Current Trends in Malaysian Higher Education and the Effect

on Education Policy and Practice: An Overview

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Abstract

Malaysia has evolved from a production-based to knowledge-based economy in order to stay relevant and compete in the global marketplace. Thus, the purpose of this article is to discuss current trends in Malaysian higher education and how these affect education policies and practices. Four main trends are discussed in this study: Globalization, Teaching and Learning, Governance, and the Knowledge-Based Society. These are followed by four elements that affect education policy and practices: Employability, Quality Assurance, Academia, and English Language Competency. The transformation that has taken place will surely contribute to the success of Malaysia's Vision 2020 policy of becoming a fully developed nation in the near future.

Keywords: National education blueprint, Malaysia education system, Center of education excellence

1. Introduction

The government, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education (MOE), is entrusted with providing quality education for the people of Malaysia. Education in Malaysia begins from pre-school and continues to university. The vision of the MOE is to make Malaysia a center for education excellence. An MOE source has stated that more than 95% of primary and secondary education and 60% of the tertiary education is funded by the government (Ministry of Higher Education, 2009).

The education system in Malaysia has gone through tremendous changes and transformation. Prior to British colonization, education was done informally, mainly to acquire basic living skills. Even during British occupation, there was no significant policy on education, but various vernacular schools catered for the needs of particular ethnic groups such as the Malays, Chinese and Indians. This policy was in line with the British intention of discouraging rapport between the different races in Malaya to uphold their "divide and rule" policy. During the Japanese occupation of Malaya, education was focused on propagating love and loyalty towards the Japanese emperor. It was only after the World War II, especially after the independence of Malaya in 1957, that a structured policy on education was formulated. The National Education System was implemented after the Education Act 1966 was passed by parliament. The government was able to use education as a tool to foster unity and nation-building through a common syllabus and curriculum. In 1989, the National Philosophy of Education was released and became part of Malaysia's Vision 2020, which was to gain the status of a fully developed country by the year 2020. In order to strengthen Vision 2020 and better prepare the younger generation for the needs of the 21st century, the MOE has developed a new National Education Blueprint (NEB), which was launched in December 2012.

Through the MOE, the government has also restructured the higher education system to enable it to respond to the need for nation-building in accordance with the nine challenges in Vision 2020. The government has also developed strategies and plans to ensure that Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) are encouraged to undertake change and achieve excellence to face the competition posed by the global education market. The objective of these plans is to ensure that Malaysian universities achieve world-class status and operate as a hub for higher education in the Southeast Asia region (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007).

According to Lee (2005), the history of higher education in Malaysia has evolved through four phases, as follows:

> (1) Education for elites
>
> (2) Education for affirmative action
>
> (3) Education as and for business
>
> (4) Education for global competition.

In an effort to reposition the HEIs, the MOE has introduced two blueprints, the National Higher Education Strategic Plan (NHESP) beyond 2020 and National Higher Education Action Plan (NHEAP) 2007–2010. The strategic plan encompasses four phases as follows:

> (1) Laying the foundation (2007–2010)
>
> (2) Strengthening and enhancement (2011–1015)
>
> (3) Excellence (2016–2020)
>
> (4) Glory and sustainability (beyond 2020).

The first three phases until 2020 are grounded in the "end-state" objectives, thrust and strategies. The fourth phase, beyond 2020 is more inspirational in nature and will be based on the accomplishment of the three phases and new challenges circa 2020 (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007).

The purpose of this research is to review the overall education system in Malaysia. In particular the review focuses on trend and the impact of trend. The paper is structured into two main sections. The first reviews the trends in Malaysian higher education. Within this section, four areas will be discussed in detail, i.e. Globalization, Teaching and Learning, Governance, and Knowledge-Based Society. The next section discusses the effects of current trends, structured into four sub-sections, namely Employability, Quality Assurance, Academia and English Language Competency. Finally conclusions are given on both the trend and impacts on trend.

2. Main trends in Malaysian higher education

2.1 Globalization

Globalization implies the opening of local and nationalistic perspectives to a broader outlook of an interconnected and interdependent world with free transfer of capital, goods and services across national frontiers (Business Dictionary.com, 2013). According to Knight (2002), in today's era of globalization, knowledge is increasingly a commodity that moves between countries. The growth of the knowledge-based economy has led not only to competition among employers worldwide for the best brains but also among the institutions that train the best brains. The author also stresses that globalization is seen as the root cause of changes taking place in higher education.

