

Empowering Education in Malaysia: Continuing the Tradition of Excellence

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Abstract

The shift from production-based economy to knowledge-based economy (K-Economy) and the influence of globalization has ushered in greater challenges to the nation's educational system. The importance of education needs to be emphasised as it is necessary as an instrument of national solidarity and the making of knowledgeable society. The role of education in generating social value and national culture has become more challenging with the surging of unstoppable tide of globalization. Cultural globalization and the current trend of worldviewing will bring along far-reaching effects that will revolutionize the society's way of thinking. This paper will discuss briefly efforts that had been implemented by the government to face the current challenges. The final part of this paper will discuss educational issues that are relevant to be examined so that all affected parties would participate in upgrading the quality of education in Malaysia.

The 1990s has witnessed a visible change in the focus of economy in Malaysia - from one that is production-based to that which is knowledge-based alongside with globalization. The objective of education and its method has also shifted, parallel to the global change in the universal education paradigm. The concept of schooling too needs to be looked into. At present, students can be educated while they are at home with the help of modern communication technology and the computer.

Education, generally, is defined as any teaching and learning process that takes

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place between a teacher and a student. Education can be transpired formally or informally. The teacher in mind may consist of parents, school teachers, religious instructors or lecturers. Generally, there is a consensus that education should function to build up one's physical, intellectual and moral development. As an element that helps in the building up of one's character and personality, educators believe that education should also be functional in creating a cultured society so as to enhance the value of responsibility and social understanding among the people. In other words, the aim of education should not just be merely to alleviate the economic status of individuals but it should also create and perpetuate a civilized and peaceful society.

In the late decades of 1800s and in the early decades of 1900s and even nearing Independence, the British had implicitly "imprisoned" the people of Malaya. The Malays were positioned in the rice fields and the farms as farmers, the Chinese were brought in to become miners and the Indians worked in the estates. Even without formal education, the *ulamas* garnered in the effort to fight colonization by setting up "*pondoks*", religious educational institutions to sow anti colonial spirit. These religious institutions were instrumental in educating dignified leaders who were morally respected to become pioneer fighters for Independence having been influenced by the revolutionary fighters and *ulamas* in Egypt.

Education, as so said by the elders, is a process to perfect human creation. The Indian Sage, Thiru Valluvar said, learning should create two happiness: internal satisfaction to the learned benefactor and happiness to the beneficiary of knowledge.

Relating education to the analogy of the art of midwifery, Socrates said a midwife helps someone to conceive a new life, a teacher helps a student to conceive an opinion, information and understanding. Today, there are teachers who are eager to teach students the knowledge that can be used to get a job with a good salary and even to show that they can go on continuing their study until the highest level. This situation is called *Diploma Syndrome*.

Our own thinker, Prof. Syed Hussein Alatas said, "Today, our universities only teach career. For example, if a student learns to become an engineer, he will not be taught the broader function of education and the aim of becoming an engineer. These students should be educated to think intellectually the purpose of becoming an engineer, how should he contribute as a good citizen, and how could he help the nation in uplifting the quality of life."

Solidarity

Since Independence in 1957 to this day, education in Malaysia has experienced numerous and rapid changes. Datuk Dr. Ahmad Sipon, Director General of Education, is quoted to say "We must not be satisfied with what we have done. There are many ways for us to improve and to change for the better." He thus said so when asked to

comment on the effectiveness of teaching the subject of Science and Mathematics in English.

Due attention must be given to the need to implement changes in line with the wind of change in the universal educational trend. Education in Malaysia must corroborate with this trend if we want to create a nation that is respected and has a high level of education standard. Nevertheless with the presence of three main racial groups in Malaysia, comprising the Malays, Chinese and Indians, national solidarity must be the main concern and the basic aim of education in Malaysia because it is the axis of the nation's success. The elements of solidarity are encouraged and nurtured among the students beginning in the primary schools up to the higher educational institutions. It is inevitable that the educational system in Malaysia still maintains the vernacular system that has a particular method and way to nurture racial unity.

One of the methods in the vernacular system is entrenched in the National Vision Policy (NVP) with the prime objective to materialize national solidarity. This policy aims at the creation of a progressive, prosperous Malaysian nation whereby the people at all levels live peacefully in harmony and fraternity. The National Vision Policy too is in line with the National Education Philosophy that envisages the creation of well rounded citizens, mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually - and who are ever ready to contribute to the nation's ambition of creating solidarity and harmony in the nation's multi-ethnic society with their pluralistic religious beliefs. Solidarity thus is the main item in the national agenda to cultivate racial solidarity through the Malaysian educational system.

