The Education System

A. Education System: Aims and Policy

Education in Malaysia has one ultimate objective: the achievement of national integration and unity among the various races. All government policies, ministries, programmes, schools and activities are geared towards this end. National unity and development through the education system is manifested in the National Philosophy of Education that stresses the holistic development of the individual based on the tenets of the National Ideology or Rukunegara. The National Philosophy of Education states that:

"Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysia citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral values, and who are responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large" (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 1997)

"If you plan for a year, plant a seed. If for ten years, plant a tree. If for a hundred years, teach the people. When you sow a seed once, you will reap a single harvest. When you teach the people, you will reap a hundred harvests.”  

Kuan Chung

The important aims underlying the Rukunegara are to achieve
(a) A united nation of a plural society;
(b) A democratic society through a constitutionally elected parliament;
(c) A just society of equal opportunities for all;
(d) A liberal society of diverse culture traditions; and
(e) A progressive society orientated towards science and modern technology.

Today, education programmes and activities in Malaysia are designed to:
(a) equip pupils with the essential skills in a holistic and integrated manner, in order to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced, as well as functionally literate;
(b) inculcate and nurture national consciousness by promoting common ideals, values, aspirations and loyalties to foster national unity and national identity;
(c) produce manpower for economic and natural development;
(d) instill devised moral values in pupils so that they can contribute effectively towards nation building.

The development of human resources, the talents, skills and creativity of the people is Malaysia's ultimate goal towards achieving the status of a fully developed and industrialised country in line with Malaysia's Vision 2020. This goal is reflected in the mission of the Ministry of Education, that is:

"To develop a world class quality education system which will realise the full potential of the individual and fulfill the aspiration of the Malaysian nation"

"Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation."

John F. Kennedy
B Education System: Structure

In Malaysia, education is the responsibility of the Federal government. The national education system has a 1-6-3-2-2 structure; one year of pre-school at the age of six in public or private pre-schools, 6 years of primary education, 3 years of lower secondary, 2 years of upper secondary and 2 years of post-secondary or college, tertiary education, in both the academic and professional field, is provided by universities, colleges and other public or private institutions of higher education (Charts I & II). The school year starts in January and ends in November. Students sit for common public examinations at the end of primary (UPSR), lower secondary (PMR), upper secondary (SPM, SPMV) and sixth form levels (STPM).

(a) Pre-School education
The aim of pre-school education is to provide a firm foundation for formal education. Pre-schools are run by government agencies, non-government agencies as well as private institutions. The major government agencies that are responsible for pre-school education are the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Rural Development and the Ministry of National Unity and Community development (KEMAS). The major private agencies are mission churches, religious bodies, political parties are independent parties.

(b) Primary education (Year I to Year V)
Primary education aims to provide the child with a firm foundation in the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic as well as emphasizing thinking skills and values across the curriculum. There are two types of schools at the primary level, that is, the national schools and private schools. National schools are divided into two types; fully aided schools maintained by the government and partially aided schools which were formerly National-Type (English) or mission schools, Chinese and Tamil schools. Private schools are run by independent and private institutions. In all the schools, except the national-type Chinese and Tamil, the medium of instruction is the Malay Language. English Language is taught as a second language in all schools. We do have a few Chinese national-type and Tamil national-type primary schools where the medium of instruction is Chinese and Tamil.

(c) Secondary education (Form I to Form V)
The ultimate goal of secondary education is to develop a strong foundation for life-long education. Education at this level is provided in national secondary schools, independent Chinese schools and private schools. The medium of instruction in secondary schools is the Malay Language, and English Language is taught as a second language. Secondary education consists of

(i) Lower Secondary level (Form I to Form III)
which covers a period of 3 years. Pupils from the national primary schools enter Form I whereas pupils from the Chinese and Tamil schools proceed to a transition year (Remove Class) before entering Form I. However pupils who have performed well in the UPSR are followed to proceed directly to Form I.

(ii) Upper Secondary level
(Form IV to Form V)
covers a period of 2 years. Besides following the general education programme, pupils begin to specialise in either the arts, science, technical, vocational or religious disciplines. Specific schools are designated for each discipline. These schools are academic schools, technical schools, vocational schools and religious schools.

(d) Post-secondary education
Education at this level prepares students for entry into local and foreign universities and other institutions of higher education or to the world of work. Education is provided in the Sixth Form which offers academic, technical and religious subjects covering a period of one to two years, Matriculation Classes conducted in universities, in polytechnics and in government assisted colleges, such as MARA Institute of Technology and the Tunku Abdul Rahman College.
(e) Higher Education
Institutions of higher education focus on improving the quality and relevance of courses offered in the fields of science and technology, information technology, electronic and manufacturing. In addition, the higher education system is fully exploited to promote research and development and consultancy service. Higher education is provided by public universities and private universities.

The Ministry of Higher Education was set up in 2004 and apart from the Public Institutions of Higher Education and Private Institutions of Higher Education also provide for Polytechnics and Community Colleges.

(www.moe.gov.my)

C Educational Administration

The Ministry of Education is responsible for the organisation, management and development of education in the country. Malaysia has a centralised system of educational administration which is headed by the Minister of Education who is assisted by two Deputy Ministers of Education. Both the Secretary - General of Education and the Director – General of Education are directly responsible to the Minister of Education. Whilst the former is responsible for administrative matters, the latter is concerned with professional matters. As shown in Chart III, there are six principal Departments, each with several Divisions. Five Departments are directly under the Director – General of Education and one is under the Secretary – General of Education. Besides these six Departments, there are several Divisions, agencies and statutory bodies in the Ministry of Education.