Higher education in Malaysia is formulated through public and private institutions, and began with the formation of University Malaya in 1959. Malaysia currently has 20 public universities, 24 polytechnics, 37 public community colleges, 33 private universities, five foreign university branch campuses and about 500 private colleges. Besides that, various other educational institutions from the UK, US, Australia, Canada, France, Germany and New Zealand offer twinning and franchised degree programs through partnerships with Malaysian colleges and universities (Ministry of Higher Education, 2009). This dramatic development and drastic changes in the number of colleges and universities have transformed Malaysia as an education hub, especially in the region of South East Asia. The education business provides a major stream of income to the national GDP, and the Malaysian government has given considerable attention to developing this sector.

For instance, the setting up of Educity in Iskandar Malaysia and Kuala Lumpur Education City (KLEC) has shown that Malaysia is serious about establishing itself as a regional education hub. The *Financial Express* (2007) further elaborated that Educity aims to provide high-quality education and produce a skilled workforce to support foreign companies located in the commercial zones of Iskandar Malaysia. It also plans to support academic-industry collaboration through joint research laboratories and design centers. Elsewhere, KLEC aims to showcase Malaysia as an environment-friendly, energy-efficient and networked knowledge-based regional center, as well as focusing on the development of human capital necessary for Malaysia's knowledge economy.

The government initiatives to introduce and implement the Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEI) Act in 1966 has also paved the way for reputable foreign universities to establish branch campuses in Malaysia; these include Monash University, Curtin University and Swinburne University of Technology from Australia, and the universities

of Nottingham and Newcastle from the United Kingdom. According to Sarjit (2008), the introduction of PHEIs has made Malaysian higher education more diversified in terms of providers of education and modes of delivery.

The establishment of these private higher education institutions has been undertaken mainly to reduce the migration of local students overseas, as well as to attract foreign students to study in Malaysia. Based on the data collected by Chong and Amli (2013), the number of foreign students enrolled in public and private HEIs increased from 27,872 in 2002 to 86,919 in 2010. These students are coming from different parts of the world such as China, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Iran, Maldives, Nigeria, Sudan, Yemen, Botswana, Thailand and Saudi Arabia. Malaysia was ranked 11th in the world as a destination among international students (Ministry of Higher Education, 2009). According to Mohamed Khaled Nordin, the former Minister of Higher Education, foreign students will spur the economy. He estimated that a foreign student will spend RM30,000 annually on his studies in Malaysia (The Star, 2010).

The increase of colleges and universities in Malaysia was also a positive sign for the implementation of democratization of secondary education in 1990s. *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM), or the Malaysian Certificate of Education, has become the minimum qualification for students in Malaysia to further their studies at higher education level. It has significantly increased the number of secondary students eligible for higher education (Tan & Santhiram, 2009).

The establishment of local and foreign colleges and universities in Malaysia has also contributed to the development of human capital, especially skilled workers to work in the five economic corridors established to stimulate global and domestic investment. One of these is the Sarawak Corridor of Renewable Energy (SCORE). The Sarawak state government, in monitoring the demand and supply of the workforce required by SCORE, has set-up U-SCORE, a consortium of public and private institutions of higher learning in the state. It is estimated that the impact of SCORE will be to expand Sarawak's GDP to RM118 billion, and increase per capita income to RM97,400.00 (Regional Corridor Development, 2013). The report from Regional Corridor Development Authority (RECODA) not only indicates the necessity of establishing HEIs but also their contribution to the economic growth of the nation.

2.2 Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning is one of the strategies included in National Higher Education Strategic Plan (NHEAP) 2007–2010. In order to ensure a stable and strong institution, dynamic and relevant curricula and pedagogy are needed. A well-designed higher education curriculum should include creativity, innovation, leadership and entrepreneurship. It should equip students with appropriate skills to enable them to compete with the challenging global market. Peer review and industry collaboration must be enhanced in curricula development and evaluation.

