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ABSTRACT

The Malaysian education systems have a long history before the Pre-World War II since 1824 to 1957, and it continued to reform from 1957 to 2020. This paper was written chronologically by addressing 201 years of Malaysian education reforms, events, reports and frameworks from past, present and future. It elaborates the future of education Malaysia based on the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013- 2025. Additionally, the Covid-19 Pandemic in March 2020 has caused the Ministry of Education Malaysia to take actions to ensure the schooling systems continue in a safe environment, although the entire country was lockdown. The researcher has provided recommendations to Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) based on the action that was taken due to Covid -19 Pandemic by reviewing various literatures related to future of schooling globally. It is hoped that, this paper will support the future researchers to comprehend the data, and carry out research studies that can be piloted by providing a practical solutions in the schooling systems.

Keywords: Malaysian Education Systems, Education Reforms, Talent Development, Covid – 19

JEL classification: A13, F43

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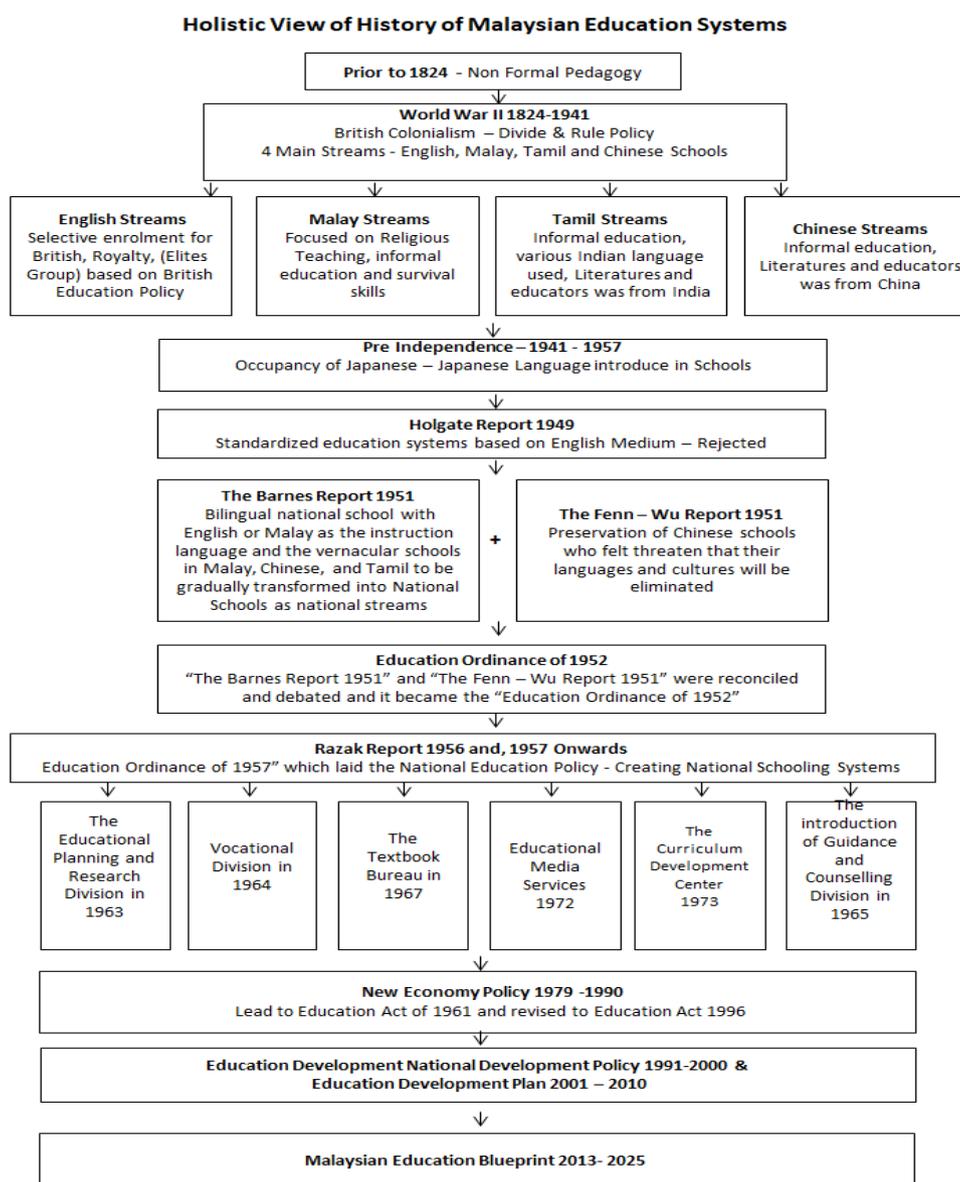
1.0 INTRODUCTION

