A CASE FOR ILLUMINATIVE EVALUATION IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF KURIKULUM BERSEPADU SEKOLAH RENDAH (KBSR) IN SMALL PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF SARAWAK

by

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ABSTRACT

This short paper is aimed at presenting a case for illuminative evaluation in the implementation of KBSR as a complimentary and supplementary evaluation strategy to that of the present method employed by the Ministry of Education in providing relevant and important information about the implementation processes, the effects and the product of an educational innovation. Departing from the traditional objectives paradigm, and taking a stand of social anthropological perspective to evaluation approaches and methodology illuminative evaluation, a naturalistic approach in evaluation emphasises on the thoroughgoing and detailed exploration of innovation-in-action, looking at the 'instructional system' and the 'learning milieu' – examining its background, its organization, its practices, its teething problems, its success stories, and the improvements devised at the context of practice. It is argued that evaluation of the implementation of KBSR in rural schools of Sarawak through an illuminative approach will be able to provide important and a more comprehensive information for decision making toward improving instruction and learning in difficult educational contexts.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The formulation and introduction of the Rukunegara and the New Economic Policy in 1970 as an attempt to 'rebuild' a new nation after the tragic racial riot of May 13, 1969, was an important chapter in the history of educational development in Malaysia. The New Economic Policy which seeks to eradicate poverty for all and to restructure the Malaysian society so that the identification of race with economic function and geographical location is reduced and eventually eliminated, viewed education as the main vehicle for transforming a heterogeneous, traditional, pluralistic society into one that is united, democratic, just, progressive and liberal.

Educational reform and innovations that come with it become a meaningful integral part of nation building. The National Education Policy emphasized that the goals of education should be concerned with overall development of the individual; to nurture balanced development in each individual by providing for the growth of physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and aesthetic potentials as a Malaysian upholding the tenets of Rukunegara; to assist the individual in obtaining greater insights and understanding into Malaysia's ecological and cultural heritage, social institutions, values and practices, societal pressures and challenges, and to enable the individual to function and fulfill his commitments and responsibilities as a citizen; to develop the human resources of the nation by helping the individual become a skilled, competent, rational and responsible planner, producer and consumer.

The National Education Philosophy explicitly documented that 'education in Malaysia is an ongoing 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 a high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the betterment of the society and nation at large' (Ministry Of Education, 1988).

In response to the Cabinet Committee Report of 1979 which reviewed the implementation of the education policy and recommended that steps should be taken to improve and consolidate the education system, and revise and reformulate the entire curriculum at both the primary and secondary schools level, a new curriculum for primary school named the Kurikulum Baru (Bersepadu) Sekolah Rendah – KBSR was developed and introduced in 1982.

In terms of the overall philosophy, the new curriculum will be such that learners at the primary level will acquire skills and knowledge through direct and active learning experiences which will cover intellectual, spiritual, aesthetic and physical aspects, a holistic approach towards ensuring all-round and integrated development of the child. The principle of flexibility will be applied to teaching and learning methodologies and materials, and to classroom organization. Adequate opportunities are to be provided to nurture creativity, and similarly problem solving capabilities are to be developed through exposure to real-life experiences.

One of the main hidden agendas of the KBSR is to help improve overall performance of rural schools as a deliberate attempt to bring them into the mainstream of educational development in the country. It is a concerted effort to bring quality education to these culturally, socially and economically disadvantaged group, so that they can effectively and actively participate in, and gain maximum benefits from the various and numerous educational opportunities available at secondary and tertiary levels provided for by the government in line with the objectives of the New Economic Policy.

This innovative educational program aimed at improving the quality of education is indeed very ambitious, especially in light of the very diverse cultural and geographical setting of Malaysian primary schools, particularly in rural Sarawak. Evaluation of its effectiveness, and evaluation strategies and approaches used to ascertain its worth is central to understanding its impact on the rural children. This paper is thus aimed at looking at current evaluation methods employed, and presenting a case for illuminative evaluation in the implementation of KBSR as a complimentary and supplementary evaluation strategy in providing information about the effects of an educational innovation, with a view of making judgements and decisions about it, especially in the context of small rural schools of Sarawak.

