

## The Challenges of Secondary School Administration During The Pandemic of Covid-19: An Overview of Rural Schools in Sabah, Malaysia

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### Abstract

School administration is crucial to educational management because it entails the involvement, support, and cooperation of all members of an organization to achieve educational quality and objectives. Administrative efficiency is also vital to the development of an education institution. Schools in Malaysia were also impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The purpose of this article is to discuss the issues and challenges facing secondary school administration during the Covid-19 pandemic. A questionnaire was distributed to rural schools in the district of Beluran, Sabah, to collect data. According to the study's findings, school administrators face four primary types of challenges, including 55% unstable internet access, 15% cost of home-based learning, 20% lack of parental cooperation, and 10% difficulty managing module delivery to rural students. Additionally, the researchers suggest several strategies for overcoming the difficulties faced by school administrators. The implications of this study provide fundamental knowledge and direction for researchers and practitioners

seeking to continuously improve school administration management in accordance with new standards in line with the transformation of schools between 2021-2025.

**Keywords:** Administrative Management, Challenges, Suggestion, Internet Access, Home Based Learning

### **Introduction**

Malaysia is a developing country that places a high value on education as a means of advancing its economy, politics, and society in the age of globalization. In Malaysia's national budget for 2022, the government allocated the highest amount of money for education development at 52.6 billion Malaysian ringgit (Ministry of Finance Malaysia, 2021). For the benefit of its citizens, the Malaysian government places a high priority on education.

In addition, the Malaysian Ministry of Education provides a wide range of educational options for teachers in order to help them maximize the potential of their students. All Malaysian educational institutions have been forced to close since the Covid-19 virus was discovered in early 2020. As a result of the spread of covid-19 virus, face-to-face transactions have been banned in nearly every industry.

HBL, or home-based learning, has gained popularity as a viable alternative to traditional face-to-face instruction and facilitation. As a result, the implementation of HBL is also affected by students and teachers. The school administration is also impacted by the implementation of HBL and staff management challenges and changes.

### **Study Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the difficulties encountered by secondary school administrators during the Covid-19 pandemic season. Among the study's objectives are the following:

- a) Identify the challenges confronting secondary school administrators during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- b) Make recommendations for resolving the challenges confronting the secondary school administration during the Covid-19 academic season.

### **Literature Review**

The success of educational institutions depends on the quality of their administration, which has a direct impact on student and teacher achievement. The quality and uniqueness of educational institutions are also influenced by the leadership style of their principals. Human resources management, school infrastructure management, teacher commitment, and parental support are four of the most common challenges faced by school administrators (Abd & Sumintono, 2021).

Additionally, the lack of computer and internet access, as well as teacher-student relationships and access in virtual learning, pose a challenge to school administrators during the covid-19 pandemic season (Chennamsetti, 2020). The reality is that there is still a lack of infrastructure and virtual learning materials, particularly in rural areas.

A school principal's ICT skills are also critical to the success of ICT implementation in schools. It is easier for principals who are aware about ICT to embrace and adapt to technological advances (Subramaniam & Hamzah, 2020). The management of nurse education is challenged by financial and logistical obstacles, but focusing on five elements, especially regarding readiness, communication/information management, resource management and command

and management/continuous maintenance, aids the implementation of education for Covid-19 patients (De Tantillo & Christopher, 2021).

Online learning management is also a significant concern for school administrators. Principals and school administrators need to focus on planning, evaluation, and monitoring in order to improve online learning management (Futra & Primahardani, 2021). In addition, dealing with the Covid-19 pandemics poses an administrative problem due to the lack of digital competency among school administrators. School administrators are also hindered in their efforts to manage online learning by schools' inability to create effective distant learning programmes due to a lack of Internet connectivity, provision, efficiency, and finance (Asio, 2021; Zaki, 2020).

Administrators are also under pressure to manage internal administration while dealing with COV-19 pandemics from a mental health standpoint. Stress or stress among school administrators and instructors is a common problem. To counteract this decline in performance, administrators, instructors, and students all benefit from stress management instruction that emphasises the development of self-regulation skills and healthy lifestyle choices. Administration of online learning in schools is complicated by the lack of training programmes for school administrators, teachers and students on how to use remote learning resources efficiently (Mohammed, 2021).

