and she only recently moved to this school. Her strong preference for exams derived from her experience in her former school, which focused on school performance. Moreover, she had previously only taught English to Year 6 pupils, where the aim is to achieve a higher percentage for the school's passing rate in the National exam, and thus she was under pressure to teach to the test (Perryman et al., 2011). This might explain why she seemed to be less engaged with the new policy. Moreover, as Kennedy (1996) suggests, teachers who were accustomed to the old system need plenty of time to adapt to the change, especially in learning new techniques. Although in this school, Farah is not teaching Year 6 pupils, my observation data confirmed that she was still drilling the pupils for the upcoming exam.

However, Jaden and Wahid show evidence of having engaged positively with SBA, despite their lack of understanding of the concept of SBA itself. Wahid sees SBA as a method of evaluating pupils in different aspects as they all have different abilities and it would not be fair to label them only by looking at the grades they obtained at the end of the semester. He truly believes that by doing different types of assessment activities in class, dealing with different pupils' abilities and needs, taught him to improve his teaching strategies. In my classroom observations with him, Wahid used his laptop as his main teaching aid in encouraging pupils to learn and to participate actively during the lesson. He did not have any prior experience of teaching the former curriculum for English, and he started teaching using the new English KSSR, which highlights the use of formative assessment. His late arrival to teaching English might also support his positive engagement with the policy. This finding is aligned with those of a study conducted by Smith (2018) with Scottish history teachers, suggesting that those teachers who were trained after the introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) in 2010 were reported to have more understanding of the purpose of history education within the curriculum document than those qualified teachers who were teaching before this time. In addition, Wahid believed that his professional training for the Literacy and Numeracy Screening programme (LINUS) and holding the post as District LINUS Coordinator was helped to gauge his positive enactment of the new policy. Wahid also believes that, in order to teach, pupils need to understand rather than memorise. This belief was clearly shown in one of his classes when he asked the pupils to use actions to represent the lyrics of a song or to

imitate the movement of animals in order to ensure that pupils not only memorize the vocabulary, but also that they know and understand those vocabularies. He also encouraged pupils to explain the vocabulary based on how or what the item resembles, rather than to say the corresponding word in Malay. He had attended a KSSR training session, which he referred to as being very poor; however, the beliefs he holds support his enactment with the change. Below is his response regarding the KSSR course;

I was teaching English for only two years. When I first attended the English KSSR course at state level, the facilitators skipped most of the topic because, according to them, they are all the same and teachers are assumed to know the aspects already. They did not consider the fact that some of the teachers are not trained to teach English, so those things that have been skipped during the course are important for us to know. Some of us attended the course for the first time. Instead of explaining or responding to our questions, they (the facilitators) were like putting the blame for us for being ignorant about things which we do not understand. The rationale was, it was all the same and teachers should know because it was implemented more than 5 years already. They should at least explain for it was supposed to be in the slot of the course and not condemning us because we know nothing about the issues.

Jaden, who attended the first English KSSR course, was the English Head and also the SBA Coordinator in this school. The experience of teaching and holding the role as Head of the English Panel for more than ten years was seen as an advantage: there was not a big problem in cascading the in-house training in her school. There is a sense here that this teacher also demonstrated beliefs about her role as a teacher, such as her responsibility in transmitting knowledge to other staff in her school. This was clearly reported in the interview data with Wahid, who stated that the help he received from the English Head had allowed him to shape his understanding in conducting assessments in real classroom practices. Jaden's engagement with the policy is also derived from her past experiences of school inspections from the MOE, which she referred to as stressful, but which eventually helped her and the school to perform better. This is evident in her description of the way in which the MOE promoted the expected

teaching principles, describing how they would be implemented “by hook or by crook”, which Jaden further explained in her own words:

They (MOE) use the term ‘by hook or by crook’ every time we attended a course which, in the context of a civil servant, there is no option, but we have to do without any excuse. I was so used (and immune) to this term and it becomes the only thing I remember which then slowly becomes my principles [...] but I still make sure that my pupils get what they are supposed to get and my role is to prepare them for the real life lesson.

It seems that there is a sense that teachers must comply with the policy because of the school inspection. It also indicates that the MOE is more concerned with ‘forcing’ schools to accept the policy, than it is in schools supporting the policy. The evidence that this school became one of the best performing schools in its division was based on the previous National exam result and the fact that the school was regarded as ‘school by example’ for their systematic method of filing KSSR records also indicates that teachers in this school need to ‘maintain’ their performativity because they are not only judged based on their compliance but also on the school’s performance. I will expand on this issue in Section 6.5.1 of this chapter.

I will now turn to examine whether the teachers have obtained a deep understanding of the policy in order to be fully engaged with the changes. From the above discussion, the main issue raised by the teachers about the new curriculum was related to the concept of assessment. For instance, Farah seemed to show her reluctance to engage in SBA in her earlier interview extracts. However, in her following interview extracts, she also seems to be aware of the pedagogical changes in KSSR:

In KSSR, the lesson plans are more focused to only one skill. If we are teaching Grammar, we focus on Grammar only. So the learning objectives are focused on skills of Grammar. For me I will follow the syllabus of the textbook. Let’s say on Monday, you teach writing skill, on Tuesday teach Reading skill and so on. In the former curriculum, we integrate the skills in one lesson for example teaching reading and grammar in the same lesson. Language Art is a new theme added up in the new English KSSR.

(Farah)

Nevertheless, in second order engagement, the evidence from my field notes during the classroom observations was reported to be more problematic; Farah showed great evidence of her resistance in her pedagogical practices in relation to the assessment change.

First classroom observation:

The teacher assigned the pupils to do writing activity, which was sentence construction based on the pictures. She repeatedly reminded the pupils to better do their work as they will have an upcoming monthly test soon. The teacher is training the pupils to answer the test by giving a set of exam question/exercise for English Paper Two in national exam. There was no pupil-centred learning going on because the one-hour lesson was fully used for drilling.

Second classroom observation:

In the same classroom, the teacher asked the pupils to do another writing exercise specifically for the Section A: Sentence Construction for English Language, Paper 2. Teacher told the pupils that based on the previous exercise they have submitted, they still need to improve their writing. There was no teaching and learning activity, or feedback given based on the previous worksheets. Pupils were only answering another set of exam questions.

The first classroom observation shows excessive use of teacher assessment for summative purposes. However, from Farah's first interview excerpt, she clearly holds a strong belief in exams. Therefore, her strong beliefs in favour of exams distort her enactment of the new assessment system.

In section 6.3.2, Jaden mentioned the aspects of "single-skill focus" in the new curriculum. She seems to understand that the integration of skills is exploited strategically to enhance pupils' development of specific language skills, as described in the content and learning standards in the modular approach in the English KSSR curriculum. Below is her response about her understanding of the "single-skill focus" concept;

We normally write only one skill in the lesson plan which I found much easier because we do not have to write much in the Learning Standards. If let's say we are teaching Writing, we will focus on writing skill only and choose the specification from the Learning Standard which is much easier in terms of achieving the objectives of the lesson.

(Jaden)

My classroom observation with Jaden also confirmed her engagement with SBA. She attempted to use peer-assessment as part of collaborative learning in her classroom learning activity. For instance, in her lesson on listening and speaking activity, she encouraged the pupils in groups of three to present their tasks orally and, instead of correcting the pupils, other pupils had to decide whether their answer was correct. If the answer is wrong, she motivated them by saying "Good try" and encouraged other groups to give different opinions, emphasising correct pronunciation. Jaden appeared to incorporate the use of higher-order thinking skills by challenging the pupils to think until they achieved the correct answer. This classroom practice clearly shows an example of second order engagement; Jaden tried to develop the individual pupils' performance in their communication and thinking skills through group activity.

In my second classroom observation with Jaden, she was conducting a lesson about computers and technology. However, there was no integration of ICT used to stimulate pupils' learning in order to enhance their understanding about the topic. When I raised this issue after my classroom observation, her response was:

It's time consuming to get pupils into the computer lab. They take time to get there and it takes time for me to set the tools. It might be much better if we have the technical support but no, we have to do and prepare everything on our own. **I think even if I don't use ICT tools, I can still make my lesson interactive.** Moreover, I have to finish the syllabus, which is much more important.

The interview data illustrate that the new English curriculum had led to pressures with time constraints in preparing and integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in

their lesson. The issue raised about finishing the syllabus also gives a strong sense that this teacher is under pressure to improve the school's ranking in the league tables, as defined by the National exam, as she also teaches Year 6. However, the highlighted texts in Jaden's excerpt shows an interesting contrast with the teacher who understood interactive as coterminous with ICT.

For this school, the seating arrangement is standardized from Primary One to Primary Six. The desks in each classroom were arranged in an E-shape pattern and pupils who were considered to be either weak or poorly behaved were usually seated in front of the classroom, that is, next to the teacher's desk. The number of pupils in each class ranged from 15 to 20 pupils only, which, according to one teacher I interviewed, makes it easy to monitor each one of them.

These two boys are usually very naughty in class. That's why I put them in front during English lesson. But for every subject, they are also the same boys which always causes problems for other pupils.

(Jaden)

In this school, placing the weak and poorly behaved pupils at the front of the class gives the sense that the teachers are attempting to ensure that the pupils participate actively and are fully engaged during the lesson. Adopting this strategy also enables the teacher to administer pair or group work activities and also to facilitate the pupils with the given tasks in a more controlled manner. The data also indicate that every teacher in this school knows their pupils well. It seems that placing the same 'poorly behaved' pupils in the front of the class for every lesson for every subject is deemed to be effective in enabling the lesson to be carried out efficiently and to help pupils to be engaged with the lesson. In KSSR, streaming pupils according to ability is not encouraged, but, based on the practices in this school, this kind of in-class streaming is seen by the teachers as being an effective practice.

The above discussion shows that teachers attempted to embrace the changes in KSSR. However, a lack of clear ideas about the embedded formative and summative assessment in SBA had further affected their engagement with SBA. The extent of policy engagement is varied among the individual teachers in this school. The majority of them appear to comply with the new curriculum and also demonstrate a great understanding about the changes. However, there is also a strong sense that such a response may be seen as 'incorporation'

strategy (Osborn et al. 1997) in order to fit their teaching approach into the school culture without making any fundamental change in their beliefs. I will move on to discuss the key factors related to Morphogenesis/Morphostasis (Archer, 1995) that help and/or impede teachers' enactments with the new policy.

6.5 Emerging Morphogenesis/Morphostasis (M/M) themes

This section will examine the emerging Morphogenesis/Morphostasis themes that are seen to be helpful in promoting teachers' positive engagement with the policy and/or poor engagement in their pedagogical practices, especially for the assessment aspect. The key factors to emerge from the interview data are categorized into two Sections; 6.5.1 Factors that shape teachers' engagement, and 6.5.2 Factors that distort teachers' engagement.

6.5.1 Factors that support teachers' engagement

a) Leadership

The data gathered in this school indicate that the school and teachers seemed to comply with the new policy because the Head teacher fully supported the imposed change. She truly believes that pupils' success cannot be measured based on how many 'A's are achieved, but that they should instead be based on how they apply all the knowledge in the real workplace later. In KSSR, pupils' performance is not solely based on the National exam, but pupils' participation in non-academic aspects of SBA will also be acknowledged. Therefore, the Head teacher strongly believed that SBA is a fair assessment for pupils. The interview data from the Head teacher revealed that she had never had any chance to attend any course regarding the new curriculum. The Head teacher was informed about the curriculum reform, but she did not attend the training for the implementation of the new policy. However, she added that she had read the online resources and always keeps herself up-to-date about the MOE circular letter before she passes any information and tasks to the staff. The Head teacher's compliance with KSSR and her role in convincing the teachers about the benefits of the change therefore led to positive engagement with the policy among the teachers in this school.

b) Teachers' collaboration and support

Teachers claimed that they received support from a member-led organization called the District English Teachers' Association (DETA) and from the English Panel in their school. The DETA comprises English teachers from different schools. It is an active committee and

often conducts meetings to discuss issues related to the English KSSR, particularly around documentation, teaching aids, and assessment materials.

The English Panel is really helpful. Since I am new to English subject, there are lot of things I need to learn. Both English teachers in this school are really experienced, so I always refer to them if I have difficulties in preparing the lesson or anything to do with the assessment.

(Wahid)

The use of electronic peer support for KSSR was also deemed to be very helpful in order to obtain news and updates about the new curriculum. As expressed by this teacher:

I am so lucky because I am in an English KSSR group of social media (WhatsApp and Telegram) comprising English teachers from different districts and the experts from School Improvement Specialist Coaches (SISC+). They are in an urban area and they have better information and knowledge about the new curriculum. It is helpful for me because schools in rural areas often do not get the latest information because of the location. I can directly ask them anytime or read from their discussion about the KSSR and they always share new information in the group.

(Jaden)

For this school, the support received from the Head teacher and also support provided from outside the school, such as the KSSR social media group made up of expert SISC+ members from different districts, seems to help Jaden to gain a better understanding of the new curriculum. In addition, support for implementing the KSSR is provided electronically by a small collaborative peer group, also helped to enable effective professional development by sharing and clarifying ideas through the group's communication which further increased Jaden's feeling of ownership of the new assessment.

c) *Reputation of school*

The school's reputation seems to be one of the most essential determinants of policy enactment in this school. This school's past experiences of being inspected under a "full school inspection" category by the School Inspectorate implies that this school was a

problematic school (see the discussion of school inspection in Section 2.2.1. Teachers were monitored and inspected by the MOE in the system of school inspection had led the school to become one of the top performing schools in terms of academic performance and it was also regarded as a ‘sekolah contoh’ or an exemplar in its district for excellence in establishing an effective KSSR filing system. As illustrated by the English Head:

We were once visited by the inspectors from the MOE for a week, on an everyday basis. Each and every one of us in this school was monitored by each of the inspectors. I remembered I really hated the school, I couldn’t even stand seeing the school’s entrance because I was so stressed about being inspected from morning until end of school. However, it gives positive impact for us because after that, everything is systematic – in preparing the file and also the documentation.

(Jaden)

According to the Head teacher:

I have been in this school for less than 3 years. But the staff here are very dedicated. They normally do all the tasks without any complaints. I know they are dedicated because I often observe them informally. For example, we need to observe teachers in class, there are schedule of observations for that purpose. But instead of coming to the classroom, I observe them from outside the class, listening to what they are teaching and when I check their lesson plan, it was exactly like what they taught during the lesson.

In regards to the new curriculum, the head teacher stated that:

The teachers have a systematic filing system and update them from time to time. It was said that there will be an inspection for the file from the MOE but it was only one time they (District Education) came and checked the file. However, our filing system is up-to-date and everyone in this school does their tasks.

The interview data indicate that the school inspection had not only provided the school with pressure to change, but this also helped the staff to transform their school culture. In addition, the interview excerpts with the Head teacher indicate the “panoptic performativity” that she practised in managing this school that led teachers to perform how the Head teacher wished. There is also a great sense that the fear of a follow-up school inspection drives the staff to comply with the new policy. Conversely, the performativity regime and the school inspection also contributed positively, allowing the teachers to achieve these remarkable changes, not only within their school culture, but also within the structure of their school. This seeming success of the school’s improvement reveals a tension between the school’s success and the proposed purposes of SBA. While the MOE inspectorate is satisfied with the school’s improved performance under the Head teacher’s authoritarian leadership, the teachers have clearly not understood the underlying philosophical ideas that support SBA. As such, they may only be promoting a tokenistic implementation of SBA, which is a good example of hybridization, in Archer’s (1995) terms. Teachers appear to reflect good practices, but this only leads to the partial enactment of this element of the new KSSR curriculum.

6.5.2 Factors that distort teachers’ engagement

a) Factors in school

i) Workload

Some teachers have more than 6 subjects to teach in this school due to the fact that it is a small school. This means that, for recording assessment, the teachers must key-in 6 different subjects for different classes and with different marking criteria. Teachers found this to be a burden and a barrier to submitting the marks on time because they are not in the school all the time because they hold different roles within the district. At the same time they have to teach and complete the syllabus. For those teachers who are often not in school because they have other commitments in the district, it is difficult for them to record the assessment when they have not yet completed the module relating to the assessment.

I pity the pupils. Most of the time we ‘steal’ their time for doing other things. In a small school, one teacher can be teaching different subjects and holds different roles which require them to attend courses, meeting and other tasks out of school. Too much paperwork needs to be submitted, demanding us to do other things rather than teaching our pupils.

(Wahid)

The dramatic increase in teachers' workload after the introduction of the new curriculum has resulted in increasing teachers' workload, and brings the additional pressure of needing time for the preparation and implementation of SBA. The highlighted excerpts from Wahid tell us not only about the workload but also about a negative impact of the policy on pupils. The new policy is intended to create 21st century learners, and yet here, this teacher is "pitying" them. This might also hinder some teachers' engagement with the new assessment.

b) Out-of-school factors that influence the change

i) Poor quality training

The interview data shows the lack of clarity during the KSSR training. As indicated in Chapter Three (see Section 3.9.4), the initial cascade training programme was provided at state level to State Facilitators who then returned to their districts and delivered the training to designated teachers. However, after a year, the initial training was reduced to a three-day course. Within the three days, there were many things that had to be covered and then teachers were expected to implement the changes straight away. In addition, they were also required to conduct in-house training for other teachers in their school after attending the short course. As explained by a teacher in this school:

When I first attended the course, it was for one week. It was very new to us and we were expected to conduct an in-house training course for other teachers in our school later. It is hard because we ourselves do not fully understand the new policy but need to cascade the same new information to the teachers in our school. I have to say that one week was not enough to fully understand and straight away implement the new policy. What I understood during the course, that will be what I have to share with other teachers in my school. However, since I was the only English teacher in my previous school, I have attended the course every year for Year 1 to Year 6. The course was gradually shortened into 3 days and even to a 1-day course. Still, the input given was the same and conducted by the same facilitator. The changes were on recording the assessment. Last 3 years it was done online, now it is done offline.

(Farah)

I have attended the course almost every year. The duration was one week and then shortened to 3 days the following year. We were trained on how to write the lesson plan and do the macro-teaching and no information given regarding the textbook because it has not published yet and we did not informed much on the assessment which I found the most difficult thing to understand.

(Jaden)

I attended a course regarding English KSSR in state level last year. That was my first English course because I'd never taught English before. What the course lacked was, all teachers are assumed to know about the policy already and when we (and some of the other teachers from other districts) raised questions about certain topics, the facilitators told us that we are supposed to know about it already because every year, the content of the course are the same. We ended up getting more confused because we honestly do not know anything because we never attended the course specifically for English language before. The rest of the information was the same but the lesson plan is different.

(Wahid)

The interview data above indicate that the cascaded training was not only conducted over a short period of time, but also that no updated information about the policy was provided. Instead, the data revealed that trainers used the same information and materials in conducting the course as they had initially. Therefore, the course failed to engage with teachers' real-world concerns, for instance, to be more responsive to teachers' needs. The absence of effective training causes the dilution and distortion of information, which then leads to lack of understanding of the reform among teachers. This might be another factor that hinders the enactment of curriculum reform. As suggested by Baine (1993) and Cheung and Man Wong (2012), the training resources should be sufficient to support the innovation, and the necessary facilities, equipment, materials and supplies should be made available to trainers to ensure the effectiveness and successfulness of curriculum reform. Moreover, as O'Sullivan (2002) observes, a lack of understanding of what is required of the teachers in the classroom may result in uncertainty and thus affect the policy's implementation and non-implementation

processes (Smit, 2005), as well as hinder positive change in the implementation (Bantwini, 2010).

