CLERICAL WORK FOR SCHOOL TEACHERS: A BURDEN OR A RESPONSIBILITY?

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Abstract

Teaching is an honourable, and essential profession for the upbringing of human development, society and country. In an age of technology, well-developed and sophisticated, the role and responsibilities of teachers are quite demanding and challenging. Qualified teachers should wisely blend the knowledge with teaching and learning methods effectively so that the concepts are well understood, by the students. Most importantly, teachers need to prepare teaching methodologies in order to present effective learning, but nowadays teachers are specifically assigned additional duties that includes adding and modifying personal information of the students, fees collection, providing textbooks, updating log books, analyzing which student is eligible to receive financial aid, and other additional clerical duties. Most of the tasks are done manually, and as a result teachers are inclined to spend more time on clerical duties instead of concentrating on teaching methodologies to improve the education quality. Therefore, this paper highlights essential matters, on teachers’ performances that is directly affecting the quality of education. The paper also discusses the findings by surveying one of the school in Kuala Lumpur and to address possible solution, so that teachers are able to convey quality teaching methodologies and the student receives a good and effective learning as what they are deserved to be.

Keywords: teachers, clerical works, quality teaching, effective learning.

Introduction

Technology never stops to inspire us. We are living in a world of outstanding and innovative inventions. Every moment we witness a new research or system proposed to help humanity in gaining benefits and have better standard of life. One of the most essential usages of

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Technology has always been found in educational systems. Our educational systems need to be highly advanced in order to achieve better outcomes in our society. Our research work is based on our most prominent people “Primary School Teachers”. Since, Teachers have not only the responsibility of teaching students, but also they need to handle various clerical works that is sometimes quite difficult to handle. We will be following specific methods and collect information in order to propose a suitable solution that will help our Teachers to concentrate more in quality education, and less in clerical work.

**Literature Review**

Traditionally, we know that teachers are responsible to teach and educate pupils to achieve the objectives of teaching and learning that has been pre-planned based on the designated syllabus by the school. However, nowadays the task of a teacher is more challenging. Öztürk (2011) stated that teachers’ role had changed due to globalization, advanced technology, and change of education. Apart from teaching, apart from teaching, teachers are also burdened with clerical duties, be a facilitator, motivator, planner, advisor curriculum advisor or club leaders, sports coaches, manage student data, manage student discipline and many more. According to Education Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid, in his speech, he aware that the changes in the teaching landscape currently were very challenging and also burdened some teachers (The Malay Mail, 2016). Apart from administrative tasks, teachers also need to write daily lesson plans (RPH) or book records which will be examined by the principal every single week.

Another research done by fellow students from UiTM, Terengganu, which discussed on the responses from the teachers mentioning that they are burden with so much clerical work such key in and sorting students’ data in the system and the system also were very slow (Nair et al., 2014). There are many other cases that describe the struggles that teachers have to face which have caused time consuming and tedious teaching preparation and lesson planning as well as difficulty in applying theory to practice (Senom, Zakaria& Ahmad Shah, 2013).

Moreover, Brante (2009) &Öztürk (2011) also agreed that the increased work tasks over the years affect teachers’ work performance. Among the tasks is related to school development and work team activities. As teachers have been given more tasks while none have been taken away, we can expect teachers to have less time available to complete each task. Furthermore, study found that other work conditions also affect teachers' working performance, including crowded classrooms, low salary and status, students’ behaviour and motivation problems, poor physical conditions, lack of necessary resources, low support from administrators, colleagues, and parents have a negative impact on teachers. Some of the negative impacts are high level of stress, poor morale, and low job satisfaction. As a result, teachers’ stress increased due to the mentioned work conditions.

Therefore, teachers can no longer provide quality teaching because the allotted time to make the necessary preparations were spent for all the clerical tasks that have been mentioned above. This has become a very significant impact on the students and their performance in class or examinations. There are more findings indicates that teachers’ roles and responsibilities would have an impact on the teachers’ quality of working life as well as their working hours (Abd Hamid, Syed Hassan, & Ismail, 2012).
Thus, in order to assist the teachers, we could start with enhancing the process of writing record book which is currently done manually. The teachers need to have a system such Lesson Planning System that able the teachers to automate generate their lesson plan and get principal to review and approve the document online (Saad & Dawson, 2016).