In comparison to some countries elsewhere, Malaysia places great emphasis to the business of upholding education among its people. It is estimated that only 20 out of 1000 of the populace are illiterate. Efforts are being made to ensure that educational inputs always keep abreast with the change of time and technology. Educational opportunities are broadened in accordance with the potentials and aptitudes of students. Evidently, support is also given to encourage participation in leadership training and leadership programs in schools. Promotions are being done and the door is widely open to encourage lifelong learning through the 10-Year Education Development Plan (2001-2010). The basis of this educational development plan is to open up access and opportunities to all people justifiably and to improve quality and alleviate effectiveness in educational management so that the quality of education in Malaysia is on par with the standard of education in the developed nations. The target of enabling forty percent of the citizenry obtain tertiary education in the higher education institutions by the year 2010 in contrast to twenty percent status quo today can be obtained if various methods to increase the standard of education is diversified.

The Performance of Education in Malaysia

Education is one of the main elements which support social institution that form and influence the development of social spectrum in the society. The fundamental education given at the primary and secondary schools must be adequate and strong enough academically in order to ensure that the nation is able to produce ample batch of excellent leaders and elite politicians, economists and academicians to lead the nation in the future. The effort to form educational hierarchy which dominates the consideration of excellence should not depart from the vision to create racial harmony because solidarity is the agenda that spells success in Malaysia. Presently there are seventeen Public High Institutions and more than ten private college universities and universities in Malaysia. Adding to that list is the presence of more than 500 private colleges. These numerous number of higher institutions show that the government is widening the door of opportunities to the citizenry and foreigners to pursue higher education in Malaysia and to obtain knowledge unlike the situation three decades ago.

Since 1995, The Ministry of Education has formulated various relevant Acts which are passed by the Parliament to dignify the development of the national education agenda. Among them are:

- Education Act 1996
- Higher Education Act 1996
- National Accreditation Board Act 1996
- University and Universitix Colleges (Amendment) Act 1996.

The most notable pragmatic shift in the education system is the creation of opportunity for adults to continue their education. The Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and SPACE-UTM have pioneered the way for off-campus studies which enable candidates with working experience and having vocational skills to further their education.

The involvement of many parties in the education process gives impetus to the democratization process of education. Internal organisation corroboration and inter-organisation cooperation is deliberated to exploit the resources effectively. In this context two Ministries have been identified to contribute more effort to the development of education in Malaysia. They are:

a) The Ministry Of Human Resources

This Ministry focuses on the development and training of students to become skilled workers in the industrial and non-industrial sectors. Considerable amount of allocation have been given to the program like *The Skill Training Loan Fund* which amounted to RM500 million and *Human Resource Development Fund* which require employees who have at least 50 workers in their manpower list to contribute one

percent from their employee emolument to the fund for the purpose of facilitating training. Besides that, centers are also set up and funds allocated for industrial training as exemplified by the setting up of **Industrial Training Institute and Advance Technology** which envisages the production of skilled workers for the industry.

b) The Ministry For Women, Family and Community Development

This Ministry gives attention to skilled training since the 1960s. The emphasis of training programs which are planned is on instilling elementary knowledge and know-how skill to generate self income such as craftsmanship, cooking and pastries, goldsmithing and other mineral works, sewing and tailoring. Other training which are considered very successful is pre-school education training that encourages the setting-up of kindergartens under KEMAS, Family Planning, and the opening of Village Resource Centre (Mini Libraries) and the implementation of literacy programs for adults.

Malaysia is not keen to imitate out-rightly the educational system that is practised in the United States of America or Japan because we believe we have our own priorities and uniqueness even though the need to adapt to the advancement of science and technology is inevitable.

The government of Malaysia at the moment is formulating a strategy that will be incorporated in the 9th Malaysia Plan (RMK-9) which foresees the emphasis on human resource development. The development of human capital investment have become the core subject which are discussed and widely quoted by the government leaders. **Human Capital** had been the focal point for consideration pushed forward by academicians since the 1960s. It is the subject of discourse for academicians who use to debate on the direct effect of education on the development of human resource capital. The basics had been reinforced 20 years later by the **think tanks** who insist that education curriculum should support the objective of human capital development very comprehensively.