The interview data also revealed that the KSSR course that the teachers attended only focused on preparing lesson plans. Assessment was only explained briefly, with demonstrations on how to use the templates for recording the assessment. However, because the English subject textbook was not provided during the course, teachers found it difficult to understand the templates because there was no reference with which to link the assessment criteria, the performance standards, and the standard curriculum to help them to understand how to conduct the assessment. The short orientation courses for training the teachers did not emphasize the philosophy and rationale of KSSR. The courses they attended did not help much in enlightening the teachers about the new curriculum, as indicated by the following interview extracts:

We were given a template for recording the assessment, copy the file about the KSSR from the facilitator for us to conduct the in-house training later in our respective school and listen to what the facilitators said about the new curriculum. Later, we were divided into small groups to prepare the lesson plan and do the micro-teaching. We have to refer the Learning specifications from the current year Curriculum standards in order to write the lesson plan. It's like, lesson plan is the most important change in new curriculum. Assessment was told to be done in a daily basis through observation, peer work and so on. But it was not explained in detail because it seems that they (the facilitators) also lack of knowledge about the assessment.

(Farah)

There were no hands-on practice for doing the assessment during the course. It was explained in brief only maybe because we did not even have the proper materials to refer to in order to help us understand the link between the lesson and what to assess. Templates were given for us to record the assessment later. It was also suggested that we need to assess our pupils every day and then record it. However, if we really practise it in our classroom, it means, we don't have time to teach. We only assess all the

time. They seemed to forget the fact that we are teaching and having other things to do at the same time. There is no way we can assess and record pupils' achievement every day unless you are only teaching one subject and there is nothing else you are doing in school.

(Jaden)

It seems as though the course attended by the teachers only focused on the practical aspects of implementing the new curriculum. This clearly shows an example of performative implementation, that is, the need to be seen to implement the policy, but this led to a non-change or morphostasis in the teachers' practices. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) suggest that, for training to be effective, theoretical knowledge needs to be compensated and integrated with physical skills in order to develop a sense of ownership of the materials learned. However, the interview data clearly show the absence of hands-on training on the assessment aspect, which further affects the likelihood of the innovation being incorporated into the teachers' teaching practices.

The interview data also reveal that the State Facilitator and teachers do not fully comprehend the conceptual aspects of the new curriculum. Below are interview excerpts that illustrate the responses of teachers and the State Facilitator regarding their perceptions of the courses they attended:

I attended the introductory course for one week. Everything was new to us and the information we need to deliver later to our district was too packed for a course in only a week. Even the facilitators who conducted the course during that time were not sure about certain thing like the allocation marks for the National Examination because there was no circular letter stating that point. But we were informed that there will be no more exams in the new assessment system. However they stressed that we have to wait for the official announcement and circular letter regarding the issue.

(State Facilitator)

I attended the course every year since I was the only English teacher in my previous school. The facilitators were also not quite sure of the new assessment, maybe because the policy kept on changing, like the assessment

system stopped and changed to offline record after like 2 years we were struggling to key in the marks online. The learning standards were still stated as draft for it will change again.

(Farah)

I am a committee member of the Board of Exam in this school. During the first introductory course, all the examination coordinators attended the course. We were not given specific information regarding the assessment even though the facilitators stressed that the main changes for in the new curriculum was the assessment system. Too many and too new for us to take and to transfer the information to our respective school later. It was like everything is “*kelam-kabut*” (rushing and hectic).

(Jaden)

The announcement of the introduction of the new curriculum by the Ministry of Education was made in 2010 and it was implemented in stages in all schools, beginning with Year 1, in January, 2011. In fact, the immediacy of its implementation shows that it was conducted too hastily, and with great uncertainty, and the officers who were required to deliver the new policy appeared to have inadequate knowledge about the new education reform. Because the courses attended at state level failed to deliver adequate knowledge and information about the new curriculum, it was then more difficult for the other English teachers to acquire sufficient information about the new curriculum, because the district facilitators themselves were given insufficient and inadequate training relating to the new curriculum. However, teachers were expected to implement teaching reforms after just a single training session which was reportedly delivered in the absence of adequate or effective in-service professional training and support. The probability of translating and transferring information about the new English curriculum into teaching and learning practices often relies on the teachers’ own interpretations of the policy. This means that the policy intentions can become transformed and distorted by the time they are implemented in the classroom, which has important implications for realistic policy-making and enactments (Morris and Adamson, 2010). This has further obstructed the implementation process and teachers’ engagement with the new policy.

ii) *Parental engagement*

For this school, a special dialogue with the parents was conducted when the policy was first introduced in 2011, informing them about the changes in the policy, especially in relation to assessment. However, the majority of the parents still preferred to receive a record of their children's ranking during the exam period, because they still want to see the exact marks and their children's rankings against the other pupils in class. As explained by the teachers in their own words:

The school was asked to inform the parents about the changes. When we conducted the talk with parents, they seem not to reject the changes, but told us that they are used to having the marks and the use of marks for every subject is much easier for them (because they said they are indigenous) to know about all the new things ... If teachers themselves are also confused with the new assessment, imagine the parents who have never heard about those terms. **All they want to know from us is the position of their children in class and the marks and whether they passed the subjects or not.** That's it.

(Jaden)

When the parents come during the Open Day to get the results of their children, all of them (for my class) asked and referred to the grade to ask about their children's performance. The grade and marks are clearly stated there, still they need to ask for clarifications from the class teacher. They do not touch upon and are not interested to ask about the band. They just don't care because they do not understand it. It's the same with the teachers also. We printed out the final summary of what the pupils get but it has no strong indicator of what actually they have learned. **That is why parents still want to see the ranking, because it will help motivate their children to get higher marks in the upcoming test or exam and there is a feeling of a good competition among peers or to get rewards from the parents if they score good marks.**

(Farah)

I think, most parents, especially in a rural area, prefer the ranking system. We cannot blame them because they are far from technology and they are used to the exam system. Even if the parents never attended school, they know about exam and getting good marks in exam in order for the children to go to a good school later. Conducting a dialogue about the changes was done, but the aim was like ... yeah, we have informed them about the changes. That's it. They (the parents) like most of the teachers do not care about the band, as long as there is still marks given during the tests and exam, they are happy with it. **They know their children's performance by comparing what they get during the previous exam to what they get in the following exam.** That's how they interpret their children's achievements.

(Wahid)

During the Open Day, the Report Card and the summary of the band achievement for SBA was still provided to the parents. However, the situation above clearly shows that the giving of marks and the grading function are overemphasized, while the giving of useful advice and guidance on the pupils' learning functions are underemphasized. This too might impede teachers' engagement with implementing the new assessment policy, especially in providing descriptive feedback on pupils' progress.

iii) Ministry of Education (MOE) pressure

Based on the previous National exam results, this school is considered to be situated among the top 10 performing school in its district. In order to maintain the school's level of performance, the KPIs for the school were set by the District Education Office to a higher level, which may have placed additional pressure on the teachers to produce high performance results. The pressure of meeting KPIs is seen as a morphostasis factor, because this could also have led the teachers to teach to the test. Such pressures thus impede teachers' assessment practices because they might face difficult problems in reconciling the formative and summative roles of SBA. As explained by the teachers:

We were told that we need to do the assessment every day and record it from time to time because there will be an inspection to check if we do it or not

but when there is any inspection from District Education, they will focus on the grade, the school performance which was based on our previous achievement in the National Examination. However, I have no problem in recording the grades and band because I am so used to the workloads.

(Farah)

To be honest, I don't see any rationale for recording pupils' achievement using the band. The recent course I attended only explained that pupils will bring the transcripts for the SBA to secondary school but gave no detailed explanation about it. It is only to make sure we record the assessment ... it's a "by hook or by crook" thing. We were told we have to do it without any excuses. However, still focus on making sure out Year 6 pupils score and pass in the National Exam because we have to maintain our school performance. If we have any visitors or inspection from District Education, they will ask about the school performance and our school programme in order to get higher result during the National Examination. There is no problem in recording both grades and band in this school because the administrator will check the file from time to time to make sure the files are complete and up-to-date.

(Jaden)

The exercise of intensified school inspection seems to be one of the factors that led the teachers in this school to comply with the policy. Jaden's use of the phrase, "by hook or by crook" was the only time that she used English words during her interview. In this context, it is significant that the teacher perceived very strongly that she was being enforced to record the assessment by any means necessary, even at the expense of other duties. There is a sense that the threat and fear of the inspection process had also led the teachers to change their practices in ways that suited their beliefs. This could also lead to what is described as 'panoptic performativity' (Perryman, 2006), as a result of being monitored and inspected by the MOE authority and also by the Head teacher and other school administrators.

6.6 Conclusion

The above discussions showed that, although teachers seem to have positive attitudes towards the curriculum reform, there is also evidence of a mismatch between the real intentions of the reform and teachers' conceptions of the new curriculum. This discrepancy appears to be due to a lack of clarity about the philosophy and rationale for practising SBA and lack of understanding on the purpose of formative and summative assessments in SBA. The system of providing training is not adequate to meet the skills gap to help teachers to understand the change, not only in relation to the theoretical aspects of the new curriculum and its rationale, but also the implications of the new assessment system that will further affect their pedagogical and assessment practices. The data also indicate that teachers in this school attempted to implement all the changes in the education system because of a belief that they were being inspected at all times. However, the support they received from the Head teacher and also that received from outside the school, individual teachers' past experiences with school inspections, and also the "performativity regime" practised by the school management, contributed to teachers' positive enactments in implementing SBA. It can be concluded that, on the whole, this school demonstrated a much better engagement with the policy than the first case study school did. The next chapter will report the emerging themes and issues from the two case study schools in more detail, using the theoretical concepts and constructs proposed by Priestley (2011) and Archer (1995) that were discussed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the key themes emerging from the analysis of the two case study schools discussed in the previous two chapters. It also presents the key findings from the cross-case analysis. The research questions will also be addressed through the discussion presented in this chapter. The overarching aim of this study was to investigate how primary English teachers make sense of and enact the new assessment system in the new KSSR curriculum. My four research questions, reproduced here, will guide this investigation.

1. How are teachers and leaders enacting the new curriculum?
2. What are the contextual and individual/teacher factors in school that influence the change the way it is implemented?
3. What out-of-school factors, e.g., external materials, resources and programmes, are shaping/influencing the changes?
4. What alternative or further supports do schools and teachers feel they need to effectively implement SBA in the KSSR?

As indicated in Chapter Four, these research questions were further categorized into generic analytical questions (Priestley, 2007) relating to social interaction, a model proposed by Priestley (2011), itself derived from Archer's (1995) social theory of Morphogenesis/Morphostasis (M/M). These theoretical underpinnings provided a critical realist approach to analysing the data. As for the analysis method, I employed thematic analysis, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). I first categorized the main themes emerging from the data gathered from the two schools by separating them into groups of loose categories relating to the cultural, structural, individual and material elements, as outlined in Figures 7.1 and 7.2 below. This approach allowed me to examine some of the underlying mechanisms that contribute to and shape policy enactments differently between the two schools. I further analysed these themes by elaborating the complementary and contradictory themes for each school to help me to understand how and why English teachers are implementing the new policy around assessment. The final section of the chapter will then

outline the key findings and conclude how the new curriculum is understood, mediated and put into practice.

Figures 7.1 and 7.2 below summarise the key features that apply in each case study. The themes derived from the two case study schools discussed in Chapters Five and Six are classified into four categories using the Social Interaction model. These will be further explained in the sections that follow.

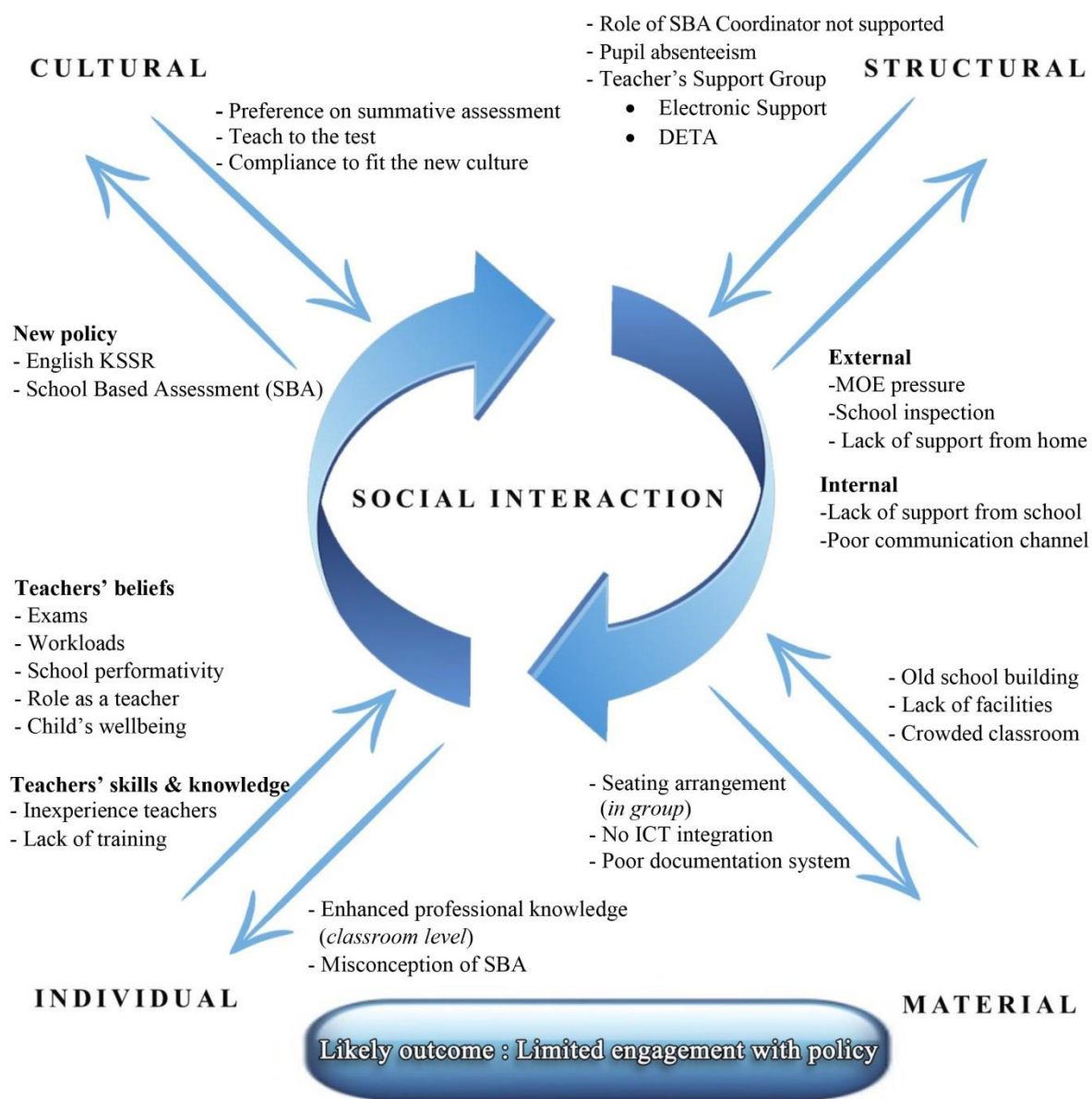


Figure 7.1: St. Dominic School

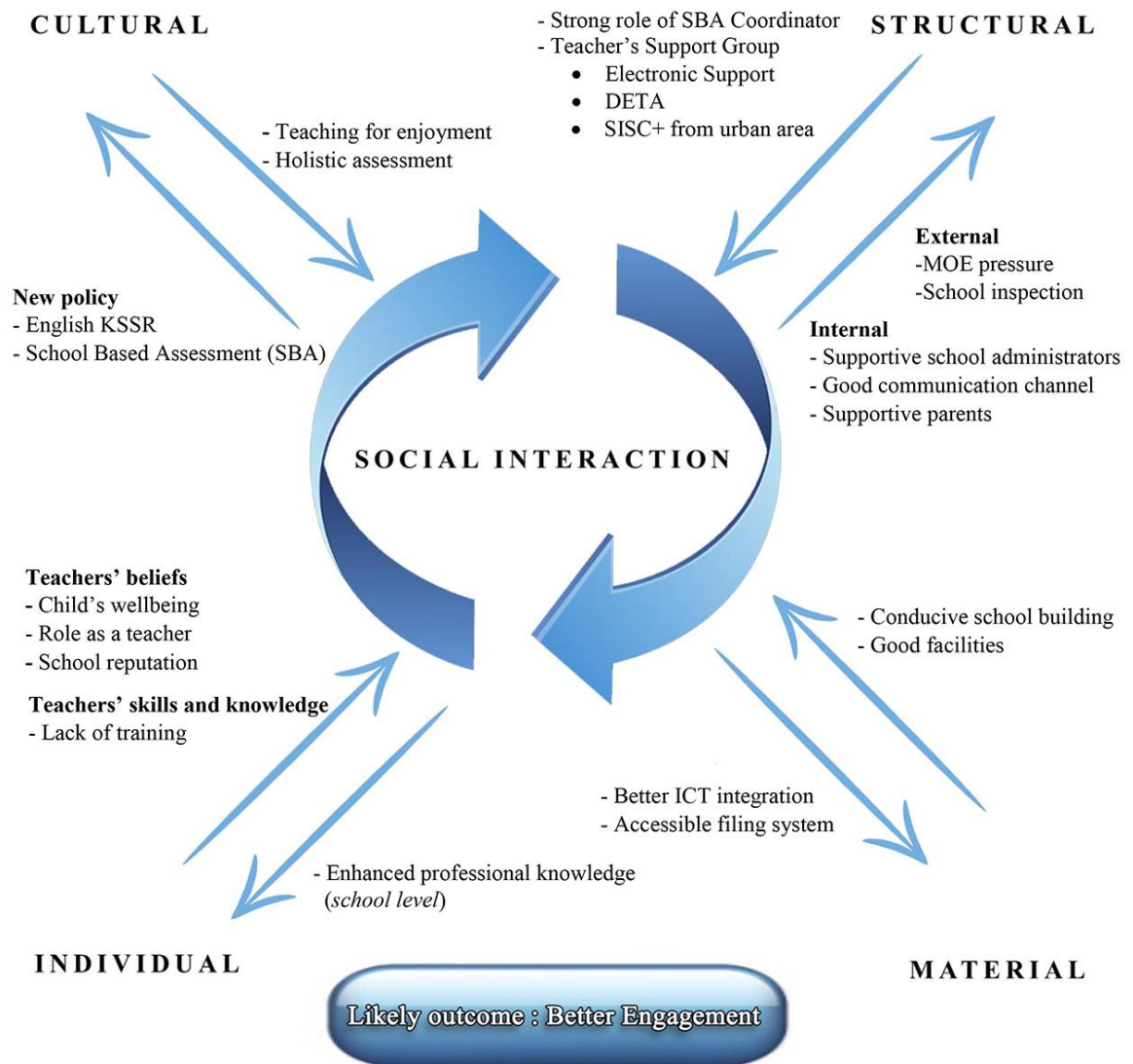


Figure 7.2: Sarayo Primary School

7.2 Social Interaction

Priestley's (2011) Social Interaction model draws directly on the social theory of M/M proposed by Archer (1995). Archer suggests that the interplay between factors, which can be classified into individual, cultural and structural, acts back to produce either morphogenesis or morphostasis (or a hybridisation of the two) to generate effects within social structures over a period of time. Priestley (2011) presents a modified version of Archer's (1995) model, which further separates the material factors from the structural. It is the interactions between each

factor that will determine whether individual factors will influence enactments of change or cause practices to remain the same, or sometimes a combination of both. This concept was particularly appropriate to this research study because it was evident that the ways in which the teachers enacted policy reform in practice were affected by each of these factors and the interplay between them, and these affected the individual teacher's capacity to act back to enact a process of reproduction, rather than transformation, thus modifying the current logical relationships and creating new ones within the culture of each school. Figure 7.3 below presents again the questions relating to Priestley's (2011) social interaction model that were employed as a reference while conducting the second stage of the analysis.

Social Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do teachers and managers react to the new idea? • Do the new ideas stimulate dialogue? • What new systems and structures develop as a result of the new ideas? • How is new knowledge constructed as a result of the engagement with the ideas? • How do individual motives translate through interaction into group goals? • What new artefacts develop as a result of such engagement? • What constraints do school and external systems place upon social interaction? • How do relationships between the various actors impact on enactment?
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Figure 7.3: Social interaction generic questions

Source: Priestley, 2007.

