

Professional Judgment of Teachers in Malaysia Based on Score Modelling Diagnostic

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Abstract

Teachers' professional judgment in classroom-based assessment (CBA) is a critical component of Malaysia's educational transformation, moving from exam-centric evaluations to more holistic, student-centered approaches. This shift underscores the importance of understanding and enhancing teachers' decision-making processes in student assessment. Despite its significance, the analysis of professional judgment practice using strategic models remains understudied, particularly in the Malaysian context. This concept paper employs the SCORE (Strengths, Challenges, Options, Responses, Effectiveness) model to investigate strategy-based assessment in teachers' professional judgment practice in Malaysia. The SCORE model was chosen for its comprehensive and positive action-oriented approach, offering a fresh perspective compared to traditional SWOT analyses. The study's major findings reveal that the implementation of CBA through teachers' professional judgment has several strengths, including more holistic student assessment and increased teacher autonomy. However, it also faces challenges such as inconsistency in assessment practices and the need for extensive teacher training. The analysis identifies opportunities for innovation in educational practices and improved teacher-student relationships. Stakeholder responses indicate mixed reactions, with some embracing the change while others express concerns about subjectivity and fairness. This paper proposes further research in several areas such as empirical assessments of the efficacy of teachers' professional judgment, comparative analyses between countries implementing similar systems, and the development of assessment tools to measure teachers' proficiency in making professional judgments. Additionally, it suggests the potential for integrating the SCORE model with existing educational theories, proposing a new SCORES model (adding 'Synthesis' to SCORE) for a more comprehensive framework in assessing and improving teachers' professional judgment

practices. This study contributes to the understanding of professional judgment in the Malaysian education system and offers insights for policymakers and educators in implementing and refining CBA practices. It also highlights the potential of the SCORE model in educational strategy analysis, opening avenues for its application in other educational contexts.

Keywords: Professional Judgment, SCORE Model, Classroom-Based Assessment, Teachers, Decision Making

Introduction

Teachers' professional judgment in the context of classroom-based assessment (CBA) in Malaysia is a critical aspect in the transformation of the country's education system. It refers to the assessment made by teachers of students based on curriculum knowledge, skills, values, evidence of achievement, teaching strategies, assessment methods, and criteria and standards set by the Malaysian Ministry of Education (Bahagian Pembangunan Kurikulum, 2019). The implementation of CBA, which is a refinement to school-based assessment introduced in 2011, aims to assess students thoroughly covering both academic and non-academic aspects. This change reflects the ministry's commitment to move away from a student-centred assessment system to a more individualized, student-centred approach.

However, the practice of professional judgment in CBA has raised various challenges and issues (Adila Athirah & Mohd Effendi Ewan, 2024). These include concerns about the ability of teachers to be the sole judge of student's achievement, the literacy level of teacher's assessment, teacher's experience, the constraints of the assessment period, and the ability to justify decisions made. These issues have become more pronounced with the cancellation of centralized standardized tests such as the Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR) and Pentaksiran Tingkatan 3 (PT3), which make the role of teachers as decision makers even more important. In this context, teachers' professional judgment requires not only in-depth knowledge and skills, but also the wisdom and ability to make ethical and responsible decisions to ensure students' Performance Level (PL) are reflective of students' true abilities.

In Malaysia, the practice of professional judgment has received less attention in the conversation versus CBA even though it is a key driver to the implementation of CBA. Strategic exposure to the potential of professional judgment among teachers, using a positive and action-oriented approach, can improve the decision-making process in education. The SCORE model stands out as an effective strategic design tool for this purpose. While there are various design tools such as SWOT, TOWS, NOISE, and SOAR, the SCORE Model offers a more positive and action-oriented approach than the frequently used SWOT analysis (Neal, 2024). This concept paper aims to outline a strategy-based assessment of the practice of professional judgment among teachers in Malaysia using the SCORE Model and potentially open new pathways for educational development and student success.

SCORE Model

The SCORE model is a strategic design tool designed to help an organization assess and develop their strategy. It helps organizations assess their current strategy and make decisions for future planning. SCORE analysis serves as an alternative to the SWOT analysis often used in the education ecosystem and is an indispensable tool that provides a positive perspective

for organizations seeking to reach a common decision. Its effectiveness lies in its comprehensive and systematic approach, which allows decision-makers to capitalize on existing strengths and opportunities and at the same time overcome challenges (Neal, 2023).

