

Summary of Proceedings ASLI 12th Malaysian Education Summit 2008

The 12th Malaysian Education Summit 2008 was held on the 22nd and 23rd of April 2008 at Istana Hotel Kuala Lumpur. The summit was organized by the Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute (ASLI) and is a premier Annual Series looking from a broad perspective at the state-of-the-Malaysian education. Themed as “Knowledge, Critical Thinking and Innovation as Keys to Building a Successful World-Class Malaysian Education System” the summit provided a timely opportunity to assess the educational outlook of Malaysia and the likely performance of the key sectors driving the education sector. Ultimately, the Conference was aimed at providing illuminating and insightful views and opinions on strategy and the economy and set the tone for the 2008 Malaysian education field.

In his Opening Remarks, **Dato Dr. Michael Yeoh, Chief Executive Officer of the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute** gave the welcoming remarks.

Dato’ Dr. Michael Yeoh noted that upgrading of the education system is a continuous process and that there are several critical areas which need to be addressed. First of all University degrees need to be more relevant to business and the nation. A quantum leap in education standards is needed. It has to be ensured that no one is left behind, so that we can move up in the value chain of creative societies. He stated that the Prime Minister had stressed the importance of Human Capital in order to compete with Smart Countries and hoped that his summit would give a strong impulse towards creating a world-class education system.

In the Opening Ceremony, **Dr. Hou Kok Chung, Deputy Minister of Higher Education** presented the speech of **YB Dato’ Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin, Minister of Higher Education** who was not able to be present at the Summit due to unforeseen circumstances. He began by stating that to change and bring around change one has to change first. The Ministry of Higher Education’s role is to facilitate and give strategic direction to higher education in Malaysia. Its three thrusts are: effective governance, promoting a culture of professionalism and obtaining a financially healthy organization. It sets the angles for creating human capital and through coordination it ensures there are no redundancies. The Ministry of Higher Education focuses on attracting foreign talent, improving research & development in order to bring higher education to the next level.

At this moment he stressed that there are two gaps that need to be addressed: The quantity of workforce with higher education and the quality of the workforce to build value. Education can leverage the nation’s GDP as much as one percent. In 2007 he stated that 20% of the workforce was educated at the third level. It is the goal of the Ministry of Higher Education through strategic planning to achieve 50% by 2020. However the bigger challenge is improving the quality of the education. This is in line with the vision of Malaysia as a global powerhouse. What first needs to be addressed is the mentality, which

needs to be transformed into life long learning. Human Capital can create new markets and therefore the right specialization is of key interest to business.

Programmes have been set in place to improve the culture in higher education. A professor's career needs to be held in high regard, while professors with credentials should be sought after. The MOHE intends to focus on staff development programmes, and this includes training, research and staff exchange programmes. Furthermore several incentive programmes have been put forward. Human Resource management should be practiced more thoroughly.

There are 15 guiding principles that will help Higher Education reach its goal. Higher Education must be more responsive to market change and envision what students need to be equipped with in order to compete on a global scale when they graduate. He mentioned that the APEX has put forward a plan to strengthen higher education in the region. At last he stated that in the short-term the ministry must ensure proper alignment between the ministry and education facilitators. The MOHE should also hold a semi-annual revision of selected initiatives and score these.

Session One - Reforming Education: The Role of Education in Generating a Knowledge-Based Economy

Moderator **Prof. Dato' Dr. Ansary Ahmed, President and CEO of Asia e-University** introduced the panelist for session one.

Prof. Dato' Dr. Sharifah Hapsah Syed Hasan Shahabudin, Vice-Chancellor of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia noted that in a knowledge economy, intangible assets need to be transformed into intangible capital, which comprises of intellectual property, network, branding and talent. Intangible assets need originality and vivid imagination. She introduced the concept of a research university, which has 3 core roles; education, research and service. Education should promote the skills for lifelong learning. What UKM wants to achieve is a faster process that will enable them to be among the best of the world. UKM compares itself with companies in emerging markets and learns from these companies through monitoring.

On top of that there are three thrusts it looks at; collaboration with world-renowned institutions, universities, and industries to build capacity and create new technology. She noted that one has to be brave to dare to select areas that need to be strengthened. She stressed the need to recruit on the basis of merit, and to structurally reorganize to improve the delivery system.

What does UKM do to prepare itself for the knowledge economy? It has selected niche areas which have seven advantages namely; effective resource allocation, better integration with national innovation system, higher relevance, greater impact, attract international participation, stimulate greater creativity,

higher added value, bigger output, ethical application of scientific innovation, more sustainable, focused mobilization of resources and strengths. It has also put forward several methods to improve the delivery system, such as a clear organizational structure, better linkages to national innovation system, governance-inclusion, representation and participation, focus on quality, image building, talent management and financial management.