The demand on schools and teachers to 'perform', that is to generate achievements in a clearly specified range of 'outcomes', is reported to be a big challenge for change to be successfully implemented in schools (Priestley et al., 2015). The School-Based Assessment (SBA) system requires teachers to develop adequate new knowledge and understanding to sufficiently equip them to develop new assessment practices in order to evaluate pupils. However, "the demand for teachers to perform" (Shore and Wright, 2000, cited in Priestley et al., 2015, p. 107) and the KPI pressures for the schools to be positioned within a desired ranking in the league tables led some of the teachers in both schools to exclude other things; in this case, the new assessment practices, which do not fit with what is intended to be represented or conveyed (Ball, 2003). The M/M social theory advocated by Archer (1995) is helpful in allowing us to understand the process of change in the two case study schools included in this research.

Archer (1995) uses the term ‘morphogenesis’, signifying change, and ‘morphostasis’, or non-change, within a social setting. M/M provides a very systematic way in which to unpack social contexts by looking at the interactions between these four factors. This means that the interplay between culture and structure will influence the ways in which individual teachers behave in enacting the new School-Based Assessment (SBA) system.

For St. Dominic, being ranked as one of the lowest performing schools in the league table demanded that the teachers, especially those teaching at upper primary level, spend time on improving the school’s KPIs to achieve the public image of being a good school (Apple, 2001). These performance pressures, the additional demands of the LINUS programme, and the increased amount of workload in recording and reporting SBA, are reported to contribute to causing anxiety for teachers as they attempt to cope with the multiple demands on their time. Ultimately, the culmination of these pressures led to their poor engagement with SBA. There was strong evidence of this consequence, particularly from the interviews with the upper primary teachers, who extensively used assessment summatively instead of formatively, to drill the pupils to correctly answer the exam questions.

Braun et al. (2011) suggest that the form of and extent of the enactment of policy depends on the degree to which particular policies ‘fit’ with the ethos and culture of the school. For St. Dominic, a school that focuses on its performance, the new policy seems to be implemented and documented for compliance reasons, rather than for pedagogical reasons or to promote organizational change. A lack of engagement with the new policy partly resulted from a structural reorganization that was not accompanied by cultural change. The majority of teachers in this school provided strong evidence of the KPIs’ requirement to improve their school performance in the National exam, which led them to comply with the new policy without seeking cultural change and this resulted in superficial engagement with the new assessment system. Therefore, the culture of exam-oriented teaching is still continuing. Although the new curriculum is designed to be more holistic, the magnitude of the system of performativity seems to diminish teachers’ positive enactments with the idea of holistic assessment practice.

Moreover, the data also suggests that some of the teachers in both schools seemed to comply with the policy, even though there was clear evidence that the real intentions of the reform contradicted their pedagogical practices. For instance, most of the teachers at Sarayo Primary

School showed a high degree of engagement within the pressure of high performance expected by the Ministry of Education (MOE). The “trust and autonomy”, which was enacted more as a performativity regime (Perryman, 2006), that the teachers obtained from the Head teacher, accompanied by strong support from other members of the school administration, resulted in high levels of engagement with the new policy in that school. Teachers worked under the surveillance of the Head teacher, which ‘forced’ the policy to be implemented well in this school. However, the authoritarian leadership in this school was ascribed as contributing to the comparative success of SBA according to the MOE. In addition, the way in which the school was organised did not come about because of the response to the new policy, but instead, it was the result of long-established relationships and good organization as a result of the management style adopted in this small school, which is directly related to the back to the elaboration of individual, cultural and material factors that interact within the social interaction of the school.

It is difficult to separate and distinguish between individual understandings of the new curriculum and their assessment practices, which then constitute a collective tradition for each school. The differences in the individual teachers’ understandings of the SBA policy further affected their different enactments of the reform, especially in the implementation of the assessment system. Their different attributes might have led to the probability that they have superficially returned to “more comfortable old assessment practices”, and the possibility that they might “develop a negative attitude toward SBA” (Cheung et al., 2001, p. 5, cited in Rahman, 2014). The next four sections will consider how the interplay between the individual, cultural, structural, and material attributes in each school were influenced by the social interaction of the schools.

7.2 Individual attributes

Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Which individuals interact within the change context?• What views do teachers and managers hold about teaching and learning?• What biographical details of individuals might influence the reception of the new ideas?• What motives and goals do individuals have?• How much knowledge do individuals possess about the issues involved?• What capacities do individuals have for self-reflection and reflexivity?• What individual elaboration (learning takes place)?
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Figure 7.4: Individual attributes – generic questions

This section is guided by the generic questions relating to individual attributes presented in Figure 7.4 above. I will now examine how individual attributes lead to morphogenesis and morphostasis, and will explore the individual emergent properties (IEPs) that come from the interactions between the individual and the other three attributes. I will structure this section into two subsections; 7.2.1 Complementarities, and 7.2.2 Contradictions, to illustrate the likely outcomes of the inputs and effects of such interactions.

7.2.1 Complementarities

Seeva, Jack, Will, Lillian and Lim at St. Dominic highlighted the importance of the children's well-being and their skills and knowledge acquisition rather than focusing too much on how well the pupils perform based on grades obtained during the exams. They also agreed that their role was to act primarily as facilitators in the classrooms and to care about pupils' participation as much as possible during the learning sessions. Jaden and Wahid, teachers in the Sarayo Primary School, also have strong beliefs about protecting children's wellbeing. Having to cope with pupils' different levels of ability caused Wahid to improve his own teaching strategies by trying different teaching approaches to ensure the pupils mastered the intended learning standards. As for Jaden, her ultimate goal for teaching is to help prepare the pupils for real life lessons.

Some of the participating teachers who were teaching the English subjects in the schools revealed that they had not been enrolled in the English teaching modules in teaching college. However, these teachers indicated that they have strong professional beliefs about their role as teachers. For example, Seeva at St. Dominic, and Wahid at Sarayo Primary School, both attended the KSSR course that was reported to be poorly cascaded and insufficient to aid in their understanding of the whole programme of changes, especially those relating to assessment. However, their interviews excerpts of which are presented in the previous case study chapters, revealed that Seeva and Wahid did change their classroom practices to enact SBA in their classroom. Seeva made an effort to find more information about the SBA from different resources, in order to learn something new, especially in their teaching strategies related to meeting the individual needs of his pupils. They used multiple teaching aids to foster pupils' participation in class and also advocated the integration of ICT, as suggested in the new curriculum, in conducting their lessons. Seeva and Wahid attempted to make their teaching and learning activities fun and interesting to engage pupils in the lessons. However, this generated extra work, for example, they had to prepare the different teaching aids for different lessons, extra work which was reported to have been done at home. Nevertheless, despite seeing the workload as a burden, they also perceived it to be part of their responsibility as teachers; to encourage active participation from the pupils during the lessons.

Betty and Kelly from St. Dominic and Farah at Sarayo Primary School held strong beliefs about the benefits of assessment by exams. These teachers only taught in upper primary and had done for more than ten years, and they strongly believed that they must prepare their pupils to achieve good marks, so that the percentage of pupils in the school who obtain the passing rate in the National exam administered at the end of Year 6 will be high. Farah at Sarayo Primary School was the only English teacher in her previous school, teaching pupils from Year 1 to Year 6. To her, a grading system is the best determinant for evaluating pupils' achievement; thus she aimed to prepare pupils for the exam, to allow the school to achieve a high percentage of passes for the English subject due to the cultural pressure of performing well in the league tables. These teachers believed that teachers who teach Year 6 will be the ones who are responsible for improving the KPIs for the school. Therefore, the purpose of assessment seems to be to focus only on summative forms of assessment that they believe will enable pupils to aim for higher grades in the final National exam through lots of drilling and by completing excerpts of these examinations.

In addition, teachers in both schools perceived that they were ‘threatened’ by structural factors, such as school inspections, which forced them to change. Therefore, they believed that they need to implement the new policy as they are monitored and inspected by the Ministry of Education (MOE). Despite having received poor training on the new curriculum, teachers from both schools had made an effort to seek support from the member-led organization called the District English Teachers’ Association (DETA), the English Panel in their schools, and the electronic peer support such as KSSR Online, to help them to develop their understanding on the pedagogical and assessment aspects of the new curriculum and therefore to help shape their enactments with the new policy.

7.2.2 Contradictions

At St. Dominic, the majority of the teachers who attended the KSSR training were inexperienced in cascading the in-house training for the rest of the teachers in their schools. None of the teachers in this school had attended any KSSR course at state level or had any experience in training others. Therefore, they were not confident in cascading the knowledge they had gained from their colleagues. For other teachers, they had to depend on the in-house training conducted by the teachers or administrators in their school, which is often problematic, as the process of disseminating information might result in the misinterpretation of crucial information. Some teachers also believed that SBA had increased their workload. This is because SBA demanded that teachers prepare lots of documentation; from the preparation of lesson plans up to reporting the SBA results to different authorities. Many teachers also teach additional subjects other than English, each of which demands the same amount of commitment to completing the assessments, especially in terms of the documentation of evidence. They must also learn how to navigate the various criteria for assessment, because they relate to each individual subject, as there are subtle differences between the ways in which assessment is conducted and recorded. Thus, these additional responsibilities tend to hamper their preferences for practising SBA. However, in Sarayo Primary School, Jaden was reported to have attended the training course every year as she was the only English teacher in that school. Her roles as a Head of English Panel, SBA Coordinator, and also secretary to the Exam Board in her school had helped her to better understand the policy. Being the only English teacher provided her with opportunities to attend a number of courses conducted by the District Education and the State Education that contributed her with experience in obtaining first-hand training regarding KSSR. It also helped

to enhance her confidence in cascading the in-house training as she received different modes of training for each different role that she holds within her school.

7.2.3 A result of interactions

I will provide an example of professional knowledge as individual emergent properties here. Some teachers' existing beliefs are aligned with the ideas presented in the new curriculum, therefore, they were more engaged with the policy. In Sarayo Primary School, teachers perceived that conducting different types of assessment and focusing on pupils' different abilities and needs helped pupils to understand the lesson better. The importance of making sure that the pupils were able to relate the learning content to their own daily lives to allow them to apply the knowledge in real workplace settings was also highlighted. For instance, as illustrated above, when the SBA Coordinator at Sarayo Primary School received professional training regarding the new curriculum every year for the different roles she holds in school, she started to gain a better understanding of SBA. Therefore, teachers in her school also appeared to be more engaged with the policy as they had someone to refer to regarding SBA. However, in the case of St. Dominic, although they did have a coordinator for SBA, it seemed as though the teachers' responses to SBA and their engagement of policy depended on their existing beliefs. Teachers who held strong beliefs about children's well-being and their role as a teacher appeared to respond positively to the policy. Nevertheless, this factor did not seem to apply to the whole school. Teachers who held strong beliefs about the benefit of exams were unlikely to demonstrate positive engagement with the imposed change. Although this behaviour can be attributed to the interplay of individual interactions, these can also be partly seen as cultural. The influence of cultural attributes will be explored in the section that follows.

7.3 Cultural attributes

I will first examine the complementarities and contradictions between existing cultures and new cultural forms in the case study schools. The form and extent of enactment of policy reform depends on "the degree to which particular policies fit with the ethos and culture of the school" (Braun et al., 2011, p. 586). When new cultural forms encounter existing notions of practice (Priestley, 2007), the new ideas of SBA may be simply be ignored when they are only superficially mapped onto the current practices (Ball et al., 2012). This section will address

my first three research questions, which relate to cultural attributes, in the previous two chapters. The generic questions relating to culture that were referred to in relation to the data are presented below in Figure 7.5.

Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What existing notions of practice exist in this area? • Do these constitute a collective tradition? • What new ideas does the change initiative introduce? • To what extent do new and old ideas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have internal consistency? ○ Concur and conflict with other current cultural forms? • How do the cultural forms in the school change and hybridise as a result of interactions?
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Figure 7.5: Cultural attributes – generic questions

The following sections will further explain the cultural contexts of the two case study schools that influence the enactment of the new curriculum and the way in which the curriculum policy is translated.

7.3.1 Complementarities

Archer (1995) suggests three different scenarios happen as a result of interaction within the cultural factors. First, the new cultural form is imposed. Second, the old idea remains and the new is completely rejected, and third, the elements of the existing ideas will be subsumed into the new ideas and result in a hybridization. Data from the interviews with the teachers in both schools suggest that they all welcome the new policy and are using the language of the new curriculum. The teachers in the two schools were enthusiastic about talking about the concept of holistic assessment in SBA and identified it as the main aspect that distinguished the new curriculum from the former curriculum. The assessment marks for SBA are recorded four times in a year for both schools. The allocated time for teaching English KSSR is 300 minutes

per week, as required and stated in the Primary School Curriculum Standard. For both schools, most of the English lessons are taught before recess or just after recess. The placement of this subject in the school's timetable shows that this it is regarded as being highly important, as it is one of the core and compulsory subjects to pass in the National Examination. Moreover, as revealed in Section 5.5.2 (b) in Chapter Five, the hot climate in Malaysia affected pupils' learning, especially in the afternoon. I discuss this issue further in Section 7.5 of this chapter. Therefore, the administrator had scheduled and arranged this subject to be taught during morning sessions. This practice also illustrates that exams are seen as being very important for the pupils and the schools, as a determinant of the school's rating in their KPIs; St. Dominic, as a low performing school, and Sarayo Primary School, as a potentially high performing school, were awarded these ratings based on the school's overall result in the National exam. Therefore, the element of SBA that refers to a new cultural form, in Archer's (1995) terms, seems to contradict with the existing culture for both schools.

In addition, teachers do not understand the concept of SBA and the distinction between formative assessment and summative assessment. As a result, there was a mismatch between the real intentions of the assessment reform and the teachers' pedagogical practices. The evidence in the data relating to teachers' Second Order Engagement (Section 5.4 in Chapter Five and Section 6.4 in Chapter 6) indicates that teachers in both schools have limited knowledge about certain aspects of the policy documents; the English Curriculum Standard document (Ministry of Education, 2011b) and the Performance Standards Framework document (Ministry of Education, 2011c) from the previous curriculum that were combined to underpin the new curriculum. It is crucial to note that, for the two schools, only the Head teacher in Sarayo School mentioned the combination of the two assessments as components of SBA in the interviews. It is also interesting to note that this participant was among the only two teachers who had not attended any of the cascade training sessions for KSSR. The rest of the teachers seemed to think that SBA is formative assessment. Evidence of this is clear in the interview data when they referred to formative assessment as SBA that is recorded in the School-Based Management System (SPPBS in Malay acronym). This confusion seems to derive from the use of two different ways of recording and storing the results: one system for tests and examinations, and one for the SBA. The lack of clarity on SBA had also affected the way some of the teachers conducted classroom assessments. There is evidence of misconceptions of the SBA principles, grouping pupils according to their proficiency levels,

less incorporation of Higher Order Thinking Skills in communicative teaching, and teaching to the test. I will first reiterate the differences between the assessment scheme of the former curriculum (KBSR) and that of the new curriculum (KSSR) in the following table (Table 7.1), a difference that seemed to have been misunderstood by the teachers in both schools.

Table 7.1 The assessment scheme in KBSR and KSSR

KBSR (the former curriculum)	KSSR(the new curriculum)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National examination, namely, the Primary School Achievement Test or Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR in Malay acronym) 100 percent on UPSR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National examination (UPSR) + school-based assessment (SBA) 60:40 (60 percent from UPSR and 40 percent from SBA)

Source: MOE circular letter (KP.LP.003.07.14(3))

As mentioned earlier in Chapter One, the implementation of SBA was designed to create a balance between teacher assessment and formal external assessments. Therefore, at the end of Year 6, the pupils' overall performance in primary school would not solely depend on their results in the high-stakes National exam. In the new assessment system, the SBA marks contribute 40 percent to the final, while the remaining 60 percent is derived from the National exam result, which brings the total possible mark to 100 percent. However, as mentioned earlier in Chapter Two (see Section 2.5.3.2), there are no guidelines from the MOE that provide any information on how the marks from SBA are calculated to be combined in the National exam. This lack of clarity in the policy had led to teachers' confusion in conducting SBA. In addition, the lack of clarity about each component of SBA had also led teachers to think that SBA comprises only formative assessment, and that the national exam at the end of Year 6 is considered to be a summative exam. The SBA policy document was also poorly written; it only states briefly that pupils' proficiency in the English language is assessed by a combination of formative and summative assessments, without outlining how these should be performed. The policy was outlined in two separate documents: the English Curriculum Standard Document (Ministry of Education, 2011b), and the Performance Standards Framework document (Ministry of Education, 2011c), published by the government and used in schools from 2011 to 2014. These separate documents appear to be too complicated for the

teachers to understand especially when they need to refer to numerous documents while conducting their assessments.

The introduction of Literacy and Numeracy Screening 2.0 (LINUS 2.0), to be conducted in teaching and learning activities for the English subject during the same lesson, was deemed to be another factor that hindered lower primary teachers' engagement with SBA. The idea of a holistic assessment system contradicts the accountability pressures that demand teachers teach to the test. For instance, in St. Dominic School, the data clearly showed that the policy was adopted and fitted in without any real change to the culture of the school. However, in Sarayo Primary School, more positive attitudes were shown towards SBA and teaching is more enjoyable for both teachers and pupils, in moving away from an exam-oriented system. Nevertheless, because the school performance is still measured based on the school's overall results in the National exam, upper primary teachers appear to neglect some of the principles outlined in the new curriculum, as issue to which I will now turn.

Some examples of the contradiction between the old and new ideas emerged in both schools; for example, the seating arrangements for pupils are still based on grouping pupils according to their abilities. This practice suggests that the concept of Mastery Learning is taught by streaming the students into separate groups and these strategies are practised due to the demands of the National exam and because this is what the teachers have always done; in the previous curriculum, pupils were streamed into categories according to their literacy skills for remedial and enrichment activities. If some pupils had not yet mastered certain skills, they were placed in the same groups so the worksheets given would match their different needs and abilities. The pressure of academic performance influenced the teachers to finish the syllabus within the set timeframe, therefore, grouping the pupils together according to their abilities and proficiency levels was seen as an appropriate practice by the teachers to ensure that the weak pupils would eventually master the skills with careful and full attention from the teachers, while the stronger pupils would be free to move ahead to drill for the exam. Although the new curriculum does not encourage streaming, the teachers' view on this point is to make sure the weak pupils will at least pass the subject during the exam. The social shifts dimension emphasised by the 21st century employability discourse would seem to enhance the need to promote mixed ability groups. This illustrates that teaching is still focused on passing the exam and not for the purpose of acquiring the language skills, as envisioned in the learning

outcomes. This contradiction is also strongly related to the performativity culture in both schools which required them to achieve the targeted KPIs by the MOE. The tension between SBA and KPI pressure has then affected teachers' abilities to implement the change effectively. Because this factor is partly structural, it will also be addressed in section 7.4 of this chapter.

7.3.2 Contradictions

The filing systems for SBA are different between the two schools. For St. Dominic, the files are compiled and kept in the administration office. However, in Sarayo Primary School, there is a special room where all of the files regarding KSSR and SBA are kept, which is easily accessible by all teachers. Therefore, they are able to update any information centrally in the filing system and it has become easy for other teachers who are teaching other subjects to prepare the SBA report according to the information kept on file, with the different subject files being stored in the same place. However, the case is different in St. Dominic. The teachers seemed to be unaware of who is responsible for compiling the marks in SBA for other subjects. This had resulted in a lack of up-to-date reports for SBA being made available to some of the Panel Heads for each subject because some teachers had only handed in the reports to the SBA Coordinator.