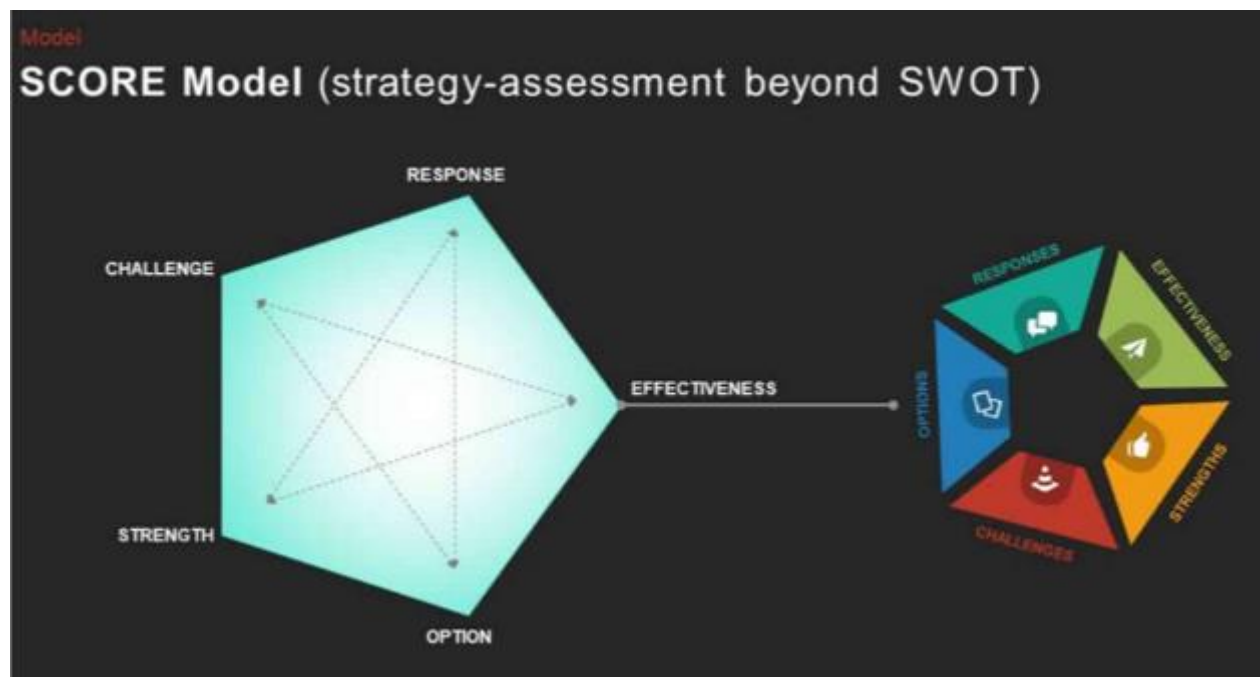


Figure 1: SCORE model as a strategy-based assessment beyond SWOT (Neal, 2023)

Figure 1 illustrates the SCORE model, which goes beyond SWOT analysis. SCORE consists of five elements: Strength(S), Challenge(C), Options(O), Response(R) and Effectiveness(E) (Neal, 2023). Strength(S) refers to what is done well or has the potential to be done well. Challenge(C) identifies areas where additional resources or capabilities are needed to make things work. Options(O) include the opportunities and risks involved. Response(R) includes the response of interested parties and expectations of rewards and Effectiveness (E) focuses on initiatives that function efficiently and reliably.

The SCORE model is very useful in fostering an expert-based culture. It encourages teams to assess the strengths, challenges, opportunities, partnerships and activities of the organization. While it is like a SWOT analysis, it also recognizes the relationships between colleagues and interested parties as well as the effort put in by those involved. The SCORE model is often used in corporate and business organizations. In an educational context, it offers great potential for looking at existing strengths. By using a rigorous and systematic approach to assessing business, SCORE analysis helps decision-makers make decisions that people agree with. Given that it considers both internal and external factors, it provides a thorough understanding of the current state of the business as well as future opportunities and challenges. As a result, SCORE analysis allows companies to capitalize on their strengths, overcome difficulties, seize opportunities and plan appropriate measures to fulfil the company's mission.

The Strength of Professional Judgment Practice

Malaysia recognized the professional judgment of teachers in assessing students along with the implementation of CBA since 2011. The method of implementation was then refined in

2016. The Ministry of Education's openness in giving autonomy to teachers shows that the MoE really needs teachers who are able to provide professional judgment. The transition from an examination-centred system to CBA in Malaysia is an important shift towards a more holistic and student-centred approach to education. This transformation puts teachers at the forefront of student assessment, using their professional judgment to assess overall student achievement. This approach provides several advantages to stakeholders.