Realizing this need, the government under the leadership of YAB Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi proactively take the step to set up two ministries to reorganize the educational system in Malaysia. The ministries are The Ministry for Women, Family and Community Development and The Ministry of Higher Education. It is hoped that with the creation of these two ministries, the integrated and pragmatic curriculum of education will reinforce the incentive and spur the spirit of research and development (R & D) in education. It should further benefit the nation and helps Malaysia to emerge as an excellent education hub for the region.

With the objective of empowering education in Malaysia, the emphasis of the 9th Malaysia Plan (RMK-9) will be the focus on mediocre students who failed to excel in the examinations. This due attention is given because the group is identified as the majority number of students graduating from the schools every year. If no efforts are

being done to alleviate the students in this category, the repercussion to the national social development agenda will be disastrous. Among the factors that have been identified as the contributors to the failure of students to do well in the examinations are the incidence of poverty, the lack of amenities and infrastructure, the shortage of teachers and other problems in schools.

The task to solve the problem is seriously placed on everyone's shoulders. The concern to build a generation of Malaysians who are creative, innovative and development oriented, ready to experiment new ideas depends on our ability to develop excellent human resource capital investment. Examples of successful human resource capital development program can be seen in India and Singapore. In India, the source of labour is very stable and hence it is no wonder that India has become the important pioneer in the global information technology industry. The might of India in the industry is contributed by its system of education which are consistently successful to produce highly skilled graduates in the field of information technology.

Likewise in Singapore, with the total population of four million, the ability of Singapore to generate world class economic system is phenomenal. Education is the main key to the economic prosperity of Singapore. As a nation who has a limited number of population with scarce resources, the effectiveness in her endeavour to produce excellent human capital resource through her education system is exemplified in its success to emerge as the exporter of "know-how"¹ products alongside the "know-who" resources to the world under the slogan of ***Go Singapore***. Presently Singapore is exploring a new dimension in order to spearhead fast billion dollar income - that is in the field of biotechnology. In education, Singapore's innovation is quite advanced when she is able to launch the school-without-book program, a smart schooling system which only uses small mini-computers in schools. This system should be regarded as a challenge to our national educational system if we want to emerge as the alternative educational hub for international students.

The government's concern to raise the level of academic excellence is very obvious and the Prime Minister himself attended the luncheon to honour 180 students who obtained excellent results in the 2004 Malaysia School Certificate (SPM) examination, including Malaysia's best student, Nur Amelina Che Bakri who scores 17A1. The luncheon held and attended by the national leader proves the government's commitment to academic excellence.

The Challenges of Education in Malaysia

Delivering his royal speech on his 77th birthday celebration recently, His Highness Sultan Azlan Shah Ibni Al Marhum Sultan Yusoff Izudin Shah, reminded that there is nothing more valuable for all races and the nation to own except to have a new breed of educated generation, with positive attitude, ready to face competition and possessing the spirit of patriotism. This suggestion is apt and timely because human resource development or capital investment will materialize in the future if education is given

heed from the very beginning. The new educated generation will be evident when the society has turned to the liking of reading, making observation, doing research and holding discussion for the purpose of increasing their knowledge and confidently self-convinced that education is for lifelong consumption.

The generation that can face challenges and competition globally will find their best place in the world to stand tall and they will make sure that their knowledge and skill will always be in consonance with the change of time, science and technology. This preparedness in knowledge and skill will determine their success in the future.

a. Pre-school Education

The importance of pre-school education cannot just be ignored because with proper education, the future of our children will be shaped. The objective of pre-school education is to disseminate learning experience to pupils aging between 4 to 6 years old in order to nurture their potentials in every aspect of intellectual development, to train them to grasp basic skills and to germinate positive attitudes among them as a preparation before enrolling in the primary schools.

The program for pre-school education was launched after the Cabinet Ministers Meeting on December 18th in 1991. A year after that, the pioneer Pre-School Education Program under The Ministry of Education (KPM) Malaysia was implemented with 1131 classes adopted as pilot projects. Following that, the introduction of the Education Act 1996 has made pre-school education an important element in the national education system. Finally on 6th of June in 2001, the Council of Cabinet Ministers endorsed that the program of pre-school education under the Ministry of Education be spread out nationwide. Thus by the year 2004, there are 3,231 number of pre-school education classes under KPM all over the nation. The pre-school education program initiated by the Ministry of Education is aimed at reinforcing early education, an encouragement that supports the effort by the government to empower the system of education in Malaysia.