One of the initiatives adopted by Malaysian HEIs is "education as a humanitarian response". A simple and logical definition of humanitarian is helping to improve and save human lives or to alleviate human suffering. According to Brock (2012), education as a humanitarian response is conventionally seen in terms of "education for emergencies" and "education for special needs". Providing educational support to those suffering from natural or manmade disaster becomes the responsibility of every human being.

Based on a study by Sirat (2002), University Sains Malaysia, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia (USM) is managing its interface with the geographic region, particularly as it applies to purposeful community service. USM has established two branch campuses, one for medical sciences (1979) on the east coast and another one for engineering (1986) in the northern part of Malaysia. The establishment of these branch campuses has actually helped the communities there in terms of increasing access to academic and technical training as well as utilizing the campuses' various facilities, especially sports and information technology. Students learning in these campuses are actually exposed to meaningful informal education besides their formal education. This kind of exposure is vital and in line with the aspiration of the government to intensify the development of human capital for nation-building.

Effective teaching and learning needs an effective delivery system. Textbooks are no longer considered as an important element of knowledge acquisition. Learning activities are done through electronic media, whereby information and communication technology (ICT) has become the main means of imparting knowledge and gathering information in higher education. ICT has actually changed students' learning behavior, helping to move from content-centered curricula to competency-based curricula, and from teacher-centered to student-centered forms of delivery (Oliver, 2002).

The advancement in ICT has also changed the delivery style of teaching and learning. The conventional method of imparting knowledge through face-to-face interaction is slowly taking a step backward, even though it is still used in public and private colleges and universities in Malaysia. Virtual classrooms, e-learning and blended learning are slowly gaining momentum.

The study conducted by Norazah, Mohamed Amin, and Zaidan (2011) into e-learning shows that 11 HEIs in Malaysia offers more than 50% of their courses online. The data also shows that 13.8% lecturers provide more than 80% online learning materials and that 44.6% of students prefer to read materials uploaded by their lecturers. The findings also show that students' preference for online courses is very encouraging. In fact, lecturers also agree that the integration of e-learning into their courses has benefited students. In general, it clearly shows that the application of e-learning is accepted by lecturers and students of HEIs as an effective means of communication.

2.3 Governance

Higher education in Malaysia has grown tremendously since independence in 1957 to meet the demand for quality education. In order to produce sufficient graduates to meet the manpower requirements of the nation's economic growth and to portray Malaysia as an education hub, especially in South East Asia, the MOE has formulated two education plans, the NHESP beyond 2020 and the NHEAP 2007–2010.

The government, through the MOE, has democratized higher education and encourages the setting up of private colleges and universities in line with its vision to provide access for all qualified students to tertiary education. To date, Malaysia has more than 942,200 students enrolled in 20 public universities, 32 private universities and colleges, four branch campuses of international universities, 21 polytechnics, 37 public community colleges and 485 private colleges (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007).

Private HEIs are given the green light to operate independently with minimal intervention from the MOE. Nevertheless, private HEIs are encouraged to adhere to the need and aspiration of the government to provide quality education and transform Malaysia into a center for education excellence. The government also recognizes the importance of giving greater autonomy and accountability to public HEIs. Some of the changes that are in progress include implementing the legal framework to transfer administrative powers to universities and to replace the University Council with university boards of directors.

The government has also upgraded four institutions, University Malaya (UM), University Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), University Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) and University Putra Malaysia (UPM), into research universities, and USM into Apex University. These five institutions are expected to obtain full autonomy by 2015 (The Star, 2011). USM will be the nation's center of academic distinction. It will be an avenue to ensure the retention of the best and brightest students and faculty in Malaysia's HEIs (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007).