One of the main strengths of the practice of professional judgment among teachers is its ability to provide a more comprehensive assessment of students. In contrast to traditional examination centred assessments, the practice of professional judgment in CBA allows teachers to consider various aspects of student development, including cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions. This comprehensive approach ensures that students are not only assessed based on their ability to memorize and repeat information but are assessed based on their overall development and potential.

The practice of professional judgment empowers teachers through more autonomy in the assessment process (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2023). Teachers, being the people closest to students, are in a good position to understand students' strengths, weaknesses, and unique learning styles. This autonomy allows teachers to customize assessments to better suit students' individual needs which ultimately fosters a more personalized learning environment. The ability to use professional judgment also increases teachers' sense of responsibility and ownership of the educational process.

Student assessment using teacher judgment allows for a variety of assessment methods to be incorporated such as project-based learning and more personalized assignments such as writing and speaking. This practice promotes the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills among students. Teachers can design assessments that challenge students to apply their knowledge in real-world scenarios, promoting deeper understanding and reinforcement of concepts. This approach is in line with the Ministry of Education's goal of producing individuals who have high self-reliance in this challenging era.

Malaysia is on the right footing along with its efforts in exploring the practice of professional judgment among teachers. The MoE has always provided room for continuous professional training and development with teachers given the opportunity to attend workshops and courses that enhance their professional judgment practices. These opportunities ensure teachers are always prepared for the latest needs.

Technology support is also provided to teachers in Malaysia with the Digital Education Policy launched by the Ministry of Education in 2023. This policy aims to strive for teachers and education leaders to integrate digital technology in the education ecosystem (Educational Resources and Technology Division, 2023). The use of technology in assessment allows teachers to access tools and resources that facilitate the assessment process and analysis of student data. Having professional learning communities, teachers can share experiences and strategies with peers through professional learning communities, which helps to improve the quality of their professional judgment practices (Norfarahin et al., 2020).

Challenges in Practicing Professional Judgment

In dealing with the challenges of practicing professional judgment, there are several issues that need to be addressed by Malaysian MoE organizations and interested parties. For teachers, especially novice teachers, low confidence in their knowledge and skills in making professional judgment is a challenge in practicing professional judgment in real situations (Daly et al., 2023). Mentorship programs and mentors from more experienced teachers can help improve their confidence and skills.

Large class sizes and time constraints can prevent teachers from conducting thorough assessments and providing meaningful feedback to students (Surianshah, 2022). This weakens the two-way relationship between teachers and students throughout teaching and learning (Gamazo & Martínez-Abad, 2020). The MoE should consider reducing class sizes to improve teacher-student interactions and assessment quality. Teachers also face challenges in explaining their assessment decisions to parents and the community. This requires support in the form of tools and instruments that can assist teachers in making and explaining their assessment decisions better. The use of Performance Levels 1 to 6 did not convince parents to accept their child's learning development.

KPM needs to ensure that there is a foundation and infrastructure in place that supports the implementation of classroom-based assessments. This includes providing sufficient resources and ensuring all stakeholders from all levels, top to bottom, understand and support this change. Teachers should require continuous training to improve their assessment literacy. This is important to ensure they can carry out assessments fairly, thoroughly and consistently. This challenge needs to be addressed by MoE by providing more workshops and courses to improve teachers' professional judgment skills to keep pace with students' current development.

In the context of education in Malaysia, the country needs a unified and accessible assessment system that allows teachers to record, analyse and report student assessments more efficiently. This includes the use of technology to facilitate the assessment process. This is to ensure that teachers can access data and collaborate by cross-checking each other on individual students. In this process, teachers need to work towards using technology in the assessment process, including learning management software and developed assessment applications. The Identity Management System (idMe) that teachers are beginning to use to create student reporting is a good start in the process of integrating information between teachers.

Options In Professional Judgment

The practice of teachers' professional judgment in assessing students can provide an opportunity for a more holistic assessment of students but at the cost of parents' lack of trust in the teacher's ability to carry it out. This situation opens up opportunities for teachers to improve relationships with parents through more frequent and effective communication. Recent technological developments that provide the convenience of online conversations allow teachers to interact with students and parents despite geographical constraints.