Prof. Dato' Dzulkifli Abdul Razak, Vice-Chancellor, Universiti Sains Malaysia, noted that critical thinking is necessary in creating a knowledge based economy. First of all fundamental questions need to be asked and answered with consensus of major stakeholders.

He stressed that subjects such as Philosophy, indigenous knowledge and traditional medicine are equally as important as Science & Technology. Numerous courses sprout up but most of these are in order to create marketable programmes. However, there is a need to explore where the *human being* is, in the definition of 'human capital'. Specialised studies do not give graduates job mobility, and worse is the danger of being compartmentalized. There are four fundamental pillars education lays the foundation for and these are; learning to do, to know, live together and to be. It is the task of the institution to consolidate these. Confucius said, learning is about being. The most fundamental question we should ask ourselves is what kind of economy we want to have and is it sustainable?

Prof. Dato' Dr. Khoo Kay Kim gave an illustration that when the Japanese occupied Malaysia, there was a shortage of cooking oil. The people quickly changed their diets; however when earlier this year there was a temporary shortage of cooking oil people were not able to manage. Malaysians have been taught to equip knowledge with facts and not to talk about thinking. A correct reasoned answer is viewed as incorrect.

The role of a university is to create thinkers. He underlined that knowledge is of no use if one does not understand it. Students have to be encouraged to ask questions. Students are not as active as before and the right environment needs to be built to encourage greater student participation.

Prof. Robin Pollard, Pro Vice-Chancellor & President (Malaysia), Monash University, Sunway Campus, gave a brief introduction on how Australia reformed its higher education institutions. Until recently the Australian Government's approach was a gradual, blended privatization of public institutions and competition injected amongst institutions and academicians. Structural reform was readily accomplished by reducing public funding per student in real terms and with financial incentives for institutions that reform.

In Malaysia the Post-SPM system is developing rapidly, and a mix of public and private funding is needed to increase access and balance public/private benefits for students. He applauded regulatory

frameworks that are increasingly sophisticated (MQF, AUQA); Consumer protection (ESOS). Tertiary institutions will rationalize themselves as consumers become more judicious. A ready and able workforce is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a knowledge economy. Harm can be done through over-management. There is a risk of spoon-feeding the private sector. Are Malaysian graduates up to the expectations of employers? There are still gaps that need to be addressed. Monash actively motivates academic staff with incentives to enhance overall standards.

Session Two - Globalization and its Impact on the Future of Education

Moderator **Tan Sri Dato' (Dr) Ramon V. Navaratnam, Chairman of the Centre for Public Policy Studies** introduced the panelists for session two.

Mr. Thai Quang Trung stated that at the moment the ASEAN community is made up of 500 million people and in 2015 will be home to 550 million when fully established. He noted that ASEAN is still very weak hence there is an urgent need to foster an ASEAN community through education. He applauded the initiative of ASLI in conjunction with Vietnam National Council on Education which jointly organized the ASEAN Education Forum. He continued that through education a stronger sense of identity could be yielded, which embraces common norms and values. He underlined the urgent need to promote a sense of belonging and the need to promote common heritage. ASEAN stands before the challenge of globalization and new approaches have to be promoted to conquer these. There is a need to share knowledge across borders. He gave an example of how the European Union had harmonized its education and subsequently did quality control on its institutions and promoted EU education. A common space of education should be formed for ASEAN countries.

Mr. Andrew Crow, representing Mr. David Redden, General Manager, Asia Pacific Higher Education, Oracle Corporation, noted that he would give a more operational view focusing on impacts. He raised four key questions.

How will globalization affect teaching methods especially at secondary and tertiary institutional levels? Quoting from Thomas Friedman's book, "The World Is Flat", virtually any place on earth can be connected to markets anywhere else and can become globally competitive. The new age of creativity, connectivity, software, harnessing the power of communities through outsourcing, off shoring, supply chaining, in-sourcing, informing, and supercharging access to information.

Secondary education has the potential to serve as a pathway for student's progress and advancement. However it can also function as an impediment to economic growth and competitiveness if not properly used or made available, World Bank Human Development Unit-2006. "Education as a key component of these [global] ecosystems must supply not only the workforce but support continuous learning and the ongoing creation of new ideas and skills" Educause 2008. He noted some considerations to be taken into account in teaching and learning. The 21st century skills are; critical thinking, creativity, cross-cultural

understanding and teamwork and 21st century thinking are quoted by Howard Gardner- Five minds for the future; the disciplined mind, synthesizing mind, creating mind, respectful mind and ethical mind.