IMPLEMENTATION OF KBSR IN SARAWAK

Implementation And Evaluation Strategies

After having successfully implemented the universalization of primary education through its policy of democratization of education, Malaysia moved a step further to address the issue of access to quality primary education for all. The implementation

of KBSR in Sarawak, and new ideas introduced and brought about by this innovative change are seen by many rural teachers as timely. Provision of basic schooling facilities alone are insufficient to bring rural children, the disadvantaged group into the mainstream of educational development, and ultimately social and economic advancement. KBSR promised better things and thus aroused new hope and aspiration. The NSPC which recommended these strategies: an integrated approach in teaching and learning; varieties in teaching methods - group teaching for children of the same ability, or mixed ability group, class teaching and individual instruction; variety in learning activities; flexibility in the choice of content and in the use of teaching methods and aids; continuous evaluation that is incorporated into the teaching and learning process; and an 'informal' classroom atmosphere with spaces to allow varied activities; were accepted both as new challenges and better alternatives to the current practices, especially in addressing the problem of poor academic performance among rural children. Its implementation in Sarawak, and even among inexperience and untrained teachers of rural schools were received with enthusiasm.

To effectively disseminate and implement the curriculum throughout the nation, various working committees and administrative infrastructures were formed at all levels; the Ministerial, State, Divisional, District and School level, following the centre-periphery model of innovation implementation. Almost everyone involved in its implementation were given the necessary exposure to enable them fully understand the changes that it is bringing and the various implications that are to come. Headmasters and teachers who are directly involved in the implementation at the school level were given in-service training through a 'cascade' training model in which key personnel attended a central induction course before training other trainers who would then pass on the information to classroom teachers (Noor Azmi Ibrahim, 1991).

Although the new curriculum recommended the teachers to embark on creative and innovative approaches in their teaching, little change were seen in the evaluation strategy employed. The new element of continuous school-based assessment still place emphasis on the evaluation of students' achievement and performance. In the context of KBSR evaluation is narrowly defined to mean the measurement of the congruence between performance and standards or objectives leading to professional judgements of pupil progress and achievement, where achieving is taken to mean the level of attainment according to stated criteria.

Two agencies are involved in the evaluation of the new curriculum. The Malaysian Examination Syndicate administers the Primary School Achievement Test (UPSR) on a national basis, and the Curriculum Development Centre manages the implementation of the School Based Assessment (PKBS). UPSR is designed to assess pupils achievement in Reading, Writing and Arithmetic on a national basis at the end of the sixth year of primary schooling. PKBS is aimed at assessing students performance in other subjects and aspects like aptitudes, interest, value judgements and attitudes not covered by UPSR. It is continuous and summative, incorporating means such as the paper and pencil tests, observation with checklists, and the gauging of the pupils' quality of work. The result of the UPSR is in the form of grades ranging from Grade A to Grade E, while that of PKBS is expressed as Grades A - E for cognitive assessment and reporting, and a rating scale of 1- 5 with Grades A - C only for the affective and psychomotor parameters.

Ideal Versus Reality in Small Schools

Analysis of the first UPSR result after the completion of its first cycle of implementation in 1988 showed that there was a slight improvement in the overall performance in Reading and Writing in rural schools. But however, the improvement fell short of what was expected, especially in Arithmetic. Similar pattern of poor performance continue to be observed in subsequent years, and this prompted the State Education Department to re-examine its implementation strategies. Two issues were immediately brought to focus; 1) the need to assess effectiveness of the training program used in retraining and preparing teachers for the full implementation of the program; and 2) The need to examine the effectiveness of its implementation at the school level.

Both these issues involved evaluation of the process of implementation, which in the new curriculum were neglected. So what seemed to be complete and ideal in theory was later seen not to be so in practice. A lot of questions were still left unanswered, and missing links yet to be established. The evaluation strategy which confined itself to assessment of product and outcome as employed in the implementation of KBSR is grossly insufficient and inadequate to help meaningful decisions to be made at an early stage of implementation for improvement and modification. Information gathered in this manner alone will not be comprehensive enough to give curriculum planners and implementers at the classroom level, the teachers, the necessary feedback about the strength and weaknesses of both the form and content of the curriculum, and the manner in which they were put to use in schools.

