

# Enhancing teaching and learning practices in malaysia



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Education is one of the main fundamentals in building up a nation. In Malaysia, education has always been the top priority of the government. About a quarter of the government 5 years budget is allocated to the ministry of education to maintain good education system in this country. The vision of the government is to make Malaysia a centre of educational excellence. There are three levels of education in Malaysia which are the primary education – a period of six years, that is, from Standard One to Standard Six; secondary education – five years, that is, from Form One to Form Five; and the tertiary level of education. Upon completion of secondary education, eligible students can opt to pursue two years of post-secondary education, Form Six. This is the university entrance preparatory course. The pre-tertiary education (pre-school to post-secondary education) is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education (MOE) while tertiary or higher education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE).[1]

Education is a priority of the Federal Government of Malaysia and it is committed to provide quality education to all. Most of the Five-Year Malaysian Plans have placed great importance on education, training and lifelong learning. In line with greater focus on human development, an average of about twenty-one percent of the total budget allocation has been allocated for the expenditure of education and training development. The national philosophy of education states 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.” It is designed to

produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, possess high moral standards, and are responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal well-being as well as to contribute to the betterment of the family, society and nation at large.[2]

In order to support “ Vision 2020” the education system is transforming which entail changing the culture and practices of Malaysia’s primary and secondary schools, moving away from memory-based learning to an education that stimulates thinking, creativity, caters to individual abilities and learning styles, and based on a more equitable access. At the same time, Malaysia is initiating many approaches in order to keep up with the changing world and current needs which will generate a well-structured development of higher education. The government has also clearly outlined the strategic thrusts in the National Higher Education Strategic Plan to make Malaysia an international centre of educational excellence by 2020.[3]

## **MALAYSIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM**

Education is the responsibility of the Federal Government. Malaysia’s national education system is divided into pre-tertiary and tertiary education. There are two governing authorities for the education sector. Pre-tertiary education, that is, from pre-school to secondary education, is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education (MOE) while tertiary education or higher education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE). Under the national education system, a child begins his/her education with pre-school education at the age of four and will be admitted into the first year of the six years compulsory primary education when the child reaches the age of six on the first day of January of the current school

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year. The government provides eleven years of free primary and secondary education. Most schools in the country are government or government-aided schools and a number of private schools. The school starts in January and ends in November. Students sit for common public examinations at the end of primary, lower secondary, upper secondary and sixth form levels.[4]

**Pre-school Education.** Pre-school education is part of the National Education System under the Education Act, 1996. The aim of pre-school education is to provide a firm foundation for formal education. Pre-schools are run by government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as private institutions. The major government agencies that are responsible for pre-school education are the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Ministry of Rural Development, and the Ministry of National Unity and Community Development. Children enroll between the ages of four and six and all pre-schools have to abide the curriculum guidelines set by the Ministry of Education. The curriculum enables pre-school children to acquire sufficient basic communication, social and other positive skills in preparation for primary schooling. The learning components include language and communication, physical development, cognitive development, moral and spiritual growth, socio-emotional development, aesthetic and creativity.

**Primary Education.** Primary education is divided into two phases – phase 1: Year 1-3 and phase 2: Year 4-6. Education at this level aims to provide the child with a firm foundation in the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, as well as emphasizing thinking skills and values across the curriculum. While education at this level is not compulsory, more than ninety-nine percent of this age-group are enrolled in primary schools  
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throughout the country. There are two types of schools at the primary level – the National Schools and the National-Type Schools. In the National Schools the medium of instruction is the Malay language which is the national language. The medium of instruction in the National-Type Schools is either Chinese language or Tamil language. In both types of schools, the Malay language is a compulsory subject. English is compulsory and is taught as a second language in all schools. Chinese, Tamil and indigenous languages are also offered as subjects in national schools.[5]

Secondary Education. Secondary education is basically an extension of primary level education. Education at this level is general in nature and is divided into lower and upper secondary level, and a special year transition program known as “ Remove Class’ for pupils from the National-Type Chinese and Tamil Primary Schools.[6]

Remove Class. Remove Class is a transition year for pupils from the Chinese and Tamil medium schools to acquire sufficient proficiency in the national language to enable them to learn through this medium the following year. However, pupils who have performed well in the Primary Assessment Test (UPSR – Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah) at the end of Year 6, are allowed to proceed directly to Form 1.