What are the global policy drivers fuelling the expansion of education internationally and how will this impact the Malaysian education sector specifically? He quoted Thomas Malone 'Inventing the organizations of the 21st Century and the Future of work. He noted, future organizations will be categorized by decentralized structures broken into loose hierarchies, democracies, external markets and internal markets that will be enabled by technology but centered on enduring human values. Future Organizations will shift from command and control to coordinate and cultivate management styles with the necessary development of underpinning soft skills as core.

Is there room for harmonization of educational systems within the region of ASEAN and Asia. If so, what are some possibilities and what impact does this have on local institutes? There are several challenges which need to be addressed; Supporting country scale reform – thousands of locations, hundreds of thousands of staff, millions of students, the transformation of policy into practice, improving quality whilst maintaining governance, regulation and compliance, fostering 21st Century Skills (critical thinking, creativity, cross-cultural understanding and teamwork), linking all of the above into curriculum and standards and retaining a clear and central focus on the learner.

Are Malaysian tertiary institutes equipped with the skills and technical expertise to cater for education in the 21st century? Towards a maturity model supporting collaboration, innovation, resilience and identity need to be addressed he noted. Under which culture and mindset, structure, policy and regulation frameworks, leadership capacity, dependencies and flexibility, processes, systems and architecture and metrics are fundamental.

Ms. Jennifer Lopez, Head of Policy & Technical Development, ACCA, gave an introduction on how ACCA has successfully leveraged on the opportunities of globalization and key success factors in driving global education. ACCA has 325 000 students, 122 000 members and presence in 170 countries. Three key important issues for ACCA are; benchmarking, delivery and assessment. In benchmarking ACCA works together with IFAC (International Federation of Accountants), which develops high quality international standards, promoting strong ethical values, encouraging quality practice, and supporting the development of all sectors of the profession around the world. The IAESB (International Accounting Education Standards Board) develops guidance, conducts research and facilitates the exchange of information to ensure that accountants are adequately trained to meet their responsibilities to the public and their employers and to contribute to the worldwide harmonization of the profession.

IFAC has released six International Education Standards (IESs) that establish the global benchmarks for education and development for professional accountants. Developed by IFAC's Education Committee, the standards are designed to achieve quality and consistency in global accounting education. Delivery, as an awarding body, ACCA relies on its global network of third party tuition providers to help our students prepare for their exams. ACCA's Approved Learning Partner – Student Tuition programme is a

quality-assurance programme which aims to recognize high-quality tuition providers who can prove that they meet ACCA's demanding performance targets. ACCA works with two Official Publishers who publish a range of materials to support students studying to take the ACCA and CAT Qualifications.

These Official Publishers are BPP Learning Media and Kaplan Publishing. The textbooks are prepared by the Publishers and then reviewed by ACCA's examiners to ensure syllabus coverage. Assessment comprises of exams, ethics and experience. There are 676000 examinations and 350 exam centres worldwide. ACCA has increased the focus on ethics and professionalism via its exams and practical experience requirements. As part of ethical development, all ACCA Qualification students are required to complete a Professional Ethics module. Part of being a professional is having the ability to demonstrate effectiveness in the workplace. The practical experience requirement allows ACCA students to demonstrate their effectiveness to employers.

Mr. Guy Perring, Project Manager, Transnational Education, British Council, introduced the evolving mentality of education UK which started off as International and has now become transnational. He gave a definition of transnational education 'All types of higher education study programmes, or sets of courses of study, or educational services (including distance education) in which the learners are located in a different country from the one where the awarding institution is based. Such programmes may [...] operate independently of any national education system.' OECD guidelines (2005). It is good to define terms. Transnational education reflects local needs.

Several themes play in the region which are; Quality and Capacity Development, Autonomy & Accountability, Meeting the Needs of the labour market, Competitiveness, Student Mobility, Staff Exchange, Evaluation and Collaboration with Industries and communities. The reasons for globalization of education are; Financial benefits, Global scanning and learning capability, Internationalization, Building a global brand, Build influence in important regions and "solve problems of global significance". He noted Michael Whorton's UCL presentation at PM12 Symposia Bangkok, key institutional themes which are; Strategic partnerships with world-class institutions, Support and infrastructure issues for international students, Greater internationalisation of the curriculum, Education for global citizenship and leadership, International research collaborations, Deeper relationships with alumni and Equality of access both domestically and internationally. He illustrated which emerging hosts and sources are arising.

Session Three - Malaysia as a Regional Educational Hub – Attracting Foreign Students to Tertiary Institutions

Moderator **Ms. Elizabeth Lee, Executive Director of Sunway University College**, introduced the panelists for session three.

Mr. Pradeep Kumar Nair, Chief Operating Officer, Taylor's College, School of Hospitality and Tourism and Taylor's College Petaling Jaya, raised the question 'how attractive are we to foreign students?'