7.3.3 A result of interactions

St. Dominic School is ranked as a low performing school and therefore the school focuses on improving their KPIs in the National exams. Teachers are under pressure to achieve the target KPIs, thus, the pressure from the MOE, such as the improvement programme, the SISC+ programme, and KPI targets, contributed to the establishment of a performativity culture in the school. Teachers understood that the new policy intended to be holistic; however, the contradiction of the policy aims with their aims for school improvement had distorted their engagement with SBA. Thus, the culture of teaching to the test is still continuing. As for Sarayo Primary School, teachers are also needed to maintain their KPI results, but in this school they are more concerned about the enjoyment of learning than meeting the pressures of good National exam results. The Head teacher was very supportive about the imposed changes, and her effort in encouraging the school to implement the change resulted in the entire staff perceiving teaching as enjoyable. Teachers were seen to try different methods of

assessment in classrooms, thus the SBA practices were more positively implemented in this school.

However, the change in both schools was not only influenced by its cultural attributes. The structural form, for example, the web of relationships, the power structures, and the culture of school inspection had also brought considerable tension within the cultural system. The next sub-section will present further explanations of how the interplay of structural attributes in each school affected the teachers' enactments of the new curriculum.

7.4 Structural attributes

Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What relationships exist within the change context (roles, internal and external connections)? • What existing systems may influence enactment of the new ideas (including external systems such as exams)? • What structural elaboration is taking place?
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Figure 7.6: Structural attributes – generic questions

This section will seek to address my second and third research questions relating to social structure by addressing how school structures affect the social structure through social interaction (see Figure 7.6 above). According to Archer's (1995) M/M model, the intended change may result in complementarities in cultural form, for instance, SBA is welcomed by the teachers. However, this is problematic in terms of school structure, particularly when the MOE requires the school to achieve a high pass rate for the National exam. The teachers already face powerful pressures from the MOE to perform well, so the idea of the new policy may have failed to stimulate change in structural form, as the MOE's pressure affects the ways in which teachers respond to the imposed change. I will start by elaborating how the "emergent properties of relationships between different people, between people and groups, and between groups and groups" (Priestley, 2007, p. 204) affect the enactment of the new policy in both schools.

The organizational chart for SBA implementation, the main timetable, and the class timetables in were clearly displayed in the administrators' office in both schools. However, at Sarayo Primary school, the timetabling was also displayed in the staff room and in every classroom.

This existing notion of practice shows that St. Dominic perceived the new policy to encompass a change at the administrative level, but for Sarayo, the way they displayed the timetable shows that the school made teaching their top priority. The clear flow of information about SBA seems to have led teachers in Sarayo Primary School to promote a clear idea of their responsibilities and roles in the implementation of SBA, whereas the teachers in St. Dominic were reported to have a lack of clarity about the delegations of tasks relating to SBA. The lack of clarity about the delegation of tasks and in the information provided on the new curriculum, although it was available to the teachers in the staff room, therefore contributed to poor engagement with the policy among teachers in St. Dominic.

As described in the case study chapters, both schools have a similar hierarchical organizational structure, but the exercising of power in between the organizational structures was enacted in slightly different ways. This structural attribute affected the relationships between the staff and the school administrators. For instance, the horizontal and vertical relationships established in the school made different impacts on the policy enactments among the teachers. In St. Dominic, Jack, in his role as SBA Coordinator, was reported to have received no support from the school administration. Being appointed as an SBA Coordinator and having to transmit all the changes regarding KSSR without any support from the higher authority made Jack feel (in his own words); *“upset and threatened because there was no strong encouragement and official rules set from the Head teacher about the implementation of the new curriculum.”* This was reported to have impeded other teachers’ engagement with SBA. In the case of Sarayo Primary School, the strong and active support from the Head teacher was seen to be the key factor in enhancing the engagement of the two teachers. A close relationship among the school community had further helped the teachers in making sense of the assessment system. The good relationships that existed between the school administrators and the school community in this school were also likely to enhance the staff’s engagement with the new policy. The next three sub-sections will explain the web of relationship in the two schools in more detail.

7.4.1 Horizontal relationship

The organizational structure of Sarayo Primary School was affected by its small school size. A single teacher tends to take multiple roles, as in the case of Jaden, who was the SBA Coordinator, the Secretary of the Exam Board, and the English Subject Head in this school.

The small size of school also meant that a teacher might be required to teach at least three different subjects; one a specialist subject, and another two or more for other elective subjects. This also meant that there were more opportunities for the whole teaching staff to engage in dialogues about the new policy implementation which seemed to result in the establishment of building up close relationships among the teachers in this particular school. The data in the case study suggest that there is no gap between the school administrators and the teachers; the Head teacher or the Deputy Head sometimes conducted informal meeting in the teachers' room, for example, to inform them about the latest news about meetings they had attended at the District Education Division, or to obtain any updates regarding any school activities or issues that needed to be raised from all of the teachers.

The situation was slightly different in St. Dominic. My interview data suggest that the lack of support from the administrators for the SBA coordinator had limited the other teachers' engagement with the new policy. My data revealed that there was no involvement from the previous Head teacher regarding the new policy. In fact, the school administrator appointed one SBA Coordinator, who was reported to have taken on all the tasks, including managing, administrating, organizing and reporting everything relating to the new curriculum for the school. Teachers were threatened with being inspected by the MOE at any time throughout the implementation of the new policy; therefore, they had to comply with the policy. Although there are a number of teachers who were not completely happy to welcome the new policy, they were also making effort to implement the policy, such as preparing the documentation for SBA as intended by the MOE. However, because there was no support and involvement from the administrators, other teachers confirmed that they still followed the same practices as they had for the previous curriculum (teaching to the test) and only started to implement SBA (classroom assessments) when they had to teach the KSSR subjects.

St. Dominic also reported a lack of opportunity for the teachers to communicate with the administrators because the administration office was located on the first floor of the building and away from the staff room. Thus, for the teachers, visiting the administrative office was only to attend to 'formal' agendas. The relationship among the teachers was good, but it seemed as though there was a huge gap in good communication between the school administrators, the 'ordinary' teachers, and teachers who held important roles or positions in that school. My data also revealed that the staff dialogues were only conducted during formal

staff meetings. During the meeting, teachers were allowed to raise any issues regarding schools. This illustrates that professional dialogue about the new curriculum only tended to be discussed during the formal meeting if it was initiated by the Head teacher or from other senior managers of that school. There was evidence of professional dialogue being conducted by the Subject Heads when they met with the subject teachers, however, this might not have encouraged the development of integrated practices for the whole school, as teachers in this school were likely to only have professional dialogue with other teachers who taught the same subjects they did. The unsupported roles and boundaries in relationships due to the directive leadership that existed in the school structure, led the 'ordinary' teachers to be less engaged with the new policy and more likely to continue with their individual teaching goals and practices.

In contrast, at Sarayo Primary School, the strong relationships between all the teachers within the school and the strength of support from the Head teacher led the teachers to be more engaged with implementing the new curriculum. The relationships between the school administrators and teachers are very close. Dialogue among the school community is conducted from time to time; formal or informally. This was seen to empower the teachers to be engaged with SBA. The next section will explore further the influence of the organizational structures and the scope of the relationships help them to engage with the policy enactments in the two schools.

7.4.2 Wider school

As mentioned earlier in Section 7.4, both schools had a similar hierarchical organizational structure. However, the major differences lie in the way in which the organizational structure was operationalized and the nature of relationships in the schools. At Sarayo Primary School, the relationships between teachers and school administrators were very close. The evidence in my data reported that the role of the SBA Coordinator was fully supported by the Head teacher and the teaching staff. There was clear documentation of the expected distribution/process of tasks regarding KSSR by the teachers, the Subject Heads, the SBA Coordinator and the Head teacher, as the highest member of the hierarchy for implementation of policy. The teachers in this school were also given full trust by the school management and had full autonomy in their roles and teaching to interpret SBA policy in teaching and learning, which eventually led to good practices of SBA.

At St. Dominic, teachers were left to do whatever they wanted to in enacting the new policy. However, in the case of the SBA Coordinator, he was given a great deal of autonomy, and was trusted to just get on with the role. Nevertheless, the lack of support from the school management as a leader and mediator of the curriculum policy in school had then limited the potential of other teachers' engagement with the new ideas. My data in Chapter Five reported that the upper primary teachers demonstrated a lack of engagement with the new policy, not only because they were late in implementing the new policy, but also because they were influenced by the performativity culture of that school. My data also suggest that the sense-making process about the new curriculum was limited, due to a lack of opportunity for teacher dialogue and the nature of relationships within the school, which resulted from the directive leadership style. The school management did not seem to help in developing good relationships and connections between the large numbers of teachers in this school. In addition, the lack of support from the school administrators, for instance, did not encourage a culture of change, but instead promoted compliance with the policy had further hindered teachers' engagement with the new policy in this school.

7.4.3 External relationships

A small school size was an advantage for Sarayo Primary School in establishing a strong relationship between the parents and the school community. Based on my observations and informal conversations with other teachers and support staff in this school, the small number of pupils made it quite easy to monitor the pupils. In addition, because the community is small, the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) is also very supportive of all of the school programmes. Teachers are therefore seen as having less pressure from the pupils and parents due to sharing an effective and supportive community with the school. This kind of community ethos helped to maintain a good relationship between the parents and the community.

The strong relationship that existed between the school and the community here contributed in developing the school's ethos, which made not only the pupils, but also the community outside the school feel appreciated and close to the school. The school must continue to maintain good results in the National Exam, but the head teacher also stressed that she does not want to put pressure on the teachers to achieve the KPIs set by the District Education Division, as long as the teachers are making an effort to maintain the good reputation and good results. She often

observed the teachers in informal ways to ensure that what they teach is what is written in their lesson plan and in updating the documentation of any programmes from each subject Heads. This school's previous experiences of 'full inspection' from the MOE was seen as a factor that led teachers to commit to the policy without any complaints and at the same time led to positive enactments with any new policy.

In the case of St. Dominic, the interview data revealed that the majority of the teachers were dissatisfied with the management style in that school. As reported in section 7.4.2, there was no support provided from the school management regarding the new policy. In fact, this was also influenced by the culture of this school, which focuses on achieving the academic standards required for their school performance in the KPIs. At the same time, the threat of being punished if the new policy is not implemented led the teachers to perform in ways dictated by the inspection in order to escape the regime (Perryman, 2006). All the upper primary teachers are challenged to meet and to achieve the target achievement standards in the National Examination for Year Six pupils. My field notes reported that St. Dominic School is struggling in making efforts to improve their school's performance. They introduced additional class tuition and other school improvement programmes proposed by the District Education under the District Transformation Programme as early as in March to prepare for the National exam in September. This school was also visited by various departments from the District Education Office in order to monitor the progress of the school in their academic performance, as this school is labelled as a low performing school. Some teachers voiced their disappointment and frustration at being labelled as such, because although they put so much effort and dedication in to improving the academic performance in the National Examination results, the results still remain modest and/or remain below average in comparison with National Standards performance. One of the factors derived from a lack of support from home. As explained in Chapter Five, some of the pupils in this school are drawn from disadvantaged families. Teachers were complaining that they received lack of support from home, especially in monitoring the pupils' progress, or in ensuring that the pupils attend school. This is very important because pupils need to be in school when the teachers are conducting the assessment; if they are absent, it will be difficult to find the time to repeat the assessment as there are more topics to be covered and teachers are occupied with so many different tasks and workloads. A lack of support from parents, especially in monitoring their children's homework, and absence from school, led to the issue of time constraints for the teachers to

focus on the progress of learning for these pupils. As reported in Chapter Five, some of the parents solely depended on the teachers for providing all aspects of the children's learning, including the relevant materials, and they placed all of the responsibility for their children's performance in school on the teachers. All these factors are reported to distort teachers' engagement with the new policy.

The key difference between the schools is that, at Sarayo Primary School, the SBA Coordinator was also the English Head who was a member of an active electronic support group of English teachers and School Improvement Specialist Coaches (SISC+) from urban schools (see Section 6.5.1). This was reported to be a benefit for this school as this teacher has direct access to the latest information from the specialist teachers in that Electronic Support Group. It also provides a benefit to her school, which is located in rural area, to obtain the latest information about the curriculum and the latest news regarding KSSR. Thus, this school is always updated with the most recent information regarding the new curriculum.

The discussion in this section illustrates the significant differences and similarities between the two schools which likely tend to lie on the management styles of the schools. It is clear that, at St. Dominic, the new policy was mediated by the role of the SBA Coordinator without any support from the school management. Therefore, there is a possibility that other teachers may only "try to fit into the new structures without significant engagement with the underlying ideas and without significant changes to the practices of teaching" (Priestley, 2011, p. 20). The school management did not appear to seek cultural change, therefore the real change did not take place. Teachers in this school seemed to comply with the policy because of a fear of school inspection without real engagement. The targeted KPIs had led upper primary teachers to prioritize their teaching to prepare their pupils to pass the test, therefore improving the KPIs for the school. However, in Sarayo Primary School, the school inspection had led teachers to perform the tasks without complaints and, at the same time, being monitored at all times by the school management, had also led to positive attitudes among teachers, for instance, to enhancing their own understandings of implementing the new policy effectively. Nevertheless, the pressure of National examination and the pressure to maintain the good results in the National Exam, had resulted in some of the teachers in both schools teaching to the test. The pressure to achieve the KPIs had then narrowed the upper primary teachers' engagement with the new policy. Next, I will now turn to exploring the material factors, which are partly

structural, but which also play a role in helping to shape and/or impede teachers' engagement with the policy enactments in both schools.

7.5 Material attributes

Material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might classroom and school geography affect enactment? • How might school facilities and resources affect enactment?
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Figure 7.7: Material attributes – generic questions

From the 'outside', a school may appear to adopt a number of policies easily (Braun et al., 2011). However, schools also have different capacities for 'coping with policy' (ibid.), which means that when policy change enters schools, each with different resources and environments, such as school building and infrastructures, it "can have considerable impact on policy enactments on the ground" (Braun et al., 2011a, p.592). Information and Communication Technology (ICT), such as the Internet, is regarded by the Ministry as being an important dimension in the new curriculum to allow pupils to have easy access to information (Ministry of Education, 2010), so schools are provided with internet access. However, for St. Dominic, having no computer lab and no Overhead Projector (OHP) in the classrooms were claimed as being big drawbacks for the teachers in integrating the ICT, as recommended for the learning process. The slow internet access depending on the location of the classrooms in the building was also one of the barriers mentioned by the teachers, particularly when they wanted to find different teaching resources online. In addition to this issue, the limited number of classrooms with OHP made it difficult for the teachers to integrate ICT in the English language classrooms. It was reported to be time consuming to set up the ICT tools and to prepare the lesson within a limited time, particularly with the very tight timetabling, as teachers also teach other subjects. In contrast, Sarayo Primary School is equipped with a computer room that is available to be used by all the staff. Nevertheless, my field notes reported that none of the teachers were seen to use this facility. It seems that the lack of time and teachers' workload hindered the integration of ICT in the classroom among the teachers, especially those who teach upper primary.

The above factors led to the next aspect that shaped the policy enactments in both schools; namely, the school budgets. Braun et al. (2011) states that “school funding is primarily driven by student numbers, differences in school sizes, local authority subsidies and location” (p. 593). As a semi-government-aided school, St. Dominic School had to depend heavily on the funds received from the mission and the community. Because of the importance of achieving good results in the national league tables, the school attempts to provide extra tuition by purchasing additional learning materials beyond those texts recommended in the curriculum documents. This means that the school must purchase extra sets of exam questions and activity books for the pupils because the school struggled to achieve the targeted KPIs in National Exam. The teachers also had to prepare evidence, such as worksheets from pupils’ assessments, to be kept in their files. Inadequate school facilities demanded that the teachers had to use their own printers for printing the documentation, worksheets and SBA reports, which was deemed to be the biggest constraint for the teachers in implementing the new policy.

The poor physical condition of the school building had also affected the teaching and learning activities, especially in the afternoon, because of the hot climate in Malaysia. For both schools, my data reported that most of the English lessons were scheduled in the morning session or just after recess, but there are cases in which some teachers have to teach this subject just before the school day ended. This is because schools also have to allocate other subjects during the school session, therefore it is impossible to arrange and structure the timetable for English to be taught only during the morning session. This is seen as problematic, especially in St. Dominic Primary School, because this school has a lack of facilities and the classrooms are not conducive for teaching and learning process, especially in the afternoon; the classrooms are very warm because there are no fans in any of the classrooms, which then affects not only the lesson but also the teachers complained that these teaching times affect pupils’ interest. Therefore, if the English subject is to be taught in afternoon classes, teachers were only giving tests to the pupils as drilling activities because the hot climate affected pupils’ engagement with the lesson. The drilling exercise, without any interactive teaching and learning activities, had also impeded the practising of pedagogical practices of SBA in the classrooms.

In the social interaction model, the material attribute is also partly structural. Thus, the layout of the school in St. Dominic also had a significant effect in limiting the facilitation of communication between the school administrators and the teachers; therefore, this also affected the relationship between the staff and school management. However, in Sarayo Primary School, the staff room and the school administration office were located in the same building and on the same floor. This contributed to building close relationships among the school community because there is no such gap in conducting any informal discussions among the school administrators and teachers.

7.6 Discussion of the key findings

This section discusses the interplay between the individual, cultural, structural and material factors within the social interaction contexts in the two schools. These factors were analytically separated in detail in order to see how each aspect mediated and therefore influenced the way in which the policy was enacted in the two schools.

In the Malaysian education system, there is a tension between school cultures that emphasise academic performance with the concept of holistic assessment in SBA. Too much emphasis is placed on the structural factors, for instance, in achieving the KPIs as a measurement of a school's excellence and performance. This therefore affects the level of engagement among teachers. In St. Dominic, the lack of school facilities, insufficient materials and limited school budget were reported to further distort the favour of SBA among teachers. The analysis also highlighted the aspect of poor training and the fact that those teachers who attended the course were inexperienced in conducting the training. Furthermore, with the short period of time allocated for training, the policy might be interpreted and translated based on the teachers' own understandings (Braun et al., 2010). Accordingly, a new policy would not be similarly interpreted and translated in every school (Braun et al., 2011), as schools also produce their own understanding of policy (Braun et al., 2010) depending on the different school contexts. As indicated in the previous four sub-sections, the ways in which each individual teacher enacts the new curriculum are influenced by the professional and work cultures where they work. The existing structures in schools will often reinforce existing ideas for doing assessment and may lead to the rejection of the new ideas. The introduction of SBA is a significant change in Malaysian education culture. From the data gathered in the two schools, one of the reasons that the new SBA culture does not penetrate and does not change the

system is because the former structural patterns, such as the pressure from the MOE to achieve KPI targets, can be seen as being a form of morphostasis; that is, these structural attributes actually hinder the shift in practice from happening. This is clearly shown in the case of St. Dominic Primary School.

St. Dominic Primary School has a strong values and beliefs in examination as being an effective determinant of their school successfulness. The culture of this school largely contradicts with the new cultural form. As a result, SBA appeared to be implemented only for the purposes of documentation because of a fear of inspection by the MOE if the documentation targets were not met. In addition, this school, as a former low performing school, must achieve additional KPI targets in the National exam, as set by the MOE. The overall results of the school in the Primary School Achievement Test (UPSR) are very important to the teachers, as they act as an indicator of the performance of the school. Due to these performance pressures, there is a lack of engagement with the new assessment. For teachers as individuals, their personal biographies, such as the nature of their original training and on-going professional development, have also affected the way that they interpret the concept of SBA. Some teachers' beliefs corresponded with the SBA policy. Therefore, these teachers were more likely to have positive enactments in changing their assessment and classroom practices. However, their daily interaction and practices in terms of the school's social structures inhibited this change from happening within the wider school community. The cultural and structural forms conflated and impeded the assessment change, albeit some of the teachers were positive about the imposed change. In relation to the management hierarchies of schools, teachers in St. Dominic appear to have mainly vertical relationships, for instance conducting a dialogue horizontally only with teachers who teach the same subject. There was limited communication between the school administrators and the teachers at St. Dominic. School meetings or dialogue only took place if they were initiated by the school management. Some individual teachers showed their great support for SBA and showed evidence of conducting formative assessment at classroom level. However, a lack of professional dialogue conducted at school level had failed to stimulate change in the school culture as a whole. The lack of support from the school management regarding the new curriculum had further distorted the cultural change in the school. In addition, for some teachers, the cascade training was the one and only chance they had to attend any professional training regarding the new curriculum. The poor condition of the school buildings and a lack

of school facilities are also reported to further hinder the effective implementation of change in St. Dominic.