Departments in the Ministry of Education

Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education Department
[Jabatan Pendidikan Pre-Sekolah, Sekolah Rendah dan Sekolah Menengah]

Matters concerning pre-school, primary and secondary education programmes, including curriculum development, textbook development, sports and teacher education comes under the jurisdiction of this Department.

Department of Higher Education
[Jabatan Pendidikan Tinggi]

This Department looks into the financial aspects, governance and policy formulation of public universities. It coordinates applications for admission to these institutions as well as the accreditation of higher education institutions in the country. The welfare of Malaysian students abroad are handled by this Department through the various Malaysian Students Departments overseas.

Technical Education Department
[Jabatan Pendidikan Teknikal]

This Department conducts research, plans and implements technical and vocational programmes. It develops the curriculum and trains personnel for all polytechnics, technical and vocational schools. All secondary technical and vocational schools come under the jurisdiction of this Department.

Department of Private Education
[Jabatan Pendidikan Swasta]

The Department of Private Education plans, monitors and regulates the development of private education in the country. It also ensures that private institutions comply with the rules and regulations set by the Ministry.

Department of Special Education
[Jabatan Pendidikan Khas]

This Department plans, develops and implements special education programmes in special schools at both the primary and secondary levels as well as inclusive education programmes in regular schools. It carries out research and develops curriculum for special education.

Department of Islamic and Moral Education
[Jabatan Pendidikan Islam dan Moral]

This Department designs and develops Islamic as well as Moral Education curriculum for school and teacher education. It is responsible for the supervision of Islamic and Moral Education at all public primary and secondary schools. It liaises with the State Islamic Religious Departments in the management of Islamic education at Islamic religious schools administered by the states.
Divisions in the Ministry of Education

There are several Divisions within the Ministry of Education that are responsible for professional administrative matters that are not handled by the six Departments. They are:

**Professional Divisions**

**Educational Planning and Research Division**
[Bahagian Perancangan dan Penyelidikan Pendidikan]

The main planning agency of the Ministry is the Educational Planning and Research Division (EPRD) which undertakes macro educational planning, policy research and evaluation, as well as post analysis. This Division also monitors the implementation of educational policies and programmes. The EPRD is also the Parliamentary Secretariat to the Ministry of Education. It is responsible for development and management of the Educational Management Information System and Documentation Centre of the Ministry of Education.

**Educational Technology Division**
[Bahagian Teknologi Pendidikan]

The Educational Technology Division provides educational media and technological services support educational programmes to upgrade the quality of the teaching-learning process. This Division monitors a network of State Educational Resource Centres, Teacher Resource Centres and School Resource Centres.

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**Institute Aminuddin Baki**
[Institut Aminuddin Baki]

Institute Aminuddin Baki (IAB), the national institute of educational management, conducts some development programmes for educational managers, teachers and support staff in the education system. It also provides training programmes for community leaders upon request.

**Examinations Syndicate**
[Lembaga Peperiksaan]

The Examinations Syndicate organizes, administers and conducts all public examinations for schools from primary to upper secondary levels. The examinations are the Level One Assessment (PTS) for primary students, Primary School Achievement Test (UPSR), the Lower Secondary Assessment (PMR), the Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM) and the Malaysian Certificate of Education (Vocational) [SPM(V)]. This Division also coordinates and administers examinations offered to foreign examination boards.

**Federal Inspectorate of Schools**
[Jemaah Nazir Sekolah Persekutuan]

The Federal Inspectorate of Schools provides professional supervision on the teaching-learning process of teachers and supervisory management to school principals.

**Examination Council of Malaysia**
[Majlis Peperiksaan Malaysia]

It administers and conducts the Malaysian Higher School Certificate Examination (STPM).
D Policy and Planning Committees

The administrative structure is organised at four hierarchical levels, namely, national, state, district and school.

(a) Ministry of Education Decision-making at the Ministry of Education is performed through a system of committees. These committees are established to facilitate inter-division and intra-division decision making. The Education Planning Committee, which is chaired by the Minister, is the highest decision-making body at the federal level. It is concerned with educational policy adoption, adjustment and implementation. The Secretariat to this committee is the Educational Planning and Research Division. Currently, there are eight steering committees with specific terms of reference assigned to formulate policy guidelines, as well as coordinate and monitor the implementation of educational policies. These committees are the Central Curriculum Committee, the Development Committee, the Finance Committee, the Textbook Committee, the Scholarship Committee and the Staff Development and Training Committee.

(b) State Education Department (SED) The implementation of educational policies and plans made at the federal level are carried out at the state level through the State Education Departments corresponding to the fourteen State Education Departments. The SEDs supervise the implementation of education policies, monitor national education programmes, projects and activities, besides providing feedback to the central agencies for general planning.

(c) District Education Offices To support the state level administrative system, District Education Offices are set up in all states, except Perlis, Malacca and the Federal Territories. The District Education Offices (called the Residency Education Offices in Sabah and the Division Education Offices in Sarawak) provide the linkage between schools and the SED.

(d) School At the school level, the headmasters/ Principals assisted by three/ two senior assistants are responsible for providing professional as well as administrative leadership in schools. As stipulated in the by-laws, all schools have Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) to foster cooperation between the school and the community.

The Ministry of Education website: www.emoe.gov.my