Areas for consideration are; incentives, policies and procedures, distribution channels, attractiveness and product experience.

The total number of foreign worldwide will grow from 988 000 in 2003 to 1 507 000 in 2010 and 3 410 000 in 2025. In Australia, income from international students is \$5 billion and is the country's third largest export. The USA and UK combined account for 50% of the global market. Malaysia might be viewed as an emerging contender with 2% of the world market in 2006.

This is the process by which a student selects where to continue his tertiary education: First the country of study is chosen before consequently the programme and institution. The prospect student then goes through a process of active browsing through information of countries, contacts with friends who went abroad for their study or family living abroad. This is where the importance of national brand comes into play. He stressed that *'A country that does not project a clearly defined image of what it is and what it represents is doomed to anonymity'*. An image was given of which unique advantages are associated with the USA, Australia and Singapore.

Where does Malaysia come in? There are many features we can think of he noted, the most prominent in his mind is the gateway to Asia. To ensure attraction and retention of foreign students every touch point needs to be taken care off. A joint cooperation between the Malaysian education promotion council and Tourism Malaysia could create centres where foreign students can obtain information and become aware of Malaysia as a viable option. Word of mouth as noted before is of essential importance and therefore students' experience will define attractiveness in the future. Foreign students face different problems and need to be coordinated appropriately.

Dr. Khong Kim Hoong, Senior Vice President, HELP University College, asked why it is that Malaysia attracts foreign students. Multicultural diversity is viewed as beneficial to students, where foreign students can help with research, commercial importance and the number of foreign students is one of the criteria for several rankings of institutions. He then asked which students is Malaysia attracting. Malaysia used to be quite successful in the past and used to attract more students than Singapore. However Malaysia is faltering now and new players are entering the market. There are several blocks that still need to be taken care of, for example; the issuing of expedition of student visas and Malaysia does not allow internships easily for foreign students.

Prof. Dr Nirwan Idrus, Associate Vice-President, Office of Research and Development, and Dean of Faculty of Engineering and Technology, INTI International University College stressed that we first have to look at the imperatives of inputs, the process and outcomes. He noted that the idea of Malaysia as an education hub is about 21 years old and was conceived before the Internet age. Initially it was successful although there are problems. LAN/MQA ensures the quality of Higher Education and there is competition between local Higher Education Institutions and Foreign Higher Education Institutions. However this is not sufficient to sustain the objective of being a regional hub. Students should be seen both as raw material and customers. He introduced some facts of technology.

Technology allows learning on demand and continuous update of information; it empowers students, forces students to learn more pro-actively and tackles the problem of life expectancy of knowledge. He noted that a major overhaul is necessary. Two shifts have to be made, shift to technology en masse and student –centered learning. Finally he gave recommendations; the Malaysian government needs to review the concept of Malaysia as a Regional Hub for higher education institutions, taking into account all those mentioned and more to keep its policies on higher education at the forefront in order to attract the best possible students into the country. Malaysian Higher education institutions must also review their program contents and delivery for the same reason, taking into account the environment and technology.

Session Four - Academia-Industry Collaboration in Malaysia: Strategies and Opportunities for the Future

Moderator **Ms. Nina Adlan, from Education Quarterly**, introduced the panelists for session four.

Prof. Dr Saran Kaur Gill, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Industry and Community Relations, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, thanked ASLI for inviting her to speak on this very important topic. The role of a university she noted should always be to contribute to society at large. Therefore it needs to be relevant to industry and the community. In this regards Univesiti Kebangsaan Malaysia holds meetings with industry to obtain an understanding of their goals and how they can contribute to that. She noted that in today’s society and in the future soft skills are becoming more important, especially baseline soft skills such as communication, interaction, and continuous learning among others. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia has been promoting these skills by allowing more interaction among students and teachers. Industry provides student placements, which allows them to gain working experience before students are given a placement. UKM ensures that the placement is suitable for both the student and the organization involved and monitors the student during the placement period.

Mr. Jean-Francois Jadin, Deputy Chairman, EU-Malaysian Chamber of Commerce and Industry took an industry perspective, stating that it takes commitment of both parties to create results. The academia is often shy when it comes to setting their demands and lacks confidence in bringing forth these. When Higher Education Institutes do research they should collaborate with industry from the very start and not wait till the end when they want to publish results and need financing. There are exciting developments going on. The EU-Malaysian Chamber of Commerce and Industry is there to facilitate a platform for academia and industry to meet. First initiatives could be placements and at the end foreign direct investment could be harnessed. The criteria for a placement are at least a length of 6 months; institutions have to ensure a continuous flow of new prospects and screening and monitoring of students. When industry players are invited to advisory panel meetings, they should be invited when

real decisions are made.

