EVALUATING SCHOOL SUPPORT PLAN: A PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK USING DISCREPANCY EVALUATION MODEL

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Abstract: The paper aims to present the evaluation framework of an in-service programme, School Support Plan (SSP) under The English Enhancement Programme for Schools (Program Peningkatan Kemahiran Bahasa Inggeris Di Sekolah - PPKBIS) using the discrepancy evaluation model (DEM). The objective of SSP centres around student outcomes by enabling teachers to apply a data-driven approach to design interventions to foster student improvement in hotspot schools. The DEM is used in this study to identify any discrepancy that occurs by comparing the programming standard with the programme performance. The suggested research design is the convergent parallel mixed methods design. A sample of 155 out of 250-course participants will be involved in the study through stratified sampling. Data will be collected using an interview protocol, questionnaires, and document checklists. Data analysis will be conducted according to the stages of evaluation in DEM. A proposed conceptual framework is presented as a guideline to evaluate SSP and to enhance our understanding on programme evaluation models.

Keywords: Continuing Professional Development, English Language Teachers, Programme Evaluation, Discrepancy Evaluation Model, Provus

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Introduction

Malaysia has conducted a comprehensive review of the Malaysian education system known as The Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013-2025 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). There were eleven shifts identified in the MEB where one of the shifts (Shift 2) emphasises on ensuring every child is proficient in the English language (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). One of the initiatives under Shift 2 was The English Enhancement Programme for Secondary Schools (*Program Peningkatan Penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris di Sekolah Menengah* – PPPBISM) to focus on increasing students' proficiency levels (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015).

The focus of PPPBISM was "… on targeted interventions in 1,191 "hotspot" schools nationwide." (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). These hotspot schools are schools with below 77% passing rates for the Malaysian Certificate of Education (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia –

SPM) English Language paper (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015; English Language Teaching Centre, 2016a). The intervention programme comprised In-Class and an Out-of-Class components (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015).

Under the In-Class component, the School Improvement Specialist Coaches (SISC+) were trained in 2014 on two modules consisted Differentiated Teaching and Learning, as well as Coaching and Mentoring to provide assistance to upper secondary English teachers in enhancing their teaching and learning strategies. However, in 2015, the target participants shifted from the SISC+ to upper secondary English teachers from the hotspot schools. Hence these teachers were given direct interventions by English Language Teaching Centre (ELTC) while the remaining English teachers from other hotspot schools were continuously guided by their respective SISC+. 300 English teachers from 300 hotspot schools were the first batch to be trained in designing "… differentiated interventions based on the students' language proficiency." (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2016). In 2016, the training was further extended to 169 English teachers (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2017).

As for the Out-of-Class component, it focused on "… cocurricular activities to boost students' confidence and proficiency in the English language." (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). Hence, 565 English teachers were trained in 2014 for the Newspaper in Education programme to integrate the use of newspaper as a resource for students (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). In the following year, 680 secondary students attended English-In-Camps "… to enhance understanding of the literature component of the SPM English Language paper." (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2016).

PPPBISM was later rebranded as The English Enhancement Programme for Schools (*Program Peningkatan Kemahiran Bahasa Inggeris Di Sekolah* - PPKBIS) in 2016. The In-Class component was changed to School Support Plan (SSP) while the Out-of-Class component was ceased (English Language Teaching Centre, 2016).

Problem statement
A study on the impact of SSP was conducted by a local university in 2017. The study stated that the information and skills taught in SSP was poorly or not properly disseminated to other English teachers in the hotspot schools (Nair & Doss, 2017). From this finding, it can be implied that the programme aims to enable teachers to apply data-driven approach when designing the interventions (what should happen) was not implemented in schools (what really happened). The implementation of the programme was impeded when teachers lacked information and skills taught in SSP. Thus, the gap between what should happen in SSP and what really happened on the ground has shown that a discrepancy has taken place. Even though the study had identified the discrepancies, it did not state explicitly what the discrepancies are. Hence, there is a need to conduct a programme evaluation to identify those discrepancies by comparing the operational aspects of the programme with the desired standards and objective stated in SSP. In a nutshell, the gap of the study revolves around the identification of specific elements that contribute to the programme discrepancies between the comparison of standard and performance.

Since the finding of the impact study indicated that the teachers did not implement the data-driven approach in schools, it can be concluded that SSP is not fully implemented. Here it can be clearly seen that the performance of the programme is not the same as the standard set at the beginning of the programme. Based on the gap identified, Discrepancy Evaluation Model

(DEM) is the suitable model of programme evaluation for this study. The simple concept of DEM is to compare "what really happen" with "what should be." (Marrs & Helge, 1978; Steinmetz, 1976). Thus, DEM is the suitable model to evaluate SSP as there is a noticeable discrepancy in the programme.