Lower Secondary Level (Form 1-Form 3). This level covers a period of three years. Education at this level is general in nature. All subjects are core subjects and compulsory for all. Chinese, language, Tamil language and Arabic language (Communication) are offered as additional subjects. Upon

completion, pupils sit for a common examination, that is, the Lower Secondary Assessment (PMR – Penilaian Menengah Rendah).

Upper Secondary (Form 4-5). Education at this level covers a period of two years. Besides following the general education program, students begin to specialize in the science, arts, technical, vocational and religious discipline. Specific schools are designated for each discipline. These schools are academic schools, technical schools, vocational schools and religious schools. Upon completion, students sit for the Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM – Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia) examination.

Secondary Technical Schools. Secondary technical education is aimed at producing an adequate pool of qualified students who excel in mathematics and science, as well as in basic engineering subjects. Students in secondary technical schools follow the same core subjects of upper secondary school curriculum and choose science and technical subjects as electives.

Admission to these schools is through application based on the PMR results, and only students with strong background in Mathematics and Science are selected. Students from these schools are expected to continue their studies in science and technology-related courses at the higher levels as well as in advanced skills.

Secondary Vocational Schools. These schools provide courses in pre-employment skills as well as general education. Courses are offered in two streams – vocational education stream and skills education stream. In the former, emphasis is given to general and technical subjects in order to provide students with a good foundation for admission into polytechnics or

other higher institutions. In the skills stream emphasis is given to practical work to develop competency in trade skills required by related industries. Students are prepared for the National Vocational Training Certificate.

Upon completion of eleven years of free education, further education is no longer automatic but is subject to the individual's academic performance and financial stability. These upper secondary school graduates, that is, Form Five leavers, can opt to continue their education in post-secondary schools to obtain a pre-university qualification such as the Sixth Form or Matriculation program or GCE A'Level, or further their education at tertiary or higher institutions. Higher education includes certificate, diploma, undergraduates as well as postgraduate studies. Undergraduate studies consist of Bachelor's degree levels and professional studies while postgraduate studies consist of Master's degrees and PhD levels. Generally, higher education at the diploma level is for secondary school certificate holders, that is, Form Five (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia or SPM) from the age of seventeen onwards. The Bachelor's degree is for students from the age of nineteen onwards with post-secondary qualifications such Form Six (STPM – Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia), which is equivalent to the GCE A'Level, or pre-university qualifications.[7]

## **MALAYSIAN SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

The role of the school curriculum is to ensure the holistic development of the individual's potential, mentally, spiritually, emotionally and physically. The curriculum is to bring faster the Malaysian citizen who is balanced and well-rounded individual, trained, skillful and cherishes the national aspiration for unity. The Malaysian school curriculum has been reframed and realigned to <https://assignbuster.com/enhancing-teaching-and-learning-practices-in-malaysia/>

present and future needs. Besides that, rapid developments in technology, new theories of learning and developments within Malaysia itself necessitated the systematic curriculum. The basis of the curriculum took into considerations four main aspects – national development, individual development, learning theories, and the national philosophy of education.[8]

The basic theoretical principle in the planning and design of the Malaysian curriculum is the integrated approach. Infusion of specific aspects of education such as moral values, patriotism, science and technology, language, environmental education, study skills, creative and critical thinking, and road safety across the subject disciplines is a basic feature in the Malaysian curriculum. Such an infusion is made with the purpose of consolidating these aspects which may already be in the school subjects but needs further emphasis. Patriotism, for example, is already discussed in History and Local Studies but because of its importance, the national curriculum requires that it be taught across other subjects.