Session Five - International Standards and Qualities for a World-Class Education System

Moderator **Datuk Dr Muhammed Rais Karim, Chairman of Malaysian Qualifications Agency**, introduced the panelists for session five.

Associate Professor Abdul Razak Ahmad noted that knowledge is becoming more central in each society. Ideas are judged by quality and research no matter what the result may be. Quality of research should be the main driver of professors, not quantity. Creativity should be emphasized throughout the education system and contribute to excellence. Institutions should recruit those who can contribute the most to the enrichment of its students. He noted that institutions should not be dictated. The guiding principle for institutions should be that they are all competing for the best students, the most creative and who can contribute the most to the nation. Key challenges are: grappling globalization, autonomy, lifelong learning, among others.

Dr. Goh Chee Leong, Vice President of HELP University College, stated that the way forward for Malaysia is to develop meaningful measures of academic quality based on the identified functions of a university. The function of a university has to link with industry. Meaningful measures are those that have the creation of knowledge as their foundation, for example publications in international research, journals citations and contribution to industry. Teaching is the bread and butter of institutions while research is to obtain funding from industry.

Another meaningful measure is to measure the quality of graduates by surveying employers, graduates and survey postgraduate programs. These should be done right after the graduate is recruited and after a period of two years. Universities need to be more resilient to publish or perish, with an assessment system that rewards quality. He underlined that to obtain these qualities a culture that fosters these has to be embraced which has clear performance indicators for departments and staff. On top of that it should enforce performance management systems. Lastly he outlined two paradoxes namely; standardization versus uniformity and industry versus independence.

Prof. Ramli Bahroom, General Manager, Corporate Planning Unit, Open University Malaysia, commenced with the definition of world-class, which is ranking among the foremost in the world; of an international standard of excellence; of the highest order. Some of these criteria include excellence in research, academic freedom, governance of institutions, adequate facilities for academic work and adequate funding to support research and teaching. The world-class university concept is based on 19th century German Research University. It reflects US and Western European norms and values.

However, national and regional realities may be different and it may cause harm to a university or even an entire academic system. He noted that due to its demand in terms of finance and other resources perhaps only one or two world-class universities for each country are possible and desirable. Research universities are at the pinnacle of the academic system in a country but the other universities are just as important; all have to play their roles effectively. Even the best universities are not the best in everything; thus, it is better to focus on building world-class departments, institutes and schools, especially of relevance to the national and regional socio-economic needs.

He underlined that the quest for world-class education and university is important yet a sense of realism and sensitivity to the public good must be taken into consideration. Furthermore, no one has figured out how to rank universities internationally, or even within countries in ways acceptable to the academic community or that can withstand serious criticism. Institutions and nations need to be careful in assessing their needs, resources, and long-term interests before launching into a rigorous campaigns to build world-class institutions. Ratings and rankings should incorporate national, regional and international requirements and goals.

Puan Zita Fahmi, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Malaysian Qualifications Agency, noted that different ranking leagues have different criteria to decide which universities deserve to be called world class. It forces universities to compete and therefore to function more efficiently and to create new education methods. On top of that universities create strategies and on national basis governments conduct surveys to learn which strategy is the most successful. On the flip side of the coin there are concerns over the social, economic and political costs, recolonisation and global policy copying. The problem is that each nation pursues world class Higher Education but no one really knows what world class truly is. Certainly she noted that there are traditional definitions of quality and corresponding standards like value for money, excellence, fit for purpose, meeting standards, and so on. She stated that quality is a continuously evolving target and standards are contextualized. The Malaysian Qualification Agency looks at the fitness for purpose in the context of academic standards, organizational standards and services standards.

The role of the Malaysian Qualification Agency is to support Accountability, Audit and Apex, ensuring quality improvements of higher education for public confidence. Quality assurance must be internationally linked. Promises of the framework are that graduates obtain qualities in outcome based setting, lifelong learning skills and that the framework supports initiatives of a knowledge based economy. However, success is dependent on several players such as students, institutions, academics, industry, and supporting authorities.

Session Six - National Schools as Catalyst for National Unity?

Moderator **Mr. Ho Khok Hua, Deputy Director-General (Planning), Department of National Unity and Integration, Prime Minister's Department** introduced the panelists for session six.

Dr. Chiam Heng Keng asked the pertinent question of whether the students of parents believe in national schools to bring about national unity. She noted that the reason they do not is because we lack the heart to believe in unity in diversity. The function of the school is to educate, but unfortunately schools only help to apply educational knowledge. The development of the whole child, and especially personality development is a very important aspect, as both head and heart knowledge have to work together.

