

ASLI- CPPS, PROHAM & KITA- UKM

**REPORT ON
EDUCATION REFORM AND
PROCESS OF CONSULTATION**

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CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Executive Summary	3
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	4
General Recommendations	4
Recommendations based on the 9 Key Areas of Focus identified by the Ministry of Education	5
Teacher Quality	5
Improve the School Curriculum	7
Summary of Main Presentations	12
Participant's Comments	16
Closing Remarks: Dr. Marzuki Mohamad (DPM's Office)	23
Appendix	24
APPENDIX 1: Programme	24
APPENDIX 2: Participants List	26
APPENDIX 3: Additional notes by Muhamad Razif Nasruddin	28
APPENDIX 4: Additional Notes by Dato' Dahan Latiff	28
APPENDIX 5: Recommendations on Education For Orang Asli	28
APPENDIX 6: Recommendations – Sabah Workshop	29
APPENDIX 7: Presentation Paper by YB Dato' Saifuddin Abdullah	30
APPENDIX 8: Presentation Paper by Tan Sri Chan Choong Tak	31
APPENDIX 9: Principal of "Maximum Consultation" by the Malaysian Christian School Council	32

Introduction

Last December, the Deputy Prime Minister (DPM), Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin established the National Education System Evaluation Panel comprising seven experts with the mandate to undertake the first overall evaluation of the national education system since the Razak Report 1956. The aim of the evaluation is to improve the quality of education in the country to be on par with that of developed countries.

Additionally, this year the DPM who is also the Education Minister announced that nationwide National Education Dialogues would be held to receive feedback from the general public. The DPM affirmed that his Ministry *“will listen to the views, recommendations and ideas from the various strata of the society, from the various races and from the stakeholders.”*

It was in this context that the Persatuan Promosi Hak Asasi Manusia (PROHAM), ASLI-Centre for Public Policy Studies (CPPS) together with the Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) took the initiative to host a Roundtable Discussion on Education Reform and Process of Consultation on the 16th April 2012.

A small focus group of educationists, academicians, private sector and civil society leaders attended the roundtable and provided their views and recommendations in contribution to the national review and consultation currently undertaken by the federal government.

Three panellists were invited to speak: Tan Sri Chan Choong Tak, former senate speaker & member of the cluster schools board; Tan Sri Marimuthu, former professor of education, University Malaya; and Y. B. Dato’ Saifuddin Abdullah, Deputy Higher Education Minister of Malaysia. The roundtable was moderated by Tan Sri Dato’ Asiah Abu Samah, former DG of Education & PROHAM member. Tan Sri Simon Sipaun, Chairman of PROHAM gave a word of welcome, while the closing summary of the roundtable findings was presented by Datuk Dr Denison Jayasooria from the Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA), UKM. A few local media representatives were also present to cover the roundtable.

Earlier this year, on the 27th of February 2012, CPPS-ASLI hosted a Roundtable Discussion on Vernacular Schools in Malaysia, recognizing that there was a need to review the Education Act and National Education policy to address issues such as the falling quality of education and increasing mono-ethnicity in national schools. The roundtable welcomed the move but also expressed concerns on the composition of the review panel and its objectives.

A number of major themes emerged from the discussion pertaining to Education Reform in Malaysia in particular, the quality of education and education institutions. Several key concerns were identified, including: the worsening standards of English language proficiency among students and graduates, the rote-learning and exam-oriented education system which hinders students’ creativity and critical thinking, poor school facilities and funding, overwhelming role of teachers in schools, and the need for meritocracy and autonomy in the selection of school heads and school management.

This report captures the thoughts shared and expressed by the majority of participants. It is to be presented to the Education Minister, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin on 23rd April 2012 when he officiates the 16th Malaysian Education Summit organised by ASLI.

I take this opportunity as coordinator of the ASLI-CPPS, PROHAM and KITA-UKM Roundtable Discussion to thank all the speakers, interventionists and participants. A special word of thanks to the CPPS staff team for the coordination of the roundtable discussion and to Ms Arlene Tan for taking notes and preparing this report.

Datuk Dr Denison Jayasooria

Principal Research Fellow, Institute of Ethnic Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

23rd April 2012

Executive Summary

1. There was a general consensus that Malaysia is in dire need of an education reform. The last education reform under the Razak Report 1956 is outdated and does not reflect the current educational needs of a new generation of young people in the 21st century. The culture of measuring academic achievement with the number of As has bred a generation of parents and students who are more concerned with academic results rather than with the joy of learning and individual improvement.
2. The declining level of English language proficiency among students and graduates is a major concern, as English is the global language of communication and proficiency is required for research, learning and commerce. Students may not be able to achieve the same level of proficiency as native speakers or those who went through the British education system which used English as the medium of instruction. However, further reform is needed in order for students to be proficient in the language as second language speakers.
3. The school environment has become devoid of fun learning. Students are compartmentalized into either Science or Arts streams in schools. There is a lack of philosophy underpinning students' learning and development. Subjects like art and music are neglected or are little emphasized in schools. Teachers and schools are too focused on rote-learning. It is important that education in Malaysia inculcate elements of character building instead of an over emphasis on competency development.
4. There is a need to foster a multicultural Malaysian identity in schools. Schools ought to be inclusive; an avenue for students to mix with other students of different races and religions. All schools should be treated equitably, especially in matters of funding. New school streams such as English medium schools should be part of the education system and receive equal treatment. Students should be taught their mother tongues and/or foreign languages of their choice as a third language in schools.
5. The school board must have greater autonomy in the selection of school heads. Selections should be made by individual schools based on merit and not on grade or rank.
6. The role of teachers in schools must be addressed. Currently, teachers are burdened with work beyond their primary scope of teaching. They are tasked with administrative work, extra co-curriculum activities and meetings. As a result, less time is allocated for actual teaching and improvement of teaching skills and methods.
7. There is a need to revamp the management of schools. Schools should have smaller class sizes. Funds should be used for improving school facilities. It is important for all schools to have playing fields and computer labs in order for students to have a well-rounded education. Schools should diversify funding through alumni endowment and partnerships with the private sector.
8. The Education Ministry must be more transparent and fair in the selection of teachers. Better teachers will ensure student development. Meritocracy is important in ensuring our education system is on par with developed nations.
9. The Education Ministry needs to adopt better key performance indicators (KPI) in education in order to extend assessments beyond the classroom. There should be more focus and funding channeled towards the first 12 years of education. Education should be tailored to fit the needs of different segments of the population. For instance, rural and Orang Asli children may have different educational needs from urban children.

10. There is a need for greater student empowerment. Education should not be politicized, with individual interests taking precedence over quality of education. Educationists, teachers, schools, and students themselves must be the catalysts for educational reform. Students need to be empowered to take the lead in shaping our education system.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

General Recommendations

➤ Review and Revamp the Education Policy

The current education system in Malaysia is too examination-oriented and over-emphasizes rote-learning with institutions of higher learning fast becoming mere diploma mills. We need to evaluate the objectives and purpose of education, especially in light of Vision 2020, the New Economic Model (NEM), the challenges of globalisation and modernisation, as well as changing societal demands.

In this age of information technology and knowledge explosion, there is a limit to how much content or knowledge teachers can impart to their students. Any knowledge imparted stands a good chance of becoming obsolete as soon as students step out of schools. However, if students are equipped with thinking and learning skills, there is no limit to their learning.

Therefore, the curriculum (content/ syllabus and teaching methods) in schools and universities should be revamped to focus more on learning to think rather than coming to know. Education at all levels should promote the development of higher-order thinking skills such as critical and creative thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills as well as learning skills. These skills are pre-requisites for continuous and life-long learning in a rapidly changing world.

In addition,

Education reform must be based on what is clearly stated in the Falsafah Pendidikan Malaysia (1987). Contrary to common perception, there is nothing inherently wrong with the education philosophy, neither is it outdated or irrelevant. What is crucial is the interpretation and implementation of the policy. The National Education Policy (1987) states that:

“Education in Malaysia is an ongoing effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, in order to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically, balanced, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards and who are responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal wellbeing to contribute to the betterment of the nation, family and society.”