Malaysian Education Systems have reformed since 1824. The paper begins by summarizing various literatures that pointed before Pre – British Period, 1824. Then, it discusses from 1824 to 1941 Pre – World War II, and followed by The Pre – Independence -1941 – 1957, The Post – Independence – 1957 onwards and, finally reviewing the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025. This paper was prepared to be a guide for future researchers to capture literatures on the Malaysian Education Systems since 1824.

1.1 Background Study

The Malaysian Education System has undergone various reforms since 1824 and during the British Colonialism, the schooling systems begin to be structured. Malaysia was known as Malaya and four streams of education medium were established based on “*Divide and Rule Policy*” such as English Medium, Malay Medium, Tamil Medium and Chinese Medium. The “*Divide and Rule Policy*” allowed the British to separate the public by ethnicity, religion, race besides dividing them as upper class and lower class to govern [5]. Figure 1 and Table 1, was develop by the author to provide a holistic view of the reforms in Malaysia and how education system reformed before the independence in 1957 to present.

Figure 1:



Source : Developed by Author for Easy References: Sivalingam A.D (2020)

Table 1: Chronological Order of Education Reform Before 1824

| | |
|---|--|
| Pre- British Period – Prior to 1824 | Delivered in a non-formal pedagogy where it was emphasized on religious teaching, value and morality teaching, spiritual teaching, martial arts teaching and handicraft teaching. In addition, education is taught for as a survival related to teaching on agriculture, fishing and hunting. |
| Pre – World War II – 1824 – 1941 | The education administrations in the Malay Peninsula were very much based on the colonial policy of “Divide and Rule - English medium, Malay Medium, Tamil Medium and the Chinese Medium. |
| The Pre – Independence -1941 – 1957 | Occupancy of the Japanese military from 1941 – 1946 have introduced addition of Japanese language and lead to eventually to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Holgate Report 1949</i> – standardized education systems based on English Medium only and proposal was rejected by Federal Legislative. • <i>The Barnes Report 1951</i> - Changing the whole education system to have a collective combination. • <i>The Fenn – Wu Report 1951</i> - The preservation and improvement of Chinese schools to be maintained. • Federation of Malaya had its first government and the first Minister of Education made 17 recommendations which lead to the “Razak Report 1956” • <i>Razak Report 1956</i> – Established to balance the racial based education systems by creating National schooling systems. • <i>Education Ordinance of 1957</i> - The National Education Policy established |
| The Post – Independence – 1957 Onwards | The National Education Policy was incorporated into the Education Act of 1961. A comprehensive system of education was developed by departments, Act and policy such : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Educational Planning and Research Division in 1963 • Vocational Division in 1964 • The Textbook Bureau in 1967 • Educational Media Services 1972, • The Curriculum Development Center 1973 • The introduction of Guidance and Counselling in 1965 • New Economy Policy 1979 -1990 lead to Education Act of 1961 revised to Education Act 1996 • Education Development National Development Policy 1991-2000 and Education Development Plan 2001 – 2010. • Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013- 2025 |

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Pre- British Period – Prior to 1824

In 1824, the education was generally delivered in a non-formal pedagogy where it was emphasized on religious teaching, value and morality teaching, spiritual teaching, martial arts teaching and handicraft teaching. In addition, education is taught for as a survival related to teaching on agriculture, fishing and hunting [1]. Furthermore, during that era, there was this system known for religious education as “pondok” (small hut) as a school established by Islamic religious scholars [3]. This type of school begin in 1450 in State of Malacca (Melaka), and only during the 19th century it expended in other states like Kelantan, Terengganu and Kedah.

By 1918, most of the students will stay around this this school by having their own small huts built around it and economic development also emerged. Today, there is some school still existed and it is managed in more organised matter. To think about it, today in the 21st century Malaysia is refocusing its education system on various soft kills, and survivor skills.

In addition, Malaysia is emphasizing on re-skilling and up-skilling its workforce to adapt to the changes that have impacted Malaysia due to the Covid -19 Pandemic, the Malaysian Education Systems continues to play its role [8].