Instructional leaders are responsible for overseeing and evaluating each program's implementation as part of their roles as administrators and educational institutions as a whole, respectively (Hallinger & Kouhsari, 2017). It is essential for every school administrator and school leader to be an effective curriculum leader who is capable of implementing and achieving a desired degree of success (Yigsaw & Bashir, 2017). Next, administrators must keep an eye on how effectively instructional knowledge is being disseminated (Hallinger & Suzette 2018). The expansion of covid-19 has, however, limited the ability to assess and monitor the provision of ongoing educational information.

As a result, the current allocation of resources cannot meet the needs of adequate and satisfactory infrastructure facilities, as well as a pleasant work environment. When it comes to providing and maintaining school infrastructure facilities, administrators face a significant challenge. However, from the perspective of school infrastructure, it is possible to improve and enhance facilities through the strength of the relationship between parents, stakeholders, and the community. PTAs (Parent-Teacher Associations) are an important part of the school's support system, especially when it comes to student issues such as bullying.

Administrators must also deal with the challenge of re-engaging teachers who have been demotivated by the covid-19 dynamics. The quality of a teacher's instruction is influenced by the level of motivation he or she has for their job. Teachers' moods and productivity are harmed by the pressures of their jobs and the emotional toll they take on them. The effectiveness of teachers in a home-based learning classroom is directly impacted by the impact of home-based learning on student performance. Even though a virtual award program is designed to boost teachers' motivation, commitment and performance, it is also important to cultivate a positive school climate by cultivating good relationships, mutual understanding, and administrators' communication skills. Due to a constantly changing student body, the school's situation is constantly shifting and requires a shift in action beyond simply keeping up with the current education system's pace of innovation.

Finally, administrators need to have the skills, abilities, experience, and responsibility for the school environment and organization in order to deal with issues and challenges in the

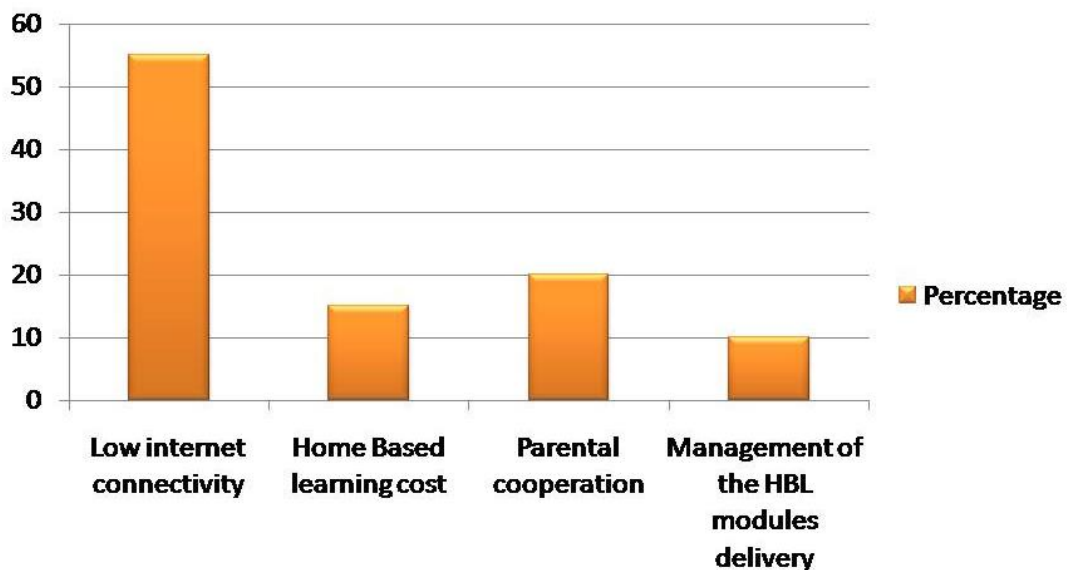
administration of education in schools. Improved school and organization performance can be aided by greater levels of teacher motivation, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and dedication.