➤ Restructure the Education System at All Levels

The education system in Malaysia should be restructured at all levels, shifting away from an over-emphasis on academic studies to give due attention to vocational and technical education. Although efforts have been made in this area (Chapter 5, 10th Malaysia Plan), there must be a sense of urgency to step up such efforts so that the country's progress in the industrial sector will not be disrupted by inadequate skilled labour. The country needs at least

3.3 million skilled workers over the next ten years to meet the requirements of industry, but currently there are only 15 government vocational schools in Malaysia. Statistics compiled by GBM (Gabungan Bertindak Malaysia) indicate that every year, out of about 200,000 students admitted into government and MARA-administered TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) schools and colleges, less than 1% of them are non-Malays. We recommend that efforts be stepped up to provide more equitable opportunities to students of all races for TVET. In addition, we should foster a more multicultural identity in the administration and staffing of these institutions so as to encourage more non-Malay participation.

In highly developed and technically advanced countries such as Germany and Japan, vocational and technical education is an important and integral part of their education systems. Our student enrollment in vocational education is only about 5% (of total student enrollment) compared to developed countries in Europe which average more than 50%. Providing alternative paths within the formal education system for students who are not academically inclined not only address the problem of school drop-out and attrition, it is a vital human resource development strategy in moving the nation towards a high-income developed status.

➤ **Foster a Multicultural Malaysian Identity for Schools**

Reforms must ensure equity of educational opportunity and freedom of choice in the medium of instruction at all levels of education, regardless of race, creed or religion. Equitable financial support and funding must be available for all. In this context, vernacular schools, such as Chinese, Tamil and even English medium schools should be recognized as national schools.

Schools should encourage interactions and dialogues among teachers and students of various ethnic, and religious backgrounds. Schools must be inclusive, accepting pupils and teachers from diverse backgrounds, so as to foster a multicultural Malaysian identity. Schools must also be secularized and further effort is needed from the Ministry of Education to ensure compliance.

Recommendations based on the 9 Key Areas of Focus identified by the Ministry of Education

1. Teacher Quality

➤ **Review the Role of Teachers in Schools**

At present, teachers are over-burdened with secondary tasks, such as administrative work, assessments, and long meetings. Consequently, teachers have little time to invest in teaching and improving their teaching methods. We recommend that the Education Ministry reviews the role of teachers in schools, and ensures that the majority of time is spent on teaching. Schools should be employing non-teaching staff for administrative work.

➤ **Address the issues within Teacher's Training Colleges**

The Ministry needs to identify the core reasons for teachers' incompetency. There have been worrying statements made that teacher's training college students very rarely fail to graduate. The underlying reason seems to be that too much money has been invested into these

graduates for them to fail. This has led to an increase in the number of sub-standard teachers.

The Ministry must also address the issue of employment for TESL teachers who have 4 years of professional English teaching education. Their teaching positions are filled by graduates who do not have an English degree and who have only gone through 9 months of teacher training.

Another important issue to be addressed is affirmative policy to ensure a gender and ethnic balance in teacher's training colleges. At present, the teaching profession is racially skewed and male teachers are underrepresented. One solution to this is to make the teaching profession a respectable career.

➤ **Enhance Skills through Teacher Training**

We recommend that more continuous training is needed to improve teaching skills. A culture of continuous learning and improvement among teachers is vital to ensure we have world class teaching standards. We also recommend that the government build more teacher training colleges.

2. Quality of School Administrative Staff

➤ **Give Greater Autonomy to School Management and the Selection of School Heads**

Schools should have autonomy in certain areas, such as the appointment of school heads and teachers by the school board. School heads should be selected based on merit and credibility instead of by rank. Schools should also have greater autonomy in initiating school policy changes and tailoring subjects according to the needs of students. The Sri Cempaka private school is a good example of greater school autonomy resulting in the improvement of the school's performance and student's individual achievement.

3. Quality of Schools - Ensure Subjects Taught are Updated and Current

➤ **Set up an Independent Inspection Commission for schools**

An Independent Inspection Commission needs to be set up to evaluate 4 key areas of overall quality of education in schools: (1) achievement of students, (2) quality of teaching, (3) quality of leadership and school management, and (4) behavior and safety of students. A grading scale is to be used in reporting the effectiveness of schools i.e. 1: Outstanding, 2: Good, 3: Satisfactory, 4: Inadequate. The results of such evaluation are to be published at least annually for the public to see. A non-governmental, independent body in place that is answerable before the parliament is vital for improving the quality of schools in Malaysia by providing constant scrutiny on the conditions present at each institution. Even though the Education Ministry has already set up an agency responsible for school assessment, we recommend to the government to set up an independent commission for better transparency that would disclose the evaluation of schools to the public as well.

➤ **Nurture Student Empowerment**

Students are the ones experiencing the educational system and they are the ones that have the most to gain from it. As such, we recommend that student empowerment is pursued and nurtured. Especially in a country that suffers from political apathy and low election turnouts, student empowerment can achieve the adoption of good habits that could last for many years after school education. Student bodies should be democratically elected by the students themselves to provide an avenue for active participation in discussions on matters that affects them, as well as a sense of duty and responsibility. We recommend student elections to be held as early as primary schools to encourage student empowerment and student choice. Through such student bodies, students should be given the chance to have a say in their education curriculum and in decisions related to improving the student and learning experience.

4. Improve the School Curriculum

➤ Adopt a Balanced Curriculum with Provision for Developing Students' Multiple Intelligences

We recommend a new paradigm shift in education, by balancing students' exposure to and learning in both liberal arts and sciences. It is important that schools become the platform for students to gain a holistic development of the mind. We recommend adopting the 40:60 Liberal Arts and Sciences learning in our education system. By liberal arts, we mean literature, languages, and history, as well as music and art.

Research over the years has led educators to adopt the theory of multiple intelligences such as that advocated by Howard Gardner. It is important that the educational system recognizes this, by providing ample opportunities for students to pursue studies in different streams such as vocational/ technical skills in schools. Students who are non-academic-inclined would benefit from the availability of alternatives and choices.

➤ Review Current Co-Curriculum in Schools

The current requirement in schools is students' compulsory participation in sports, societies and a uniform body of their choice. We recommend that this is changed from the three, to at most two of the above; and that the students themselves have the freedom of choice. This way, we leave it to the students to choose extra-curricular activities that they are interested in rather than those being forced on them. . We also recommend that in addition to this change, the schools increase the time allocation ratio of co-curricular to academic from the existing 10:90 to 30:70.

➤ Review School Curriculum Structure

We also recommend that MOE focuses on structuring a new curriculum that develops reading, writing and arithmetic among pre-school and primary school students to address the issues of lack of basic literacy among students from low-income families. There is a significant group of children nationwide who are deprived of pre-school education. For those that do have pre-school education, the quality is questionable. It has been supported by research that the return of investment for the nation in pre-school and primary education is greater than the return of investment in higher education.

In addition, we recommend that the school curriculum provides a cross-disciplinary integrated approach encompassing holistic learning that would be relevant to the learners' real world experiences and the development of problem-solving skills. To strengthen the learning of English, there is a need to develop students' English literacy. Worthy of adoption is the

reading programme used in the United Kingdom schools i.e. graded readers and reading journals. Furthermore, an empirical-based core vocabulary list is recommended. As learners need to have several encounters with a word in different contexts to learn it effectively, this core vocabulary list should guide the design and development of English textbooks, workbooks, story books and audio-visual learning aids.

The Ministry could also study the curriculum structure adopted by International Schools in Malaysia, which are able to produce students who can read and write well at a very early age. There is also greater freedom of learning given to the students in International Schools, such as the freedom to choose their own subjects, to study at their own pace, to move one level up or down based on their learning abilities, etc.

➤ **Restructure and Regulate Remove Class Curriculum**

Students from vernacular schools are usually weaker in Bahasa Malaysia and are required to attend remove classes. As this is a transitional year before going on to Form One to re-join their peers from other non-vernacular schools, it is imperative that they are given intensive Bahasa Malaysia classes to strengthen their command of the national language. Another recommendation is to restructure the remove class curriculum, to provide students the opportunity to re-learn selected primary school subject areas – e.g. math, science, history, geography -- in Bahasa Malaysia. This will equip them with the relevant subject vocabulary (in Bahasa Malaysia) to facilitate transition into national secondary schools where the medium of instruction for most subjects is Bahasa Malaysia.

➤ **Improve Student Soft Skills**

Students need to improve their communication abilities and how they interact with others. Many employers have raised concerns about the poor communication skills among Malaysian employees, especially when compared with foreigners. Communication skills include the skills for effective transfer of ideas and knowledge, either in writing, speaking or through various tools and aids, including body language; as well as attitude towards communication, openness to both positive or negative feedbacks, and the ways of interacting and mingling with people.