With the freedom of teachers to choose methods that better meet the needs of their students in achieving learning objectives, teachers need to deal with the risk of being one-sided in their assessments. This risk presents an opportunity for MoE to constantly improve the assessment method by providing a clearer and more objective assessment framework as in other countries that have used teachers' professional judgment as their assessment method. Among the countries that have used the professional judgment approach are Singapore, Australia, Finland, the United Kingdom and the United States.

In addition, one of the most significant opportunities is the empowerment of teachers as the primary decision-makers in student assessment. By putting the responsibility on teachers' shoulders, the Malaysian education system indirectly recognizes teachers' expertise in assessment. This situation can increase job satisfaction and motivation among teachers as they are recognized as co-contributors in making decisions regarding students.

The role of teachers who are often involved in decision-making encourages deeper interaction between teachers and students and strengthens the relationship between them. Through these interactions, teachers have the opportunity to understand students more personally, about their strengths and weaknesses, their learning styles, which helps teachers to design appropriate teaching approaches. This personalized attention can increase student engagement and motivation which will lead to improved student achievement.

The transition to CBA creates a good foundation for the practice of innovation in educational practice in the Malaysian context. Teachers need to develop teaching strategies by recognizing the various assessment methods. This research contributes to the world body of knowledge in effective assessment practices and helps education reform to keep up with the times.

The opportunities afforded by the shift to classroom-based assessment in Malaysia are vast and transformative. By embracing this opportunity, the education system can enhance teachers' professional judgment, promote holistic student development, and foster a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. Given that teachers are empowered to take a more prominent role in the assessment process, they become important representatives of change, spurring the evolution of education in Malaysia towards a more sensible and effective system.

Responses of Professional Judgment

Responses obtained from interested parties certainly need to be taken into account with the implementation of the practice of professional consideration of teachers in CBA in Malaysia. Teachers have reacted differently since the implementation of CBA (Faudzi & Ahmad, 2022). Some teachers welcome the empowerment and autonomy that comes with CBA, appreciating the opportunity to freely adapt assessments to student needs. However, other teachers may feel burdened by the increased responsibilities and the need for additional training to implement CBA effectively.

Parents also voiced concerns about the subjectivity of teacher assessments compared to standardized tests. They were concerned about the fairness and permanence of teachers,

especially if they considered that teacher assessments could be one-sided and inconsistent due to the influence of various factors such as teacher emotions.

From the students' perspective, the practice of assessment through professional judgment received positive feedback towards a more personalized assessment approach that takes into account their individual strengths and learning styles. However, some students were concerned about the absence of expert guidelines and how this might affect their future educational opportunities if teacher judgment did not give them an edge.

To address concerns about the fairness and permanence of teachers' professional judgment, standardized rules need to be introduced so that assessment criteria across the school follow harmonized standards. This involves developing clear guidelines and rubrics for teachers to follow. Specific training and certificates for teachers need to be realized to ensure they are equipped with the appropriate skills to effectively implement CBA. Continuous professional development programs and assessment literacy programs need to be gone through by teachers at least once a year to ensure teachers are at their best.

The new skills have certainly added to teachers' responsibilities, which now require them to document their assessment decisions with evidence. This leads to improved assessment practices but can also increase teacher workload. The need for additional resources for schools, such as funding for teacher training programs and the development of assessment tools will reduce budgets but also improve the overall quality of education.

The implementation of CBA has the potential to improve educational outcomes. The focus given to thorough and personalized assessment, rather than catch-all, allows students to build a deep understanding of a subject and develop a culture of critical thinking skills. Indirect student engagement will give teachers greater job satisfaction and increase parents' trust in the education system. This trust will lead to greater involvement and support for the school.

The Effectiveness of Professional Judgment Practices

The practice of teacher professional judgment in the context of CBA in Malaysia shows high potential effectiveness from various aspects. In terms of efficiency, this practice maximizes the use of resources by integrating assessment into the daily teaching process, reducing the need for time-consuming and costly separate assessment sessions. Each teacher is an evaluator and no longer limited to an examiner appointed by Malaysia Examination Board. Decisions relating to students can continue to be made without going through a lengthy process because the student's teacher is the assessor.

The professional judgment practice offers clarity through easy-to-understand guidelines and concise but comprehensive reporting templates. The simplicity of the system is seen in its focus on key assessment criteria and the use of a grading scale that is easily understood by all interested parties. Consistency is maintained by aligning the assessment criteria with the curriculum objectives and ensuring continuity in the assessment approach across stages and subjects. The flexibility in the application of the guidelines allows for customization to individual student needs, demonstrating the system's ability to adapt to the human factor.