2.2 Pre – World War II – 1824 – 1941

During the period of 1824 to 1941, the education administrations in the Malay Peninsula were very much based on the colonial policy of “Divide and Rule Policy” [1]. Four language concept of education was (Malay, Chinese, Tamil and English) and it was separated with school systems to serve different purposes. It has to note at this stage, during the war, many were affected and the counselling concepts started to develop in the US [4].

2.3 Malay Medium Schools

[3] The Malay education actually started during the “pondok school” concept and had strong Quranic teaching. In 1858, most of the Malay schools was expended and taken over by the British Malaya administration and financial aid was provided. These schools were assisted by the British East India Company and by 1938, approximately 788 Malay school was subsidized in the Straits of Malacca (Melaka) and the Federated Malay States. The main purpose of the Malay education is to provide knowledge on reading writing and arithmetic (Mathematics) together with vocational skills to enable more students to become better farmer and fishermen. Today, in 2020 we are discussing similar issues under the name TVET. [6].

Education was given more focus by the citizen and administration and in 1884 the Training of Malay Teachers was started in Telok Belanga, Singapore, which was part of the Malaya Federation. Due to the increase in demand, in 1922 The Sultan Indris Training College in Tanjung Malim was established which known today as the University Pendidikan Sultan Indris (UPSI). Furthermore 1935, The Malay Women’s Training College was established to train Malay women teachers [1].

2.4 Chinese Medium Schools

In 1829, the Chinese education in Malaya was very much driven and influenced by the political development in China and it began in Singapore. The curriculum was based on China and teaching materials and teachers were brought in from China and were fully maintained by the Chinese community[1].

In 1920, the British administration introduced the law to prevent alienation and to have a control of the activities of these schools to avoid any communism activities. Since 1924, some of the school begun to get financial grants by the British government and, by 1938, 654 Chinese schools was established. (305 Schools assisted by government, 18 managed by Christian missionaries, 331 by private Chinese organisations and only after the World War II, it had formal teacher training programmes.

2.5 Tamil Medium Schools

In 1816, the first Tamil primary school started in Penang for Indians who came to Malaya as traders and migrant workers in rubber, tea, coffee and sugar plantations. This plantation eventually grew and some was owned by wealthy Indian traders and in 1923. The Federated Malay States Ordinance incorporated a provision to the plantation owners to build schools for their employees children. In 1905, there was 13 government schools, 23 Christian missionary Tamil schools, 551 estate schools and 60 private Tamil schools were established throughout Peninsular or Malaya [1]. The curriculum was based on India education systems and most teachers were from India. The teacher training programme started before the World War II. Emphasis was given on reading, writing and arithmetic (Mathematics). However, many of the estate owners refused to build schools buildings and student had to be placed at smoke house and government funding was not enough. The British only involved when there was threat for them.

2.6 English Medium Schools

The English education was established in 1816 as Penang Free School and by 1938, 56 government schools, 59 supported schools, and 106 private English schools were established in Malaya. The curriculum was based by the Great Britain, and in 1905 the Malay College at Kuala Kangsar, Perak was established to train administrators for the Malayan Civil service. Most of them are from aristocratic families (Royal Family/ upper social classes). Furthermore, in 1905 - 1912, diploma level courses were established at Raffles College in Singapore, Higher Education course in science and arts at King Edward VII Medical College [1].

2.7 The Pre – Independence -1941 – 1957

The Pre – Independence time or known as the World War II was another turning point for the Malaysian Education system then known as Malaya. The invasion and occupancy of the Japanese military from 1941 – 1946 have introduced addition of Japanese language. During that time the Japanese were replacing Chinese and English schools as Nippon – Government schools, Tamil schools and Malay school just needed to add Japanese language with Japanese orientation [3]. However, past literatures have indicated that the English and Chinese language were totally abolished by the Japanese occupation with an aim to only have Japanese influence and death penalty will be applied for schools that uses English and Chinese language.

Furthermore, some secondary schools were replaced as technical colleges for telecommunication, fisheries, agriculture and some urban school was used as barracks, trading centers and headquarters for the Japanese military [1]. This change in education made the Malay community to realize that increasingly settled immigrants with their education schools have cause other challenges. Therefore, it was time to have their own politically, socially and economically education was vital [3].

The Malay community seek for improvement in Malay schools and in 1950 a Malay education committee was established under the chairmanship of Mr. L.J Barnes, Director of Social Training, and Oxford University which lead to “The Barnes Report 1951” mainly towards changing the whole education system.