Problem Statement

A successful education system relies on the foundation of active and dedicated teaching staff and the proper management of the daily clerical work, upkeep of tasks that facilitate educational services and the infrastructure of institutes that enable quality educational services. In the current education system of Malaysia, clerical work of teachers is considered as one of the most important tasks as it involves the responsibilities such as student attendance registry, student module grading, Lesson and course structures, timetable management and monthly schedules. Even with the advancement of technology, these tasks are manually performed and the burden of ensuring that these documents are updated regularly is placed upon the teachers of institutions. Teachers are required to ensure that these tasks are manually entered in to log books and passed on to the management of the respective institute to successfully complete the clerical work.

The process of manually managing this heavy work load makes a negative impact on the teachers’ daily routine as it takes away valuable time that could be used for teaching and guiding students. Most institutions facilitate students of different backgrounds such as students with financial difficulties, motivation and concentration issues and thus requiring the teachers to pay more attention towards their wellbeing. Additionally, with the lack of resources provided by certain institutions, the balancing act of managing clerical work with the educational duties of a teacher becomes tougher. This also affects the mental and physical health of teachers as it causes stress, anxiety and low job satisfaction as the teachers are required to concentrate on sub-important documenting tasks instead of following their passion of teaching and guiding students.

The problem of managing the clerical work burdened upon teachers is a universally accepted issue and most countries have taken necessary steps to reduce the work load and allow teachers to concentrate on the daily academic tasks. A successful education system focuses on the wellbeing of teachers as they are the pillars of quality education. A system that doesn’t cater to the mental and physical wellbeing of the teachers and a work flow that disallows teachers to provide proper educational services to their students adversely affects the education of a society and steps must be taken to reduce this catastrophic impact.

As mentioned on the literature review, the problem statement for this research are mainly: (1) teachers are burden with clerical and administrative work which most of them are done manually. These kind of task has consumed time and affect the quality in teaching. Due to lack of time in preparing the lesson plan, it has becoming a difficulty in applying theory for a good practice in teaching (Nair et al, 2014) and (2) currently there are not standardize and effective system(Saad & Dawson, 2016) to assist teacher mainly for submitting daily lesson plan online (web based and application based) which can be access in anywhere as long as
there is internet and other task such marking daily attendance of students, performance reports, exam results management and syllabus management.

Methodology

![Figure 1: Saunder’s Research Onion (Anlp,2013)](image)

**Research Philosophy**

Based on problem statement, aims and objectives it can be analyzed that research work is positivism in nature. Since the research work will have a relationship between theory and application software, it will develop a logical reasoning. The data and findings will be compared and tested in quantitative analysis in order to publish new research based on the proposed system.

Also the research will be based on interpretivism, due to gathering information from insights and having subjective meanings. The research will be conducted upon teachers who are working in local schools and having major issues with clerical responsibilities. The analysis will involve qualitative data by doing in-depth investigations with smaller samples.

**Methodical Choice**

The methodology will be based on mixed analysis and method research by using quantitative surveys and semi structured interviews by following Saunder’s Research Onion showed in Figure 1.
Access

The ability to collect data and gaining access will be crucial. An approach will be taken among schools in order to conduct interviews from teachers.

Research Strategy

The research strategies based on Figure 4 use for research work will be Survey, Experiment and Action research. The Survey strategy will help us to collect data and information with respect to questionnaires and it will be easily identifying the statistics of the research work using bar graphs or pie charts. The Experiment strategy will be applied in order to test the proposed software in order to gain feedback from the users. The Action research strategy will provide real time analysis and findings based on the framework implementation in organization to prove better circumstances for the research work. The strategies will utilize both quantitative and qualitative questionnaires showed in Table 1.