The suitability of this practice is clear when seen in how it supports and maximizes the country's education goals. It not only assesses academic achievement but also supports the development of 21st century skills and lifelong learning of students. The results of the assessment are used to augment both the curriculum and teaching methods, making it a valuable tool in the overall improvement of education quality.

From an integration perspective, the practice of professional judgment shows a high degree of integration with the broader education system. It is integrated with the school's digital learning management system and harmonized with the teacher performance assessment system. The continuity between CBA and formal summative assessment ensures a holistic approach to assessment. Periodic analysis is conducted to assess the suitability of current practices with current educational needs, while planning for a gradual transition to a more advanced assessment system that takes into account technological developments and modern pedagogy.

While this practice shows high efficacy, there is room for improvement. Continued emphasis needs to be given to teacher training to improve consistency in judgment. The use of technology can be further enhanced to increase the efficiency and reliability of the assessment process. In addition, better communication with interested parties, especially parents and students, can increase understanding and acceptance of the system. With continuous improvement, the practice of teacher professional judgment in CBA has the potential to become the core to a more effective and responsive education assessment system in Malaysia.

Figure 2 is the SCORE Framework Model on professional judgment practice in Malaysia. What we can learn from this framework is that the SCORE will help to monitor the development of grit in future especially for educational context.

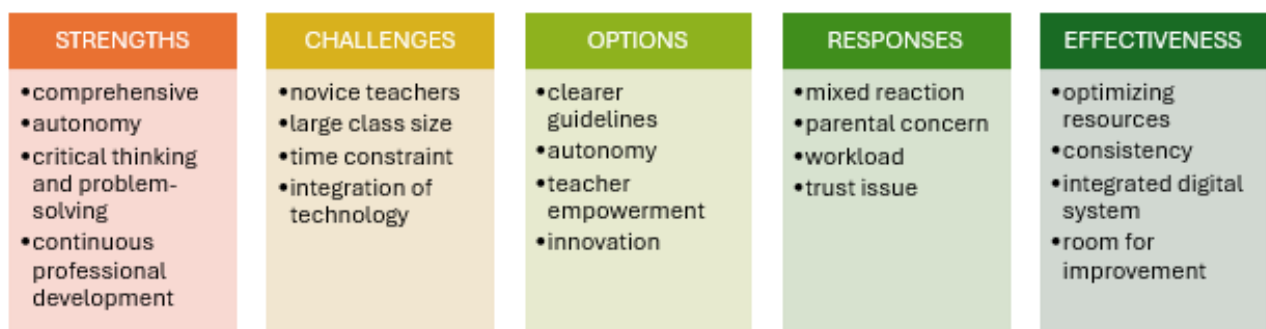


Figure 2 SCORE Framework Model on Teachers' Professional Judgment

Conclusion

Overall, the results of this concept paper show that the SCORE Model offers a useful approach in assessing the practice of teacher professional judgment in the context CBA in Malaysia. This analysis has identified the strengths, challenges, opportunities, responses, and efficiency of the practice. Due to practical constraints, this paper cannot provide a comprehensive review of SCORE. It only discusses positive aspects such as increased teacher autonomy, more holistic student assessment, and the potential for innovation in it. However, it is worth noting that the

overly positive nature of the SCORE Model can introduce discussion of negative aspects. Therefore, future researchers are advised to also discuss the negative side in their analysis. This finding has important implications for practice and theory. In terms of practice, it can help in framing more effective teacher training policies and programs to improve professional judgment skills. In terms of theory, this SCORE analysis has high potential for developing Bayesian Decision Theory, particularly in the context of classroom-based assessment. In addition, this finding can help in identifying strategies to deal with challenges in the implementation of CBA. By understanding the dynamics of teachers' professional judgment, we can better identify the support and development needs for teachers. Future studies could extend to empirical assessments of the efficacy of teachers' professional judgment, comparative analysis between countries, and the development of assessment tools to measure teachers' proficiency in making professional judgments. Following SCORE, integration models can be developed that combine elements of SCORE with existing educational theories. For example, one proposed new model is SCORES (Strengths, Challenges, Options, Responses, Effectiveness, Synthesis), where 'Synthesis' adds a new dimension that combines all elements to form a more holistic and integrated strategy. This SCORES model has the potential to provide a more comprehensive framework for assessing and improving teachers' professional judgment practices, thereby supporting the development of a more responsive and effective education system in Malaysia.

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