➤ **Review Orang Asli Education Policy**

The Orang Asli needs a special education policy in order to reduce the poor academic results and high dropout rates¹ among the orang asli students. Their formal educational experiences in schools overall also need to be tailored to suit their cultural norms and practices.

5. Multilingual Proficiency - Increase the Number of Languages Spoken by Students

➤ **Enhance English Language Proficiency**

English is an important global language. The Education Ministry needs to have a comprehensive review of the method of teaching the English language subject in schools. The first 12 years of the students' education is crucial in mastering the English language.

The Ministry of Education has yet to fully deal with the English language policy issue. Further research on case studies from other countries is needed, as students from other countries are catching up with us in their command of the language.

¹ Source: Suhakam Report 2006

The Ministry allows the mushrooming of new international schools with English as the medium of instruction and yet the request of some parents and educationists for English-medium national schools is being turned down or frowned upon. Instead, the Ministry ought to address the issue of English Competency pragmatically. These are our recommendations:

I. Retain PPSMI Policy

The teaching and learning of Science and Mathematics in English (PPSMI) should be retained in the education system in Malaysia. However, to ensure learning of English is effective among students, it is important that Arts subjects such as History and Geography are taught as bilingual subjects in both Malay and English languages.

II. Introduce Special Intensive Programme in Advanced English

Another consideration is to introduce a Special Intensive Programme that would provide enhanced English teaching to promising students that show an aptitude for the language to better prepare them for the use of the language at an advanced level. This model has been successfully implemented in residential schools such as MARA. Such a programme would benefit especially children from the rural areas and low-income families.

III. Reintroduce English Medium of Instruction in Schools

Many parents who are able to afford expensive tuition fees send their children to international schools, which explain the rapid rise of international schools in the country. In addressing the issue, the government should take heed at strengthening the English language proficiency of the majority of Malaysian students, who are not able to afford expensive private education.

English Mission Schools in Malaysia are keen to reintroduce English Schools where English is the medium of instruction. Recognising that English is an important global language, these schools could play a leading role in improving the English language proficiency standards among students.

In this regard, the government should also consider re-introducing English Public Schools in Malaysia. We recommend having 10% of national schools to adopt an English-medium of instruction, in order to ensure that at least 10% of Malaysian students are proficient in English.

➤ Teach a Third Language

Schools should offer multilingual learning or a third language subject, after English and Malay. With the increasing demand for international languages for commerce and global communication, being multilingual is an added advantage for Malaysian students to compete in the global environment. Furthermore, it is also important for students to embrace their cultural heritage through mastering their mother tongue language.

Hence, the choice of a third language can be an option to students to either choose their own mother tongue/community language such as Mandarin or Tamil, or global/foreign languages such as French, Arabic and Japanese.

6. Post-School Opportunities - Improve Student Readiness for Job Markets

➤ Make it compulsory to have a Pass in English for University Entrance

In order to increase the competency of students in the English language, it should be made a requirement for students to gain at least a pass in SPM English in order to enter university. However, that would be dependent on the chosen field of study; having at least a credit in English should be made compulsory for university entrance to English-related fields or courses. This should be the first step, to be revised and raised in the future.

➤ Encourage Teaching as a Professional Career

We recommend that the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) focuses on nurturing quality human capital. We would like to suggest for MOHE to select 50 of the best students to be sent to the best tertiary institutions in the world to pursue Education degrees, with a bond to offer their services to the national education for at least 4-6 years when they return. They could also be offered to be sent to foreign missions for exposure for 3 to 4 years. They can either continue teaching or join the civil service after that, or change a career altogether if they want.

Furthermore, attractive salary and better mobility would encourage these graduates to make teaching as their top choice as a profession. This has been successfully implemented in Scandinavian countries where teaching is a competitive profession among top graduates and is one of the top choices as a career.

7. Involve Parents, Private Sector and Communities as Partners in Education

➤ Strengthen School Governance Framework

It is important that all stake holders i.e. headmasters, the Chairman of PTA, alumni, and student representatives work together in raising the standards of the school system.

Such an all-encompassing governance framework can play a very important role, especially in government assisted schools, where it can act as a mechanism to provide a clear instrument of implementation and a reduction of the government's responsibilities.

Funding has always been an issue to the schools; through this framework there would be a comprehensive mechanism to facilitate Alumni for Endowment Funds, and increase the financial reserves of the schools.

8. Improve Efficiency of Resource Management

➤ Allocate Equitable Budget

The Education Ministry should set the criteria and priority of funding allocations based on equitable distribution (relativity and the proportion of budget per capita) and ensuring that the funding goes directly to critical areas and improves students' performances in schools. There is a need for schools to have proper, modern computer labs, well-equipped libraries, playing fields, etc. A lot of schools, especially those in the rural areas are being neglected; school buildings and facilities are in very poor conditions. Furthermore, it is important that the

government recognizes that national-type schools are not included in the government's development budget allocation; these schools are in dire need of better schools buildings and facilities.

Additionally, the government should avoid politicization of education; the funding allocation ought to be given to schools as a requirement, not for compensation during elections.

➤ **Set Up New Schools based on Demand**

Whenever there's a fall in the enrolment of students in a school, the school is not able to close down because the current system encourages 'closing down one school and opening up another school elsewhere'. This situation is much more prevalent among national-type schools. The most effective way would be to close a school with reduced enrolment numbers and only open a new school when there is a demand for it.

9. Administrative Structure of the Ministry of Education

➤ **Review the KPIs of MOE**

We recommend that the Ministry of Education (MOE) reviews the key indicators to measure students' performance. The current KPIs focus widely on academic results and examinations rather than addressing the greater issues of the plummeting quality of education and the high rates of unemployment/low wages faced by Malaysian graduates.

The Education Ministry also needs to widen education assessment beyond the classroom and incorporate the realities that the younger generation of today would have to face after school.

Additional Recommendations:

In addition to the above recommendations, several other recommendations were derived from the Roundtable Discussion. These are recommendations that the Ministry of Education has already recognized as important and in fact, some of these policies are being implemented in selective schools around Malaysia. However, we would like to urge the Ministry of Education to hasten the implementation of these policies nationally:

1. Single Session Schools

The government should consider the implementation of single session schools nationwide. With the single session schools, students will have ample time to play, take up a hobby, do extra revision and spend quality time with their family. Students should not be burdened by too much school work and classes.

2. Smaller class size in schools

The quality of education depends on the quantity of the student population in the classroom. By having fewer students, the teachers would be able to pay more attention to each student in the class. We recommend reducing classes to a maximum of 35 students.

3. Moral Class for Muslims and Non-Muslims

We recommend that the moral education class be taught for both Muslim and non-Muslim students, instead of providing the Muslim students with a separate class for Islamic education during the same time. Although this has been implemented in selected schools in the urban areas, we would like the moral education class to be inclusive and implemented nationally to all students. The curriculum for moral studies should focus on the multi-religious and multi-ethnic identities of the children rather than approaching it from a mono-cultural, mono-religious viewpoint as practiced currently, i.e. moral lessons are based on Islamic teaching. There is a need for inter-faith studies and moral education is an important avenue to broaden children's views and understanding of each other.

Summary of Main Presentations

Welcoming remarks: Tan Sri Simon Sipaun

On behalf of PROHAM, I would like to welcome each and every one of you to this roundtable discussion on Education and Process of Consultation. I wish to express and record my appreciation to our co-hosts, the Centre for Public Policy Studies (CPPS), Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (ASLI) and KITA. I note that our panellists comprise of eminent personalities, highly qualified and experienced in the field of education. This being the case, I am confident that this roundtable discussion would be able to achieve its objective and come up with comprehensive, objective and useful recommendations for submission to the authorities.

Personally, I am totally ignorant of the Malaysian Education System, apart from a very sketchy knowledge which I obtained through reading. I sat for my Cambridge Overseas School Certificate Examination in 1957. Despite dedicated and highly disciplined teachers, only one in my batch obtained Grade one passed, a few obtained Grade two and the rest obtained Grade three or fail.

These days getting 10 As or 12 As appears to be routine. I hope that this is a reflection of the generally higher standards of education. I hope that it does not reflect the attainment of quantity at the expense of quality.

I also did not have the opportunity to attend university in Malaysia, I left North Borneo (Sabah), before it became part of Malaysia on the 16th of September 1963, I returned to a new country. Before the formation of Malaysia, the language used for correspondence in the civil service was English. When Malaysia came into being, it was changed into the Malay language. Malay was regularly used in Sabah as a national language, first monthly, then yearly, and eventually on a permanent basis. It was the beginning of the decline in the standard of English in the country. The pros and cons of this policy are still being debated. Whether we like it or not, English is the language of commerce, science and now the internet. Indeed, it is the language of the world. Strong political will is needed to face narrow-minded nationalists, with no excuses stemming from racism and nationalism, so as not to impede the advancement of English.