Table 1: Analysis based on Surveys, Experiment and Action research strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Type of questions</th>
<th>Methods of Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative questionnaire</td>
<td>Teachers perception of what constitutes an efficient ways of clerical responsibilities</td>
<td>Around 30 – 40 teachers review who have worked in schools and carry clerical work.</td>
<td>Questions and data</td>
<td>Bar chart, Pie chart, graphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative questionnaires (Interviews)</td>
<td>Will be used to learn the benefits of the new system.</td>
<td>4 to 5 people will be interviewed in order to test and implement the system</td>
<td>Open and semi structure questions</td>
<td>Content findings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Time Horizon and Techniques & Procedures

Depending upon the nature of the research work the time horizon will be Longitudinal due to different collaboration of strategies. Based on longitudinal procedures the techniques and procedure are given below.

i. Sampling Method (Quantitative data)

Based on research aims, objectives and problem statement it will be most appropriate to collect and analyze data through sampling method. This method will be utilized in quantitative analysis. The teachers will be asked questions and provide their opinions from scale 1 – 5 and samples will be collected in order to analyzed and determine proper statistics. This is a useful method as the quantitative analysis provides accurate measurements in objective manners.

ii. Qualitative data

The research questions formulated earlier will be collected through interviews and it will provide the findings based on literature review and theories. Based on arguments the study will analyze a deductive method. This will method will be able to check the findings of
the respondents that will allow creating a proper theme for the literature review. All the opinions and interviews will be recorded to support the research work.

iii. Ethics

Based on enterprise procedure and appropriateness of behavior, the rights of the schools will be highly subjective involved in the research work. Ethical issues will be identified and taken care of in order to rise appropriately with respect to research work. Few aspects of ethical issues can be:

a) Teachers might not share their related work openly in order to keep their respected jobs.

b) Few teachers may not be able to discuss their personal opinions during interview questionnaires because they might fear negative reputation of the company.

Therefore, in order to gain better findings, the questionnaires will be designed in such a way that it will not offend or harm anyone ethics.

iv. Limitations

The main limitation of this research is to get access of at least 3 to 4 schools and collect the necessary data and information through its teachers. Along with gaining access to teachers, it is important to take interviews while testing the framework application. There can be few issues regarding limitations given below

a) The staff willingness to answer questionnaires can affect research work negatively. Some may not keep the capacity to answer an outsider due to organization’s policies. Therefore, the questionnaires are limited to 30 people. The participants will represent sample questions that will only determine their personal opinion on clerical work. No question will be mentioned that is personal for organization’s criteria.

b) While applying a test for the new software application the organizations might hesitate to agree on deploying the system. In order to gain access of testing and getting the required results the test will be implemented in a form of a prototype and a general interview. The interview is limited only to 4 people in order to gain proper and limited access. This way it will be relevant to collect necessary anticipations for the research work.

v. Questionnaire

A questionnaire has been distributed among primary school teacher of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The aim of the survey is to investigate and analyze the clerical issues teachers face. The survey consists of around 15 questions in order to collect necessary information regarding teachers daily routine and their responsibilities. The study has distributed the survey among 30 teachers to collect the information regarding their working issues and the school systems. However, on 28 teachers able to attend the questionnaires. Other than that, the study also uses pivot table by Microsoft Excel to generate the raw data.

Result and Discussion

According to our requirement gathering and survey, we have analyze our findings into following categories:
Manual or Automatic System

Based on Graph 1, the study can analyze that 100% teachers are still dependent on manual clerical work, and none of them have used any automatic system yet.

Graph 1: Manual or Graph 1: Automatic System

Time Took to Finish the Manual Tasks

Based on Table 1, 42% of teachers spend around 3 – 4 hours to finish the manual task, and 10% took more than 7 hours to complete their tasks. This will give impact on getting prepared for the class and will not able to provide quality deliverables in the classroom due to limited if time. The timings are categorizing as follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – 2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – 4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – 6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Daily Tasks

Besides the main core task which is teaching, teachers also have other task and responsibilities to handle daily. These tasks are performed without failing and it is definitely consuming time and causing teachers to stay back after office hours just to settle their day-to-day unfinished tasks. There are times where they have to bring their work back home. Pie chart below illustrates the percentage of time used for a certain task. 25% of teacher’s time are used to prepare lesson plan for the next class. Lesson plan for each subjects are pre-planned before the class starts. 18% of the time are used equally for taking down students’ attendance and creating new teaching method for student to learn in classroom. Teachers are supposed to take the attendance during the class using a system. Sometimes due to limit of time and the slowness of the attendance system, attendance is recorded manually and when the school hours’ finishes, then teachers will log on into the system. Other than that, teachers are encourage to create new teaching method such blended learning and apply it in class. To
create some new activities will also consume time. 12% of the time are used for taking down daily log book. The rest of 27% are used for decorating class, entering marks, conduct exams, documentations, updating student files, grading and produce exam papers. Thus, because of putting effort and spending time to finish all the task in one day, there are times, teachers have to bring work to home.