2.4 Knowledge-Based Society

The fundamental objective of the education system is to ensure that all Malaysian students, be they in primary schools, secondary schools or in higher education, are equipped with the knowledge and skills required to be successful in life. In an effort to develop a holistic individual, the government spelled out its national education philosophy in 1996:

> Education in Malaysia is an ongoing effort towards further develop the potential of individuals in a 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 a 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 high levels 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. (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2013–2025)

Malaysia has certainly moved towards a knowledge-based society since the transformation of its education system into a more holistic approach through the introduction of various initiatives and approaches in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013–2025, the NHEAP 2007–2010, and the NHESP beyond 2020. As the former Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad said in 2001:

> In our pursuit towards developing the K-economy, knowledge has to replace labour and capital as key factors of production in our economy. The challenge for Malaysia is to develop this knowledge amongst our citizens so that our success will be due to the contributions of Malaysian talents and knowledge workers. (Evers, 2001)

Lifelong learning is one the imperatives suggested by the MOE in the NHEAP 2007–2010. The establishment of public and private universities, university colleges, open universities, polytechnics, community colleges and private colleges in Malaysia has made it possible to implement lifelong learning, especially for adult learners. In addition, other government agencies are offering education and training to Malaysian citizens through various ministries such

as Entrepreneur and Co-operative Development, Rural and Regional Development, Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry, Women, Family & Community Development, Culture, Arts & Heritage, Youth & Sports, and Tourism and Health (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007).

Advances in ICT have also contributed significantly to lifelong learning. Students have the option to learn online. Programs are designed to produce knowledge workers. Institutions of higher learning are collaborating with industry to make the learning experience more meaningful and relevant. Students are also given the flexibility to design their own study programs. Students are given the choice to pursuit the field of their choice and focus on a few areas in an attempt to increase their market value.

The government via the MOE plays an important role in the development of skilled and knowledgeable human capital. The vision to make Malaysia a center of education excellence is being advanced through proper planning and the restructuring of the higher education system. Through the development of skilled, knowledgeable and innovative human capital, Malaysia could be transformed into a high-income nation.

3. The effects of current trends on Malaysian education policy and practice

3.1 Employability

The transformation of its higher education system has evolved Malaysia towards becoming a center of education excellence and the education hub of South East Asia. In order to be competitive in the global market, Malaysia is aware of the need to collaborate with foreign countries. The restructuring of its education policy have given foreign stakeholders the opportunity to conduct twinning programs with local colleges and universities, as well as to open international branch campuses in Malaysia.

One of the concerns of parliamentarians and the public is unemployment among Malaysian graduates. Hrm ASIA (2012) reports that some 150,000 people graduate from Malaysia's universities each year, but many of them fail to secure a job. This report revealed that some 44,000 Malaysian graduates had yet to find work in 2011. This figure represents an increase from 43,000 in 2010 and 41,000 in 2009. Experts have identified that unemployed Malaysian graduates are not adequately equipped with the skills that employers expect, in addition to their poor command of the English language, poor problem-solving skills and a lack of professional etiquette.

This view was supported by Chiew (2013), who noted that while Malaysia had very low unemployment rate of 3.3% (434,000 of its 13-million labor force) as of December 2012, graduate unemployment was high. The author suggested that the main reason for this was a mismatch of talent produced by Malaysian higher learning institutions, while not discounting the fact that the ineffective delivery system in higher institutions could also play a part.

The formulation of the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013–2025, the NHEAP 2007–2010 and the NHESP beyond 2020, and the democratization of post-secondary education, has increased the number of graduates tremendously (150,000 graduates every year from higher education institutions in Malaysia). The government realizes the need to help graduates to find jobs. One of the initiatives that have been carried out is the establishment of a government agency known as the Graduate Career Accelerated Program (GCAP). According to Yong (2012), two private-education centers, Scicom Education Group and MyPartners, will provide six weeks' training for unemployed graduates who have scored cumulative grade point averages of between 2.0 and 3.0. Upon completion of the training session, the firms will assist the graduates to find employment in the service sector, including commercial banks and multinational companies.

Choo (2013) has asserted that CIMB Group has signed a partnership agreement with six firms to help enhance graduates' skills. The author also quoted from Hamidah Naziadin, Head of Group Corporate Resources, that the talent development partnership would contribute to the Malaysian talent pool by developing a new generation of leaders who are technically competent, extensively networked and well exposed to international best practices.

In fact many private firms in Malaysia are coming forward to help Malaysian graduates to secure jobs. This is indeed a noble move that supports the government's intention to produce quality skilled workers who can compete in the global marketplace.