Education and religion in my view should not be politicized. I believed there are more than 60,000 graduates currently who are unemployed due to poor linguistic and social skills. The Minister of Education reported recently that Malaysian children are receiving better quality of education than in America, Germany and United Kingdom. If this is indeed true, political leaders should lead by example and not send their own children overseas for education. We should have no cause for concern.

However, on the ground I have yet to meet anyone who agrees with the Education Minister. This is akin to saying that Malaysian bullock carts are better than cars produced in the United States, Germany, and England. No Malaysian universities rank in the top 10 among ASEAN countries. The top university in the region is in Singapore, followed by universities in Thailand and Indonesia. No

Malaysian universities are in the top 400 in the world either. Can we claim to be on par with the best universities in the world?

Ladies and Gentlemen, you are the experts and hopefully by the end of the discussion we will have the answer to that question. Thank you.

Panellist 1: Tan Sri Chan Choong Tak

Tan Sri Simon mentioned the statement that our education standards are higher than in Britain and Germany. I was bewildered until I read the Star article entitled "Report supports case for English". The Deputy Prime Minister's (DPM) statement was based on the result of the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Competitive Index (GCI) report 2011-2012. The compiled data are from the viewpoints of top businessmen and financial leaders in the world, who seek to send their children to the best schools in the world. Our schools were ranked number 14 in the world.

In a proper analysis carried out in a broad base study, incorporating the viewpoints of students, universities and others, the results showed that Malaysia's education standards are far below average. I believe this could be one of the reasons the DPM formed the National Education Panel Council to review our education system.

I am retired but I am still a member of the cluster school committee. The committee studied the education systems of different countries and made recommendations to the Ministry of Education. Soon after we made the recommendations, the current DPM was appointed Minister of Education, replacing Datuk Seri Panglima Hishamuddin Hussien. We are happy that one of our committee, Professor Khoo Kay Kim has been appointed to the Education Review Panel. I hope our views will be received.

I would like to touch on the issue of schools:

- Headmasters are appointed according to rank and point system: In other developed countries, their appointment is left to the board, and is merit-based. Determination of salary and incentives should be under the purview of the ministry.
- Allow teachers to teach: Teachers are too busy doing administrative work, conducting assessments and attending meetings instead of teaching. Teachers should not be burdened by administrative work; instead, the schools can appoint a clerk or non-teaching staff to do administrative work. We should allow our teachers more interactive learning time with their students. Based on my personal experience as a former teacher, I say all this with conviction. There should be less school-based assessment.
- The school atmosphere needs to be fun: My grandchild hates attending the Chinese medium school because it is not fun. The school system is all about memorizing facts and figures and then reproducing them rather than instilling creativity and creating a good learning experience.
- The education system is too result-oriented: The current system emphasizes the number of As attained in examinations. During my time, it used to be difficult to get a distinction in schools, but nowadays, the standard of exams has been lowered to the point that students can acquire many distinctions or As in school. The system has become too result-oriented.
- The size of schools is too large: During my time there were only a few hundred students in a school. Now there are more than a thousand students in a school. It looks like a factory. Instead of enlarging schools, the Education Ministry should keep the school size to a reasonable number of between 800 and 1000 students.

- Closing schools due to decrease in student enrollment: The system encourages the closing one school to coincide with the opening of another. The most effective way to deal with this issue is to close schools where there is a sharp decrease in enrollment and only open a new school when there is a demand.
- Malaysianize schools: Vernacular schools are becoming a political tool for racial polarisation. Schools are for educating Malaysians but this has been overridden by racial-centric educationists such as the Dong Jiao Zong fighting for the existence of Chinese Schools, Indian educationists fighting for Tamil schools, and Mara College which is almost entirely Malay in composition. Both vernacular and national schools should cater to all Malaysians. Teachers from all races should be allowed to teach in any school, regardless of the school's medium of instruction.
- All schools must be treated equally: I believe all schools must be treated as national schools with funds to be allocated equally. This is not the case at present. Christian mission schools are under Tan Sri Koh Tsu Koon's ministry. We have requested funding from his ministry a number of times but funding has instead been channeled for use as grants for elections or for holding national festivals.

Panellist 2: Tan Sri T Marimuthu

The problems and weaknesses of the education system were discussed by the previous speaker, but in evaluating the education system, we need to understand the education philosophy. This philosophy calls for holistic development of the student – physically, intellectually and spiritually. In line with the government's call for Vision 2020, we need to acquire educated and skilled manpower. Under the New Economic Policy (NEP), we need to redress ethnic imbalances and develop a national integration plan. We also need to address the demands of globalisation and modernisation. Parents and the entire nation have expectations of the education system. We need to produce global citizens who are responsible to the nation.

Does our education fulfill these demands and objectives?

The Razak Report was a milestone for the country. There has never since been a comprehensive study of our national education system. I would like to congratulate the current DPM for setting up a review panel for our education system.

We must look at the strength of the education system. In the last 50 years, we have moved away from elitist education and we have followed the 11 + examination. We have democratized the education system up to form 3. We also took away the UPSR and PMR. This is a great achievement. Now, every socio-economic level has been raised and the literacy level has gone up. As of 2009, 90% of the population is literate.

But what has gone wrong? We have to look at the current situation in our education system. Some issues are real, but are merely perceived. What are the real issues?

- Basic literacy: Quality is measured through achievement, evidenced by exam passes and distinctions. But look at the number of pupils who do not have basic literacy skills, even after 6 years of schooling. We have democratized access, but have we increased the level of literacy among students?
- Quality of courses: The general standards have fallen. We look at graduates from the school system and question if they possess the skills that are in demand by local and global society. We would need to identify the underlying cause of this. I read an article from the NST entitled "The Decay of the Education System" which emphasized the aspects of education which have seen a decline in standards.

- Quality of teachers: I have no supporting data on this, but this is a perception. We have witnessed some unprofessional behavior by teachers, such as violence and name-calling. All of this will definitely affect student morale. Many children are from poor backgrounds – teachers need a missionary spirit in interacting with such students.
- Curriculum of schools: We must review the relevance of the curriculum which is based on the Razak report, as the report was formulated during a period of conflicting cultural needs.
- Language Proficiency: The standard of English language proficiency is an issue of concern. Some of our corporate leaders are unable to communicate satisfactorily with foreigners and this is an indication that English language competency has declined.

How can these issues be solved?

- Schools must make learning fun. Schools and teachers must look at good schools as case studies to understand how to improve the learning environment.
- Schools should encourage more science societies to be formed among students.
- Vernacular schools will no longer be a problem as the government has given its assurance that it will not touch on the rights of minorities to learn in their mother tongue.

Panellist 3: Y. B. Dato' Saifuddin Abdullah

In this present situation, we need to come up with a checklist as we embark on reform of the education system. The Education Minister has already lined up 9 key areas of focus for the education system.

We need to revisit the philosophy of learning and realign ourselves with that philosophy. We also need to realign ourselves with the objective of education. I am reminded of the words by Professor S. Naquib al-Attas, "The objective of education is to raise a good son/man, not a good worker."

Some points on the objectives of education:

- The pursuit of knowledge and culture
- Language/ communication skills: not just communication, but also the attitude towards communication. It is more internal than external. It is about interacting and mingling with people.
- Critical thinking
- Being a good, moral citizen
- Living in a global and plural society
- Having an interest. People tend to be too bored with life, not knowing what to do, especially during weekends
- Career preparation for jobs

Another point to make is that our review will not be happening in a vacuum. We are a society in transition. If I could use spheres and circles as an analogy: we used to live in one sphere, where life did not vary much – for instance, everyone understood the meaning of 'patriotism'. But now there is a new sphere. In this new sphere, people may identify with patriotism in different ways, such as singing rock songs on patriotism. Different spheres have different realities, new forms and organisations. Our nation is a society in transition; we need to ensure that we are keeping up with the times. In fact, there may be a new sphere forming as we speak now.

My third point is on 60:40 curriculum of sciences and arts. Is the current curriculum still valid? In university, we are facing a decline in enrolment into science subjects. We also have situations where

boarding schools are 100% science, instead of applying the 60:40 system. We need to look into the issue further.