The proposal recommended having an interracial bilingual national school with English or Malay as the instruction language and the vernacular schools in Malay, Chinese, and Tamil to be gradually transformed into National Schools as national streams. However, The Barnes Report 1951 has made other communities unhappy, mainly the Chinese who felt threaten that their languages and cultures are plan to be eliminated. Therefore, a Chinese education committee was established under the leadership of Dr. Fenn a trustee from Chinese University and Dr. Wu from United Nations who reports on Chinese Schools in Malaya.

This lead to “The Fenn – Wu Report 1951”.This report recommended that the preservation and improvement of Chinese schools to be maintained, and this added more intense towards the education in Malaya [1]. Both report “The Barnes Report 1951” and “The Fenn – Wu Report 1951” were reconciled and debated and it became the “Education Ordinance of 1952”. In 1955, the Federation of Malaya had its first government and the first Minister of Education then had made 17 recommendations which lead to the “Razak Report 1956” that eventually enacted as the “Education Ordinance of 1957” which laid the National Education Policy. In addition, this has resulted in establishing University of Malaya in Singapore in 1949 as the demand of higher education in Malaya and Singapore increased.

2. 8 The Post – Independence – 1957 Onwards

After independence, the National Education Policy was incorporated into the Education Act of 1961. A comprehensive system of education was developed and various departments was established such as the Educational Planning and Research Division in 1963, Vocational Division in 1964, The Textbook Bureau in 1967, Educational Media Services 1972, The Curriculum Development Center 1973 and the introduction of guidance and counselling in 1965 [1].

2. 9 Reports and Education Act and Policy for Further Studies

| Reports | Overview |
|----------------------------|--|
| The Holgate Report 1949 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standardized education systems based on English Medium only and the proposal was rejected by Federal Legislative. |
| The Barnes Report 1951 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Barnes Report 1951</i> - Changing the whole education system to have a collective combination. To create national schools of transforming the vernacular schools with English medium of instruction and Malay language as national language. Tamil and Chinese to be additional class or known as (POL) – Pupils Own Language. It was aimed to have nationalism among the younger generations. |
| The Fen-Wu Report 1951 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Fenn – Wu Report 1951</i> - The preservation and improvement of Chinese schools to be maintained. |
| Educational Ordinance 1952 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both report “The Barnes Report 1951” and “The Fenn – Wu Report 1951” were reconciled and debated and it became the “Education Ordinance of 1952”. |

| | |
|---|---|
| The Razak Report 1956 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established to balance the racial based education systems by creating National schooling systems. Primary Schools: Malay language as medium of instruction in standard national schools. Tamil, Chinese or English as medium of instructions by compulsory Malay subject in vernacular schools. Secondary Schools: Malay language and English as medium of instruction and other language to be removed to have a unify schooling systems. However, there were critiques in the Chinese and Tamil Schools. |
| Education Ordinance of 1957 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Education Policy established |
| Rahman Talib Report 1961 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Education systems created under the Education Act 1961 to allow multi-racial communities to continue to live in harmony. The Federal education policy was aimed to have standard education systems. Chinese and Tamil allowed to be used as medium of instruction in vernaculars schools and Malay language as a compulsory subject. |
| Education Act 1961 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To allow changes to replace colonial based education systems and implement National Education Systems including Sabah and Sarawak |
| Cabinet Committee Report 1979 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve and reinforce the national education policy by improving science and technology in schools. Vocational based education to increase and improved. To build a holistic schooling systems by intellectual, spiritual, physical and emotional. Allow student to choose their stream with elective subjects |
| New Economic Policy - 1979-1990 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes made in education making Malay language as main medium of instruction and English as second language and government vernacular schools continues with Chinese and Tamil as medium of instruction. |
| Education Development National Development Policy 1991-2000 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allowed private education to be introduced – Higher education. National schooling to reform to cater for higher education needs. |
| Education Development Plan & Policy 2001-2010 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introducing ICT subjects and based on K- Economy. Improving guidance and counselling Programs. Improve in financial aids for children in needs. Elective vocational subjects introduced in schools. |
| Education National Key Results Area (NKRA) 2010-2012 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the schooling systems by literacy, numeracy and enrolment of students. Develop High Performing Schools Increase Trust schools with Public – Private Partnership |
| Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013- 2025 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Producing talents for Malaysia and feed the demand of industries. 100% enrolment by 5 main system aspirations (Access, Quality, Equity, Unity and Efficiency). Develop 6 student aspiration (Knowledge, Bilingual Proficiency, Thinking skills, Ethics and Spirituality, Leadership skills and National Identity) 11 shifts were focused introduced. |