The case for Sarayo Primary School is slightly different. The Head teacher was really supportive of the imposed change. Although the school needed to aim for higher KPIs, the Head teacher did not push the teachers to focus on their pupils' exam performance. However, for teachers who teach upper primary, it seemed as though the pressure from the MOE led them to continue to focus on teaching to the test. Nevertheless, sometimes heavier workload pressures could be seen as an advantage. For example, one of the teachers, who also acted as the SBA Coordinator, the English Head, and was also a member of the English Teachers' Group consisting of the SISC+ members from the urban schools, had a greater understanding of the new curriculum and this led her to be more engaged with the reform. She received support not only from her school but also from outside the school. The relationship among the school community was also really close. Teachers were given full trust and also monitored by the administrators in implementing the SBA system in their practices. This had further helped teachers to have positive attitudes towards the change as they were given full authority to interpret and implement the change in their own way in their classrooms. The school administrators at Sarayo Primary School were also more collaborative in conducting formal or informal dialogue, and they always consulted the teachers for any decision making regarding the school; thus, this collaboration made it possible for the school to implement the policy effectively rather than simply implement it superficially. The close relationship between school administrators, the school community and the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) had helped the school to have same focus in achieving the school mission and vision instead of aiming for each individual's goal. The emerging practices from these relationships can be seen as being a form of morphogenesis as they are promoting change between teachers in within the school. Therefore, the implementation of SBA at the school level was much better at Sarayo Primary School than in St. Dominic Primary School.

The findings from this cross-case analysis provided an insight into why curriculum reform is likely to be unsuccessful, particularly in pedagogical and assessment practices among primary school teachers. This research suggests that the two case study schools demonstrated striking evidence that teachers do not understand SBA and the fundamental concepts underpinning KSSR. A number of factors were identified from the themes that emerged in the analysis of

the data gathered from the two schools. These factors were identified as those that both shape and/or hinder teachers' enactments of SBA.

Among the factors that led to positive enactment with the policy by teachers within both schools are:

- Peer collaboration and support;
- Leadership; and
- The reputation of the school.

The factors that hindered teachers' engagements are:

- Inexperienced teachers;
- Lack of school facilities;
- Workload;
- Poor quality training;
- Pressure from the Ministry of Education (accountability measure, school inspection);
- Parental engagement; and
- Lack of support from home.

The factors that shaped the engagement listed above are not the same for both schools. The leadership factor and the reputation of the school only applied to Sarayo Primary School, the second case study school. However, the similarities in the factors that were found to impede teachers' engagement with SBA are clear. The major findings from the two case study schools revealed that teachers lacked clarity about the English KSSR and its relation to SBA. They were also confused about how to conduct SBA and they did not understand the difference between formative and summative assessment and how it should be applied. Labelling pupils according to band without employing the appropriate criteria or learning standards is a good example of this lack of clarity and confusion about the link between SBA and the curriculum. In addition, teachers were accustomed to evaluating pupils' performance against that of other pupils. Therefore, teachers seem to have a cultural commitment to norm referencing over criterion referencing; for instance, they assess pupils with continuous assessment by simply using the bands to differentiate good and weak pupils instead of consulting the performance standards criteria. This is an example of hybridisation; there is a little evidence of change

drawing upon old and new practices. However, as discussed earlier in Chapter One (see Section 1.3), Malaysia has a long tradition of placing great trust in the effectiveness of high-stakes examinations. Therefore, there is a possibility that the teachers' assessment practices may have been subject to a 'washback effect'. For instance, upper primary teachers in the two schools still teach to the test and assessments were used mostly as drilling exercises to answer questions, mimicking the National exam. Instead of using assessment to evaluate pupils' progress in their learning, assessment was mainly used as judgement of pupils' attainment. Thus, formative classroom assessment practices were neglected.

In addition, teachers perceived that SBA is primarily a formative assessment, therefore they do not see the rationale for applying it in relation to the National exam. One of the reasons for this misconception is the lack of clarity in implementing the policy. In particular, it is not clear how the mark from SBA is to be combined with the results that the pupils achieve in the National exam. However, because the 60 percent weighting ratio of the national exam is higher than that attributed to SBA, there is also a tendency that teachers will focus more on the component that carries a greater weight. Moreover, while the SBA accumulates marks for each subject (Science, Bahasa Melayu, Bahasa Inggeris and Mathematics) that will be tested in the national exam, it is not clear to the teachers how the value of the SBA marks are translated to constitute the eventual mark awarded after the final exam. Nevertheless, there was no clarification for how the 40 percent should be allocated between the four subjects. In addition, there were no guidelines or clarity provided for how the marks for SBA ought to be calculated before being aggregated with the results of the National exam by the MOE. This finding coincides with those of Yu (2010), in a study conducted in Hong Kong schools, which reported that the washback effect of high-stakes exams resulted in teachers failing to see the logic of SBA in the Hong Kong education system. Another reason for this misunderstanding was derived from the poor quality of the training provided during the introductory course for KSSR. The subsequently cascaded single training session was too short and did not help teachers to understand the new policy and did not equip them with the necessary skills to enact the SBA practices, which led to further misinterpretation and dilution of the intention of the policy.

The findings also revealed that the same materials were used during the year-to-year training, which did not help teachers understand the purpose and significance of the reform. These

factors had all led to confusion and challenges with SBA implementation. This finding aligns with the recent study conducted by Rahman (2014), who reported that the cascade model of KSSR training was ineffective in helping teachers to understand the new curriculum. It also led to problems, such as the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of crucial information as it progresses down the cascade. The lack of understanding about the reform led to confusion about the whole concept of KSSR reform, which included the alignment of the English curriculum with SBA, and also with the learning outcomes in the English Curriculum Standard Document (Ministry of Education, 2011b). Teachers and schools are left to implement the reform with limited support. Therefore, the pressure to change from the policy-makers is likely to only “pay-lip service to reform rhetoric” (Carless and Harfitt, 2013, p. 175). Schools in Malaysia, each operating within a different context and having different priorities, are faced with time constraints in their attempts to engage with multiple innovations, for example, the English KSSR and SBA, and the LINUS programme were introduced in 2011 and 2013, respectively. These different policies are expected to be delivered by teachers, but the existence of the implementation gap and the envisioned intention of the policy (due to poor quality training and a lack of understanding about the new curriculum) have contributed to it being enacted in superficial ways by teachers. In addition, the implementation of the different policies mentioned above seemed to be unrealistic to teachers and schools because of the lack of time given to them to develop their understandings in enacting the changes. Therefore, it is crucial for the MOE and policy-makers “to explore what is actually happening in schools and classrooms as innovations are enacted, and to use that evidence to inform incremental changes to practice and changes to policy over longer time scales than the typical government policy cycle” (Wyse, Hayward, and Pandya, 2016, p. 24) in order to sustain the change.

The key finding in this cross-case analysis chapter also signifies that the biggest single factor militating against effective implementation is the existing culture in the Malaysian education system. The intended assessment reform in Malaysian school thus necessitates changes to culture. For many years, teachers have been accustomed to the norm-referenced high-stakes exams, but now they are required to use both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced approaches continuously to assess their pupils. This means that SBA is a totally new concept that contradicts the former high-stakes exam-oriented culture in the Malaysian assessment system. Therefore, in these two schools, the enactment of the SBA implementation occurs as a result of hybridisation; the original intention of SBA is adjusted to fit into the existing culture.

The first school, St. Dominic, seemed to implement the change superficially. The second school, Sarayo Primary School, demonstrated some evidence of implementing the policy effectively. The ways in which SBA is enacted between these two schools depends on individual teachers who have different degrees of understanding of the concepts outlined in the reform. This has further affected the way in which the SBA practices have penetrated their school cultures. On the surface, the findings suggest that SBA engagement was more comprehensive and better aligned with the policy in Sarayo Primary School. However, the implementation seemed only to be related to first order engagement. On the one hand, the “performativity regime” practised by the Head teacher in this school seemed to not only enforce, but also helped the SBA to be implemented in this school. On the other hand, teachers in this school were given full trust to interpret the policy in their own classrooms. Because teachers were inspected continuously by the school administrators, the surveillance seemed to promote improvement in the ranking of the school’s academic achievement. However, the findings also suggest that the teachers lacked a deeper understanding of the purpose and philosophical foundations of SBA, indicating that its implementation lacked second order engagement by the teachers (Priestley and Minty, 2013). Nevertheless, by implementing SBA as she wished it to be enacted, the Head teacher did help the teachers to obtain a deeper understanding of the rationale for making links between the English KSSR and the SBA assessment criteria. Conversely, teachers in St. Dominic Primary School demonstrated a lack of understanding about the new curriculum and assessment scheme. Nevertheless, as the mandated policy needs to be implemented, the implementation tended to be enacted mainly for the purpose of documentation to avoid the threat of school inspection. Therefore, the cultural practices in these schools remained the same as they had been enacted in the former curriculum.

The findings also suggest that the high accountability pressure and the culture of performativity, which are the two biggest morphostatic elements with origins outside the school, impeded the effective implementation of the policy change in the two case study schools. This accountability pressure worked differently in the two schools. For instance, St. Dominic is labelled as a low performing school, while Sarayo Primary is a high performing school. This categorisation further hindered the cultural shift in that the cultures in the schools still prioritised the high-stakes exam performance over holistic assessment, preventing the schools from achieving the aims of the imposed change in the assessment system in Malaysia.

Teachers, as human actors, in Archer's terms (1995), mediate the policy creatively in their own ways. The National Exam, namely, the Primary Pupils Achievement Test (UPSR in Malay acronym) had a strong influence on how the teachers in both schools enact the SBA policy.

For a low performing school such as St. Dominic, the pressure to achieve the KPI targets led teachers to comply with the new policy without real engagement with it. Some teachers, especially the upper primary teachers, did not see much change in their assessment practices because they had to improve their school performance in the National exam. Therefore, the teachers' pedagogical and assessment practices were still focused on preparing the pupils for the National exam. Some teachers, especially those who arrived late to the KSSR implementation, did not notice any difference between the two curricula because the school management did not make any effort to promote the cultural shift. This hindrance resulted from structural forms of social interaction. These include the leadership role in supporting the change to promote the cultural shift for the school. This is because the pressure of meeting KPI targets, that is, the structural constraints, hindered the change from taking place and therefore impeded the new assessment policy from being implemented effectively.

The close relationships between the school management and teachers, and among the teachers themselves, also helped to develop teachers' engagement with SBA. For instance, in both schools, peer collaboration and the support provided through English Panel and District English Teachers Association (DETA) helped to stimulate the change in pedagogical and assessment practices among the teachers. However, the inadequacy of the school facilities and resources, those that constitute material factors, had also affected the way in which teachers conducted their pedagogical practices and thus impeded their enactment with SBA. Some teachers' existing beliefs, such as the belief in their role to protect children's wellbeing as a teacher, are congruent with the new policy, therefore, these teachers welcome the change and attempted to change their classroom practices. However, some teachers' existing beliefs about the benefits of exams totally contradicted the idea of holistic assessment. Therefore, continuous assessment practices are not favoured, but teachers focus instead on teaching to the test. Nevertheless, these teachers had to comply with the requirements of the new curriculum, and they seemed to respond to these changes by coping with the strategy of 'incorporation' (Osborn et al., 1997), without making any real changes in their classroom assessment

practices. As a result, instead of transformation, their practices are an example of a reproduction of the new idea of holistic assessment rather than a transformation of their practices. The evidence relating to the second order engagement presented in Chapter Five provides a strong sense of how this engagement was superficial and morphostatic; there is strong evidence of grouping the pupils by ability, a lack of incorporation of Higher Order Thinking Skills elements, teaching to the test, the prioritising of subjective evaluation of the pupils' learning progression, and conducting formative assessment summatively.

As for the well-performing schools such as Sarayo Primary School, it seems that they have more freedom to opt out and mediate the policy in more creative ways, as they are not threatened with school inspection and the pressures of performativity. However, the “panoptic performativity” under the school management seems to enforce SBA to be implemented in this school. Therefore, some teachers implemented the policy because they were aware that they were being inspected all the time, and they performed in ways that suggested that they needed to be seen. In addition, this school had experienced a full inspection by the School Inspectorates. Thus, SBA was implemented to ‘fit’ the changes as required by the policy and the school management. For instance, there is some evidence to show that the upper primary teachers are still concerned about the demands of the National exam. Other evidence (see Section 6.5.2) seems to show teachers’ ‘disagreement’ with the new policy, as SBA takes up much of their time and diverts their priority away from teaching the pupils. Teachers were challenged to make sense of the SBA policy within a high performative culture in the Malaysian education system. Nevertheless, the school management was very supportive about the SBA policy and full trust was given to teachers to interpret the policy in their own ways. Teachers were thus empowered but at the same time forced to implement the SBA in their own classroom. The trust bestowed by the Head teacher and school administrators helped the teachers to have a greater sense of ownership of the policy. The findings in this study also suggests that, even if a school is provided with additional pressures and the facilities to change their culture, teachers’ beliefs need to be addressed first, as they contribute to how they make sense of and enact the assessment reform. As suggested by Priestley (2005 p. 29), “the form which innovation takes in practice is to a large extent dependent on the attitudes and values of these practitioners, notably teachers.” The open leadership style practised in this school empowers the teachers to mediate the policy. This helped teachers to shift their classroom practices into enacting the English SBA approach more effectively.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter explained how SBA in the English subject was interpreted by teachers and enacted in the two case study primary schools. It can be concluded that there is evidence that demonstrated that the SBA policy was implemented in both schools. However, the data strongly suggest that there is a contrast between the teachers' understandings of the SBA with the way it was designed to be implemented, because of a lack of conceptual understanding of the two forms of assessment practice. In addition, due to a lack of clarity in defining the philosophy and purpose of the policy during the training courses, the teachers seemed to lack the ability to differentiate between formative assessment and summative assessment. Therefore, they appear not to see the relation of each type of assessment with its function, concepts which are inseparable in the teaching process (Heritage, 2007). The question that arises repeatedly from teachers is 'Why do we have to do two assessments at the same time?' This is a good example of teachers' lack of understanding about the function of SBA. Educational change always involves "change in practice" (Fullan, 1991, p. 37). However, for teachers who have been trained in a very exam-oriented system, changing away from the old practice is not easy. The different beliefs about assessment revealed by the teachers in this study, and whether they were congruent or contradict with the SBA policy, also contributed to shaping or distorting their engagement with the policy. In addition, the numerous forms of pressure dictated by the demands of the MOE, for instance, setting higher KPIs targets which demand that the schools engage in high-stakes results for the purpose of monitoring the performance of teachers and schools (Harlen, 2005), led to hybridisation or the reproduction rather than the transformation of the teachers' pedagogical practices. The aim of achieving the KPIs thus demands that the teachers must focus on teaching to the test (Black et al., 2003; Perryman et al., 2011) or on training pupils to practise answering questions for the National examination. This makes a huge impact on promoting the change, such as the limited use of formative assessment to help to improve the learning process (Broadfoot et al., 1998 and Pollard et al., 2000, as cited in Harlen, 2005). This has also led to the adaptation of both the new and old ideas to aid in removing the contradictions (Priestley and Sime, 2005), such as conducting summative assessment and claiming it to be formative, and therefore continuing with the old way of assessing the pupils while only seeming to comply with the assessment practices mandated in the new policy.

This chapter provided a complete analytical separation of the individual, cultural, structural and material forms evident in the data gathered from the two case study schools. The chapter also examined some of the underlying mechanisms and how the new curriculum is understood, mediated and put into practice by teachers. In the reality of enacting education reform, policy is decoded in complex ways; it involves not only the process of interpretation and translation (Braun et al., 2011), but also includes contextual factors; how individual capacity interplays with social and material structures and cultural forms (Priestley et al., 2015) that then result in better and/or limited engagement with the policy. The next chapter will present some conclusions that can be drawn from the research. I will also present a consideration of how these findings may be applied to the problem of educational change in Malaysia, and the implications that the findings have.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

What is prescribed is not necessarily what is undertaken, and what is planned is not necessarily what happens.

Goodson, 1990, p. 310

The previous chapter presented the cross-case analysis and discussed the key findings from the two case study schools using an analytical separation of individual, cultural, structural, and material attributes that influence social interaction. This concluding chapter is set out in four sections. I will start by presenting the contribution of the study, the implications and suggestions for future study, the strengths and limitations of the chosen research methodology, and will close with a brief personal reflective commentary about my journey from teacher to scholar throughout the process of conducting and completing this research.

8.2 Contribution of the study

This section discusses the contribution that this study makes to the literature, particularly around the issues of educational change. The findings in this study contribute to current research on why SBA is unlikely to be implemented effectively in an educational setting that highly emphasises school performance and accountability measures, such as Malaysia. The culture of the Malaysian education system places too much emphasis on accountability, which led to tension between the two assessment roles. Placing too much emphasis on the schools' performance in league tables has hindered the effective implementation of SBA in primary schools. Therefore, implementing SBA policy is likely only paying lip service to the MOE, for example, by considering the preparation of documentation for SBA as evidence of its implementation, yet the teaching practices remain the same, that is to say, the teachers still teach to prepare the pupils for exams. In order for the MOE to ensure that SBA is enacted in a meaningful way, effective training regarding KSSR that addresses teachers' existing beliefs must be conducted so that their pedagogical beliefs might shift to be congruent with SBA practices. If SBA is to be sustained and to become congruent with teachers' beliefs about assessment, a continuous professional development programme for staff must be considered,

as this will help to change teachers' beliefs about assessment. All of the teachers in this study claimed that the training they attended was inadequate for them to fully understand the concept of the assessment reform. One of the contributing factors lies in the top-down dissemination process. A large number of existing studies (see Section 3.9.4 in Chapter Three) indicate that employing a top-down approach in disseminating a new innovation is likely to cause dilution and distortion of messages. The existing cascade training about the reform, in the findings of this thesis, suggest that employing a top-down approach in disseminating the SBA caused reinterpretation, dilution and distortion of the intended policy. As observed by Gardner et al. (2008), the top-down approach in rolling out classroom practices is not the same as top-down processes in introducing a policy. It needs to focus on teachers' knowledge and attitudes and to take account of their beliefs as a starting point in order for the teachers to make sense of the assessment change. Accordingly, as the data reveal in this study, the teachers seemed to lack ownership of the reform because of the ineffective top-down approach used in disseminating the mandated policy. Teachers are the real and final implementers of the reform into the classroom practices. Their understanding about the change is crucial, as the success of education reform depends on how teachers interpret the policy. Hence, a continuous support and training programme, including teachers' networking and professional learning collaboration, is needed to help teachers to enact the reform, and, eventually, this may shift their pedagogical beliefs about their classroom assessment. In order to achieve this, recent research (e.g., Pyhältö et al., 2018, Priestley et al., 2014) advocates shared sense-making to make sense of and translate the policy into meaningful classroom practices. This is a process designed to build new collective understanding through dialogue and negotiation about the reform by those who are directly involved (Pyhältö et al, 2018). The data from the two case study school schools reported that there are has been some positive response to SBA gained through the peer support provided by the subject panel, and by the teachers' groups, such as the District English Teachers Association (DETA), and also the support provided electronically on social media support groups comprising English teachers from both rural and urban schools. Therefore, the shared-sense-making through dialogue and negotiation across educational levels, such as those between the schools and school districts, along with the presence of the experts from the MOE, might help to trigger more sense of ownership towards the intended SBA. In addition, the findings in this study indicate that school leadership style plays a big role in encouraging any reform. The lack of support from school management

resulted in superficial change in St. Dominic School. Conversely, in Sarayo Primary School, SBA is much more welcomed and effectively implemented because of the supportive Head teacher. As stressed by Fullan (1991), one of the reasons why school leaders are hesitant to enact reform is because the ways in which the fundamental concepts of the reform and how the head teacher should enact the change process are not made clear enough. Thus, the shared decision-making strategies should be developed to build teachers' understanding, not only regarding the curriculum reform, but also to act "as tools to enhance co-regulative learning in reform implementation as well as to monitor the reform progress within and between the different levels of the system" (Pyhältö et al., 2018, p. 197). Adopting this strategy will further develop a clear understanding and positive engagement with the reform among all the stakeholders involved in the change process.