Others such as environmental education are taught across the curriculum because it cannot be accorded the status of subject due to constraints of time, facilities and the like. The technical, vocational and skills training offered in secondary technical and secondary vocational schools provide students with practical training and employability skills. Besides that, the use of technology as an enabler to facilitate teaching and learning activities have made learning interesting, motivating, stimulating, meaningful and develop skills that will prepare students to face greater challenges.[9]



Pre-school Curriculum. The pre-school curriculum focuses on the whole-child development. The curriculum emphasizes on socialization process, the development of personality and the preparation of children to enter primary school. The components in the curriculum include language and communication, cognitive development, socio-emotional development, spiritual development, physical development and aesthetic and creativity.

Primary School Curriculum. The Integrated Curriculum for Primary School (ICPS) is divided into two phases – phase 1 for Year 1-3 and phase 2 for Year 4-6. The ICPS emphasizes the mastery, reinforcement and application of 3Rs, acquisition of complex skills and knowledge, pre-vocational skill, and the development of personality, attitudes and values. The ICPS consists of three areas, mainly communication, man and his environment, and self development. These areas are further divide into six components – basic skills, humanities, art and recreation, living skills, communication, spiritually, values and attitudes.

Secondary School Curriculum. The emphasis of Integrated Curriculum for Secondary School (ICCS) is on general education, the consolidation of skills acquired in primary school, the development of attitudes, values, personality, and interests as well as specialization for higher education and career options.

## **CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES IN EDUCATION**

In the twenty-first century, education in Malaysia will face significant challenge as it is in this century that the country is set to become industrialized. It is imperative therefore to understand what it is that needs

to be given attention for the education system to prepare adequately for the century:

Shift to K-economy. Knowledge has to be the basic form of capital in the twenty-first century to position Malaysia for industrialization. The education system must yield knowledge workers to push Malaysia into the K-economy. Knowledge workers are essential for the country to make investments in technology which will contribute to sustainable growth. Malaysian education must enhance knowledge and technology in every facet of its education system.[10]

Improving Education Qualities. Given all the qualitative achievements at all levels of education with continuous growth of enrolment rates, Malaysian education has to shift to the dominance of qualitative target. Several factors have to be considered for determining educational quality. The areas of content and delivery that directly affect teaching and learning must be given emphasis. There have to be innovations within the approach for both the content and delivery at all levels of education. To ensure effective delivery, teacher professionalism has to be addressed to induce greater professionalism among school teachers. Recruitments, training and school restructuring should be the primary target areas for introducing professionalism among teachers.[11]

Narrowing the Digital Divide. The equity issue in education should aim for providing equal access to education. The focus of democratization of the education in the twenty-first century will be in terms of providing equity in education with emphasis on knowledge and technology between rural and

urban school population. Malaysian education has to achieve increase participation and improved performance in science and technology especially among the school population. Apart from providing the necessary infrastructure, science and technology have to be aggressively promoted to harness interest among students.[12]

Redefining the Role of the Private Sector. The role of the private sector is vital particularly at the higher level of education. It releases some of the heavy financing load off the government, reduces the capacity constraints of the public institutions, and provide innovation and competition. Nonetheless, profit and commercial motivations have developed a number of problems. These problems if not address adequately will effect the quality of higher education in the country. One broad question that should be addressed is what should be the role of private higher education – should they be complementary, supplementary or both.[13]

Teaching Methodology. Two shortcoming are identified in the current practice: (i) lecture-based instruction – students tend to become passive recipients of knowledge and resort to rote learning; (ii) teacher-centered – students tend to rely on their teachers to decide what, when, and how to learn. This worked relatively well but it is not clear that students are learning at higher, conceptual level of thinking.[14]