Reforms and modifications were also continually done toward the pre-school programs under the KPM especially those which are concerned with information technology so that the programs are consistently updated with the current development of technology. Among the programs involved are the ICT Kidsmart Early Learning Program (2001), Pe-School ICT Program (2002), The Pilot Inclusive Pre-School Special Program (2003) and the Pre-School Special Education Program (2004) which consists of 28 pre-school classes for slow-learners, and for sight and hearing handicapped children. In order to improve the quality of pre-school teaching and learning, beginning the year 2004, the government has also placed trained graduate pre-school teachers to the specified preschool classes with the objective of rendering quality teaching service right from the pre-school level.

The reports made by a supporting group **Legal Momentum** and by the Research

Centre For The Study of The Working Place, Massachussetts Institute Of Technology have analysed the findings about the economic and other causal effects brought about by the benefits of (early) pre-school education. The research that began forty years ago studied the economic effect of beneficial pre-schooling on 123 infants of African Americans from low-income families which are considered high-risk school drop-outs.

Among the group of children that were studied, half of them were found to have attended pre-school education of high-level quality while another half did not. The observation concludes that the probability of children having attended kindergarten classes to complete secondary school education are higher, will have more chance to fine employment, will be less dependent on social welfare societies and will be less likely to be jailed for criminal offences. Children who have good early chance in life will less likely need special and expensive rehabilitary education and they will have more probability to have the chance to enter the universities.

The government's desire to build up confidence, self respect and personality among the children in the nation's future development as a united people of Malaysia is also evident in her insistence to make it compulsory to adopt the National Pre-School Curriculum beginning 2003. Among the criteria considered is to ensure that the teachers are really skilled and well-trained. Beginning in 2005, teachers who were trained with pre-school education curriculum will begin their responsibility. They will play the role as trainers who will support the objective of bringing about educated generation from the very beginning of the children's life. The success of the Malaysian system of education is reflected in the incidence of high percentage of literacy rate in Malaysia : 94.0% (in 2002).

Table 1: Literacy rate

	2000	2001	2002
Literacy rate (age from 10 and above)			
%	93.8	93.9	94.0

b. The Introduction of English as the Medium of Instruction in Teaching Science and Mathematics

The government has allocated RM500 million to implement the program of teaching and learning Science and Mathematics in English language. This program is aimed at giving early preparation to the students to equip themselves in the competitive globalization era, k-economy and the necessity to exploit positively the benefits of information and communication technology (ICT). In the context of language usage in the world, Mandarin has 1.5 billion speakers, followed by Spanish, English and Malay (250 million).

Although English is ranked third, the role of this language as the medium of communication is unquestionably important. Thus English has to be continually exposed to the students and the students should master the language fully because almost all business intercourse at the global level today is done in the language. Likewise in the context of technological information language, more than 80% of the source of reference and the contents of information available in the internet are in English.

The policy of making English as the medium of instruction in the teaching of Science and Mathematics should be viewed as a positive effort to prepare Malaysia to advance forward as a developed nation as envisaged in the Vision 2020. Japan, an advanced nation is now considered fallen behind in the development of knowledge because knowledge can be accessed readily in the Internet. France has also implemented the policy of instruction in English for all the subjects in the universities except law. Thus, although France is noted for her patriotism in the national language, finally she succumbed to the universal trend of preferring English.

A research paper delivered in the Second Congress of Malay Education held on 26th and 27th March 2005 in Kuala Lumpur, reported an academic study indicated that about 80% or half a million Malay students would probably failed in both the subjects of Science and Mathematics if the policy is continued. However the government has decided to go ahead with the program because it is felt that discontinuing the policy is not appropriate at this point of time when a good command of the English language has become a prerequisite to enable our students to go international. The vital step to do is to modify the methodology and technique of teaching so that it becomes creative and dynamic. In that light, it is not surprising to notice that the **American Peace Corps** were able to master the Malay language within six months in America and in just three to six months in Malaysia to familiarize the volunteers with the Malay language which they will use as the medium of instruction when teaching in the Malay Medium schools in Malaysia. This success is due to the methodology of teaching which is interesting and effective.