### Methodology

The purpose of this study was to analyze the difficulties encountered by secondary school administrators during the Covid-19 pandemic season. This study is more quantitative in nature and descriptive in nature. The survey method is utilized to ascertain the difficulties encountered by secondary school administration. This investigation was place in a remote secondary school in the district of Beluran, Sabah. This study enrolled 30 teachers, including middle and top leaders. To collect data, a questionnaire instrument in the form of a Google form is employed. The generated surveys were distributed through the district administration's data collection-focused social media groups. This questionnaire has only two items: school administrators must respond to questions on the issues confronting secondary school administration and the steps necessary to overcome them from an administrator's perspective. The data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel and interpreted using simple-to-understand graphs.

### Findings

The study's findings indicate that secondary school administrators in the district of Beluran, Sabah confront four distinct sorts of challenges. Graph 4.1 illustrates the outcomes of four different types of challenges encountered by secondary school administrators during the 2020-2021 academic year.



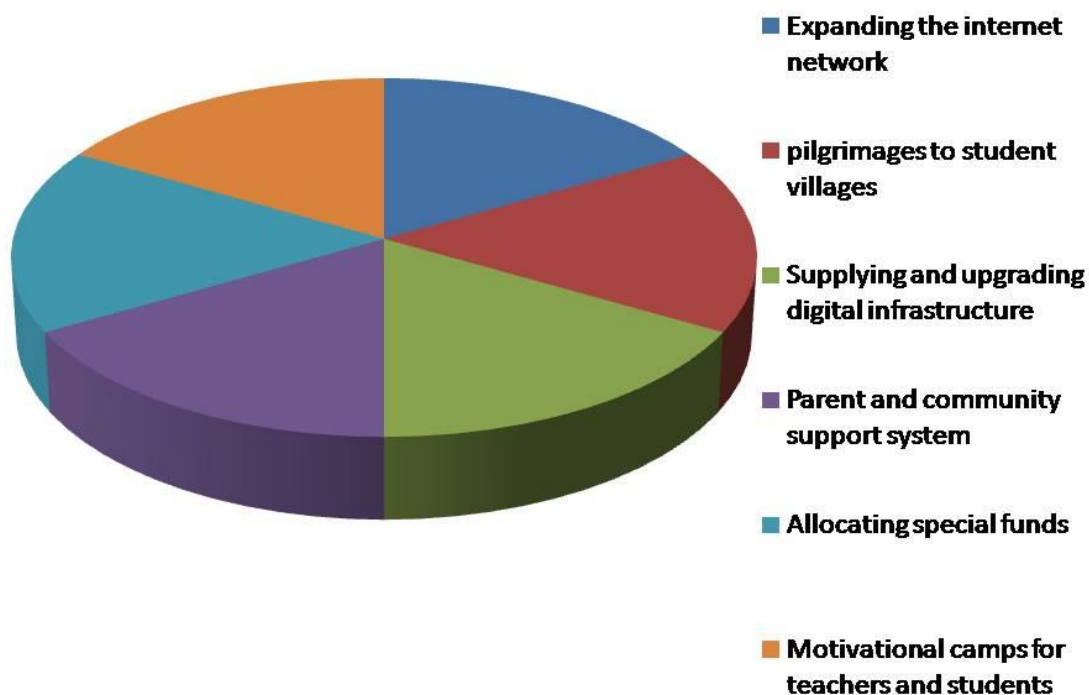
**Figure 4.1 Graph of Percentage According to Administrative Challenges**

According to figure 4.1, secondary school administrators in Beluran district confront four major obstacles. The primary difficulty confronting the administration of secondary schools in Beluran district is the district's low internet connectivity rate of 55%. It is obvious that rural areas have an inadequate internet network that has to be improved on a regular basis. Rural areas' limited Internet connectivity not only leads in dropouts from online classes, but also prevents teachers from attending online courses to improve their professionalism.