Visits by school supervisors and key personnel in the initial stage of its implementation for the purpose of helping schools implement KBSR were indeed helpful in gathering information about the 'happenings' and the actual teaching practices in the classroom. But however, these visits were brief, few and irregular, and in most cases in Sarawak, were not well structured, and confined to schools that are easily accessible. Small rural schools where professional advisers and guidance were very much needed, especially by the inexperienced and under qualified teachers, were somewhat left out. And consequently no reliable feedback and information were gathered about the reality in small rural schools of Sarawak with regard to the what and the how of the implementation of this educational innovation.

There is a clear absence of reliable information on the actual operationalization process of the new curriculum in small schools. In-depth evaluation is important and necessary towards this end. Illuminating the reality of what actually happen in the classrooms of these schools is critical if the KBSR is to bring about the desired change to the rural educational scenario. Special concern should be the manner in which the following six teaching strategies which are central to effective implementation of the KBSR are interpreted and operationalized by teachers:

a) a) Emphasis on, and integration of remedial and enrichment activities into the normal teaching learning situations which required teachers to give considerable attention to pupils individual differences and the promotion of independent learning;

b) b) Concept of continuous evaluation as an integral part of teaching and learning which requires the teachers to have a good understanding of both formative and summative evaluation and the necessary skills to administer them;

c) c) Integration of subject matter and skills which requires the teachers to apply a more integrated approach to their teaching as well as personal mastery and acquisition of a bigger number of skills and broader knowledge;

d) d) Concept of group and individual teaching which requires the teachers to change from their normal teaching strategies of teaching the same skill or knowledge to all pupils in the same class to one that is more creative and multi-dimensional;

e) e) Concept of flexibility which requires the teachers to be flexible in their choice of skills and knowledge to be taught, and materials to be used to suit changing situations and pupils needs and abilities, a contrast to textbook-based teaching they are familiar with; and

f) f) Effective teaching of new subjects like Music, Moral and Religious Education, Manipulative Skills, and Commercial Practices in which these teachers were never trained before.

Possible disparities between 'theory and the ideal' and 'practice and the reality' in the implementation of KBSR in rural small schools could have been the main contributing factor to the poor performance and attainment of these rural children. The present evaluation strategy could only tell decision makers that the performance of these schools are far from satisfactory based on a standard already set and predetermined. It does not tell the 'true story' or paint the 'real picture', that characterizes the reality of small schools and their actual teaching learning scenario.

The poor physical facilities, the absence of a conducive teaching learning atmosphere, and most important, the high percentage of untrained, under-qualified and inexperienced teaching force among the already small number of teachers posted to these rural schools are factors that both determine and influence the form and the content of the new curriculum in this particular setting. It is these elements that we should be equally interested in, the what, the how and the why of a particular kind of interaction within the instructional system and the learning milieu of the small schools of Sarawak in implementing the KBSR.

Evaluation is not simply concerned with product, of how well students have learnt something, but also with questions of process, justification and the unintended consequences of learning (Lawton, 1981). It is towards this direction that illuminative evaluation has a part to play and a contribution to make.

ILLUMINATIVE EVALUATION AN ALTERNATIVE

The Changing Meaning and Dimension of Evaluation

In the systematic curriculum development (Ralph Tyler, 1949), or the 'objectives' model it is commonly referred to, evaluation is taken to mean the process of determining to what extent the educational objectives are actually being realized by the program of the curriculum and instruction. And since, educational objectives are to produce certain desirable changes in the behaviour patterns of the students, the evaluation is the process for determining the degree to which these changes in behaviour are actually taking place.

However, realizing the limitation of the 'objectives' model of evaluation many educators reassess and redefine the role and goal of evaluation. Cronbach (1963) doubted the completeness of the objectives approach, and proposed that evaluation process should provide data to serve the following purposes: a) course improvement; deciding on needed changes in instructional materials and methods; b) individual; decision about individuals for planning instruction for selection or placement, for

informing students on progress; and c) administration; judging effectiveness of the system, or of teachers. Evaluation he stressed should be regarded primarily as ‘the collection and use of information to make decision about an educational programme’.