On the issue of segregation, we may talk endlessly about the increasing enrolment of students in Chinese schools, but there are more private and cluster schools coming up and some have been doing very well.

In co-curriculum activities, we have a 90:10 system. We need to strengthen this component in the education system, and look at the whole eco-system and sub-areas. Number one is sports, the “1 Murid 1 Sukan” policy should be applauded. But making student participation in sports, society and curriculum compulsory is not relevant at all. It is better for students to specialize in two activities of the three.

On sports, the education authority should not limit sports to competitions or classes. The schools should encourage the students to form clubs and groups.

An additional element is to focus on areas such as debate, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation. Innovation in particular is not just about science but can be applied on other subjects too.

We also need to come up with a School Governance Framework. It is important for all stake holders to be on board; where headmasters, chairman of PTA, alumni, student representatives work together towards improving the school's performance. It is also important to facilitate alumni in creating an endowment fund to increase the financial reserves of the school.

I strongly recommend increasing student empowerment and student choice. We need to seize every opportunity to educate a good man. Unfortunately, only 30% of our citizens get some exposure on exercising democracy and voting, as early election exposure starts only in the university instead of from high school. On another note, we need to keep up with the new generation, adopting new technology ourselves and educating young people on the use of technology. For example, instead of banning hand phones in schools, we should be educating young people on the right way to handle technology.

Participant's Comments

Moderator: Tan Sri Dato' Asiah Abu Samad

Based on my experience in Suhakam, it was very hard to get universities to open their doors and allow human rights societies on campus. I also noticed that students in form 5 and 6 used to have better empowerment by comparison to the present.

Intervention 1

International schools in practical terms are different in a number of aspects: Students study at their own pace, pick their own subject and are allowed to accumulate 5 credits in at least 2 sittings to do their foundation. There are no external exams. They can move up or down a step within the school levels if they cannot cope with the syllabus. It makes it easier to choose their career path when they proceed to O-Levels and A Levels.

In the formative years, the students attend kindergarten at four and start year One when they are five. The students between the age of 4, 5 and 6 years old are still treated like children, and the emphasis

is on the 3Rs. By the ages of 7 and 8, they have learned to read and write well due to the structure of the curriculum.

There are some things we might not be able to apply in national schools like choice of teachers. In the international school system, my daughter and son attained better results but they could not have survived in national schools. The paradox is even students with many As in national schools may not be able to get into the top international universities as the standards of students is not on par at international level.

Intervention 2

As a person from the Ministry of the Higher Education, I have some worrying statistics to share with you. I would like to highlight that these are about the quality and standards of students that KPT gets from MOE. This is also part of the manifestation of frustration of being in KPT. Before that, Tan Sri was talking about the perception of reality; I think with these facts, it would become reality. In KPT we have an assessment of soft skills of the students. The moment they entered university, they are measured through these 6 elements: critical thinking, communication skills, team work, morality and ethics, leadership, lifelong learning, and entrepreneurship competency.

There are 3 elements where 58.56% of the students do not meet the minimum criteria: critical thinking, entrepreneurship competency and team work. Majority of students failed in these areas. In terms of competency of language in comparison, Malay language competency fares better than English, but in terms of speaking, 32.63% does not meet with the minimum criteria in Malay, as compared to English at 68.22% that does not meet the minimum competency level. This is supported by another study; 53% of IPTA students are placed in band 1 and 2 in the Malaysian University Examination Test (MUET). Another study shows that only 7% of employers agreed our graduates are competent in English. 60% of lecturers in IPTA are not competent at teaching in English. In a study by Job Street, 55.5% of employers say that the reason they do not hire local graduates is because they have poor command of English.

I'm sharing this, because we are quite stressed as our performance is based on our KPIs, and our KPIs are based on the percentage of our graduates getting jobs. Whereas for MOE, whenever their Ministry makes a statement it is mostly on the percentage of their students getting straight As or the percentage of their students improving in their courses. It is absurd that within 2-4 years we are expected to produce quality graduates with high skills to lead the country. More than 40% of our graduates are getting income at less than RM1500, yet we are looking at becoming a developed country with graduates having an income of at least RM5000 on average.

The KPIs of MOE and schools need not only be based on academic achievements but also on the soft skills of the graduates. Our expectations are too high but the reality is that the graduates' quality is too low. The KPIs of the Minister of Education need to change and include other elements such as beyond-classroom learning activities, multidisciplinary learning at secondary level, etc.

The Minister of Education would also need to observe and assess the competency of teachers.

Intervention 3

It is unrealistic to expect the English language proficiency level of our students to be on par to the proficiency level of native English speakers. There is a need to define what the competency level is for English as a second language for Malaysian students. Unlike the education system in the past

which used English as the medium of instruction, in the current system, English is only taught in a class as a subject.

I would also like to suggest having a pass in English as the basis of university entrance.

Intervention 4

KPT spent too much money in universities in terms of intervention programmes, yet the result remains the same or worsening. I believe the best investment for the government is to invest on the early 12 years of education of the students, with the aim of raising the standard of English among the students. When students enter university, the KPT should only focus on polishing their linguistic skills.

Intervention 5

I think it is possible for students to be proficient in the English language, but the government needs to strategise its education system for long term commitment, such as having five-year planning, to ensure the goal is well-attained and not merely short term solutions. Malaysia is the centre of Southeast Asia; we are looking at the possibility of an influx market without the capabilities to speak English, and this is going to be a problem.

Intervention 6

Studies have shown that we can never achieve the goal of having our students be proficient in English as long as English is taught as second or third language. During the British education, Malaysian students were taught as native speakers in English, and most of the students excelled in learning English. We need to have an intervention at the school level to increase the student proficiency.

Intervention 7

The most important factor in learning a language is motivation. The motivation of education itself is very important for both students and teachers which is very much lacking, and the government would need to re-think some of its education policies and implementation methods.

Intervention 8

I am working on a PhD research on English vocabulary acquisition for pre-school learners, focusing on Tabika Perpaduan children from low-income families. Children are taught to learn many words with very little recycling of words in the classroom. In fact, learners need different encounters of the same word in different settings, in different ways before the word is learned. Children learn words very fast but they also forget equally fast. As such, there is a need for a core vocabulary list for primary school English syllabus; these words are selected based on criteria such as word frequency, utility, learner interest, and cultural context. These core words then form the basis for the development of English language learning materials and are repeated and recycled in textbooks, workbooks, story books and audio-visual learning aids. We also need more structured reading programme like in the United

Kingdom, and also to the use of a reading journal to link school and family participation in developing the children's literacy level.

Intervention 9

The quality of teachers is important, and the selections made are important to schools. I heard from one source (but I have no concrete evidence on it) that the education authorities do not select the best teachers, because they will not stay put or consider it as a long term career option.

The curriculum also needs revamping. Our curriculum is out-dated.

Another concern is the teachers' incompetency. How many people in the teachers' college have been failed due to their incompetency but they are not let to fail? The excuse from the government is that it has invested too much on them. For example, some teachers have anger management issues, and are not competent to be teachers.

Also, the Ministry of Education took KPLI students from other courses (not related to teaching) with only 9 months of training in English and they are guaranteed to become teachers, while the 4 years educated TESOL teachers are left without jobs.

Many teachers are frustrated and some left the sector to join corporations, but there are a few good case studies such as in Lahat Datu where the teachers have made a great impact in teaching and educating the students. Teachers should be left to only teach; on the other hand the Students' Affairs Department should be the one left with clerical work and student assessment. Surprisingly, no matter how weak or difficult the students were in learning, most complaints from the teachers are not about the teaching but the over pouring paperwork and meetings. Some of the TESOL teachers are really passionate and want to make a difference. And they can make a difference; one good case study is a project to teach children from the outskirt areas in Sarawak.

Intervention 10

In my 35 years of teaching profession, there were many changes made in a good way. When the Razak Report came, the Tamil estate schools were given a new life. I would like to highlight some major issues of concern in schools:

- The attitude at that time was that the students were able to have fun and learn basic knowledge; nowadays there is too much control and discipline in schools. Even with a principal and normal class schedule, the same school is also providing additional tuition to the students. The newspapers and ministers have given too much importance on higher grades. The need for children to have fun in schools, through learning music for example is important. We used to learn many songs in school; nowadays the only thing children could do is to sing Rasa Sayang. Music is sometimes substituted for exam subjects.
- Religion has taken a very important role in schools. Even in my school days we had March songs, but now the students have religious songs in multiracial schools. For 20 years we wanted to meet the Education Minister; I only retired in 2009 from the Inter-religious Council. I believe moral education should be a subject for both Muslims and non-Muslims; they should be sitting together in learning moral education, instead of having the Muslim students have a separate Islamic education class at the same time. The government needs to review on the matter.