The second issue is a lack of parental cooperation, which occurs at a rate of 20%. This second difficulty also includes a lack of parental support for teaching and learning at home, a lack of

parental supervision and collaboration with teachers, a lack of parental reporting and monitoring, and a lack of parental knowledge with instructors. Parents' lack of awareness and understanding about their children's education is likely to be the source of the issue of parental and teacher cooperation. Additionally, the adoption of movement restriction orders during the pandemic season contributed to a lack of collaboration on issues of restricted movement. This can have a detrimental effect on kids and exacerbate the rural dropout rate. The third challenge administrators face during the Covid 19-pandemic season is the cost of home-based learning, which occurs at a 15% frequency rate. Administrators, — in other words middle and upper leaders, are liable for the payment of photocopying and the purchase of home based learning equipment such as a digital drawing board, green screen, studio lights, smart phones, and internet data. Administrators were also required to update computer software used in schools and businesses to conform to the digital concept in order to monitor meetings, virtual discussions, and so on.

Management of the home teaching and learning modules delivery with the frequency proportion of 10%, the fourth difficulty addressed by school administrators. Administrators encounter challenges in distributing modules to students through parents due to the distance between students' homes and remote schools, as well as communication issues and potentially hazardous communication pathways between teachers and students. Despite the fact that a checkpoint for the intake of home-based learning materials has been built, neither parents nor students are able to use it owing to distance, time, expense, or energy. This has an effect on the number of children who drop out of rural schools' home-based learning programs. These obstacles must be overcome and addressed in order to improve student growth and teacher professionalism as the education industry develops in the eyes of the world.



**Figure 4.2 Recommendations in Overcoming the Challenges of Secondary School Administration in the Covid-19 Pandemic Season**

As illustrated in Figure 4.2, six recommendations have been made by administrators comprised of middle and higher school leaders for resolving administrative obstacles encountered during the Covid-19 pandemic season. Among the proposals are expanding the internet network in rural areas, arranging pilgrimages to student villages with the permission and cooperation of the authorities, supplying and upgrading digital infrastructure for rural teachers and students, establishing a continuous parent and community support system, allocating special funds for the implementation of home-based learning, and organizing motivational camps for teachers and students in order to assist in achieving e-learning.

### **Discussion**

According to the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013–2025, the 5th shift is to ensure that every school has high-performing leadership in step with the international boom of industry 4.0, and this study is intended to realize that shift. Therefore, it is anticipated that the findings of this research will be useful to the Malaysian government, the State Education Department (JPN), and the local district education office (PPD) as they work to improve education policy formulations related to administrative leadership practices. As a result, it is recommended that the MOE, JPN, and PPD work together to develop awareness-raising programs and concepts that may be distributed to school administrators and principals.

Confidence in school administrators declines during this important season because they lack the necessary skills, knowledge, and readiness. It is imperative that the Aminuddin Baki

Institute and the Teacher Professional Development Unit conduct courses for school administrators so that they can gain a wealth of information and guidance about school administration leadership training planning from the perspective of In-Service Training (LADAP). When administrators' abilities are developed through courses or workshops, this can raise training's effectiveness as well. While this is going on, it is possible to strengthen one's leadership skills by being familiar with the various facets of school administration.

As a result, the findings of this study are intended to help school administrators better understand the best leadership methods in order to ensure that all aspects of school administration are handled properly and that teachers are further encouraged to become better educators. Additionally, this study can assist school administrators in implementing a culture of one heart with the school community that must be fostered in schools to promote comfort and improve school administration.

### **Conclusion**

The concerns and challenges confronting educators must be appropriately handled in order to achieve school excellence. It is critical to implement successfully the allocation and sharing of duties, devolution, enhancement of work culture, and leadership methods that are acceptable to school personnel. This study serves as a guide for administrators (Middle Leader Team and Senior Leader Team), PPD, JPN, and KPM, as well as policymakers, when confronted with administrative obstacles, particularly those associated with current learning owing to epidemics or other issues. This way, school authorities will be able to increase pupils' academic performance.

Schools should also boost teacher, parent, and student motivation; parental support, reinforced communities, and networking with non-governmental organization (NGOs) should be strengthened to streamline education administration, particularly in the delivery of home-based learning materials. This can indirectly improve the school's digital infrastructure management, which will contribute to academic achievement. Finally, this study is likely to serve as a springboard for academics interested in performing a more in-depth examination of the administrative issues faced by schools over the academic year.

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