The purpose of this paper is to employ DEM to evaluate SSP by proposing a conceptual framework as a guide to conduct programme evaluation for SSP. The research scope focuses on the comparison between the standard and performance of SSP.

Literature Review
Concepts and Stages of Discrepancy Evaluation Model
Discrepancy Evaluation Model or also known as DEM outlines three main purposes of assessment. These three purposes of assessment are determining the programme benefits to students, garnering sufficient operational information, and making a projection to determine whether the programme will succeed or fail (Provus, 1969). The fundamental concept of DEM revolves around "… the comparison of an Actual Performance to a Desired Standard" (Kpolovie & Obilor, 2014).

Three key features of DEM are standard, performance, and discrepancy (Hasreena A.R. & Ahmad, 2015a, 2015b, 2016a, 2016b; Marrs & Helge, 1978; Singh, 2013; Steinmetz, 1976). Standard refers to what is intended to happen and has to be measurable (Marrs & Helge, 1978; Steinmetz, 1976; Stufflebeam & Coryn, 2014). Standard is also commonly known as the programme design (Yavorsky, 1984). After setting the standard, it is then compared with the performance. Performance is the operational information on how a programme is conducted (Fox, 2011; Marrs & Helge, 1978; Steinmetz, 1976; Stufflebeam & Coryn, 2014). Ideally, a programme should have the performance that equals to the standard ($s = p$) (Marrs & Helge, 1978). However, in other cases, the performance does not equal to the standard ($s \neq p$). This inequality transpires congruency. This congruency indicates that there is a discrepancy in the programme $(s \neq p) \rightarrow d$.

There are five stages of evaluation in DEM: programme design (Stage I), programme installation (Stage II), programme process (Stage III), programme product (Stage IV) and cost-benefit analysis (Stage V) (Provus, 1971; Yavorsky, 1984). In Stage I, information on the programme design is gathered which then turns into the programme standard. There are three main criteria of programme in Stage I which comprise input, process, and output. The first comparison between the programme performance and the programme standard occurs in Stage II which is known as the programme input. The comparison is made to evaluate the programme installation, and to identify any discrepancy that arises (Alter, 1998; Provus, 1969, 1971). Stage III, the programme process, assesses whether the process can turn input to output. This is to ensure that the resources and techniques implemented are conforming with the goals of the programme. (Alter, 1998; Provus, 1969, 1971). In the next stage, Stage IV, evaluation is conducted to establish if the programme objectives have been achieved by evaluating the programme output (Alter, 1998; Provus, 1969, 1971). The final stage, Stage V, compares the programme with other similar programmes financially to decide which programme is better at managing allocation effectively (Provus, 1969, 1971; Yavorsky, 1984). In a nutshell, Stage I is the programme standard while Stages II, III, and IV are the programme performance.

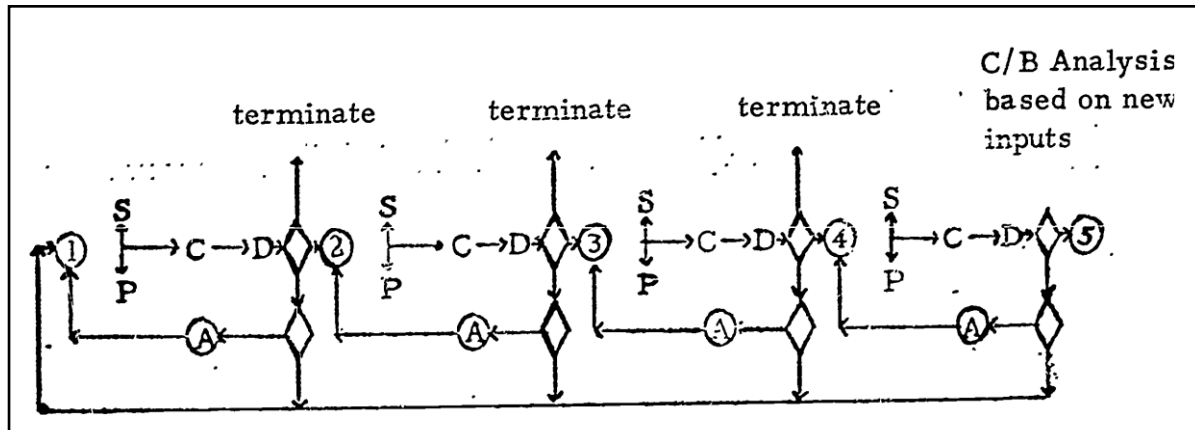The process of comparison in all stages in DEM is illustrated in Figure 1:

Figure 1: Theoretical framework in DEM (Provus, 1969)

Based on the Figure 1, DEM can be regarded as an ongoing cycle (Kpolovie & Obilor, 2014). As depicted in Figure 1, S represents Standard, P is Performance, C is an indication for Compare, D stands for Discrepancy information, and A signifies Alteration in either the programme standard or performance (Kpolovie & Obilor, 2014; Provus, 1969). The numbers 1 to 5 refer to Stages I to V that describe the different stages of evaluation in DEM. After acquiring discrepancy information (D), the programme manager is left with four possible decisions (Provus, 1969). The first possible decision is the programme can proceed to the next level when no discrepancy information exists. However, if any discrepancy appears, three possible options are available for the programme manager to ponder: to recycle that particular stage after modification; to recycle to Stage I after modification; or to terminate the programme (Kpolovie & Obilor, 2014; Provus, 1969).