- There are lands that belong to Tamil schools being acquired to build new schools which were not there and estates being acquired by the government to accomplish development projects (which are passed by the parliament). There seems to be some sort of marginalisation towards the minority communities.

The committee should consider only single session schools. Within the next 10 years, all schools should be single session schools; students should be more liberal, have more play time and the interest in exam subjects be less. We need the students to enjoy themselves.

Intervention 10

When we look into school transformation, we must look into two levels: First is the government level – change in school curriculum, government policy, teacher’s training and motivation. The second level, which is equally important, is school innovation. Schools themselves need to take the initiative to transform themselves. Schools need to tailor-make the subjects according to needs, and schools need better autonomy and to take initiative to institute school policy changes. For example, the Saint Xavier School in Penang, where Brother Paul Ho built a bakery and started giving bakery classes to the students, ensured that the students learn not only how to bake, but also to read, calculate and be an entrepreneur. These kinds of initiatives and possibilities need to be there for schools to transform.

Intervention 12

On behalf of the Christian Mission Schools Council, we would like to have a say on the appointment of headmasters. In Mission Schools, we have passionate principals and teachers, such as the example of Brother Paul Ho from Saint Xavier School. As of right now the Methodist Council of Education has 34 primary schools and 23 Secondary schools all over Malaysia, and we are in constant dialogue with the Ministry of Education on the issue of headmasters’ appointment.

Secondly, we are looking at the de-registration of those schools. We have schools like the MGS P2 in Brickfields, the Methodist Boys’ School in Sentul, and the Target School in Penang. In the hey days we had 1500 students’ enrollment, but today we have less than 200 students. Looking at these figures, we from the Methodist Council of Education would like to have these schools back and to have our own private education of social enterprise. We are not a business entity; whatever surpluses we have would be channeled back to the education. Our intention is to build our human capital together with the national policy makers. We have engaged with the Ministry of Education and hope to convince them on our proposal. Right now, our flagship school is Wesley Methodist Sentul; it is very successful and in fact charging fees at a rate much lower than International Schools. We do provide excellent education to all Malaysians, with the Malaysian syllabus.

However, we need funding from the government; I have travelled to some of our Methodist schools in Sugai Siput, Tanjung Malim, Nebung Karbau, and so on; these places are prone to floods and most chairs and tables are second-hand from the government schools. I appeal to the government: we gave the land and buildings to the government in 1960s without charging any rentals. Hence we need the government to take the opportunity to maintain the buildings and facilities of the mission schools.

The Malaysian Christian Schools Council has been in constant dialogue with the PPIT and has established with certainty as being brought up by Dato’ Saifuddin Abdullah, that the community, the board of management and governance, the alumni and the PTA, must play a very important role in the government assorted schools. And we have come up with a very clear instrument of governance; in fact It has been in the act - 1961, 1962, 1971, and 1997. We want to help the schools and not to interfere with the management of the schools.

There are many misunderstandings on our role in education, especially the misunderstanding on our ethos and the character of the Mission Schools. When we were organising the Methodist School Heads Conference National, which was never a Christian religious activity as thought by some of the parents, even the special branch came to interfere. Actually, the whole programme is a professional development for the Methodist School heads. In this regard, we were asked by the authorities, upon the request of Tan Sri Koh Tsu Koon and Tan Sri Bernard, to present our ethos and character as a mission school. (The Christian Mission Schools Council has submitted a memorandum to the ministry, the document on the Ethos and Character of Mission Schools is also attached in this report).

Intervention 13

I would like to express a few solutions:

- We thought too much on the concept of 3R. In fact, very few students got into post-graduate studies as we have become too materialistic as a society. From these few post-graduates, fewer are producing new knowledge.
- We should take 50 of the most intelligent people in Malaysia and offer to send them to the best schools in the world to study Education. I know Columbia University has a good programme. When they return back to Malaysia, the government can have an arrangement for them to teach for 4 years locally as a form of national service, as well as be sent to foreign missions for exposure for 3 to 4 years. They can either continue teaching or join the civil service. This is how we nurture high level, quality human capital. These graduates from Oxford, Harvard and other excellent universities can also be the role models for the children they are teaching and having the children to aspire to be like them. Instead of spending tax payers' money on ineffective programme, the government should invest into a serious solution rather than having short term fixes.

Intervention 14

The quality of education depends on the quantity of students in school classes. In La Salle School we have a new policy where we reduce classes to 35 students and have single session schools, while encouraging students to take up dance, arts, drama and music, etc.

Education also should not be divided into merely arts and sciences; it should incorporate technology which is a whole new sphere.

I recommend that we need more teacher training colleges to produce people that can help our younger generation.

Intervention 15

NUTP is the biggest teachers' union in Malaysia. I recommend that we need to develop more fun and joyful learning experiences in school. Today we have 450,000 teachers and 5 million children. We do not have enough teachers. We should also consider being technology-friendly in schools, by for example, allowing the use of hand phones. It is easier said than done, and we need to consider the many different types (character and behavioural patterns) of students in schools before implementing this.

On learning the English language, in terms of practicality, some in the rural areas may not need to be very proficient in English because they do not need it as much. Sadly, I believe the low-quality educational product of today's students is due to the poor quality of the teachers.

Intervention 16

I appeal to the organiser to have a sub-roundtable and follow ups. Education should be the development of the mind, and not just about learning or knowledge. Education is about learning to think rather than coming to know. It is about teaching critical thinking rather than enforcing blind memorizing.

Intervention 17

In school, the learning method for sciences is very linear, while the arts are all about discovery. Our education system puts more emphasis on sciences than the arts. We need a new paradigm of approaching education; we need to combine arts and sciences into a concept I call design, which is the discovering of new knowledge. The reality is that the young generation does its learning through games and technology. Learning is also when discovery happens.

Intervention 18

In addition to the 9 key areas which I mentioned in my presentation earlier, there are 4 additional points on how we define literacy in the 21st century:

- Literacy is about being able to find information online on platforms such as Google
- Schooling education should be competitive in the international environment
- Text books have a changed role in the era where the Internet dominates the knowledge depositories
- Schools, teachers and students need to all have a say on education.

Intervention 19

I recommend that students should have a say on their curriculum, rather than adults making the decisions in education.

Intervention 20

My opinion is that we need only 10% of students to be proficient in English; hence we could have 10% of national schools adopt the English-medium model of teaching.

Closing Remarks: Dr. Marzuki Mohamad (DPM's Office)

I have listened to comments by the participants and I will convey the message to the Minister. I would like to comment on Dato' Saifuddin's remarks - the Education Review should not be done in a vacuum; instead it should have some context, as there are different views about quality of the education system. According to the World Economic Forum Report as mentioned earlier by Dato' Saifuddin Abdullah, our education system is good or even better than other countries. This is not surprising. In yet another survey which I came across, the World Economic Forum surveyed a larger sample of more than a thousand Malaysian adults, and the majority stated that the quality of the education system in Malaysia is comparable to the developed ones.

We are in a transition period; we have done a good job in educating our young minds, but to face the new 21st Century challenges, we will need new skills, and to re-think on how to improve the ability of students to analyse and to communicate effectively rather than just memorise facts. Sadly, even with 9As, some of these students lack the ability to communicate effectively, and they hold poor analytical skills. These could be because of the system itself, since we mainly teach students to answer exam questions and to seek better grades.

In order to move forward, acquiring the soft skills component is important, as well as the ability to communicate effectively in multiple languages. In order to improve the quality of education we need to have good quality teachers. I fully agreed that we need to focus on teachers' training.

Other existing challenges that we are facing include that thousands of graduates apply to be teachers however only a small percentage of those are competent and well-equipped teachers. Our observation is that the teaching profession is not the first choice in comparison to engineering, law, etc. How to make the teaching profession a professional choice? With many solutions in hand stated by the participants, the reality is that the teaching force has been there for too long; there are 400,000 of teachers who have been teaching for 10-30 years and you cannot simply fire all of them. They have become demoralised and static in their position. We need better training for these teachers, such as in-service training.

In order to prepare our children for the future, we need to realise that we need to equip the students with different skills and improve the quality of the education system.

The three important areas that need immediate review that emerge from this discussion are English competency, soft skills and teacher's training. All these elements will be looked at when we do the education review.