3.2 Quality Assurance

In order to attract international students to Malaysia, the government realizes the importance of branding Malaysian education. According to Susan (2008), the Malaysian education brand draws on deep cultural, religious and political resonances to promote its product, one that emphasizes lifestyle, culture and quality of education. Susan further elaborates that Malaysia demonstrates a high level of fluidity in globalizing the higher education market. This

requires its HEIs to be more competitive, attentive to strategies on opening new markets, utilize intelligence and to become a more attractive and unique brand.

One of the issues to be looked into very closely to ensure the healthy growth and competitiveness of Malaysia's HEIs is quality assurance. In 1997, *Lembaga Akreditasi Negara* (LAN) was established to ensure the quality of education provided by the private HEIs. In 2002, the government also established a Quality Assurance Division (QAD) within the MOE to monitor public HEIs. In 2005, the cabinet made a major decision to establish a Malaysia Qualification Agency (MQA), which would responsible for quality assurance in higher education and to implement the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF).

The MQA has developed the Codes of Practice for Program Accreditation (COPPA) and Codes of Practice for Institutional Audit (COPIA). These codes are benchmarked against international good practices and nationally accepted by stakeholders through various consultations (Studymalaysia, 2012).

In achieving Malaysia's aspiration to be an education hub in the region, the MQA has also designed three assessments that could be the motivators to improve Malaysia's position in the competitiveness ranking among nations in the world. These assessments are the Rating System for Malaysian Higher Education Institutions (SETARA), the Malaysia Quality Evaluation System for Private Colleges (MyQUEST), and the Malaysia Research Assessment Instrument (MyRA). As an example, the results of the first Discipline-Based Rating System (D-Setara) were unveiled by the Higher Education Minister and reported in *The Star* (February 10, 2013) by Priya Kulasagaran. D-Setara is voluntary, and classifies institutions in six tiers: Tier Six (outstanding), Tier Five (excellent), Tier Four (very good), Tier Three (good), Tier Two (satisfactory) and Tier One (weak).

According to Najmi Mohd Noor, director of the MQA's Institutional Audit Division, D-Setara would be more relevant to prospective students as it focuses on specific fields of study rather than an institution's overall quality of teaching and learning (The Star, 2013). Malaysian universities are also encouraged to participate in QS World University Ranking to be recognized as world-class universities. Ben Sowter, the QS head of research, has said the ranking method is based on academic reputation, employer reputation, student/faculty ratio, papers per faculty, citations per paper, and internationalization, as well as inbound and outbound student exchange (Chapman, 2013).

Due to the rapid expansion of the higher education system, quality assurance has become an effective mechanism for the professional recognition of HEIs in Malaysia. The establishment of MQA is vital to ensure that HEIs provide relevant quality education to students and uphold the government's aspiration to make Malaysia an "education hub", especially in the region of South East Asia.

3.3 Academia

The word "academia" can be translated as "the academic community". The government has formulated three well-planned education blueprints: Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013–2025; the NHEAP 2007–2010; and the NHESP beyond 2020. These have transformed Malaysia into one the most sought-after countries by foreign investors and students in terms of its education sector. The Malaysian HEIs have the responsibility for offering quality education. The excellence of any HEIs can only be determined by competent and qualified academic staff.

In 2006, there were more than 20,000 lecturers in public HEIs. Some 5000 of these hold a PhD qualification. The government has targeted to increase it by 60% by 2010. Several initiatives have been identified to uplift the profession such as tenureships and more stringent criteria for professorships. In addition the quality and number of lecturers have also been increased through Research and Development (R&D), Pillar and MyBrain15 (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007).

The government has indentified two important aspects in the development of R&D:

(1) Building the critical mass of researchers, scientists and engineers (RSE);

(2) Inculcating the right culture to ensure passion, dedication and commitment towards research. (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007).

Even though the government has set the science-to-arts ratio as 60:40 in order to fulfill the future demands of a developing nation, this target has yet to be achieved. According to *Majlis Penyelidikan dan Kemajuan Sains Negara*, Malaysia needs a workforce of 493,830 people in RSE by 2020 to support the current government initiatives in the Economic Transformation Program, the Government Transformation Program and the New Economic Model (MyForesight, 2013).