Based on the explanation on DEM, this model is the best model to be incorporated in evaluating SSP as it aligns to the finding of the impact study conducted where discrepancies had been identified. By using DEM, researcher will be able to identify specific elements that might have caused discrepancies in SSP.

Proposed Conceptual Framework
For the purpose of this study, only the first four stages will be incorporated. Stage V will be omitted because it is an optional stage only (Provus, 1969; Yavorsky, 1984), and the focus of this research is not to compare SSP with other programmes. Hence the proposed conceptual framework concentrates on identifying the programme standards and performance, and comparing them to identify the discrepancy information. After the discrepancy identification, suggested alterations will be given. This conceptual framework can be used as a guide to conduct programme evaluation on SSP. The proposed conceptual framework for each stage to evaluate SSP is as shown in Figure 2:
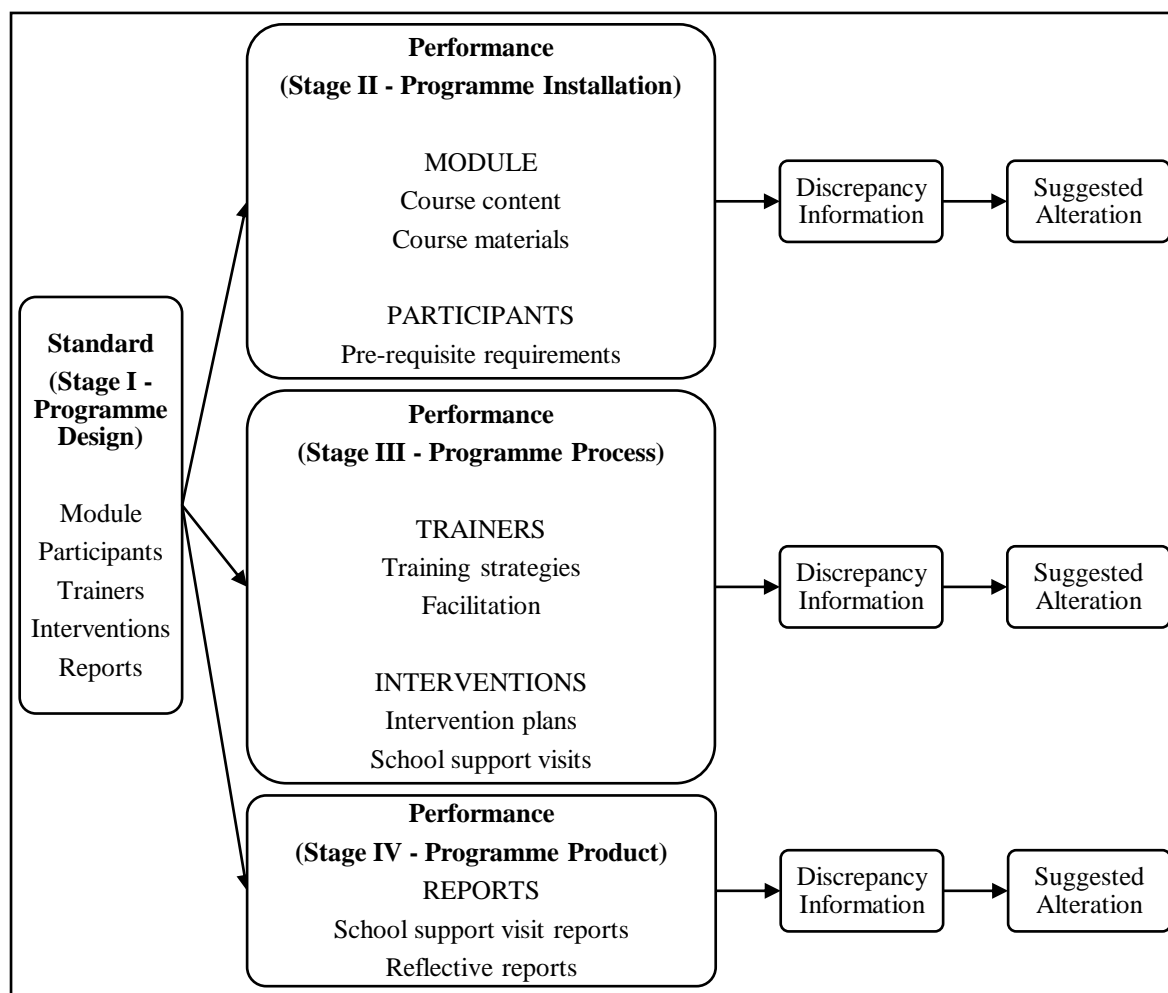
Figure 2: Proposed conceptual framework for SSP

