



Brief Summary of CPPS-ASLI RTD on Education Blueprint Findings

EDUCATION BLUE PRINT – JOB WELL DONE BUT NEEDS MORE IMPROVEMENTS

Yesterday, the Asli's Centre For Public Policy Studies (CPPS), hosted a Roundtable Discussion (RTD) to Review the newly released National Education Blueprint (2013-2025). This was a small group of people but they represented a cross section of Malaysian society with educational expertise.

The Chairman of ASLI-CPPS, Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam, moderated the RTD. Among those present were Datin Noor Azimah Abdul Rahim (Page), Tan Sri Dr T Marimuthu (former professor of Education), Dato AR Peter (former Principal), Mr Khor Hong Yin (former Principal and Secretary of Methodist Schools), Ms Leow Lee Lin (educationist), Bro Anthony Rogers (Head, La Salle Schools), Dr Daniel Ho (former lecturer) and Datuk Dr Denison Jayasooria (Ethnic studies, UKM) and many other education leaders

.The RTD made the following observations & recommendations :-

1. Appreciate the Government for the Effort

All present recognised that the Ministry of Education had taken tremendous effort in public consultation, receiving input from professionals, educational experts, parents and the public, before bringing out a comprehensive preliminary report

The RTD recognised that the Ministry of Education was in no illusion or seeking to cover up many weaknesses in the current state of the education performance and achievements of the educational system in Malaysia.

While also recognising major developments and achievements in education, the Report does acknowledge serious shortcomings when benchmarked internationally with other countries both at the content as well as in the delivery and learning outcomes, which have to be overcome at a much faster pace, to prevent further decline in our educational standards

2. Strengthening English Language

While the importance of Bahasa Malaysia and English was rightly noted, however the emphasis of English requires stronger thrust in order for Malaysia to prepare Malaysians to become better able to compete in the globalised world, as Malaysians are losing their competitive edge.

Hence much more attention should be given to upgrading the teaching of English together with English literature studies. Furthermore, it is necessary to teach Maths and Science in English, especially at the secondary level. Also we need the introduction of English medium schools based on parental choice in selected schools. This attempt was felt would not weaken the commitment to the national language which we hold paramount.

In this connection, It was felt that the key findings of the international and local panel of experts be released including the feedback from the town hall gathering especially in the area of English language proficiency including the experiences Korea and Singapore in this respect.



3. Science & technology need specific mention

It was noted that the blueprint was weak in addressing the science and technology concerns and therefore the blueprint needs a very much stronger focus on this aspect, including the expansion of technical schools to meet the demand for technical and semi-professional manpower need in a rapidly developing country like Malaysia

4. Concern over moral studies

Much Concern was expressed over the teaching of morals and Islamic studies. There is a need to clearly describe how this will be done and more details on this matter.

The perceived Islamisation in national schools should be addressed urgently as this issue could be causing more polarisation in national schools and making national schools unpopular with parents and large sectors of the public

This could be one reason why national schools are seen to be driving students away at the primary levels

5. Clear roadmap for mission schools

It was felt that the legacy of the Mission schools is totally neglected and their immense contributions not adequately recognised. There is no reference or roadmap for the future of Mission schools and this is a major gap in the report. While the RTD appreciates the reference to both Pintar and Trust schools as new innovative approaches for private sector involvement, the tremendous potential of the Mission schools should not be neglected and should be enhanced.

In this context the RTD felt that these schools which were premier schools of the past and where today like other national schools with a majority of the students from the Malay community, these schools must be regarded as National schools with sufficient resources allocated for infrastructure development and common maintenance, as many mission and vernacular schools are in miserable conditions.

The traditional dichotomy of National schools and National Type Schools must be dismantled. This is because the students are all Malaysians and therefore the tax payers must benefit from universal public resources allocations. This sore issue itself is causing resentment and disunity. Hence any transformed education policy must seek to promote rather expand disunity

It was felt therefore that Mission schools had the full potential of adopting the Trust school approach for greater community and private sector involvement.

Furthermore the blue print does not mention School Boards, their potential and development which is a very good method for greater and more stable community involvement in the management of the schools. This aspect must be added into the blueprint.



6. Reposition Vernacular schools as full national school recognition

It was also strongly felt that in the case of the vernacular schools there is a need for a clear statement of commitment and recognition that vernacular schools contribute to the national education development and should indicate a clear expression of our basis need to follow our national slogan of pursuing ``unity in diversity``. UNESCO studies show that children learn best in the early years in their own mother tongue and therefore this diversity of choice must be appreciated and enhanced in the Malaysian education system, especially at primary level .