3.0 THE FUTURE OF MALAYSIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

Over the past 196 years, the Malaysian education system have evolved by stages which lead to the current Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013- 2025 that is shaping to transform the Malaysian Education System by focusing on 11 Shift under the MEB [11]. It is hope that the Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013- 2025 will achieve its set target by 2025 and it will mark 201 years of history. The first “Wave 1” was from 2013-2015 to turn around the systems by supporting teachers by focusing on core skills.

At present the second “Wave 2” is coming to an end from 2016-2020 whereby, it was focus to accelerate systems improvement. At this juncture, the Ministry of education is preparing to move to “Wave 3” three 2021-2025 which focuses to move towards excellence with increase operational flexibility. Figure 2 indicated the direction [3].

| Wave 1 (2013-2015) Turn around system by supporting teachers and focusing on core skills | Wave 2 (2016-2020) Accelerate system improvement | Wave 3 (2021-2025) Move towards excellence with increased operational flexibility |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raising teaching standards through tailored on-the-ground teacher coaching, particularly in core subjects (Bahasa Malaysia, English Language, Mathematics and Science) Revamping examination questions to include greater focus on higher-order thinking skills Strengthen quality of STEM education through an enhanced curriculum, the testing and training of teachers, and the use of blended learning models Rolling out National-type school Bahasa Malaysia Primary School Standard Curriculum designed for students whose mother tongue is not Bahasa Malaysia Strengthening English language proficiency through testing and retraining of teachers, expansion of LINUS and remedial support as well as blended learning models Rolling out 1BestariNet to all schools to integrate ICT into day-to-day learning Rolling out District Transformation Programme, focused on under-performing schools, including those for students with specific needs, to accelerate school improvement Revamping the IPG and pre-service training, and raising entry standards for new teachers Rolling out dedicated principal coaches for Band 5,6 and 7 schools and enhanced selection criteria for principals to improve quality of school leadership Transforming the Ministry by placing the best leaders in pivotal JPN and PPD positions to improve delivery Increasing preschool and secondary school enrolment through enrolment drives, greater parental involvement, and better vocational programmes Enhancing practicum in vocational programmes through greater private sector collaboration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rolling out secondary (KSSM) and revised primary (KSSR) curriculum to raise content and learning standards to international benchmarks Increasing public interest and awareness in STEM through campaigns and partnerships Piloting options to increase English language exposure, and strengthening additional language provision to improve overall language proficiency Enhancing programmes for groups with specific needs such as indigenous and other minority groups, gifted, and special needs Accelerating ICT innovations especially for distance and self-paced learning Enhancing teacher coaching and support to improve delivery of knowledge, skills, and values across all academic and non-academic aspects of curriculum Enhancing competency and performance based progressions and career pathways for teachers to revitalise the teaching profession Strengthening core divisions, streamlining federal, state and district roles, and restructuring the Ministry to improve delivery capacity and capabilities Obtaining international accreditation and enhancing curriculum for the matriculation programme to better equip students for university Expanding vocational education options through off-take agreements with private vocational providers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scaling up innovations and options to continuously raise BM and English language proficiency and providing more choices of additional languages Rolling out ICT innovations and programmes for groups with specific needs to continuously raise learning standards nationally Cultivating a peer-led culture of professional excellence, where teachers and principals mentor one another, share best practices and hold peers accountable for meeting professional standards Creating greater school-based management and autonomy around curriculum implementation and budget allocation for most, if not all schools Strengthening the Ministry and institutionalising transformation with enhanced career progression for Ministry officials Reviewing school structure to determine if further optimisation of pathways and schooling options are necessary |
| Key outcomes | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% students literate in bahasa Malaysia and numerate after 3 years of schooling; target for English literacy to be determined after baseline is established 92% preschool, 98% primary, 96% secondary enrolment 25% reduction in the urban-rural gap | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Malaysia's performance at par with international average at the next TIMSS and PISA cycle 100% preschool to secondary enrolment 50% reduction in the urban-rural gap, 25% reduction in the socio-economic and gender gap | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Malaysia's performance on TIMSS and PISA in top third of systems Maintain or improve enrolment Maintain or improve urban-rural gap, 50% reduction in the socio-economic and gender gaps |

However, the Covid- 19 Pandemic has created additional challenges for the Malaysian schooling systems. All schools have closed due to the Pandemic and “Online Learning” and “Blended Learning” is being accelerated. This has also caused social issues to rise [6]. In addition, Malaysians are facing difficulties financially; many are unemployed and were terminated since March 2020 that makes the situation more challenging where parents are not able to sustain. Many are seeking additional source of income. Reports are indicating that students are losing their interest in education.