The programme design is the first stage of evaluation in DEM. The aim of SSP is to facilitate teachers "… to apply a data-driven approach in designing context- and needs-based interventions to foster student improvement." (Quah, Kaur, & James Dass, 2017). SSP enables teachers to use various types of data to support effective pedagogical problem-solving, to analyse student performance data to identify gaps in students' knowledge and skills, and to interpret data to develop and implement interventions which address the gaps (Quah et al., 2017). Hence, the focus of Stage I will be on the course module, participants, trainers, interventions, and reports which will become the programme standards of SSP.

In Stage II, three sub-components in SSP will be evaluated under two components which consists of module and participants. Under the module component, there will be two suggested sub-components that are made up of course content and course materials. As for the participants component, participants prerequisite requirement will be the suggested sub-component.

In Stage III where the programme process occurs, two components are suggested that include trainers and interventions. Under trainers' components, the sub-components that will be suggested consist of training strategies and facilitation. For interventions component, two sub-components that will be evaluate are intervention plans and school support visits.

The last stage, Stage IV, will be conducted to evaluate the programme product. The suggested sub-components for report component comprise the trainers' school support visit reports and the course participants' reflective reports.

Comparisons will be made between all the sub-components in Stages II, III and IV and the sub-components in Stage I to gather any discrepancy information. Possible alterations will be suggested based on the gathered discrepancy information.

Proposed Methodology
The suggested research design is the convergent parallel mixed methods design (Creswell, 2012) which is also known as concurrent triangulation approach (Creswell, 2009). Both quantitative and qualitative data will be simultaneously collected, merged and compared to further understand the research problem (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, this research design is suitable for the purpose of this study. The comparison of both quantitative and qualitative data will "… determine if there is convergence, differences, or some combination." (Creswell, 2009). By comparing both types of data, identification of any discrepancy in SSP can be done more effectively.

For this study, the proposed sample is 155 out of 250 participants (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The sampling technique that will be used is stratified sampling where participants will be divided according to their training venues.

Questionnaires, interview protocol, and document checklists will be used for data collection of this study. Comparison of data will be made between data for Stages II, III and IV with data from Stage I.

In Stage I, interview protocol and document checklists will be the research instruments used. Interviews and document analysis will be conducted to collect information on the programme design. Interviews will be conducted with the programme manager of SSP to acquire more information and understanding on the programme. The interviews with the SSP programme manager will revolve around the set standard of the programme. The interview questions will comprise the course content and course materials of the SSP module, the pre-requisite requirements of the participants, the training strategies and facilitation used by the trainers, the intervention plans and school support visits under intervention, and the school support visit reports from the trainers and reflective reports from the participants. Document analysis will be implemented as well at this stage as the programme design is in the form of proposal papers and reports. The proposal papers have information on SSP especially on the programme standard and the expected programme outcomes or performance. The

In obtaining information on programme installation in Stage II, questionnaires will be distributed to course participants on course content and materials which descriptive statistics will be tabulated in frequency counts. The SSP programme manager will be able to provide data on the participant selection based on the pre-requisite requirements set earlier. To do so, the SSP programme manager will be interview using interview protocol. Besides that, information will be retrieved from Google Drive that is used by the programme manager to gather necessary information on the participants. Document checklist will be used to check whether the pre-requisite requirements have been fulfilled.

For Stage III, questionnaires, and document checklists will be used. The questionnaires administered will provide information on the training strategies and facilitation used by the trainers. The responses from the questionnaires will be analysed based on frequency count. Next, document checklists will be utilised by evaluating the design of the participants' intervention plans. Interview protocol, observation checklist and notes will be used to gather information from the course participants on the interventions implemented in class during school support visits. The findings for interventions will be compared with the standards that have been set earlier.

In Stage IV where the programme product will be evaluated, document checklist will be used to check if the reports indicate the use of data-driven approach in the programme as a whole. The data gathered from the school support visit reports and the participants' reflective reports will then be organised into major themes to identify the discrepancies that occur.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, there is a need to evaluate SSP in ensuring programme performance is aligned to the programme standards. Therefore, the use of the DEM is apt as it compares between what really happens with what it should be.

The use of DEM framework is hoped to guide the programme manager to plan, conduct, and alter SSP more holistically. With this conceptual framework, we will have more knowledge and will enhance our understanding on programme evaluation.

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