In this context too all the vernacular schools must be treated as National schools and the false dichotomy separating national and National Type Schools must be discontinued as a matter of priority , to give more credibility to the blueprint !

The RTD recognised that the Federal Government has been making substantial funding available since 2008 for vernacular and mission schools .However this is viewed as ‘ad hoc and piece meal’ and even tentative .Therefore there must be in the educational blue print , a major departure from the past to move towards to future WHERE all streams have a legitimate place within the educational system. There must be a clear roadmap for both mission and vernacular schools like how the blueprint enhances ‘the religious education pathway’ (page 7-12)

The predominance of mainly Malay teachers in the whole education system is unacceptable especially to non-Malays , as this unhealthy trend alienates the system from non-Malays and creates disunity and reduced quality and competition among teachers and destroys empathy among teachers and students

In this context too it was strongly felt that the position of coordinator or ministry official in charge of vernacular and mission schools, should be updated to Director level with the establishment of a new Division for the management of both vernacular and mission schools urgently. This is necessary in order for the Ministry to give adequate priority to proper development of all streams of education without apparent discrimination!.

The current system of management is unsatisfactory and is unable to address these concerns and also tap the full potential of our teachers and students , leading to mediocrity and not promoting meritocracy

7. Decentralising & empowering the school heads

It was strongly felt that principal and school headship selection is very essential including providing the support needed. In this context it was felt that greater autonomy be given to school heads. A radical proposal of dismantling the district level educational administration and layer (PPD) and this was felt as imposing a debilitating burden on heads as it restricts the potential of the school heads and the PIBG to pay a greater innovative role in effectively managing and leading their Schools progress .

It was felt that the schools and teachers are too burdened by administrative and bureaucratic requirements from the top administrators at the Federal, state and district levels. It was emphasised



that both the heads and teachers be give autonomy with accountability. This is not adequately addressed in the blueprint and therefore requires a stronger input from the teachers rather than the bureaucrats.

8. Teacher selection and training including ethnic balance

It was felt that priority must be given to undoing the current ethnic imbalance of the teacher, heads of schools and also educational officials towards a better national reflection. While this is acknowledged in the blueprint there is however no road map in addressing this imbalance over the next few years.

A clear road map on recruitment and promotions must be in place. A stronger selection process must be introduced and non-interference during the training period especially to fail potential teachers who do not reach the mark while in teacher training. The key to transformation is empowering and enabling the teachers to improve the quality of the teaching and learning experience.

In this context it was also proposed that the private sector be allowed to provide teacher training courses in order to meet standards and the current shortage of subject proficiency teachers. Since there are private colleges and private universities, why can't there be private teacher training institute, to raise our education standards ?

9. Creating a conducive multi-cultural learning environment

The national unity agenda in the blue print is too simplistic with a weak analysis and way forward. The RTD felt that this component of promoting a multi-cultural appreciation of Malaysian society must be strengthened not just from interaction but in fostering a radical change in the attitudes of current teachers as well as development a multi-cultural learning environment in the schools.

In this context address the ethnic imbalance in the teaching staff and heads is imperative and therefore a clear road map in addressing this matter is targeted. The RTD could not accept the claim that non Malays are not interested in joining the teaching profession especially now that teachers have had big

We are surprise that the document does not make reference to the 1Malaysia concept of moving from tolerance to appreciation to acceptance. This is a very critical dimension that even within homogeneous and mono-cultural environment there can be a fostering towards multi-cultural dimensions

10. Call for the release and public review of other Reports

The RTD strongly felt that the consultative approach adopted in the preparation of the blue print was also intended to address the increasing loss of public confidence in the educational system, which has deteriorated according to international studies. Therefore very effort to address this loss of confidence becomes essential and these big gaps in the report must be addressed speedily, as some of them quite incomprehensively have been ignored and omitted !



The RTD felt that the release of the reports by the Independent Review Panel chaired by Prof Tan Sri Dzulkipli and the National Dialogue – Townhall meetings chaired by Tan Sri Dr Wan Zahid and the other independent commission studies will enhance public confidence. It will address some of the POOR perception problems.

More public discussions and debates are necessary, but more importantly there is a growing feeling that many of the proposals are heard but not taken seriously and worse still often ignored for political expediency .

ASLI -CPPS RTD appeals to all Malaysians and especially our political leaders to refrain from political interference and to pursue the progress of our educational system on a professional and long term basis to ensure the sustainability of Malaysian unity and competitiveness for our posterity of all races and religions in our multicultural society

Released on behalf of ASLI-CPPS
Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam , Chairman of ASLI-CPPS
& Datuk Dr Denison Jayasooria

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