The medium of instruction of vernacular schools is equally important for Malaysian students. National schools are equated with the Malay medium of instruction while the vernacular schools have either Chinese or Tamil. Non-Indians would start attending Tamil schools, as India is fast becoming an economic giant.

There should be respect for a person's culture and religion, while over-sensitivity can enhance fear, intolerance and discrimination. To educate school children is to enable them to grow in knowledge and wisdom. Students need to acquire a personality that respects and values the well being of others, and this would then be a part of the development of wisdom. School administrators and teachers need to be role models. Lastly textbooks need to promote wisdom and accuracy and this would lead to national unity.

Ms. Lok Yim Pheng, Secretary-General of the National Union of Teaching Professionals (NUTP) said that education in Malaysia is an ongoing effort towards developing the potential in 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 and devotion to God. The Education Blue Print is to ensure National schools become the choice of all parents, magnet schools for all races. Many programmes in schools fail half way through. Parents play a very important role to promote unity, as 17 hours of a child's day is spent at home.

Many non-Malay parents prefer to enroll children in vernacular schools, however this is not an issue in hindering national unity. Mission schools, Chinese Schools and Tamil Schools are not provided sufficient funds as compared to national schools and thus the children are not given equal rights in national schools. The government has that obligation to fully aid such schools. The teaching of Mandarin and Tamil in national schools is an issue with classes being too small to even start and also with the lack of qualified teachers.

Conservative thinking needs to be eroded in schools, students should be taught basic human rights, intercultural skills and knowledge on socialization. There should be integration through diversified education, improved networking and communication amongst the pupils through the introduction of many languages in national schools.

The curriculum needs coordination between subjects to avoid clashing of topics, and requires closer networking and dissemination of information pertaining to integration between rural and urban schools through MOE's Schoolnets.

She notes that for unity to take place through parents' role. Teachers and school heads should attend courses in intercultural management and multicultural education or inter-ethnic competence should be taught in schools. Teachers should be trained in unity, whilst Inter-Cultural Immersion Programmes should be planned in schools. National schools need to be magnet schools with the spirit of 'muhibbah' to resolve issues.

During the **Question and Answer session**, this comment was directed towards Ms. Lok Yim Pheng. Leadership (senior assistant, principal, teachers) plays a vital role to achieve unity in the national school. Children should always be respected, and teachers must be role models. To allow other races to be principals in Kuala Lumpur, change needs to take place from top-level leadership. Feedback helps to check how programmes are implemented.

Prof. Datuk Haji Mohamad Ali Hasan, Deputy President of Transparency International Malaysia and Chairman of the National PTA Council defines unity as a single, separate thing; a harmonious, unified arrangement of parts in an artistic work. Malaysia is a country of great ethnic, cultural and religious diversity despite racial violence, thus national schools can be effective agents of peace to unite students of different races. Malay in national schools is used as the language for unity that is widespread and accessible for all. The challenge of national schools is that it emphasizes too much on one religion. Tolerance is needed to allow other students of different religions to pray along with the Arab prayers. The strategies of national unity in schools include the Rancangan Integrası Murid untuk Perpaduan (RIMUP). It focuses on 6 activities, Academic excellence, Sports & games, Co-curriculum activities, Community service, Activities to promote patriotism, and Virtual activities through E-Integrasi.

He questioned the existence of policies that actually promote unity, especially when there are rampant examples of separation and segregation of students in the national schools. Matriculation and STPM are also a means of segregation based on races as Matriculation reserves 90% of its spots for the Bumiputera. The obstacles faced by national schools include the push and pull factors of language diversity, religious tolerance, perceptions and ultimate goals of parents and guardians, leadership and conscious efforts from schools. What is the availability of manpower and finance resources? Do diversified activities involve all sections? Negative obstacles faced by national schools include non-Malay parents afraid of Islamisation in national schools and that Chinese schools are more resourceful in the teaching of science and math.

Lastly the Parents Teachers Association (PTA)'s role in national unity in schools is important in that parents complement the schools' efforts. The PTA committee members & its activities must reflect the aspirations of national unity by having networking activities between neighbouring schools. The PTA complements or works together with school to organize various socio-religious activities in schools, i.e.

to raise funds to organize exchange programmes among students and teachers. The PTA too has a role to detect early signs of polarization activities in schools and take measures against it. Possible measures include cross-cultural activities and to ensure 'national unity representation' in all school activities, sports, co-curriculum etc. The PTAs can inculcate a culture of inter-ethnic dialogue, an inclusive and holistic means to be a catalyst for change.

Dr. Sahrifah Bee bte Aboo Bakar, Principal Assistant Director, Ministry of Education notes that national schools (NS) are a means to unify the different races. Students from NS can interact and experience learning in a common setting, using a common curriculum and using common facilities without any prejudice. The more common this composition of plurality co-exists within the school environment, the better an understanding these pupils have of each other's differences and similarities. This composition of plurality must co-exist within the school environment. National schools aim to promote, register and normalize (the above) among all citizens.