The Malaysian Budget 2021 has allocated with MYR\$64.12 Billion, 21.5% lesser compare to 2020 to managed effectively [9]. The author foresees that there are some aspects to be reviewed or piloted by the Ministry of Education Malaysia based on the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013- 2025 or “Wave 3” three 2021-2025. Recommendations are provided below.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

To move forward, we have to take one step backward to see what we are trying to achieve. The Malaysian Education systems have reformed since 1824 and, we have developed as a nation due to the education reforms that have shaped Malaysia.

It is vital to observe other countries implementations due to Covid -19 Pandemic. However, basic fundamental questions needed to be recaptured if Malaysia is just adapting global solutions. Malaysia is to build a holistic schooling system by intellectual, spiritual, physical and emotional. Therefore, it has to continue to find the right balance that will create a better life for all Malaysian from a PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental aspect.

Acceptance and Adapting Changes:

- i **Recommendation 1:** The researcher believes the Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013- 2025 can guide the strategic direction further. At the moment, the ministry must find options to improve the “11 Shifts” that can be develop by engaging with various stakeholders, mainly Shift 9 allows to (Partner with Parents, Community and Private Sector) [6]. Shift 9 is important whereby, it lets various inputs and new solution to emerge from all stakeholders.
- ii **Recommendation 2:** “Wave 3” three 2021-2025 was designed to “*focus to move towards excellence with increase operational flexibility*”. Therefore, considering to continuing operating in a blended learning approach due to Covid -19 is a practical option. This approach will improve the technology usage among all stakeholders, and directly prepare our students in “Digital Economy and Industrial 4.0”.
- iii **Recommendation 3:** Students should be able to learn in a flexibility way, duplicating some higher education concepts of semester based and gain new experience as “working internship programs” while studying/learning for their schooling curriculum is highly recommended. This can also create a generation that understands how Malaysia had to develop from 1824 by various hurdles. The operating expenses may reduce due to the new flexibility in curriculum and the space of the schools can be considered to be used to generate revenues for the schools.
- iv **Recommendation 4:** The Malaysian School Counselling Department needs to revamp its operation by repositioning with a focus of Human and Career Development Center [11]. Furthermore, Malaysian secondary schools should work with universities with social entrepreneurship programs for secondary school with an aim to create talents and employments[7].
- v **Recommendation 5:** On the other hand, Trust school programs to be increased and encourage more private sectors to adopt school by providing reasonable budgets by emphasizing financial management [10]. Schools should begin to operate like how public higher educations are reducing in depending on funding.
- vi **Recommendation 6:** The researcher understands that the above actions can lead to other challenges and disagreeable. Henceforward, piloting these concepts is highly recommended by working collectively with Ministry of Human Resource.

5.0 CONCLUSION

To conclude, Malaysian Education Systems have reformed significantly since independence and there will be always changes that it needs to adapt. Maybe, it is time to improve the schooling systems by revisiting all types of schooling systems that is offered in Malaysia. To name few : *National Government schools, Vocational Schools, Vernacular Schools, Trust School Concepts, Home Schooling, Private Schools and International Schools*. The researcher believes, an academic institution should have clear purpose of its existence, and it should be a learning organisation. A student goes to schools to learn and eventually qualify based on the higher education prerequisite and employment requirements. If they have the qualifications, and having challenges to be employed, then something has to be done. Basic living is important and creating jobs is crucial.

Education is vital for any nation to continue to develop and it is also significant that the qualification focused by schools will results positively in their career. There are various reports that unemployment was rising in Malaysia and the Covid-19 Pandemic has just made it harder. Although this paper was to provide chronologically by addressing 201 years of Malaysian education reforms, events, reports and frameworks from past, present and future, it is hoped that future researchers will find this paper useful and provide practical solutions or conduct a study which will support Ministry of Education Malaysia and address unemployment and rise of social issues.

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