Myron Atkin (1963) suggested a need to widen the scope of evaluation to help course improvement. Evaluation he argues should be central to course improvement, facilitating rather than limiting so that it will be meaningful to curriculum developers. Scriven (1967) registered his concern about the objectives approach in that it left the objectives unexamined by developing the notion of goal-free evaluation. He proposed that evaluation should begin by deliberately avoiding the teachers’ or curriculum developers’ goal, and focus their concern on ’actual’ outcomes. By so doing he argues, important discrepancies between intention and reality may be revealed, and the original goals scrutinized in the light of actual processes and outcomes.

Robert Stake (1967) further broadened the meaning and scope of evaluation to include: a) the notion that evaluation could provide valuable information by describing and portraying a wide variety of elements associated with a program or events being examined (in particular, “antecedents’, ‘transaction’, and a wide range of outcomes); b) the inclusion of values, judgements and views of people involved in the program; c) the incorporation of both formal and informal techniques; d) the importance of evaluation strategies being suited or ‘responsive’ to both the particular problem and to the needs of those wanting the information; e) the idea of examining logical consistencies among aims, intended processes and hoped for outcomes; f) the idea of examining congruencies among intentions, actual processes and actual outcomes.

Elliot Eisner (1967) proposed evaluation should illuminate what goes in school through ‘criticism’ approach as a set of methods that can complement the quantitative procedures now so widely used. Eisner stressed that educational criticism aimed not only at revealing from an intellectual point of view the meanings and conventions made and broken that might occur in the classroom, but also at using language in a way so vivid that it enables the reader to participate vicariously in the quality of life that characterizes the events being described. This 'thick description' of the meaning or significance of behaviour as it occurs in a cultural network saturated with meaning of both the 'happenings' in the classroom and outcomes provides for better understanding by practitioners, decision and policy makers of the range of educational styles possible in teaching, in organizing classrooms and schools, in using curriculum materials, and in providing educational activities.

Lawrence Stenhouse (1970) highlighted the shortcoming of the objectives model as that it assesses without explaining, and hence the developer of curriculum cannot learn from it. He further recommended that evaluation should be concerned with the explication of the relation between a curriculum, the contextual variables in the school and the teaching situation, psychological factors in pupils and teachers and the effects obtained. It should attempt to evaluate the relationship between the curriculum (the content-method bundle) as a relatively controlled variable, and the uncontrolled variables in the individual settings in which the curriculum is implemented. Stenhouse viewed evaluation in curriculum development more than merely an exercise in assessing outcome, it is a 'particular kind of action research'.

Reactions against the 'traditional' or 'experimental' evaluation continue to generate new proposals, development and articulation of new approaches. A broader interpretation of evaluation and its possible roles provides for the emergence of new alternatives. Parlett and Hamilton (1972) using historical, sociological and anthropological perspectives developed the illuminative approach to evaluation of

innovation. On evaluation Parlett wrote that it should set out not to 'test' so much as to 'understand and document' an innovation - examining its background, its organization, its practices, and its problems in addition to its outcomes. It should constitute a thoroughgoing and detailed exploration of the innovation-in-action. It should provide, for all concerned with the curriculum or programme, as well as for the outsider, an informed and accurate description of the operation of the scheme, summaries of the various points of view expressed by those associated with it, and a detailed historical-type account of the development of the innovation over time - its teething troubles, success stories, and the improvements devised.

ILLUMINATIVE EVALUATION: THE CONCEPT

The emergence of 'naturalistic' evaluation led by people like Barry MacDonald, Lawrence Stenhouse, David Hamilton and Malcolm Parlett in Britain, and Robert E. Stake, Louis Smith and Elliot Eisner in the United States in the field of educational evaluation arises from a firm belief that qualitative approaches based on descriptive and interpretative anthropological paradigm can effectively contribute to the 'process of delineating, obtaining and providing information useful for making decisions and judgments' (Stufflebeam et. al., 1971).