The Rukunegara Club started in primary schools up to secondary school levels addresses issues of equal rights, racism and discrimination. The Vision school concept allows different types of schools to mingle amongst themselves with the sharing of the playing field and the cafeteria. Steps taken to promote unity between students from Peninsula and East Malaysia include sports programmes, academic & co-curricular activities, co-operation and commitment from the private sectors to promote racial and social unity. There was an overwhelming response to teach Mandarin & Tamil in National Schools (through 220 pilot schools in 2007). Lastly she concluded that implementation is a long and winding road akin to a never-ending journey.

During the **Question and Answer session**, this comment was directed towards Dr. Sharifah. Every sector from the parents and teachers should be roped in to implement the policies and plans. The principal plays the most important role to interpret policies and programmes and this would be a conducive environment for a successful future for students.

Other issues that were raised:

- One of the main obstacles is how we can have national unity when it is not shown through the mixes of races in national schools, with 98% Malay representation.
- Diversity is not reflected in teachers too where there are only 3 non-Malays teachers in total in the school, breeding the wrong mentality in teachers.
- There is no national unity in the curriculum and initiatives to teach Chinese & Indian are not filtered to a majority of schools. There is a reinforcement of disunity when Arabic, moral studies, and Islamic studies focus on individual races alone.

- How can schools be national through its content and not just implementation? How about different religions? Is there a common space to discuss different religions and high profile cases taking place in Malaysia?
- Chinese & Tamil subjects introduced to enroll more non-Malays. A lot of Malays take up Chinese and Tamil instead of focusing on Chinese and Indians. Why was the People's Own Language (POL) programme a failure?
- More world class lecturers are needed in schools, there should be decentralization and more empowerment given to state agencies
- There is failure in implementation and a need for more open-minded principals.

Moderator **Mr. Ho Khok Hua** concluded that the end product is that all children are of Malaysian hearts. National unity and learning identities should very much be emphasized within the school structures.

Session Seven - The Herald of International Schools into Malaysia

Moderator **Mr. Peter Morris, etc International Schools Kedah** introduced the panelists for session seven.

Mr. Walter Jones, Principal, Kolej Tuanku Ja'afar, emphasized 3 key ingredients in his presentation. Firstly, freedom of action and independence is given to international schools as compared to national schools to control budgets and priorities, and to determine targets and allocation of resources. Secondly, a small size classroom is beautiful as class size is a major concern (classes do not go over 20-25 students). The size of the school matters too as Kolej Tuanku Ja'afar (KTJ) is filled up at 550 students. Thirdly, there's been a significant development of international schools, where students have many strengths and have high academic excellence and are determined to take responsibility for their own learning. KTJ encourages its students to be more active learners and allow the students to think of answers and space to think of questions.

Ms. Puan Ee Hong, Director of Private Education Division, Ministry of Education, gave a very thorough understanding of international schools in Malaysia. She said that there are 5 types of self-funded private schools, which include religious schools, expatriate schools (mostly run by embassies), Chinese independent schools, private national curriculum schools and international schools. The definition of international schools is that it does not require students to learn the national language.

In June 2007 local students were allowed to enroll in international schools. The typically used curricula in international schools are based on the school's country of origin. There are a total of 40 international schools in Malaysia: 32 from Britain, 4 from America, 2 from Australia and 1 each from Canada and

India. There are a total of 14,268 students from private schools, Malaysian students in international schools total 1277 students in 2007.

Investors invest in international schools due to stable policies, clear rules & regulations, investment friendly policies in Malaysia, liberalization, emerging markets around South East Asia, government support & local demand. Foreign students would enroll because of Malaysia's political stability, quality education & affordability, international curriculum, multicultural aspects, ICT infrastructure, friendly environment and good international schools.

Some criteria for Malaysian students' entry into international schools are that one of the parents must be a foreigner, the student must have had at least 3 years of education abroad, parents who have PR status in other countries, parents who have concrete proof that they will reside abroad, parents that are categorized as Malaysian professionals working abroad, children's condition requiring special care, having other children/siblings who are in international schools, parents are citizens but children are non-citizens, and parents who have permanent properties abroad.

Mr. Graham Wilson, Head of Secondary, Garden International School notes that an international school can be seen as a symbiotic relationship for Malaysians and foreign students. The growth of quality international schools would allow the system's development to allow higher education structure in Malaysia to improve and allow more students to get degrees in Malaysia instead of overseas. We need to accept that choice is vital in a developing society and parents in a caring society will value education, choice and seek quality.