MyBrain15 is one of the government's strategies to produce human capital to promote economic growth and industrial development, and to explore new areas of research that can sustain Malaysia as a global competitor. In

order to achieve its target of creating a pool of 100,000 high-quality graduates with doctoral degrees, the government is willing to give scholarships to individuals, especially lecturers, to pursuit their degree in local or foreign universities (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007).

Enhancing human capital in the education sector to provide quality education to students is vital to uphold the integrity of education in Malaysia. It will be a letdown – especially to the government – if proper planning is carried out through the establishment of various education blueprints and initiatives, but the delivery system in HEIs is compromised by a lack of manpower, especially of qualified lecturers.

3.4 English Language Competency

Malay, or *Bahasa Melayu*, is the national language and widely used in the Malaysian education system as the medium of instruction, especially in national schools and public universities. A plural society such as Malaysia needs a strong mechanism for communication and integration purposes, and the government believes that using the Malay language in all aspects of the education system could strengthen nation-building and national integration.

As the country moves into a new era from a production-based economy to an innovative and knowledge-based one, the government has allowed English to be used as the medium of instruction, especially in private HEIs (Tan, 2002). This change is essential as the government has to respond to globalization and internationalization. Moreover, to meet the government's aspirations to make Malaysia an education hub in the region and attract foreign investment in education, English has to be used as the medium of instruction in private HEIs. Thus language becomes one of the main agendas for attracting foreign students to Malaysia.

The Education Act 1996 and the Private HEIs Act approves the use of English as a medium of instruction for technical areas in post-secondary courses. The English language is also allowed to be used in courses provided through twinning programs with overseas institutions as well as offshore campuses. Nevertheless, Section 23 of the Education Act 1966 states that "where the main medium of the instruction in an education institution is other than the national language, the national language shall be taught as a compulsory subject in the educational institution" (Saran, 2002). This provision is stipulated to ensure that the Malay language does not become totally redundant in Malaysia, as it is the national language.

The use of the English language in our education system is also lauded by Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. He has defended the move, saying that "learning English language will reinforce the spirit of nationalism when it is used to bring about development and progress for the country… True nationalism means doing everything possible for the country, even if it means learning the English language" (Mahathir, 1999).

English proficiency tests such as IELTS and TOEFL are widely used in academic institutions throughout the world for admission and placement purposes in HEIs. Similarly, in Malaysia, the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) is used to measure proficiency, a prerequisite for admission, and also as placement in various academic programs (Souba & Chuah, 2011). The MUET determines the ability of students to perform effectively in their academic pursuits at tertiary level. The establishment of ICT in HEIs also requires students to have a good grasp of the English language to enable them to do their research and assignments effectively. Moreover, English has also becomes a communication language among students, especially in private HEIs.

English is sometimes referred to as the language of progress and development. It has become one of the widely used international languages in the world. The government's aspiration to establish Malaysia as a center for education excellence can only materialize if the English language is widely used in teaching and learning, communication and R&D in public and private HEIs.

4. Conclusion

The current trends in Malaysian higher education are based on four factors:

        (1) Globalization,

        (2) Teaching and Learning,

        (3) Governance and

        (4) Knowledge-based Society.

Based on these trends, the government through The MOE has formulated three education blueprints: The Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013–2025, NHEAP 2007–2010 and NHESP beyond 2020 in order to pursuit the idea of becoming an "education hub" in the region, especially in South East Asia. The Malaysia Education Act 1996 and later the Private Higher Education Act were also restructured to attract more foreign investors to collaborate with

Malaysian HEIs and also to set up foreign branch campuses in Malaysia. The focus on making Malaysia an education hub has resulted in the setting up of many public and private colleges and universities. The government has made various changes in the governance of these public and private HEIs, and with the setting-up of the MQA, the government can rest assured that quality education is provided to the students in HEIs. This includes teaching and learning and also qualified lecturers. The government has also given a green light to the use of the English language as the medium of instruction, especially in private HEIs, even though Malay is the national language and has been widely used as a medium of communication, and of instruction in schools and public HEIs since independence. This drastic change has been introduced by the government in order to accommodate and compete in the global market in education. The Malaysian education policy and practice has to be reviewed from time to time by the government through the MOE to make sure it is relevant to the needs and aspirations of Malaysian society and to raise the Malaysian higher education system to new heights.

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