Our students are capable of mastering any language if the approach and the method of teaching is effective. Cristiana Cayles, the Director of **Asia Pacific Cambridge International Examinations (CIE)** in a statement said that the performance of student candidates in the subject of **English 1119** is good and very encouraging.

c. Lifelong Learning

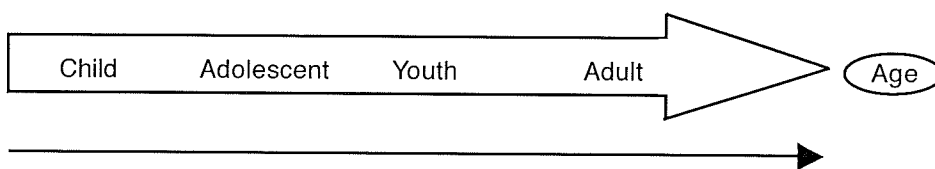
The concept of lifelong learning (LL) had been practised for a long time ago by the advanced societies in the world. This concept was started by the Greeks with the advent of the paideia and the institution of knowledge. Lifelong learning involves research activities, planning, implementation and evaluation of the education program either in the formal or informal form. The early civilizations of Sumeria, Babylon, Europe, China,

India and Islam were started with the revolution and reformation of knowledge which conceived the highly civilized society.

As a preparation to change the mind, attitude and behaviour of the society to advance forward to excellence, success is determined by the cooperation of all parties involved. This involvement will maximize the exploitation of resources available and it ensures that the implementation of the programs will render full benefit to the society and the nation. The need for lifelong learning can be viewed from three important perspectives. They are human capital, social capital and cultural capital. The scope of learning will no more become the framework of economy and material alone but it goes beyond the social and cultural needs. In the Malaysian context, lifelong learning program can be used as a tool to enhance inter racial understanding. For that purpose, lifelong learning can be regarded as a catalyst to the boost to foster racial solidarity that is more stable. There are five characteristics that form the lifelong learning program:

- a. Learning that is characterised by its conscious purpose, has its own particular curriculum and pedagogy. The form is either formal or informal.
- b. Has a clear target and keen interest to realise excellence.
- c. Implement the knowledge learned in accordance with the trend of change.
- d. Manages to evolve change in the behaviour such as able to become more skilful.
- e. Helps to change the value and attitude of individuals and the society. Encourages to shift the mindset, the philosophy the belief and opinion of any subject

Illustration 1: Lifelong Learning



The Practice of Lifelong Learning in Malaysia

The government is continually trying to foster lifelong education among the people in Malaysia. The government's initiative to champion lifelong education is reflected in the government's **third blue print for development (RRJP3)** for the term 2001 - 2010 and in the government's Vision 2020 Policy which outlined the steps to face the challenges of globalization, economic liberalization, and the changing economic environment based on knowledge (k-economy). In Japan, the Japanese perception of lifelong education policy is very encouraging. The new generation in Japan is very

persistent in continuing their studies in various fields to ensure that they could secure good employment in the future. In South Korea, since the middle of 1990s, the government has included a change in the educational system in view of facing the challenges of globalization by the enactment of The Law For lifelong education and the formation of Korea Educational Development Institute (KEDI) as a center for Lifelong Education. Up to the year 2000, there are 12,630 students who had benefited from the program of lifelong learning in South Korea.

The civil service in Hong Kong has made lifelong education program as their culture in their administration since 1999. It is hoped that this new reform will make the civil service more open, more flexible and equitable with a pro-active working environment culture, responsible in its role, highly efficient and capable of delivering the best service to the public. The keenness of the Singapore government to promote lifelong education policy starting March 2000 is consistent with the launching of Singapore Learning Movement, a machinery which encourages Singapore citizen to instill the culture of lifelong learning in their life. Lifelong learning policy is a program implemented under a project called **School of Lifelong Learning (SOLL)**, one of the action plan set up under **Singapore Manpower 21** as a blueprint for manpower development so as to face the changing world globalization.

Malaysia too does not fall behind in the effort to make lifelong learning program an important asset in the national education program. An amount of RM 50.586 billion is allocated in the 9th Malaysia Development Plan (RMK9) to develop human resource building up manpower who are ever conscious about education needs and the fulfillment of knowledge. Through the Ministry of Human Resource, the government has prepared a strategic plan for lifelong learning program with the following objectives:

- a. To provide for and to encourage high skill technological training with the emphasis on multi skill knowledge.
- b. To develop innovative training program for the need of industry.
- c. To provide computer-based training.
- d. To alleviate manpower skill through industry retraining .
- e. Introducing Career Development Study Financing Scheme to veteran-aged workers who want to improve their qualification.
- f. To implement e-training program.

Lifelong learning program is a very important concept and thus needs to be given due attention by all parties so that our desire to see the evolution of a society that practices the culture of analytical observation, and research-and-study centric can be realized.