Quantitative paradigm in the traditional evaluation strategies are, it is argued, less satisfactory in providing the most accurate and most useful information for improving understanding and facilitating decision making in curriculum innovation. Over-attention to the over-simplification of psychometrically measurable behavioural changes in students which form the thrust of this approach have not been helpful to 'stake holders' of innovation in bringing about improvement in educational practices in schools, which are of equal importance. Efforts must also be taken to evaluate these numerous actual happenings - whether intended, predetermined or otherwise, be it in the complex organizational set-up or the teaching and learning processes. Taking a stand of social anthropological perspective to evaluation approaches and methodology illuminative evaluation strives to provide a more realistic and holistic in-depth means of helping decision makers in bringing about improvement to innovation.

The primary concern of illuminative evaluation as Parlett and Hamilton (1972) described it is with description and interpretation rather than measurement and predication, very much an integral part of the qualitative paradigm. It 'seeks to address and illuminate a complex array of questions' (Trow, 1970) about the implementation of innovative educational project; how it operates; how it is influenced by the various school situations in which it is applied; what those directly concern regard as its advantages and disadvantages; and how students' intellectual advantages and disadvantages; and how students' intellectual tasks and academic experiences are most affected. It aims to discover and document what it is like to be participating in the scheme, whether as teachers or pupils; and, in addition, to discern and discuss the innovation's most significant features, recurring concomitants, and critical processes.

Illuminative evaluation which is more concerned with the context and process of innovation than with outcomes introduces two additional concepts which become the focus of evaluative attention; the 'instructional system' and the 'learning milieu'. The illuminative evaluator looks at 'instructional system', which is basically educational catalogues, prospectuses and reports containing a variety of formalized plans and statements related to particular teaching arrangement, constituting a set of pedagogic assumptions, new syllabus, and details of techniques and equipments, as

a system which when adopted and put to operation in a particular setting will undergo modification, reinterpretation and possibly change. Although the instructional system may remain as a shared idea and ideal, but its form differs as its constituent elements are emphasized or de-emphasized, expanded or truncated, by teachers, administrators, and students to suit their particular needs and setting. In the process of redefining and reinterpreting the 'original' objectives to fit into and suit the local situation implementers of innovation will directly or indirectly modify the 'ideal' pre-specified in the original plan, creating situations whereby the 'shared common instructional system' can greatly differ from school to school.

Parlett and Hamilton see the 'learning milieu' as the social-psychological and material environment in which the students and teachers work together. It represents a network of cultural, social, institutional and psychological variable which interact in complicated ways to produce, in each class or course, a unique pattern of circumstances, pressures, customs, opinions and work styles which suffuse the teaching and learning that occur in a particular setting. The configuration of this learning milieu depends on the interaction pattern and style of numerous different factors; the numerous administrative constraints on the organization of teaching in schools, various operating assumptions and pedagogic experiences of the staff; teachers individual characteristics and personal styles and preferences; and students perspectives and preoccupations.

Illuminative evaluation acknowledges the diversity and complexity of the learning milieu and its importance in influencing educational innovation and its implementation. The introduction of innovation which triggers various repercussion and chain reactions throughout the learning milieu can bring about unintended consequences, which can in turn affect innovation, both changing its form and possibly moderating its impact. The study of learning milieu thus becomes necessary for analysing the interdependence of learning and teaching, and for relating the organization and practices of instruction to the immediate and long-term responses of students. Evaluation of students' performance, the learning outcomes, students' intellectual development and behavioural change, cannot be fully understood without in-depth understanding of the particular learning milieu, its culture and its practices.

The Methods of Illuminative Evaluation

Illuminative evaluation is not a standard methodological package but a general research strategy (Parlett and Hamilton, 1972) within the qualitative paradigm. It aims to be both adaptable and eclectic, and combines different techniques to throw light on a common problem. The main task of illuminative evaluator is to study, describe and report the day-to-day reality of the setting of his subject, taking the social anthropological approach. He is concerned with identifying significant features, delineating cycles of cause and effect, and comprehending relationships between beliefs and practices, and between organizational patterns and the responses of individuals, as Parlett and Hamilton put it.