Appendix

APPENDIX 1: Programme

PROHAM, ASLI-CPPS & KITA ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ON EDUCATION REFORM AND PROCESS OF CONSULTATION

Date: April 16, 2012 (Mon)
Time: 8.30pm to 10.30pm – (Dinner served from 7.00pm)
Venue: PJ Hilton, Petaling Jaya, Selangor

Last year in December, the Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin established the National Education System Evaluation Panel comprising seven experts with the mandate to undertake an overall evolution of the national education system since the Razak Report 1956. The aim is to improve the quality of education in the country to be on par with that of developed countries.

In addition this year the DPM who is also the Education Minister announced holding nationwide National Education Dialogues to receive feedback from the general public. The DPM affirmed that his Ministry “will listen to the views, recommendations and ideas from the various strata of the society, from the various races and from the stakeholders.

In this context Persatuan Promosi Hak Asasi Manusia (PROHAM), ASLI-Centre for Public Policy Studies (CPPS) together with the Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA), University Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) have taken the initiative to host a Roundtable Discussion to provide feedback to Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin. We are hoping to present the findings to him on April 23, 2012 when he officiates the 16th Malaysian Education Summit organised by ASLI.

Earlier this year on 27 February 2012, CPPS-ASLI hosted a Roundtable Discussion on Vernacular Schools in Malaysia recognising that there is a need to review the Education Act and National Education policy to address issues like the falling quality of education and increasing mono-ethnicity in national schools. The RTD welcomed the move but also expressed concerns on the composition of the review panel and its objectives.

It is hoped that the 16 April RTD on Education Reform and Process of Consultation will further contribute to the on-going discussion. Therefore a small focus group of educationists, academicians, private sector and civil society leaders can provide their views and recommendations as the Federal government undertakes this national review and consultation to receive feedback from the citizenry.

While the RTD starts with some thoughts from a number of invited participants (about 10 minutes each), there is ample opportunity for all participants to share their views (about 3 to 5 minutes each).

Objectives:

- To analyse the current education system noting the challenges and achievements, recognising historical origins, diversity of educational streams and contemporary regional and international competitive global society

- To recommend specific changes that need to be made to the laws, policies, education methods, educational institutions and agencies both in the public and private sector
- To provide ideas on how to ensure effective feedback during consultation processes from all sections of the Malaysian society so as to be very inclusive in discussions and receiving input

PROGRAM

Word of Welcome & Introductions

Tan Sri Simon Sipaun, (Proham Chairman)

Panel Presentations:

Tan Sri Chan Choong Tak (Former Senate Speaker & member of the Cluster School Board)

Tan Sri T. Marimuthu (Former Professor of Education, University Malaya)

YB Dato' Saifuddin Abdullah (Deputy High Education Minister)

RTD Moderator

Tan Sri Dato Asiah Abu Samah (Former DG of Education & Proham member)

INTERVENTION BY RTD PARTICIPANTS

Closing summary of RTD Findings - Datuk Dr Denison Jayasooria (KITA-UKM)

APPENDIX 2: Participants List

No	Name	Organisation
1	Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah	Deputy Higher Education Minister
2	Datuk Dr Denison Jayasooria	Principal Research Fellow, KITA-UKM & PROHAM
3	Ms Jenny Gryzelius	Senior Researcher, IDEAS
4	Ms Sarah Lim	Assisting DatukDr Denison Jayasooria
5	Puan Karimah Tan Abdullah	CEO, Yayasan Pintar
6	Tan Sri Simon Sipaun	PROHAM
7	Dr. Gan Siowck Lee	Curriculum & Instruction specialist, formerly associate professor of UPM
8	Tan Sri Chan ChoongTak	former Speaker of Senate and Member of Cluster School Board; MoE
9	Ms Ho Sook Wah	UPM
10	Assoc Prof Dr Wong Bee Eng	UPM
11	Nithi Nesadurai	Director of Nesa Communications
12	Tan Sri Dato' Asiah Abu Samah	Former DG of Education and Proham member
13	Tan Sri Chan Choong Tak	Former Senate Speaker & Member of the Cluster School Board
14	Prof Dr NS Rajendran	Aminuddin Baki Centre for Global Education/ UPSI
16	Tan Sri Dato Dr T Marimuthu	Mantan Ahli Parlimen Teluk Kemang of Koperasi Didik Berhad/ MIC Education Committee
17	Mr Khor Hong Yin	Yin Methodist Education Secretary
18	Ms Leow Lee Lin	Methodist College
19	Mr Azlan Sharom	Chief Executive Officer; Yayasan Pintar
20	Dr Marzuki Mohamad	DPM special officer
21	Brother Anthony Rogers	Director of the De La Salle Brothers in Malaysia
22	Dato Nelson Rengasamy	Founder/ chairman, regent international school

23	Ms Anis Yusoff,	Principal Research fellow, KITA, UKM
24	Mr Khairil Ahmad	IIU
25	Justina Chen	CPPS
26	Arlene Tan	CPPS
27	Mr Razif Nasruddin	Thinklab
28	Mr Fadzmel	Office of Deputy Education Minister
29	Ms Hashini K. K.	Reporter, the New Straits Times
30	Ms Lauanyia	Reporter, the New Straits Times
31	Mr Jason Leong	SIP Consulting
32	Tan Sri Simon Sipaun	Chairman, PROHAM
33	KDR Hashim Adnan	NUTP
34	Datuk A. Vaithilingam	Independent
35	Dr Syahira Hamidon	KPT
36	Ms Stephanie Sta marie	Free Malaysia Today
37	Dato' Mohd Dahan Latiff	Introspe k Asia
38	Dr Marzuki Mohamad	DPM's Office

APPENDIX 3: Additional notes by Muhamad Razif Nasruddin

For many years, the secondary education system was clearly created to the advantage of science stream students. The inorganic and linear system no longer fits the criteria of today's second enlightenment period (today's information age), whereby it punishes and discourages options for students in other streams such as Economics, Arts, Vocational, etc to grow and build new knowledge for society.

Since any radical educational reform will do more damage, we at Make Condition Design / Thinklab, suggest that a new stream could be subtly created, consisting of Science and Arts, as it will help build new critical thinking dimensions for Secondary students and help build stronger soft skills as they enter tertiary education. Hence, the suggestion of naming it Design stream could be considered as to further empower the students, and possibly encourage them to be great future world leaders.

APPENDIX 4: Additional Notes by Dato' Dahan Latiff

I did propose that the government convert or change 10% of the existing schools to English Medium schools out of 10,000 existing schools to allow choice from parents; and to achieve a target of at least 10% of students/Malaysians being competent in English, ensuring global competitiveness and maintaining the global talent standard. Unfortunately, the current reality is that most of the undergraduates who are supposed to have 12 years of English as a subject learned in school are simply atrocious when it comes to speaking English, and not much repair work can be done in the 3 years of university education.

The other 90% of parents and students ought to be given the choice of Chinese, Tamil and Malay education.

I would like to propose two solutions for ensuring committed quality teachers:

- One criterion for selecting future teachers into teachers' training should be that they must have taught at least 6 months at the kindergarten level first.

- Many kindergarten teachers have better understanding of handling children's psychology than Primary ones who often suppress the enthusiasm of kindergarten children when they enter primary school. The children who can speak English from kindergarten are ridiculed in the primary school by both peers and teachers. This happened to two of my grandchildren, so now they shifted to international school since their dad can afford the expensive tuition fees.

APPENDIX 5: Recommendations on Education For Orang Asli

- _(a) We need to reduce the dropout rate among Orang Asli students
 - We need to modify the system/educational curriculum to suit the culture and environment of Orang Asli communities.