Another important contribution made by these findings is the need for professional support regarding the Higher Order Thinking Skills, which is the main reason why KSSR was introduced to replace the former curriculum. The reasoning skills added to the new curriculum were stressed repeatedly in both the KSSR and SBA policies. However, teachers' lack of skills in integrating the Higher Order Thinking Skills in teaching and learning activities impeded pupils from thinking critically in order to express their thoughts confidently. Instead, the old practices of memorising and repetition and using closed-ended questions that only require a Yes/No response answer continue to be prevalent. It is also crucial to note that, instead of promoting the ability of pupils to apply communicative reasoning skills, the ability of pupils to think critically was tested using written tests, for example, drilling pupils with English Paper 2 because, in the National exam, 70 percent of the questions asked are based on Higher Order Thinking Skills. However, the way in which these skills were integrated was not enacted in oral communication, but mainly in written tests. Thus, this hindered pupils to think critically and make full use of the language. Therefore, professional development for teachers is crucial in providing training about the effective use of higher order questioning methods in their classrooms to encourage pupils to think and express their thought confidently.

This study also contributes novel and original findings in literature, specifically in research conducted in Malaysia. As mentioned briefly in Chapters One and Four, past research in Malaysia has mainly focused on teachers' readiness, beliefs and perceptions, or the effectiveness of SBA implementation. However, studies relating to their enactments of the

curriculum have rarely been investigated. A recent study about policy enactment was conducted by Mahmood (2014) on citizenship education in secondary schools in Malaysia. However, for this study, my research focused on the enactment of policy related specifically to SBA, and was conducted in primary schools, the setting in which the SBA practices were first implemented. In addition, the Social Interaction Model used in this research had also provided greater in-depth findings, not only regarding teachers' beliefs, but also about the different contextual factors in schools that shape and/or hinder teachers' enactment of the policy. These, therefore provided clear information regarding which elements in the social interaction model have had a bigger influence on wider SBA enactments, not only among teachers. In addition, the findings also provided clear evidence of why one school might implement policy more effectively than another. This, therefore, will contribute great value for the MOE in determining which aspects needed to be considered in order to ensure that SBA practices will be effectively implemented at school level.

8.3 Implications of the study

The findings from this study suggest that teachers are confused by SBA and this is because teachers do not understand the concept of formative assessment or its purpose. This misunderstanding caused teachers to struggle with the policy implementation. This section will discuss the implications of the study, followed by some suggestions for future research.

8.3.1 Ministry of Education

The existing policy documents provided as a reference in schools are not clear and are poorly written, and appear to be problematic and confusing for teachers to understand, especially when they need to refer to them in conducting the assessment. However, as I mentioned earlier in Chapter One (see Section 1.3), the policy documents were prepared by two different government bodies. Therefore, although the two policy documents have been combined into one, there is a need for the Performance Standards to be framed more clearly to provide an easy reference for the teachers. For example, a set of guidelines might be drafted, in consultation with the teachers, to clearly outline the process and the steps that they must take to enact the appropriate skills in performing SBA. In addition, this document does not help teachers to understand what they are required to do; it only sets out the final outcomes and the goals of the implementation, and the teachers are expected to interpret and deliver the policy. The new guidelines should be able to frame clearly the concept of SBA, and should provide

insight into how the contribution of the marks drawn from SBA is calculated to be combined with the results of the National exam. Teachers need to have a clear idea of the rationale for calculating 40 percent of the SBA in relation to the 60 percent for the National exam, because the lack of clarity about this issue led teachers in this study to implement SBA only for documentation purposes. However, the rationale and purpose of conducting SBA is still unclear to teachers. Therefore, there is a mismatch between the policy's intention and the underlying pedagogical and assessment practices that the concept of SBA advocates they use in their classroom practices and there is insufficient understanding of the rationale and purpose of SBA, which often leads to confusion among the teachers at the implementation stage. Yet, teachers are needed to implement the policy, regardless of whether they understand it sufficiently. This has further resulted in teachers complying with the policy without real engagement, thus the new curriculum is only implemented superficially and without any real changes in their classroom practices because of the gap between the intention of the policy and the reality of the implementation has not been fully addressed. Unclear policy is often "interpreted and translated and reconstructed and remade in different but similar settings" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 6). Thus the process of enactment becomes much more complex and constrains the development of understanding among the teachers (Priestley and Philippou, 2018). Therefore, there is a need to frame a new document that clearly outlines what the change intends to achieve, how it should be implemented, and the links between the descriptors and evidence and the Performance Standards for appropriate and effective assessment. In addition, a clear explanation of the fundamental concept that informs the curriculum reform (KSSR), particularly one that aligns well with the concept of English SBA, must be communicated among the teacher educators and also the school authorities. This means that the dissemination process needs to be carefully considered. The policy should be able to be communicated clearly in order to be implemented effectively by all actors in the educational setting, for instance, the school leaders, teachers, pupils, and also parents. Therefore, it is important to maintain educational integrity (Hayward and Spencer, 2010) or a clear understanding of what it entails to ensure that teachers are given continuous professional support such as peer networking to discuss and to deepen their understandings and learning about assessment.

8.3.2 Examination Syndicate

Most of the confusion around the policy reform lies in the circular letter that stated the 60:40 ratios for National exam and SBA, respectively. The 40 percent comes from the school assessments that comprise both academic and non-academic components. However, how the contribution of marks from SBA are to be combined with the 60 percent for the National exam is not explained. Teachers lack clarity about the rationale for SBA and about how the individual marks for each subject will contribute to the overall percentage, because, in the National exam, four subjects are assessed. This means that a clear explanation is lacking for the weighting percentage that each subject in SBA carries for the subjects tested in the National exam (English, Mathematics, Science and Bahasa Malaysia) and this must be clearly framed. In addition, teachers think that SBA is only composed of formative assessment. Formative assessment does not include grading and scoring, so teachers do not see the relevance of combining pupils' level of progress, based on performance criteria, and the numerical grade for the Primary School Achievement Test (UPSR). To add to the confusion, while the policy was implemented in 2011, the hard copy of the *Guidelines for School-Based Assessment and Management* (Malaysian Examination Syndicate, 2012) were only sent by the Examination Syndicate to every school in 2012. Moreover, the guidelines only listed the terms and how SBA is administered from state level downwards, but there are no specific instructions on how SBA and its various methods of assessment should be conducted. In addition, on page 13 of the Guidelines (Malaysian Examination Syndicate, 2012), Section 1.4 states that each school would only be issued with one hard copy and the school administrators were expected to provide photocopies for each teacher who would be implementing the KSSR that year for all subjects, including English. However, none of the teachers in this study were aware of the existence of this text. In certain schools, especially in remote area, schools are not adequately equipped with facilities such as photocopy machines. The geographical location of certain schools, such as those located in Sabah, where this study was conducted, is very isolated and distant from the nearest town. It would be problematic for teachers to travel to the nearest town in order to obtain photocopies of the books, thus these material factors lead to the miscommunication of crucial information from the primary source of the SBA reference. Therefore, instead of making enough copies of the guidelines, teachers instead depend on the cascade training to obtain information about the implementation. However, the KSSR training was also reported to be very inefficient. Thus, there is a need for the Examination Syndicate to

consider providing an online reference and access for teachers to seek any necessary information and guidance relating to the implementation so as not to miscommunicate any information about SBA. Secondly, as the majority of teachers perceive SBA to be formative, the classroom practices will focus on the weightage of 60 percent, which carries a higher value in determining the final mark. Therefore, teaching to the test is still emphasised as a result of the culture of performativity in Malaysian schools. Thus, the Examination Syndicate needs to consider to how SBA and National examination is aligned because there is strong evidence in this study to support the notion that the purposes of the formative assessments are being swamped by the perceived importance of the higher percentage weight of the National exam.

8.3.3 Primary school teachers

The concept of SBA, which emphasises Higher Order Thinking Skills, encompassed in the new KSSR English curriculum needs to be fully understood by teachers. Teachers need to have a very clear mental map or conceptualisation about the different purposes of assessment in order to be able to see the benefits of both formative and summative assessments. More professional training on SBA, especially on formative assessment, is needed to help teachers to better understand the concept. Some teachers in this study did implement formative assessment, but they were not aware that they were conducting formative assessment. Conversely, some teachers did practise excessive use of summative assessment, but defined it as formative assessment. Most of the teachers perceived that SBA encompasses only formative assessment. Therefore, this study suggests several ways in which teachers might obtain a better understanding of formative assessment:

- Continuing professional development training, and maintaining personal and professional integrity (Hayward and Spencer, 2010), explicitly focused on the concept of SBA, will help teachers understand the concept of SBA and how each of its components can aid teachers and pupils with their learning outcomes through their learning processes.
- Shared sense-making activities with current experts in formative assessment to help teachers understand the underlying principles of AfL.
- Special training on how to use the Performance Standards Document that outlines the criteria-based referenced that distinguishes pupils' performance level or band based on the stipulated language skills. This training is crucial to help teachers understand that

the levels indicated in the SBA template are not to be used as a grade as they are in summative assessment, but rather as a determinant of pupils' mastery learning to inform their future learning. This needs to include a very clear explanation of how formative assessment will eventually help pupils to obtain better grades in summative assessment.

8.4 Suggestion for future studies

Several recommendations are outlined in this section. SBA policy was implemented in phases between 2011 and 2016 in Malaysian Primary schools. The first full implementation of combining the SBA results with those obtained in the National exam occurred in 2016. However, this research suggests that teachers are still facing difficulties in implementing SBA. Therefore, there is a need to prioritize the implementation stage of the SBA at school level for sustainable change. Teachers are the key factors for promoting education reform (Sarason, 1990). Therefore, the role of leadership is also crucial in order to convince teachers to implement the change effectively (Fullan, 1991). However, as argued by Priestley and Sime (2005), strong leadership alone is not enough to promote change; it must be followed by professional trust, specifically in empowering the teachers to interpret the policy in their own classroom. An effective change demands considerable effort from all stakeholders who are involved in the process.

One way of promoting effective change is by engaging in collaborative and shared sense-making among the stakeholders involved in the change process. For instance, shared sense-making has proven to be an integral element of curriculum change, as it helps to construct understanding, highlights the significance of the reform, and identifies the implications for the school (Pyhäntö et al., 2018). This study focused on how teachers make sense of the new assessment system. My findings reported that one of the strongest factors that helps shape teachers understanding was through teachers' collaborative support groups. Similarly, a recent research study by Pyhäntö et al. (2018) in Finland reported that the hands-on strategies for sense-making and enactment through dialogue and negotiation throughout all levels of the education system promotes remarkable success in helping the translation of policy and its successful enactment and implementation into the school practices. In the Malaysian education system, which is highly centralised and is structured in different distinct hierarchical levels (see Figure 2.2 in Chapter Two), there is a tendency that the policies might be misinterpreted

between the different levels of educational settings. Therefore, the shared-sense making practices of the teachers will help to build understanding across the educational system of the rationale behind the SBA and the required development work in order to achieve the aim of the assessment change in SBA thus, sustaining SBA in Malaysian education system.

Therefore, I suggest that, for future study, the focus should be placed on shared-sense making through dialogue and collaboration between the macro (Ministry of Education), meso (school), or micro (teachers) levels. This will be helpful in exploring how the process of any educational reform implementation reaches the final level in the education system. The education hierarchy in the Malaysian education system is comprised of stakeholders drawn from each of these levels. These levels are explained further in the following section.

8.4.1 Macro level (Ministry of Education)

At the Ministry of Education level, there is a need to provide training across the entire implementation stage (i.e., the State Education Department, and District Education Offices) on how the 40 percent of SBA might be composed. When teachers were given the policy, the circular letter stated that the 40 percent is derived from SBA, it does not help teachers to enact meaningful practices unless they fully understand why they have to follow the policy. The teachers must progress through a process of making sense of that process. For instance, Ball et al. (2012) observe that schools have to implement multiple policies at the same time, and they are often enacted differently by teachers within the same school. In this research, schools had to implement the new English KSSR that comes with a new assessment system and the LINUS programme, which was introduced in 2011 and 2013. However, “putting policies into practice is a creative and sophisticated and complex process” (ibid., p. 8). Policy enactments are not just about their implementation, but it is interpreted differently by different policy actors. Therefore, the process of generating different interpretations and translations of policy resulted in a more complex process for teachers to make sense of it. This is because “teachers do not implement policy; they enact, translate, mediate it through a process of iterative refraction, filtered via existing professional knowledge, dispositions and beliefs” (Priestley and Philippou, 2018, p. 153). Therefore, training should include discussion groups with an external group of experts, such as including an expert facilitator to focus on building up a better understanding of how SBA is conducted so as to help teachers to have better

understanding of the purpose of SBA. This might change their beliefs and shift their classroom practices.

8.4.2 Meso level (school level)

The individual attributes, such as teachers' beliefs, were revealed to be very important in making sense of and enacting the policy. Teachers' existing beliefs need to be addressed as they influenced their classroom practices. In St. Dominic School, for instance, the collaboration between teachers and the teachers' group at the district level was the only factor that helped teachers in that school to build up their understanding about the new curriculum. Again, Pyhältö et al. (2018) suggest that Finnish reforms were reported to be successfully implemented because the hands-on strategies of shared sense-making were utilized in building understanding for how reform works at the districts level. Therefore, the findings in this study suggests that a continuous dialogue on English SBA, underpinned by the new curriculum must be initiated. Developing a shared understanding, for instance, between the districts in a state and between schools in a district, will help teachers to make sense of the unfamiliar ideas; in this case, the rationale for conducting SBA in schools. For future research, I suggest a study based on what forms of professional training might help to promote teachers to shift their pedagogical beliefs about assessment that will then help both teachers and pupils to embrace SBA in teaching and learning activities.

8.4.3 Micro level (School leaders)

Fullan (1991) stressed that the extent of reform implementation is not the same in every school because of the different leadership concerns. As discussed in Section 3.9.3 in Chapter Three, school leaders need to convince and lead the change for it to be successfully implemented in schools. For instance, St. Dominic School reported a lack of support from the school management in encouraging them to embed SBA in their existing school culture. Therefore, some of the teachers were not aware about the change or how to comply with the new policy, so there was no evident change in their classroom assessment practices. In contrast, teachers in Sarayo Primary School were given professional trust by the school management to implement the policy in their classrooms. The strong leadership role drove the school to promote cultural change. Thus, a strong leadership helps to shape teachers' positive attitudes towards embracing SBA. This finding aligns with those presented by Priestley and Sime (2005), which suggest that strong leadership, accompanied by professional trust, promotes teachers' capacity

for change. However, the performativity culture and the weighing ratios of 60:40, prioritising the National exam over SBA, seemed to hinder the schools from focusing on the holistic assessment. Instead, one of the key findings discussed earlier in Section 8.2 in this chapter indicates that the school leadership in St. Dominic seemed to face the constraint of KPI targets dictated by the Ministry of Education. This distorted the SBA practices and prevented them from being effectively implemented and from penetrating the culture of the school because of the performativity measures. Therefore, possible future research could focus on what forms of leadership might help stimulate the new assessment practices to be part of the school culture. One way of doing this is through shared understanding; if the school management does not understand the policy, they will not be able to convince their staff to implement it well. However, Pyhäntö et al. (2018) also warned about the possibility that shared sense-making may not automatically result in practical understanding and improvement in relation to practices. This is especially true in the Malaysian context, where too much emphasis is placed on league tables based on their school's performance. Thus, school leaders might be affected by the different values and practices and the school aspects that they found to be crucial at school level. As discussed briefly in Section 8.5.1, policy speaks differently to different policy actors, thus it depends on what schools perceive to be more important for their school agenda. In the case of a low performing school, such as in St. Dominic, the accountability pressure from the MOE on the school's performance during the National exam impeded the school management from promoting the SBA culture as a change in assessment practices in their school. In fact, the pressure from the MOE led this school to continue with their old practices of teaching to the test. This school is striving to improve the KPIs targets that are based on the Year 6 pupils' overall results in the National exam. Therefore, the culture of teaching for exam preparation is much more in focus, so the idea of assessing the pupils holistically has been neglected. However, if spaces are provided among the school leaders to promote knowledge sharing about the reform; this might help them to construct an understanding of the aims of the reform, thereby helping to promote sustainable change at their school level (ibid.).

8.5 Limitations

As discussed in Section 4.4.4 of my Methodology chapter, this study was only conducted in two primary schools in Malaysia. The schools may not represent the whole of primary schools in Malaysia. Therefore, in terms of generalisation, the findings from the two schools are limited. However, the two schools in this study are contrasting in terms of school type

(government school and semi-aided government school), each, with different resources and diversity in their philosophies, have provided me with rich and interesting information regarding the teachers' engagement with the policy. In addition, as mentioned earlier in Section 4.7 in Chapter Four, the points of comparison, for instance, the findings from a case can be generalised where that case may provide insights which are applicable to similar settings. These therefore provide the basis for future research to determine whether the phenomena revealed are more common. Focusing on the two case study schools also helped me to spend more time with the teachers in each school and allowed me to build good rapport with them. This therefore contributed to the trustworthiness of my data and helped to mitigate the power imbalance of my position as a researcher with the teachers in both schools.

The second limitation is that the empirical element of the study was conducted at the beginning of 2016. However, starting in 2017, the schools began to use a new revised policy for the English Curriculum Standards Document (Ministry of Education, 2011b). The Performance Standards Framework document (Ministry of Education, 2011c) was also revised. The use of the bands were changed and re-classified as levels to distinguish pupils' progress in learning based on the criteria outlined for each level. The two documents (English Curriculum Standards and the Performance Standards Framework) were merged and presented as one document (English Curriculum Standard and Assessment document, Ministry of Education, 2015a) as a reference for teachers. Therefore, teachers' understanding of the SBA and their classroom practices might have been slightly changed. Nevertheless, the data from the two case study schools that were analysed separately in terms of individual, structure, culture and material attributes discussed in Sections 8.3 and 8.4 of this chapter, provided insight on how policy enactments work at the institutional level. The findings from the two schools indicate that the different school contexts play very significant roles, not only as constraints for the policy, but also as factors that enable its enactment; yet, some occur simultaneously. For instance, the pressure of school KPIs targets impeded and shaped the enactment at the same time. Therefore, the findings might be helpful and relevant for the Ministry of Education to consider what aspects of schools need to have more consideration in order for any reform or innovation to be effectively and successfully implemented.

8.6 My odyssey from teacher to scholar

It has been more than two years since I conducted my empirical research in Malaysia. I must say, I thoroughly enjoyed the process of writing the thesis, although at times I felt so frustrated, isolated and lost in my own world. The PhD is indeed a lonely journey; but for me I was not alone on my journey as I was surrounded by supportive and helpful supervisors and colleagues. I should mention that writing each and every chapter was a really challenging task. However, I came to understand that completing a PhD study is not a straightforward process. It required me to be reflexive in order to make sense of the large amount of data that I obtained. It taught me to learn, not simply how to write in English, but also how to refer to lots of literature and there was lots of reading for me to do to enable me to write using an academic writing style. The writing of my thesis challenged me to be critical in writing and also to make my own claims boldly, as well as to build my own confidence in talking about my own research.