Evaluation by illumination involves a three-stage frame encompassing observation by investigators, further intensive inquiry, and explanatory stage. These three stages overlap and interrelate functionally with one another as investigation developes. It begins with an extensive data base, and later systematically and progressively give due attention to unique and unpredicted phenomena. Four sources of data used in the formulation of an information profile are; observation, interviews, questionnaire and tests, and documentary and background sources.

Through observation and documentation of day-to-day activities and attendance in a variety of other school activities and events, initial data and information will be collected. Interviews of participants and other relevant individuals that follow will add on to a better understanding of their views and attitudes towards, and experiences with the innovation. Use of survey-type questionnaires, written comments, checklists and other custom-built tests materials will further help verify earlier tentative findings. Similarly, other relevant documents and background information from official and semi-official sources will provide a more in depth understanding of the 'happenings'. Parlett and Hamilton suggest that illuminative evaluation concentrates on the information-gathering rather than the decision-making component of evaluation. The main task is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex reality surrounding the project.

THE WHY, THE WHAT AND THE HOW IN SARAWAK

The Why and What of Illuminative Evaluation

Carol H. Weiss (1986) in advocating for a stake holder approach to evaluation charged that evaluation is narrow because it focuses on only a small subset of questions of importance to program people; unrealistic because it measures the success of program against unreasonably high standards; irrelevant because it provides answers to questions that no one really cares about; unfair because it is responsive to the concerns of influential people, such as bureaucratic sponsors, but blind to the wants of others lower in the hierarchy, such as front line staff and clients; and unused in councils of actions where decisions are made.

I hold similar views on current evaluation practice in the implementation of KBSR in Sarawak. Evaluation of students' performance alone, both by formative and summative approaches have not been sufficiently successful in providing enough relevant information and feedback to stake holders in the process of decision making. Department of Education at all levels, national program developers, school administrators, teachers, parents, and students have not been provided with the right kind of information that would be useful and helpful in their respective level decision making about the implementation of KBSR, especially decision that can further contribute to making this innovative educational program meaningful and effective to all primary schools, importantly to the disadvantaged many.

UPSR results do not give stakeholders and decision makers the much required information to help improve instruction. With regards to small rural school the most these results can show will be their achievement standing after six years of primary education in relation to a national norm in Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. It will not be able to provide detailed feedback about the happenings and the realities of small schools which is of primary concern to all parties interested in seeing that rural children, the disadvantaged, do really have access to quality education and benefit from this innovation.

Much more information needs to be gathered to enable a more comprehensive and realistic visualization of the actual implementation scenario in small schools, and an in-depth understanding of the problems encountered. Among others, the questions of how the curriculum is being interpreted; how the teachers' guides and students' learning materials are being used; how do teachers adapt themselves to and cope with the change introduced and new roles expected; how do school administrators manage their limited resources to meet the requirement of these new program; how

do the supervisory support group operates in the school; need to be addressed. In other words, to fully understand the impact of KBSR rating an 'inside evaluation' of the process as an integral part of the overall evaluation strategy of this primary education innovation.

It is important for both teachers and school administrators at the school level, and policy makers in the Department to fully understand the actual problems that lead to the continuous poor performance of rural children. The problems of resource constraint, motivational problems, insufficient number of qualified teachers, minimum community and parental support, absence of effective supervisory and professional support services from the central office, and their remoteness from centers of activities and development are features of small schools which definitely will have direct influence on the tempo and scope of implementation of KBSR. Teachers' preparedness and willingness to adopt new ideas, and their abilities to comprehend, interpret and operationalize these desired changes are areas of relevance to curriculum implementation, and of great importance to evaluation.

The How Of Illuminative Evaluation

Evaluation in small schools through an illuminative approach can indeed provide useful and meaningful information about the context into which the new curriculum is being introduced in rural Sarawak, and ultimately will also provide all interested parties and individuals with suitable information relevant for their respective level of decision making. Characteristics of evaluation in schools proposed by Helens Simons (1981) can serve to throw some light on the advantages that illuminative evaluation can effectively bring towards better understanding of the setting in which the curriculum is operating. Some of these are relevant and will be of importance in operationalizing evaluation in Sarawak schools. Among others the following should be given due consideration, that is, that evaluation:

a) a) Should aspire to reflect the processes of teaching, learning and schooling in order to educate judgments about the adequacy of educational provision and the quality of experience pupils have;