## **PROPOSED ENHANCEMENTS**

Several factors ought to facilitate the enhancements of the Malaysian education system, especially the national curriculum such as the introduction of new subjects and programs in schools. The facilitating factors include

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findings of research and studies, public opinions, world trends, social and economic needs and political pressures. In addition, they are to be facilitated further with the existence of the following supporting factors at varying degrees:

- The government's continued efforts to expand and improve education and training through increase in the budget for education.
- The experience over the years of the nation's education policy in enhancing quality and access to education to meet the needs of rapid development of the nation.
- Availability of basic infrastructure and training, that is, in-service teacher training, seminars, forums and workshops to familiarize teachers with the curriculum and to upgrade teachers' efficiency.
- Continuous training received by ministry officers both locally and overseas covering a wide range of topics which helps the officers to gain more knowledge and experience in planning and implementing curriculum reform initiatives.
- Public awareness and support to carry out educational reforms to fulfill the needs of cultural, social and economic development.
- Efforts by both the government and private sectors to intensify the acquisition and application of information and communication technologies in all fields of life as a result of globalization and modernisation.
- The strong commitment and awareness among parents of the importance of education in producing educated, knowledgeable and skillful Malaysians who are prudent, creative and innovative.

- In the learning process, to develop inter-personal and small-group skills – teachers must provide opportunities for group members to know each other, support and accept each other, communicate accurately and confidently, and resolve differences constructively.
- Promotive interactions – individual can achieve promotive interaction by helping each other, exchanging resources, challenging each other's conclusion, provide feedback, encouraging and striving for mutual benefits.
- Individual accountability – teachers should assess the amount of effort that each member is contributing. These can be done by giving an individual test to each student and randomly calling students to present their group's work.
- Group processing – teachers should provide opportunities for the class to assess group progress. This would enable group to focus on good working relationship, facilitate cooperation in learning and ensure members get feedback.[15]
- The curriculum must be so designed and randomly monitored to help students achieve overall and balance development and improvement.
- Appropriate mix of learning strategies to ensure mastery of basic competencies and promotion of holistic development.
- More emphasis should be given on students understanding of a particular concept, guiding students in active learning, providing opportunities for discussion and elaboration, and encouraging them to work with peers and teachers.
- Encourage and support collaborative effort with students from other schools or even from other countries.

- The curriculum and teaching methodology must cater to students' different capabilities, for example, their learning styles and levels of intelligence.
- Allow students to practice self-paced, self-accessed and self-directed learning which can be facilitated via the use of technology.[16]

## **CONCLUSION**

The environment and socialisation process to which students are exposed remain as important factors contributing to academic success and character building. The Malaysian educational system, at pre-school, primary and tertiary levels have consistently emphasised on the importance of nurturing, among others, moral values and ethics among students. Thus, the quality of education that teachers provide to students is highly dependent upon what teachers do in the classroom. Teachers should have the knowledge on how students learn and how best to teach. In addition, contemporary learning and teaching methodology should be in line with the technologies of tomorrow where technologies and communications infrastructure are paving the way for a more sophisticated ICT-enabled teaching and learning environment.

Indeed, with the advent of globalisation and modernisation, the education curriculum in Malaysia for sustainable development in the new century, call for a total commitments from all Malaysians, with a sense of urgency in the face of increasing competition. The Malaysian policy framework recognises that education development plays an ever important role in building a sustainable, resilient and competitive society. Interestingly, the global education scenario has similar development strategies, namely, by providing <https://assignbuster.com/enhancing-teaching-and-learning-practices-in-malaysia/>

wider accessibilities, ensuring quality education, continuous strategic education reforms so that the respective countries can compete as global education providers. In fact, education has already evolved into a big economic entity for some countries. Malaysia ought to be ready to face these challenges in the field of education, both internally and externally, with the advent of globalisation, trade liberalisation, and the development of ICT in this new century.