I mentioned earlier in Chapter One that I worked as a primary school teacher before beginning my PhD study at the University of Stirling in 2014. I was involved in the implementation of SBA and experienced difficulties in understanding the KSSR policy and the SBA policy. All the teachers I knew, including myself, encountered the same problem in making sense of the new assessment system in the new curriculum. This motivated me to deepen my own understanding of the rationale for this education reform in Malaysia. Throughout the process of reading to deepen my own understanding, especially about SBA, I gained valuable knowledge that allowed me to have a better idea about what the concept of SBA is in Malaysia, how it is helpful in improving pupils' learning, and how it might inform my own pedagogical approach that I will confidently apply when I get back to teach in school after finishing my PhD.

I must say, throughout my journey as a beginning researcher, it helped me to develop my own professional knowledge; this was an eye-opener for me – to see the bigger issue and problems in educational change. Through engaging with the literature regarding curriculum change, it allowed me to see the bigger issues that might be challenging in introducing any reform in any educational setting. It allowed me to build my own understanding about SBA, particularly in relation to formative assessment and how it can help both teachers and pupils in the learning process if we truly understand its purposes. Dealing with teachers who had the same confusion

about the SBA implementation helped me to understand that implementing a policy and enacting that policy is not an easy process. This research also gave me an insight to how teachers and schools might implement a mandated policy without real engagement with it. A lack of engagement therefore resulted in more complex issues and further confusion in its implementation. I also came to understand that it takes time and continuous effort from all the stakeholders involved with the change process. Thus, I truly believe that teachers should not be put into deficit in the entire process of not enacting the policy well or even being resistant to changes, because of the complexities they face in their own school settings.

I faced the biggest challenges in writing my analysis chapters, but those critical chapters have really contributed to my ability to understand and to see which contextual factors carry the most influential issues when they interplay with each other. It helped me to see that the different elements in the school context are crucial in the social interaction that will either shape and/or hinder teachers to implement the change effectively. It also helped me to understand and realise that we can never have complete knowledge, because we cannot see everything. However, I learned a lot from gathering the different perspectives of what the teachers in my study see and do, and this allowed me to interpret what is happening from the different data I obtained. I also learned that the different school contexts made enacting the mandated policy even more complicated. The social interaction model provided me with a clear picture to see how the interplay between all the elements in the school setting had constrained and/or shaped the enactment of SBA in the two schools. This had therefore helped to answer my curiosity that I explained earlier in Section 1.4 in the introductory chapter, which initially drove my interest in conducting this research. Thus, the data helped to build my understanding of what is actually happening when teachers deliver a mandated policy. It made me appreciate the complexities and challenges that the teachers have to deal with in implementing a policy. This study is far from perfect, but I tried my very best to present all of the data I gathered from the teachers in this thesis with the hope that my findings will help to deepen their knowledge and understanding about the reform, especially around SBA, in Malaysia. The findings will provide insights to the Malaysian Ministry of Education or any curriculum reformers regarding the problems and challenges they may face in implementing any educational reforms.

8.7 Conclusions

At a centre of policy enactment is the school – but the school is neither a simple nor a coherent entity, there is a need to understand schools as far more differentiated and loosely assembled than is often the case. Schools are not of a piece. They are precarious networks of different and overlapping groups of people, artefacts and practices.

Ball et al., 2012, p. 144

In this final paragraph of this thesis, I drew together my research questions related to how teachers make sense of policy. In the early chapters (One, Two and Three), I have tried to develop my understanding of the curriculum reform in Malaysia that brought changes to Malaysian assessment system. While addressing my inquiry of how SBA is enacted in schools, I came to understand that policy enactment is not as straightforward a process as the policymakers made it appear to be. In fact, the reality of the schools, for example, the different school contexts, as discussed in detail in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, are not fully considered when schools are expected to implement the mandated policy, therefore, this makes the policy enactment much more complicated. This thesis is not only sought to provide an understanding of why SBA practices are not fully implemented effectively among the primary school teachers, but also, I attempted to describe how SBA policy is actually ‘working’ in real school settings. It is my hope that this study will provide insights to teachers by providing an understanding about the reform and the processes that actually happen behind their enactments, and also by providing a list of suggestions for policy makers and educationalists in order to help enhance better sense-making of policy at school level.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: MS Excel Template for the SBA Management System

PENTAKSIRAN MATA PELAJARAN BAHASA INGERIS TAHUN 5

NAMA SEKOLAH:
ALAMAT SEKOLAH:
KOD SEKOLAH:
TARIKH PELAPORAN:
NAMA GURU MATA PELAJARAN :
TEMPOH TAKSIRAN:

KELAS :

BIL	NAMA MURID	NO. SURAT BERANAK	JANTINA	KELOMPOK STANDARD PEMBELAJARAN											
				LISTENING AND SPEAKING			READING			WRITING			LANGUAGE ARTS		
	STANDARD PEMBELAJARAN YANG PERLU DIAJAR DAN DITAKSIR			Kelompok 1	Kelompok 2	Kelompok 3	Kelompok 1	Kelompok 2	Kelompok 3	Kelompok 1	Kelompok 2	Kelompok 3	Kelompok 1	Kelompok 2	Kelompok 3
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Appendix B: Interview Schedules

Participants	Interview Guide
Head teacher	<p><u>Part A: Teachers' background</u></p> <p>Q1. Can you please tell me about your teaching qualification and teaching experience?</p> <p>Q2. What course did you take during your teachers' training?</p> <p>Q3. May I know how long you have been the Head teacher? How were you chosen to hold this position?</p> <p>Q4. Can you briefly tell me about your working experience? Have you held any other positions?</p> <p>Q5. What is the scope of your duties within the current position?</p> <p><u>Part B: Training and support</u></p> <p>Q1. Could you please tell me about any training/support regarding the new curriculum that you have had since you held this position?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who provided the training? • How often do attend training or receive any support? • What kind of support do you get? <p>Q2. Do you think you have received adequate training and support to ensure that the new curriculum has been implemented effectively in your school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What additional support would you like to receive? (if support is insufficient, how do you cope with this?) <p>Q3. Can you please tell me the supporting materials that were provided to implement the new curriculum? Who provided these materials? How would you rate the quality of these materials?</p> <p>Q4. Does your school conduct any courses or produce any materials to support teaching and learning for the new curriculum?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the teachers prepare their own materials? • Are they encouraged to share their teaching and materials/ideas?

	<p><u>Part C: Teaching, learning and assessment</u></p> <p>Q1. As a Head teacher, how would you ideally see the implementation of the new assessment system?</p> <p>Q2. What do you think is important but not included in the new curriculum system? Can you describe these? Why are they important?</p> <p>Q3. Is there any training and support regarding the new assessment system being conducted in your school?</p> <p>Q4. How is KSSR implemented in your school?</p> <p><u>Part D: View on School-Based Assessment</u></p> <p>Q1. How is The SBA introduced in the school curriculum?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you think SBA is introduced? • What is the importance of the new assessment system? • What would you personally like to achieve in implementing the new assessment system? <p>Q2. Can you please tell me some information about the school's objectives and strategies in implementing the new curriculum in your school?</p> <p>Q3. How do you think the SBA should be conducted?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think the teachers are conducting SBA in the way it should be conducted? <p><u>Part E: Challenges and recommendations</u></p> <p>Q1. What, if any, are the challenges that you faced in managing the new curriculum (timetabling, resources management, support, others)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you suggest these problems might be resolved? <p>Q2. Looking at the KSSR subjects in your school, do you think the objectives of SBA could be achieved? Why? Why not?</p> <p>Q3. What changes would you like to see in KSSR/SBA in order for it to be effectively implemented?</p>
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English Teachers	<p><u>Part A: Teachers' background</u></p> <p>Q1. Can you please tell me about your teaching qualification and teaching experience?</p> <p>Q2. What course did you take during your teachers' training?</p> <p>Q3. How long have you been teaching in this school?</p> <p>Q4. May I know how long have you been teaching English?</p> <p>Q5. What other subjects do you teach?</p> <p>Q6. How many English classes do you teach?</p> <p>Q7. How many English (KSSR) classes do you teach?</p> <p><u>Part B: Training and support</u></p> <p>Q1. When did you receive your first training regarding KSSR?</p> <p>Q2. When was the last training you had on the English KSSR, particularly on school-based assessment?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who organised/conducted the training? • How long was the training? • What benefit did you get from the training/your experience? Was it helpful? • How often is the training offered during a year? <p>Q3. Do you think you have received adequate training and support to teach English KSSR?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What additional support would you like to receive? • What materials were provided to support the teaching and learning of English KSSR? Who provided these support materials? What did you think about the quality of these materials? <p><u>Part C: Teaching, learning and assessment</u></p> <p>Q1. In your opinion, what is the difference between the former curriculum (KBSR) and the new curriculum (KSSR)?</p>
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	<p>Q2. Can you tell me about your classroom assessment experience in your English (KSSR) classroom?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When do you do classroom assessment in your English teaching? Why? • How do you assess your pupils? • What kind of classroom assessment do you normally conduct in your class? • How do you keep or record the assessment? <p>Q3. In your opinion, what do you think is the best way to assess the pupils? Why?</p> <p>Q4. When do you think is the best time to assess the pupils? Why?</p> <p><u>Part D: Challenges and recommendations</u></p> <p>Q1. What, if any, are the challenges that you faced in conducting the assessment (timetabling, resources management, support, others)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you suggest these problems might be resolved? <p>Q2. Looking at the English KSSR teaching and learning practice in your school, do you think the objectives of the assessment could be achieved? Why? Why not?</p> <p>Q3. What changes would you like to see in KSSR/SBA in order for it to be effectively implemented?</p>
<p>Non-English teacher (SBA coordinator and Senior Teacher)</p>	<p><u>Part A: Teachers' background</u></p> <p>Q1. Can you please tell me about your teaching qualification and teaching experience?</p> <p>Q2. What course did you take during your teachers' training?</p> <p>Q3. How long have you been teaching in this school?</p> <p>Q4. How many KSSR subjects do you teach?</p> <p><u>Part B: Training and support</u></p> <p>Q1. When was your first training regarding KSSR?</p>

	<p>Q2. When was the last training you had on school-based assessment?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who organised/conducted the training? • How long was the training? • What benefit did you get from the training/your experience? Was it helpful? • How often is the training offered during a year? <p>Q3. Do you think you have received adequate training and support to teach KSSR subjects?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What additional support would you like to receive? • What materials were provided to support the teaching and learning of KSSR? Who provided these support materials? What did you think about the quality of these materials? <p><u>Part C: Teaching, learning and assessment</u></p> <p>Q1. In your opinion, what is the difference between the former curriculum (KBSR) and the new curriculum (KSSR)?</p> <p>Q2. Can you tell me about your classroom assessment experience in your KSSR classroom?</p> <p>Q3. In your opinion, what do you think is the best way to assess the pupils? Why?</p> <p>Q4. When do you think is the best time to assess the pupils? Why?</p> <p><u>Part D: Challenges and recommendations</u></p> <p>Q1. What, if any, are the challenges that you faced in conducting SBA (timetabling, resources management, support, others)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you suggest these problems might be resolved? <p>Q2. Looking at the KSSR teaching and learning practice in your school, do you think the objectives of SBA could be achieved? Why? Why not?</p> <p>Q3. What changes would you like to see in KSSR/SBA in order for these to be effectively implemented?</p>
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- Q1. Can you please tell me about your teaching qualification and teaching experience?
- Q2. What course did you take during your teachers' training?
- Q3. How long have you held the role as a facilitator?
- Q4. What is the scope of your duties within your current position?

Part B: Training and support

- Q1. In your opinion, what is the difference between the former curriculum (KBSR) and the new curriculum (KSSR)?
- Q2. When was your first training regarding KSSR?
- Q3. When was your last training you received on the English school-based assessment?
- Who organised/conducted the training?
 - How long was the training?
 - What benefit did you get from the training/your experience? Was it helpful?
 - How often is the training held during a year?
- Q4. Can you tell me about your experience in cascading training with teachers?
- Do you think you have received adequate training and support to cascade training to teachers?
 - What additional support would you like to receive?
 - What materials were provided to support the teaching and learning of English KSSR? Who provided these support materials? What did you think about the quality of these materials?
- Q3. In your opinion, what do you think is the best way to assess the pupils? Why?
- Q4. When do you think is the best time to assess the pupils? Why?

	<p><u>Part C: Challenges and recommendations</u></p> <p>Q1. What, if any, are the challenges that you faced in conducting the assessment? (timetabling, resources management, support, others)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you suggest in solving this problem/ these problems? <p>Q2. Based on your experience of conducting training to teachers in your district, do you think the objectives of SBA could be achieved? Why? Why not?</p> <p>Q3. What changes would you like to see in KSSR in order to allow teachers to effectively implement SBA?</p>
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Appendix C: Economic Planning Unit Approval Letter



UNIT PERANCANG EKONOMI
Economic Planning Unit
Jabatan Perdana Menteri
Prime Minister's Department
Block B5 & B6
Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan
62502 PUTRAJAYA
MALAYSIA



PU
ECONOMIC PLANNING UNIT
PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT
Telefon : 603-8000 8000

MARCELINA BINTI JOHN
Universiti Malaysia Sabah
Jalan UMS
88400 Kota Kinabalu Sabah
Email : m.b.john@stir.ac.uk

Ruj. Tuan:
Your Ref.:

Ruj. Kami: UPE 40/200/19/3278(4)
Our Ref.:

Tarikh: 17 November 2015
Date:

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN MALAYSIA

With reference to your application, I am pleased to inform you that your application to conduct research in Malaysia has been approved by the **Research Promotion and Co-Ordination Committee, Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department**. The details of the approval are as follows:

Researcher's name	: MARCELINA BINTI JOHN
Passport No./ I.C No	: 780308-12-5134
Nationality	: MALAYSIAN
Title of Research	: "EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF OF SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT IN THE REVISED PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM STANDARDS (KSSR) IN MALAYSIA"
Period of Research Approved	: 4 YEARS

2. Please collect your Research Pass in person from the Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department, Parcel B, Level 4 Block B5, Federal Government Administrative Centre, 62502 Putrajaya, Malaysia. Bring along **two (2) colour passport size photographs**. Kindly, **get an appointment date from us before you come to collect your research pass**.

"Merancang Ke Arah Kecemerlangan"

Appendix D: Sabah State Education Department Approval Letter



JABATAN PENDIDIKAN NEGERI SABAH

Sektor Pengurusan Sekolah
Aras 2, Wisma Pendidikan
Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Sabah
Jalan Punai Tanah, 88450 Likas
KOTA KINABALU, SABAH



Tel : 088-537127/115/098/106
Fax : 088-310719
Laman Web: www.moe.gov.my/jnosabah
E-mel : sjk.sabah@moe.gov.my

Rujukan: JP (SB)/700/7/03 Jld. 43
Tarikh : 22 Disember 2015

Marcelina Binti John
Universiti Malaysia Sabah
Jalan UMS
88400 Kota Kinabalu
Sabah

Tuan,

KELULUSAN UNTUK MENJALANKAN KAJIAN DI SEKOLAH, INSTITUT PERGURUAN, JABATAN PENDIDIKAN NEGERI DAN BAHAGIAN-BAHAGIAN DI BAWAH KEMENTERIAN PENDIDIKAN MALAYSIA

Dengan segala hormatnya, saya diarah merujuk surat tuan/puan mengenai perkara di atas

2. Sukacita dimaklumkan bahawa Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Sabah tiada halangan bagi pihak tuan menjalankan kajian "Evaluation of the Implementation of School-Based Assessment (SBA) in the Revised Primary School Curriculum Standards (KSSR) in Malaysia" seperti dalam surat Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia. Walau bagaimanapun ianya tertakluk kepada syarat-syarat berikut:

- 2.1 Berhubung dan berbincang dengan pentadbir sekolah tentang pelaksanaan/ perjalanan kajian tersebut.
- 2.2 Penyertaan warga pendidik dan murid-murid dalam kajian adalah sukarela.
- 2.3 Proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran atau pelaksanaan aktiviti sekolah tidak terganggu atau terjejas semasa kajian dijalankan..
- 2.4 Tuan tidak dibenarkan menjalankan aktiviti di kelas-kelas peperiksaan awam sekolah.
- 2.5 Sebarang data / maklumat serta dapatan kajian hanyalah untuk memenuhi syarat-syarat kursus pengajian sahaja.
- 2.6. Sila tuan kemukakan ke sektor ini senaskah laporan akhir kajian/laporan dalam bentuk elektronik berformat Pdf di dalam CD bersama naskah hardcopy setelah selesai kelak sebagai rujukan.

Sekian, terima kasih.

"BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA"

Saya yang menurut perintah

RAZALI H.J. MATALI
Ketua Unit
Unit Perhubungan dan Pendaftaran
Sektor Pengurusan Sekolah
b.p Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Sabah

s.k 1. Pendaftar Institusi Pendidikan dan Guru,
Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Sabah



Appendix E: Participant Information Sheet



UNIVERSITY OF
STIRLING

Research Project:

Understanding Curriculum Change in Malaysia: Investigating the enactments of educators' experiences, beliefs and perceptions of the implementation of School-Based Assessment (SBA) in the Revised Primary School Curriculum Standards (KSSR).

Participant Information Sheet

I would like to invite you to take part in this research project. Before you decide whether or not you would like to take part, it is important that you understand why I am carrying out this project and exactly what will be involved if you agree. This information sheet should explain what I am doing and should answer any questions that you might have about the project. If there is anything at all that you are unsure of or if you want to find out more, please do ask me for more information.

Who am I?

My name is Marcelina John and I am sponsored by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia at University of Stirling, United Kingdom and supervised by Professor Mark Priestley and Dr Joseph Smith. I am undertaking this educational research as part of my PhD study to complete a doctorate at the School of Education.

What is the purpose of the project?

This project aims to investigate how primary English teachers make sense of and enact the new assessment system in the new curriculum. This research also aims to examine the contextual and individual factors in schools which influence the changes, to explore what external factors are influencing the changes and to explore what alternative or further supports schools and teachers feel they need to effectively implement the new assessment practice.

Timeline

The project is due to be completed by the end of September, 2018, so I am hoping to perform interviews and make observations during the month of January to April, 2016.

Research Questions

The project will consider these key questions:

1. How are teachers and leaders enacting the new curriculum?
2. What are the contextual and individual/teacher factors in school which influence the change?
3. What out of school factors e.g. external materials, resources and programmes are shaping/influencing the changes?

4. What alternative or further supports do schools and teachers feel they need to effectively implement the SBA in KSSR?

Why have I been chosen to participate?

I am asking for English primary school teachers who are teaching English KSSR as they have first-hand experience in transferring this new assessment policy into teaching and learning practice.

Do I have to take part?

No, you do not have to take part in this project. If you do decide to participate, you will be given this information sheet to keep and will be asked to complete the Consent Form and post it or email a scanned copy back to me.

What will I have to do?

If you are interested in taking part in this project, you will be asked to take part in two interviews: one before the classroom observation sessions and one afterwards. Because the project will also make use of observation to collect data, I will observe your lessons twice. These interviews will be audiotaped to allow for the gathering of rich data and I will transcribe them myself. Any audio recordings will be securely stored on a password-protected server at the University of Stirling and all of the information will be anonymised. Manual notes and any printed transcriptions will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. If you decide not to take part, you can withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

Has this project been reviewed by an ethics committee?

Yes, this project has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the School of Education at the University of Stirling and no ethical objections were found to this study being carried out.

What will happen to the results of the project?

The findings of this project will be reported in a thesis that will be reviewed by my supervisors, Professor Mark Priestley and Dr Joseph Smith, and by two markers who are internal to the University. The thesis may also be subject to an examination by reviewers external to the University. In addition, the findings may be presented within the School of Education here at the University of Stirling or wider, in academic journals or at conferences. A summary of the findings of the study will also be sent to all of the participants at the end of writing up the findings. However, great care will be taken to make the reported data as anonymous as possible so that no individual can be identified by others in the writings of the findings.

When will the research take place?