Graph 2: Time Spent for Other Daily Task.

Negative Effects & Disturbances

According to Table 3, the study has analyzed that 53% teachers have voted for less negative effects, and only 46% has voted for more negative effects based on their present manual clerical work duties. The effects are categorized into:

a) Not enough time to prepare for teaching methods
b) Too much time for clerical work
c) Not enough time to spend with family

Table 3: Negative effects of Manual Clerical Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative effects &amp; Disturbances</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>46%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even though 53% of the teachers have voted that they were not have negative effects or disturbances on their teaching work, then again there are still 46% of teachers got effected by them.

Effects on Family Relationships

According to Table 3, the study can assume that 96% teachers are facing family issues due to their overloaded clerical tasks. Beside the students, the teacher’s family also need their attention and care. However due to a lot of clerical task that has been assigned to them, the
teachers tend to use after school hours to finish up their work which end up coming home late. This is not only concern with their relationship with the family, this is also concern with the health such lack of rest and not enough sleep.

Table 4: Effects on family relationships due to Clerical work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>27</th>
<th>96%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

System Preference

Based on Graph 3, 64% of teacher prefer to have an automated Log book system (for lesson plan) & automated attendance system, compared to fee record system. This is because most of their time is used in preparing the lesson plan and while in class, they need to log the students’ attendance in the system before end of each class. Most of the time, the attendance system was so slow which caused the teacher would have to keep on waiting rather then proceed with the lesson planned. This is also one of the issue that need urgent attention and immediate and better solution.

Graph 3: Preferred School System

Solution & Expected Benefits

The proposed system is capable of performing tasks such as logging details, marking daily attendance of students, performance reports, exam results management and syllabus management, thereby reducing the manual workload at a drastic level. Another benefit rendered by the system would be the accuracy level of data entered. Manual method of writing and submitting details and data are prone to common mistakes, therefore the system is built in with validation capabilities that check for mistakes in data entered and automatically attempts to correct them or alerts the teacher about any changes required. The system also contains fundamental tools that are required by teachers for frequent reuse such as spelling and grammar checking, bookmarking, error correction in documents and report generation, thus creating a user-friendly environment for teachers utilizing the system and providing them with all the necessary tools in one access space.
Attendance marking of students is simplified by allowing teachers to rapidly iterate through students of different classes simply by selecting the cohort they belong to instead of managing multiple logbooks for each session. The system also generates reports on attendance of each student, including late/absent declarations and generation of end-of-year attendance reports. In addition, due to that automated activity, any additional staff member from other departments of the institution such as Finance department and Student services department could be granted access for reference purposes.

The future of the system can be foreseen as a fruitful platform for teachers and academia and act as a trustworthy tool that automates most manual and time-consuming tasks. Possibly in the future, the system may even house the ability to connect the teacher's system to a mobile app dedicated to students and establish a stream-lined communication mechanism between teachers and students. This may radically enhance the way teachers deliver information to students outside of class and may even deliver automation to student related tasks such as scheduling appointments with teachers and receiving feedback on assignments instantly.

**Conclusion**

The study can anticipate that teachers play an essential role for betterment of our society by teaching our children. In general, we need to understand that teaching children is itself a huge responsibility and we need to give more attention towards the quality of education. According to requirements gathering and solution proposed, the teachers will be able to easily adapt the technology. This way enables the school systems to be more efficient and students will gain more educational benefits. The technological enhancement is important for our educational system. The study need to drive more methods and solutions in order to provide better future to our school systems. The potential benefits through our proposed system are not only for internal integration, in fact, it will provide benefits in each step and will evolve into redesigning school scope definition.

**Acknowledgement**

Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation (APU) has provided the research with financial aid for the conference, the journal and other related expenses.

**References**