- We need to give priority to the quality of transportation and appropriate hostel facilities as well as expose teachers and students of different races to the cultural sensitivities of the Orang Asli to stop discrimination in schools.
 - We need to inculcate a self-esteem programme for higher self-confidence among Orang Asli students or parents.
 - In the school we need to hold programmes through which teachers understand the Orang Asli communities and through which parents become part of the school community, in order to eliminate an environment where schools and communities are separate entities.
- (b) Essential elements of a culturally-appropriate education system
- Introduce the history, culture and traditional sports/crafts/economy/music of the indigenous people as subjects to be taught in schools, wherever there are Orang Asli children.
 - Employ Orang Asli teachers as far as possible to teach Orang Asli students.
 - Create curriculum content and pedagogical studies to suit the Orang Asli situation and environment.
- (c) Multi-lingual education system
- Employ qualified indigenous language teachers.
 - Test and produce books in Orang Asli languages.
 - Introduce foundational language programmes at pre-school level.
- (d) How the Ministry of Education can strengthen education and pedagogy of indigenous people
- Recognise indigenous languages and adopt these in the national education system.
 - Actively involve implementing agencies and indigenous communities (village organisations and Parent-Teacher Associations).
 - Improve the education system at all levels.
 - Allow flexibility in requirements and create a bigger quota for indigenous people to enter universities, Teacher Education Institutes and other tertiary institutions.
- (e) Recommendations to the JAKOA
- Provide in-depth explanation of scholarship procedures to the Orang Asli.
 - Streamline and improve the delivery system, including providing accurate information/data for smooth delivery of aid and support to the target groups.
 - Inform the batin (village head) to ensure more effective dissemination of information.
 - Provide financial assistance to Orang Asli students who wish to study in Chinese and Tamil primary schools.
- (f) General recommendations to the Government
- All departments and agencies involved with indigenous people should work together in restructuring and formulating the relevant policies.
 - Appoint more Orang Asli to government posts.

APPENDIX 6: Recommendations – Sabah Workshop

- a) Achieve culturally-appropriate curricula by introducing, for example, vocational subjects that are founded on indigenous economic activities.

- b) The Sabah Education Department and relevant Ministries need to work towards the recognition of indigenous ways of learning and of institutions.
- c) Efforts to introduce indigenous perspectives in the mainstream education system should not be hampered by lack of understanding by the Government, but work towards overcoming the poor interface between traditional and mainstream education systems and institutions.
- d) The Ministry needs to look into the issue of discrimination of indigenous people, poor accessibility and inadequate public spending, particularly in rural areas where most of the indigenous people live.
- e) The institutionalisation of educational services and tight control by the State – which does not allow much room for NGOs and communities to contribute more effectively in the system – should be reviewed.

APPENDIX 7: Presentation Paper by YB Dato' Saifuddin Abdullah

Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia has identified 9 key areas of focus:

- 1) standard of teachers.
- 2) Quality of school heads.
- 3) Quality of schools.
- 4) School curriculum & evaluation.
- 5) Multilingual proficiency.
- 6) Post-school opportunities.
- 7) Role of parents & community.
- 8) Utilisation of resources.
- 9) Administrative structure of KPM

Dato Saifuddin Abdullah has highlighted 9 characteristics of a good person to be nurtured by the school:

- 1) pursuit of knowledge
- 2) Communication skills
- 3) Critical thinking
- 4) Moral reasoning
- 5) Good citizen
- 6) Living in a plural society
- 7) Living in a global society
- 8) Have life interests
- 9) Prepared for careers

Thus in order to get there, we need to:

- 1) Introduce new streams, not limited to arts/sciences
- 2) Strengthen co-curricular from 10:90 to 30:70 ratio against academic
- 3) Establish new school governance structure
- 4) Practice student empowerment

APPENDIX 8: Presentation Paper by Tan Sri Chan Choong Tak

Education

- 1) Heads - selection should be based on merit + not on grade/rank.
- 2) Teachers - duties mainly to teach & not to do administrative jobs/attend meetings etc.
- 3) Atmosphere in schools -
 - FUN - in learning
 - in creating
 - in sports & games
- 4) Emphasis - on individual improvement not on purely academic results
- 5) Size - moderate for proper administration & not bloated for various reasons
 - closed it enrolment too small - it demands great effort
- 6) English - to be accepted as the most imp. lang. for learning, research etc.
 - should not be treated as a foreign language
- 7) Malaystanise all types of schools in the country.
 - teachers of all races
 - pupils of all races
 - English, medium of instruction, national
 - ~~difficult~~ education from all sides religious feelings - recent term in J.B
- 8) Funds - all Gov. Schools to be treated equally
 - cut off school grants during election periods
- 9) Facilities - modern, computerised, labs, libraries - playing fields
- 10) Chinese language - should be accepted as the most imp. second language in non Chinese medium sch.

APPENDIX 9: Principal of “Maximum Consultation” by the Malaysian Christian School Council

DASAR “MAXIMUM CONSULTATION”

The Principle of Maximum Consultation

MALAYAN CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS’ COUNCIL

MAC 2012

Mukadimah

Satu permuafakatan antara Kerajaan dengan pihak Berkuasa Mubaligh berkaitan dengan pelantikan guru terutamanya Pengetua dan Guru Besar sekolah-sekolah Mubaligh telah direncana dan didokumenkan dengan sempurna dan baik yang termaktub dalam laporan semakan semula Laporan Persuruhanjaya Di Raja bagi Perkhidmatan Guru, Semenanjung Malaysia, Jun 1971 (Aziz Report) ternyata seperti di bawah:

8.53 “To allay any misgivings as regards the status and the special character of, particularly the mission schools ..., we would suggest that in exercising the powers of deployment and assignment of teachers, there should be maximum consultation between the deployment authority and the individual Boards of the school so that this character is maintained.”

Dasar ini telah didukung dan dipertahankan oleh Tun Dr. Mahathir Bin Mohammed, bekas Menteri Pelajaran pada tahun 1976 melalui sepucuk surat beliau kepada pihak Berkuasa Mubaligh Sabah yang diperjelaskan seperti di bawah:-

“... the appointment and transfer of Heads of Schools shall be made by the Director of Education in consultation with the heads of the relevant Church.”

Dasar pelaksanaan “Maximum Consultation” bagi pelantikan Pengetua dan Guru Besar telah diulangi dan diperkukuhkan lagi oleh Datuk Seri Najib Bin Tun Abdul Razak, Perdana Menteri Malaysia ketika menghadiri satu Majlis Jamuan Makan Tengahari dengan Ketua-Ketua Pertubuhan Gereja Agama Kristian pada 4hb Januari 2012.

I. Maksud Pihak Berkuasa Mubaligh

Pihak Berkuasa Mubaligh bererti Pengasas Sekolah Mubaligh serta Pemilik berdaftar tapak tanah dan bangunan sekolah.

II. Dasar Pelaksanaan “Maximum Consultation”

Dasar pelaksanaan “Maximum Consultation” bererti “full consultation” atau berunding dengan sepenuhnya dengan pihak Berkuasa Mubaligh atau wakilnya, berhubung dengan pelantikan dan pertukaran guru terutamanya Pengetua dan Guru Besar (Laporan Aziz).

III. Tujuan “Maximum Consultation”

Memastikan pelantikan Pengetua, Guru Besar dan Penolong Kanan adalah terdiri daripada calon-calon yang berpengetahuan dan berkomited bagi mempertahankan dan memartabatkan watak yang unggul, etos dan tradisi sekolah-sekolah Mubaligh (*Rujuk Appendix: Ethos, Special Character and Traditions of Malaysian Christian Mission Schools: MCSC, 2012 Publication*)

IV. Proses “Maximum Consultation”

1. Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia dipohon agar memaklumkan kepada pihak Berkuasa Mubaligh tentang kewujudan kekosongan jawatan Pengetua dan Guru Besar akibat daripada persaraan, pertukaran, kenaikan pangkat atau kematian pegawai kanan tersebut dengan kadar seberapa cepat yang mungkin.

2. Pihak Berkuasa Mubaligh berkenaan atau wakilnya akan membuat pencalonannya dan bertemu dengan pegawai Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia yang berkaitan untuk mengenalpasti dan berbincang kelayakan dan kesesuaian calon. Pihak Kementerian juga akan mengemukakan pencalonannya.

3. Sekiranya calon pihak Berkuasa Mubaligh atau Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia tidak dapat dipersetujui, maka proses perundingan atau “consultation” perlu dilanjutkan dan diteruskan bagi pelantikan dan tindakan susulan pada suatu tempoh masa yang bersesuaian.

V. Kesimpulan DASAR “MAXIMUM CONSULTATION”

Mukadimah

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V. Kesimpulan

1. Sepucuk surat Pekeliling Ikhtisas daripada Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia berkaitan dengan arahan pelaksanaan dasar “maximum consultation” pelantikan Pengetua dan Guru Besar sekolah-sekolah Mubaligh harus disampaikan kepada Pengarah Pelajaran semua negeri untuk pengetahuan dan tindakan susulan.
2. Sepucuk surat Pekeliling Ikhtisas daripada Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia berkaitan dengan arahan pelaksanaan dasar “maximum consultation” pelantikan Pengetua dan Guru Besar sekolah-sekolah Mubaligh harus disampaikan kepada Pengarah Pelajaran semua negeri untuk pengetahuan dan tindakan susulan.