The research will take place in your school for about three to four weeks. However, interviews will only be conducted during the teachers' free period or at any time which is convenient to them.

Will my taking part be confidential?

You can give as much or as little information as you wish. No one will be named or identifiable in any way in the reports of the study. In addition, neither individuals' names nor names of schools will be revealed.

What if I wish to withdraw?

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time you wish, without giving a reason. However, if you wish to withdraw I would reserve the right to include any information that you give prior to withdrawing.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about the project, please do not hesitate to contact me at the following;

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Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

Appendix F: Participant Consent Form



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Consent for Participation in Interview Research and Classroom Observation

		PLEASE INITIAL BOX IF YOU AGREE
1.	I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study. I have also had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
2.	I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.	
3.	I understand that the research team at the University of Stirling will hold the information I give confidentially and my name will not be mentioned in any reports.	
4.	I understand that all information from this study will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the University of Stirling and stored in a password protected folder on the University of Stirling computer hard drive to which only the research team will have access.	
5.	I agree to participate in this study.	

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Name of person taking consent

Date

Signature

Note : Two copies: 1 for participant and 1 for research file.

Appendix G: Coding Sample

Case Study 1 : St. Dominic Primary School

Participants	Implementation	Assessment issue	Leadership	Result-based pressure	Professionalism	Debates over utility/value	Reluctance	Parental pressure		
SBA Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -insufficient training -unclear policy -lack of support -lack of further inspection from macro/micro level (only from the District Education) -lack of facilities "...during the first introductory course in 2011, we were told that the implementation of SBA is a must and the filing and documentation need to be prepared because there will be an inspection from the MOE." "...all the staff were making effort to implement and follow the new policy during that time." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -transparency in assessing - computer illiterate especially senior teacher (the coordinator has to help to key in the band) "For sure, teachers might not really do the assessment anymore because they have to focus more on the achievement of the final centralized exam." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Credibility "Last time everything is assigned on me, to decide on our own...other teachers started to question and become ignorant because the input was not from the authority but from me-it's like "melangkau kuasa" (doing task as if he has the power in the school)" -role of school admin "the previous school admin know how to talk about it but the implementation is nil. if they want to delegate the task, make sure they have mastered the thing first, not simply giving the task to other teacher but not understanding it." (When there is an inspection from District Education, he has to explain everything about 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOE pressure (some teachers are complaining but they have no option but to do and implement the new policy). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -responsibility (the task has been appointed to him so he has to make sure the teachers do their tasks) "...because of the school's reputation and for the sake of the pupils" (teacher holds 9 different roles (coordinator) in that school) "...because no one wants the tasks and I have to just carry on" -obligation for school reputation -willingness to learn (need to explore on his own before conveying the information to the staff) -compliance "As a teacher, do whatever tasks given to you. We are the implementers of the policy, so do it without complaints" "there are lot of things which are not clear but it depends on the attitude and behaviour of the teachers." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "At the end of the day, when the school is observed, they will look and focus on the exam performance" "Teachers do not believe the policy because after more than 5 years, the efforts they put in to compile the data from Year1 to Year 6 is useless- especially for lower primary teacher." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "After coming to the 6 years of the implementation of the new policy, teachers refused to do it because there is no rationale of the 40-60 especially the lower primary teachers. if they do it, only for the sake of doing it, to submit the marks for Head of Panel and to the coordinator." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -parents are still looking for a position in class -parents have been informed about the new assessment and the school provides the band and grades during the Open Day but they prefer to have the report card to check their children's performance in class. 		

[illegible]

	-no facilities in school -insufficient knowledge (Facilitator) -insufficient training "Just for the purpose of doing the duty. I have to say that the information given during the course is enough."	try to recall when recorded the band for the pupils).		-aiming for the KPI intended by the MOE "there will be an inspection from macro and micro level anytime so teachers have to implement the new policy immediately"		minister, different policy"	sure the pupils score and pass the English paper.	exam		
Lilian	-no facilities in school -unclear about the policy/confuse -lack of training	Bias in assessing pupils			-has to read on her own to get more information about the policy.	-politicize in education -not sure what is the relation between band and the exam.		-parents need to see their children's performance based on grades.		
Seeva	-increasing workload "For a Year 1 teacher, too much teaching need to be prepared." "For LINUS programme (Literacy and numeracy Screening, it's an extra workload- catching the syllabus and doing the diagnostic test and making sure pupils pass at the same time." (there should be one specialist teacher to teach English for the remedial class but they have to do it on their own because there is no one else	-changes in descriptors -having exam for class control -trustworthiness of the assessment		-punishment if not implementing the policy - inspection for LINUS programme "There is a case for this special needs pupils who doesn't know anything but I still have to give him Band 1 because it is not possible for any pupils not to know anything."	-personal development -teachers' attitude "depends on teachers to see the work as a burden or responsibility...sometimes I get stress also and thinking of retiring early" (joking but there was a sense of selflessness) -compliance (selflessness) "Who are we to speak up..there is no way to say no, so just follow whatever changes in the education system."	"there seems no difference from the former curriculum-the only difference is extra workload and the descriptors are also changing 2 times in 5 years."		-they want the grades and their children's position in class to see their performance.	Teachers' support group	Parents' issue -not cooperative "it seems like the children are not monitored at home"

Appendix H: Analysis Sample

Category or themes	Brief meaning	Evidence from the data	
Peer collaboration and support	Support offered by the District English Teacher association (DETA), the English Panel and electronic groups such as KSSR online.	<p>St. Dominic</p> <p>I was among the first to attend the KSSR course because I am teaching Year 1. During that time, there were limited online resources available so I had to ask DETA teachers who were also teaching Year One from other schools in order to share the teaching materials and worksheets for assessment. (Seeva)</p> <p>I have never attended English KSSR course but I get help from other English teachers in this school for matters regarding this subject. I always refer to the English Head to check my assessment resources and also the relevant English resource books for the pupils. Moreover, resources and materials are available from the KSSR online posted by different teachers, so we can easily get them and amend them according to our pupils' level. (Neil)</p> <p>During the English Panel meeting, we will discuss what resource books to buy for our pupils. For other</p>	<p>Sarayo Primary School</p> <p>The English Panel is really helpful. Since I am new to English subject, there are lot of things I need to learn. Both English teachers in this school are really experienced, so I always refer to them if I have difficulties in preparing the lesson or anything to do with the assessment. (Wahid)</p> <p>I am so lucky because I am in an English KSSR group of social media (WhatsApp and Telegram) comprising English teachers from different districts and the experts from School Improvement Specialist Coaches (SISC+). They are in an urban area and they have better information and knowledge about the new curriculum. It is helpful for me because schools in rural areas often do not get the latest information because of the location. I can directly ask them anytime or read from their discussion about the KSSR and they always share new information in the group. (Jaden)</p>

Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The support received by teachers from the Head teacher and school administrators. • The role of school leader in convincing teachers to accept and implement the intended policy. 	resources and materials for English, I asked from other teachers in this school and the DETA in that district. (Betty)	<p>I believe that SBA is a fair assessment for pupils because some of the pupils may not be excel in exam, but they still have chances to obtain marks from different perspectives in the SBA components. It is for them because they will have equal chance with other pupils. They won't be labelled based on the grades they achieve in National exam. (Head teacher)</p> <p>The school admin will have to check the file for KSSR from time to time to make sure that all the document are complete and up-to-date. (Jaden)</p>
			<p>Last time, the administrator just “lepas tangan” (totally put all the responsibility of the implementation of the new policy) onto me. Because SBA was really new during that time, some teachers started to question my credibility because the order/instruction did not come from the administrative of the school but all from me as I was appointed to attend and expected to be responsible with any matters regarding the new curriculum. As for the administrators, they only know how to talk about it but the implementation is nil. When there was inspection from the District Education, I had to come to the administrator’s office and explained about the implementation because the admin did not know anything about the KSSR. At least, they should be responsible so that the input is not from me alone but also from the authority so that the other teachers will be more confident about the importance of implementing the new curriculum. I feel upset and threatened because there was no</p>

		<p>strong encouragement and official rules set from the Head teacher about the implementation of the new curriculum. Everything about the new policy seems to come from me alone and not from any of the school administrators. (SBA Coordinator)</p> <p>The problem to comprehend the new curriculum implementation in this school was because, in the last administration, the authority did not really make it compulsory for the teachers to hand in the assessment record. They did remind the staff but there was no black and white rules to ensure all the teachers do the work. There was no checklist whether teachers have submitted the record or not. The Head teacher was always not around and all the responsibilities were given to the teachers. There were no support and effort from the Head teacher regarding the changes. The SBA Coordinator had to handle everything about the new curriculum. (Senior Teacher)</p> <p>I know about the new curriculum but there was no pressure from the administration about the changes and I was teaching Upper Primary so I don't really know the new policy</p>
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MOE pressure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School inspection • Result-based pressure • KPIs target 	until it reaches the third year of the implementation. (Neil)	<p>Our school is ranked as a low achievement school based on the previous National exam. So I have to make sure that all teachers do their tasks. This is because, when I attended any meeting regarding the implementation, the Education Officer will have to display the names of the school which have not completed the online templates. I felt obliged to maintain the reputation of the school. Moreover I have been appointed by the school to represent the school for anything to do with the new curriculum. Furthermore, during the introductory course, we were told that the implementation of the SBA is a must and the filing and documentation need to be prepared because there will be an inspection from the MOE. (SBA Coordinator)</p> <p>The first product of the reform is this year's Year 6 pupils. There is a new paper for English which was just introduced early this year, so my main focus is to teach the pupils to pass the exam and to improve the KPI for this school. Results for the school and the average grade of subject</p>	<p>We were told that we need to do the assessment every day and record it from time to time because there will be an inspection to check if we do it or not but when there is any inspection from District Education, they will focus on the grade, the school performance which was based on our previous achievement in the National Examination. However, I have no problem in recording the grades and band because I am so used to the workloads. (Farah)</p> <p>To be honest, I don't see any rationale for recording pupils' achievement using the band. The recent course I attended only explained that pupils will bring the transcripts for the SBA to secondary school but gave no detailed explanation about it. It is only to make sure we record the assessment ... it's a 'by hook or by crook' thing. We were told we have to do it without any excuses. However, still focus on making sure out Year 6 pupils score and pass in the National Exam because we have to maintain</p>
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		<p>(GPMP) are displayed during the District English Panel meeting with other schools' representatives in this division. They (MOE) ranked the school based on the performance from the previous exam and it was like if the school's GPS and KPI are low, the blame is on the teachers who teach the subject. For them, they do not want to hear the excuse that the pupils are indeed weak (in the case of our school we have the Special Education Class which means the pupils who were diagnosed by doctors are all there) but still they need to sit for the National Exam together with the pupils from the 'normal' class. But they (MOE) do not see that fact, some were saying like it's impossible for the pupils to only learn A, B, C in a year ... which means, for them if the pupils fail, it's because the teacher is not good enough. In fact, we have so many other administrative work to do and not just teaching. If our task is at least 70 percent for teaching only ... yeah it might be worth saying that.</p> <p>(Kelly)</p>	<p>our school performance. If we have any visitors or inspection from District Education, they will ask about the school performance and our school programme in order to get higher result during the National Examination. There is no problem in recording both grades and band in this school because the administrator will check the file from time to time to make sure the files are complete and up-to-date.</p> <p>(Jaden)</p>
Poor quality training	<p>Cascade training programme provided by the MOE regarding KSSR/SBA.</p>	<p>When I attended the course, we were given the same input that we had from the in-house training in school. All the contents from the slide are just the same. The focus of the course was</p>	<p>When I first attended the course, it was for one week. It was very new to us and we were expected to conduct an in-house training course for other teachers in our school later.</p>

		<p>to write the lesson plan in the new way of writing it as we need to know how to use the Content and Learning Standards in our lesson plan. (Kelly)</p> <p>I attended the course for different subjects. All the input given was the same. The only difference is the session on writing the lesson plan which focuses on the subject you are attending. Every subject has a different way of writing the lesson. (Neil)</p>	<p>It is hard because we ourselves do not fully understand the new policy but need to cascade the same new information to the teachers in our school. I have to say that one week was not enough to fully understand and straight away implement the new policy. What I understood during the course, that will be what I have to share with other teachers in my school. However, since I was the only English teacher in my previous school, I have attended the course every year for Year 1 to Year 6. The course was gradually shortened into 3 days and even to a 1-day course. Still, the input given was the same and conducted by the same facilitator. The changes were on recording the assessment. Last 3 years it was done online, now it is done offline. (Farah)</p> <p>I have attended the course almost every year. The duration was one week and then shortened to 3 days the following year. We were trained on how to write the lesson plan and do the macro-teaching and no information given regarding the textbook because it has not published yet and we did not informed much on the assessment</p>
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		<p>which I found the most difficult thing to understand. (Jaden)</p> <p>I attended a course regarding English KSSR in state level last year. That was my first English course because I'd never taught English before. What the course lacked was, all teachers are assumed to know about the policy already and when we (and some of the other teachers from other districts) raised questions about certain topics, the facilitators told us that we are supposed to know about it already because every year, the content of the course are the same. We ended up getting more confused because we honestly do not know anything because we never attended the course specifically for English language before. The rest of the information was the same but the lesson plan is different. (Wahid)</p>
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Appendix I: Sample of Lesson Plan

RANCANGAN MENGAJAR HARIAN	
PERKARA	TARIKH 29.01.2016
Subject	English Language
Class/Time	Year 5c (10.40-11.40)
Unit	3
Theme	World of Knowledge
Topic	Superheroes
Focussed Skills:	
Learning Contents:	
1.3 - Understand and respond to oral texts in a variety of Context.	
1.2 - Listen to respond appropriately in formal and informal situations for a variety of purposes.	
Learning Standard:	
1.3.1(a) - Able to listen to and demonstrate understanding of oral texts by	
(a) asking and answering questions.	
1.2.5 - Able to talk on topics of interest in formal situations with guidance.	
Learning Objective: By the end of this lesson, pupils should be able to;	
a. ask and answer questions correctly at least 80% correct.	
b. talk on topics of interest in formal situation with guidance.	
Learning Activity:	
1. Brainstorming	
2. Interviewing (in pairs)	
LCE	Creativity
Teaching Aid	Textbook
Assessment	
Reflection	Objective partially achieved.

Appendix J: Executive Summary of the Malaysian SBA Policy

The Government Transformation Programme (GTP) was introduced by Najib Tun Razak (the former Malaysian Prime Minister) in 2010 with the aim of producing world-class human capital that is equipped with the relevant skills and knowledge to make Malaysia a high-income and developed nation (MOE, 2013). To meet with this demand, and to be globally competitive, the Malaysian Educational Blueprint 2013–2025, which emphasized the development of human capital through education, was developed. This meant that the former education system (KBSR curriculum) was no longer seen as relevant, because it mainly focused on Reading, wRiting, and aRithmetic, or the 3Rs. The government acknowledged that communication skills are of paramount importance for Malaysians in determining whether they will be globally competitive; not only in education, but also for employment within and outside the country (MOE, 2013). Moreover, it was reported that Malaysia has a very exam-oriented education system, which places great emphasis on the number of “A” grades obtained by students, and their schools as a whole, in all major examinations (e.g., Berry, 2011 and Rahim, 2012).

The Malaysian Ministry of Education realised that there was a need to formulate a new curriculum that would help to move away from the over-reliance on exam results to a more holistic education system, which promotes a balance between summative assessment (centralized examination) and formative assessment (School-Based Assessment) (Tuah, 2007). Therefore, the new curriculum, known as the Primary School Standard Curriculum, or Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah (KSSR), was introduced in 2010 under the GTP and was implemented in a staged process in 2011 to replace the former curriculum. KSSR was formulated for the entire primary school curriculum, including the English curriculum. It emphasises the communicative skills with which it hopes to achieve the aim of the GTP – to produce highly competitive individuals by providing pupils with literacy development to establish a strong foundation in their English language capabilities to allow them to communicate effectively within and outside Malaysia. In order to move away from a highly centralised education system, the new assessment system, the School Based Assessment (SBA) system, was introduced to meet the aim of both the KSSR and the GTP.

The SBA is also seen as a platform that will help to reduce the over-reliance on scores or grades obtained through national exams (Tuah, 2007). The Malaysian Ministry of Education

upheld that SBA will be able to provide accurate judgement of pupils' performance because, in SBA, pupils will be assessed with a variety of components, for example, in academic and non-academic aspects (Malaysian Examination Syndicate, 2012). As for the English curriculum, SBA is seen as a catalyst in helping to promote good communicative skills for individuals to be globally competitive, because pupils will be assessed in a variety of English components (e.g., reading, language and speaking, and writing) which focus more on the aspects of Higher-Order Thinking Skills.

According to the SBA guidelines prepared by the Malaysian Examination Syndicate in 2012, SBA is not a new concept in Malaysia. The norm of teachers' classroom practices, such as giving quizzes, and conducting question-and-answer session during the lesson, had previously been practised by Malaysian school teachers. The concept of SBA had also been previously introduced in the English subject as part of the School Based Oral Assessment. With SBA, teachers are authorized to plan and administer assessment tasks continuously, inside or outside the classroom. Pupils will no longer be evaluated based on cognitive aspects only, but their assessment will combine a whole-cognitive, affective and psychomotor approach in order to identify and develop pupils' potential and inclination and not to focus solely on their academic achievements.

Training relating to SBA was conducted with all teachers who were teaching KSSR subjects in 2011, in stages. Policymakers may have assumed that they had successfully disseminated and communicated the intended changes in the curriculum to teachers during these training sessions. However, previous research reports that the cascade training was problematic and ineffective (e.g., Fook and Sindhu, 2006; Hamdan, 2009; Rahman, 2014). The MOE (2013) also reported teachers' lack of understanding about the new curriculum, especially in developing their own assessment tasks and instruments. One of the findings in this thesis suggests that the one-shot training session relating to SBA is not enough for teachers to fully understand the SBA policy and to implement it straight away. In addition, the training was mainly focused on how to write the new lesson plan (see Chapters Five and Six of this thesis), but no hands-on training regarding SBA was provided. The lack of understanding on how SBA was to be conducted in classrooms may have resulted in teachers' practices remaining the same because of the existing practice of providing summative assessment through examinations in the Malaysian education system. The SBA cascade training sessions may also

have caused a dilution of the crucial information because whatever information was provided during the training was contingent on the teachers' own understanding, and this weakening effect would become more pronounced, especially when the teachers who had attended the training had to conduct in-house training in their respective schools.

The SBA guidelines stated that 40 percent of the marks from SBA are to contribute towards the Primary School Achievement Test that is taken by pupils at the end of Year 6. However, there is no explicit explanation for how the contribution of the marks is calculated and how this is to be combined with the results of the National exam. Malaysia has a very long tradition of teaching to the test (Tuah, 2007; Berry, 2011). The new weightage of the marks for the National exam is 60 percent from Primary School Achievement Test and 40 percent from SBA. The marks from the Primary School Achievement Test still carry a higher value in determining the final mark. Furthermore, the added pressure exerted by the MoE, such as setting up Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for schools, may further distort teachers' SBA classroom practices. Teachers may still focus on aiming to help students achieve higher marks and may still teach their pupils solely for exam preparation.

Nevertheless, SBA is a top-down reform in Malaysian schools. Teachers, as the implementers, must implement the policy, regardless of whether they understand it sufficiently. The threat of school inspection if schools do not implement the policy may lead schools and teachers to prepare the documentation for inspection purposes only, or to pay lip service to the Ministry of Education. The Malaysian Ministry of Education may assume that the SBA is being implemented well, based on the complete and up-to-date documentation prepared in the schools. However, the crucial issue here is whether the policy has been enacted by teachers. Doing the policy and enacting that policy is a complex process. Thus, SBA may only be implemented superficially, without any real changes in teachers' classroom practices. Therefore, if SBA is to be sustained and seriously implemented in Malaysian schools, continuous training to address the building up of understanding and the empowerment of all stakeholders who are involved with the reform to interpret the policy, must be carried out.