b) b) Should draw on a wide spectrum of information sources: interview data, close description of observed events, documentary evidence, as well as text and examination results;

c) c) Should examine the attitudes, values and assumptions that underlie the kind of information that come from various sources;

d) d) Should encourage the flow of information in all directions: down the status hierarchy as well as laterally and upwards;

e) e) Should develop the kind of informal evaluation that teachers normally engage in order to gain some feedback on their practice;

f) f) Should focus on internal needs defined by the school and its teachers, not merely what outsiders consider to be important;

g) g) Should be particularistic and small scale and concerned with the immediate problems of a given institutional context; and

h) h) Should be concerned with evaluating educational situations in ways that provide information relevant to decision making and the analysis of policy options.

Using these characteristics and Nero's (1980) 10 dimensional approach in conceptualising evaluation, I would propose that evaluation of innovation in Sarawak rural schools should take the following stands: that evaluation must be taken as an integral part of innovation, a process encompassing various strategies for providing information for decision making towards improving instruction and learning; that its primary function should be formative, of use for the improvement and development of an ongoing activity; that the 'instructional system' and the 'learning milieu' should be its main objects; that the manner in which the planned innovation is being adapted, interpreted and operationalized by the implementing agencies in the context of their unique setting should constitute the main information to be collected; that more emphasis and special attention should be given to positive changes within the organization, the teaching learning process, and the overall attitudes towards the program; that it should serve all stake holders in the innovative educational program, especially the school administration, teachers and innovation developers; that it should have these four stages: (a) initiating and organizing the evaluation strategy, (b) identifying key issues and area of concerns, (c) gathering useful information, and (d) reporting the findings; that it should use eclectic approach to evaluation methodology; that it should involve both outside and inside evaluators; and finally that it should strike a balance between usefulness, accuracy and propriety.

To get the best out of evaluation of innovation in these small rural schools by illumination, observation and monitoring which can be done in a variety of ways, structured or unstructured, by an outsider or participant observer, or through recordings will provide a clearer picture of how innovation is being implemented in these schools. Case-studies of selected schools will further help bring to focus unique and special realities which characterizes the implementation of KBSR in such schools. And, comparative studies within and among schools with similar settings, or with schools of a totally different background will further enrich and provide in-depth understanding of the problems and issues, and possible decisions making related to its implementation. Interviews with school administrators and teachers other than being useful for getting information about how they perceive and feel about the program can also help evaluators to cross check information gathered earlier, and to interpret observations already made.

Involvement of teachers and headmasters of small rural schools in this evaluation exercise through a collaborative approach between evaluators from outside the school and these school personnel, the practitioners, will have both short term and long term effect. The evaluation will have the advantage of first hand information gathered from those who are directly involved in the actual teaching learning processes on one hand, and on the other will provide useful and valuable research experience for personal professional development of these school personnel. Similarly close working relationship between curriculum developers at the national level and decision makers at the District, Divisional and State Education Office and innovation implementers at the school level will enhance greater understanding of each others role and expectation, and anxiety and problems in implementing change. This promises a better and more meaningful professional relationship in future, an atmosphere and a working climate very important for the improvement of small rural schools of Sarawak.

CONCLUSION

To meaningfully help the disadvantaged reap maximum yield from the New Primary School Curriculum, a more effective evaluation can contribute to this. Other than its usefulness in bringing to light and into focus issues and phenomena that can generate change and improvement to the program and the system, it can also directly help in staff training and development of rural teachers which otherwise will not be of priority. As Robert E. Stake (1967) puts it, “a full evaluation result is a story, supported perhaps by statistics and profiles. It tells what happened. It reveals perception and judgments that different groups and individuals hold…“ It tells of merit and shortcoming. As a bonus, it may offer generalization for the guidance of subsequent educational programs'.

If the marriage between traditional evaluation approaches as reflected by UPSR and PKBS in the Malaysia context of implementing the New Primary School Curriculum, and that of illuminative paradigm can provide the extra bonus which I see as very important for both developers of innovation and implementers, then there is indeed a case for illuminative evaluation, especially in the context of small schools of Sarawak.

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