Issues of Education: The Present and the Future

a) World Class National School

The determination of the Ministry of Education to make the standard of National School curriculum world class and regard it as a social medium to enhance racial integration in the country should be viewed as a positive effort. The ability of the National School curriculum to compete internationally should be dignified so that it can become the choice of every strata of the Malaysian people. For instance, Sekolah Bintang Utara (the North Star School) learning curriculum has far surpassed the standard of other school so much so that it even had received application from students of an international school who opt to study there. The success is due to hard work that is been done to empower and to equip the school with various teaching facilities notably with many apparatus that suit the changing information technology. The most challenging task the Ministry of Education has to confront today is to ensure that national solidarity is nurtured and racial integration is reinforced.

b) The Effect of Enrolment Based on Meritocracy

Ever since the government introduces the methodology of choosing the candidates to enter the Public High Institutions (PHI) based on meritocracy, various complains of dissatisfaction had been made by certain parties who were anxious about the decreasing number of bumiputra students offered to study critical courses in the PHIs. For critical courses such as medicine, dentistry, engineering and law the number of bumiputra enrolling are dwindling and the nation may be heading for racial polarization which is unhealthy to national development in the future.

c) Student Discipline

Statistical data presented April last year by a special team formed by the Ministry of Education to look into the problem of student discipline recorded 670 calls made by students involving 202 reports of indiscipline and misbehaviour, 337 reports about the school management, 135 involving questions and answers and opinions from the public. Students' discipline rightly has to be given heed very seriously by every party in Malaysia. Students' discipline must be given serious attention by every party and cooperation between the school and the Parent-teacher Association must be strengthened so that all the students could enjoy all the benefit of education. The teachers in particular should be equipped with wide spectrum of knowledge and skill in order to tackle the problems faced by students.

d) Special Education

Excellent Special Education Teachers 2005 is introduced as an incentive to encourage

teachers involved in special training education to be creative and innovative. The award is a symbolic recognition of the Ministry to the teachers who believe that the skill of teaching management to students who need special training is not only found by reading books but it also requires various innovative techniques that can be created through experience. Thus the consciousness of the government towards the importance of special education is greatly appreciated and it goes to show (to the society) that the welfare of students in special education institution is given special attention from time to time.

e) Mastering Scientific English Language

The Ministry of Education is conducting more than one hundred programs to increase the level of English language proficiency in daily conversation. We have to admit that the axis of knowledge in various fields especially of science and technology today lies in the West and the medium is in English. The number of journals, books, television programs, web sites and science and technology courseware available in English are far more numerous than in any other languages. We must not be sceptical to the effort of the government to target the students as a society that is English literate especially in Science and Mathematics. On the contrary, the effort should be supported wholeheartedly. Every weakness should be improved and the effort must be assisted so that the competitiveness of Malaysia at the global level is consistent at all times.

f) The Dignity of Teaching Profession

The issue of teachers not being able to receive the honour they deserve, the teaching profession that has been viewed lowly and the salary and service scheme that is unattractive has resulted in decreasing interest by the youth towards teaching profession. This subject must command due attention by the government because the dignity of teachers is very vital and the government has set aside a special day (Teachers' Day) every year to honour the teachers for their service and contribution to the nation.

g) Teachers' Gender Imbalance

Implementation of activities in schools are limited by the shortage of male teachers in comparison to female teachers who are outnumbering the male teachers. The focus of the curriculum today is on the memorization of facts and information with examination-orientation and no attention is given to the development of student aptitude and creativity. The teachers and the schools are pressured to demonstrate excellent performance statistically. The contents of the subjects taught in schools are too detailed in the primary level and does not inspire cheerfulness in the teaching technique. The equilibrium of ratio between the male teachers and the female should be able to develop self pride, inspiration and ambition to the students so that they can become successful in their education.

Conclusion

The government should focus on soul searching and studying in depth all the issues in the national education especially in the primary and secondary school levels. The national education needs to have a guidance and clear direction to ensure that the future generation are united in the march towards the process of national integration.

The issues of Malay language, the command of English, the weakness in mastering science and mathematics, and the proper instruction of religious education should be discussed and implemented effectively. The question is: have we taken the big stride in the shift to the direction we wish to go to as a result of the change in the curriculum and the reform in our system of education?

The quota policy is apparently getting less functional in ensuring the enrolment of excellent Malay students in the High Education Institution and choosing the best field of study. How about the position of Malay students who do not do well in their education? Those who do not excel in the examinations especially for candidates who came from the rural areas, must have certain reasons why they do not do well. Besides their lacking of discipline and the keenness to study, the factors such as inadequate learning facilities, their daily diet, the loss of focus to their study, and their parents apathy towards education also contribute to the examination results. These aspects must be analysed in order to success in the future.

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