Would international schools then be seen as a threat to Malaysian cultures? Not when this country (Malaysia) aspires to respect diversity, encompass & embrace change and values tolerance. How is education changing? Education focuses on the learning and not the teaching, to start to look at education from the needs of the target audience as he quoted "the future is not what adults think, it is what children do".

Yesterday's children were the book generation, drilled by a *rotan* and held in place, passive learners, specialists task-wise, physically active and largely untouched by technology. Today's children are a screen generation; they learn through involvement, are active learners, multi-taskers at various activities, physically inactive and very much confronted by technology. Tomorrow's learners (the technology generation) will choose what and how they want to learn, to be responsible for own outcomes, evolving into virtual socialites.

We try to develop learners who are resilient, resourceful, responsible, capable of reasoning and reflective. The biggest challenge they would face would be in managing and implementing change. He closed with a quote by Charles Darwin, 'It is not the strongest of the species that will survive, nor the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to change'.

Mr. Terry Boucher, Principal of Sunway International School noted that the international school he helms has a firm commitment to globalization in Malaysia. Education is seen as a key to that development, as the presence of international schools is consistent with the goal to develop Malaysia into a knowledge-based economy.

The positive implications of international schools are that it offers an additional choice to parents, making Malaysia attractive to international companies and their employees, and provides a benchmark by which the public system can be compared/ measured against other systems. One negative implication of international schools is that it acts as a form of 'Brain drain' from national schools, where the viability and overall quality of the national school system may be affected, social differences widened, increasing dichotomy between rural and urban areas.

He closed with the following questions. What is the role of education in nurturing and evolving nationalism and national identity? If globalization is 'a given', how can we make sure its impact in every aspect, is a positive impact?

Prof. Gopinathan Raman Kutty, Academic Director, Fairview International School, Kuala Lumpur, wants students in international schools to be builders of a community of global citizenship. To enrich nationalistic pride, students are encouraged to be aware of local contexts as part of a global curriculum (to consciously create opportunities for many communities to share their stories), for students to learn respect for other cultures and in so doing build appreciation for one's heritage, to create knowledge macro-communities (to encourage students to take risks, challenge themselves, to struggle with difficulty), to use sports and other forms of exercise & learning to work with others or how to compete against others (through teamwork and teambuilding).

Internationalism: the Primary Year Programme (PYP) states that a school should be proud to send out into the world a person we could call an internationalist. A PYP school regardless of location size or constitution strives towards developing an international person. A PYP student profile is to create internationally minded students who believe that students should be inquirers, thinkers, communicators, risk-takers, knowledgeable, principled, caring, open-minded, well balanced and reflective.

Teachers engage in reflection of their own practice, both individually and in collaboration with colleagues, with a view of sharing ideas and strengths. There should also be whole school planning, collaborative planning structured around open ended questions. All teachers are to be committed to internationalism and learning. Parents should know that the school is working to define a balanced programme of concepts, knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions for children and incorporates a range of assessments, recording and reporting strategies.

International school communities and the world of global connections must link up deliberately on levels that are philosophical, ideological and practical. The love of various kinds of learning could be our greatest gift to our children.

Mr. B. K. Gan, President of Taylor's Education Group, School Division, questioned why international schools attract parents. 40% of parents cited push factors and 60% cited pull factors. A lack of curriculum in national schools and too much focus on academics form the push factors, while quality teachers in international schools form pull factors. The role and functions of different international schools in Malaysia are its ability and availability of choices. Education equates sharing of information. Each stream has to be clear in its roles and visions to meet the needs of students, finally bringing international standards to Malaysia.

In the **Question and Answer** session, these issues were raised.

- How are special needs students given entrance into international school?
- What are the artificial values supplied to children of international schools? As the international schools only cater to the middle and upper class in international schools, what should the concerns be for such children? In answering this question, there was a note to provide scholarships for students of all age ranges, as this would help with socio-economic differences.

Session Eight - Vocational and technical training: providing feasible alternatives in the education sector

Moderator **Mr. Michael Chiam Tow Hui, President of Commercial Employers Association of Peninsular Malaysia** introduced the panelists for session eight.

Dato' Hj. Yusoff bin Harun, Deputy Director General of Education, Technical Education Department, Ministry of Education, said that the mission of the Ministry of Technical Education is to provide quality and relevant technical and vocational education through comprehensive curriculum implementation and efficient management. The issues and challenges include implementing competency-based education in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), integrating academic core subjects and vocational elections to upgrade to TVET, tailoring courses to meet the needs of industries, to have National Occupational Skills Standard (NOSS) accredited courses and Vocational Skills Stream Articulation to higher TVET institutions.

The direction of technical and vocational education is to improve the quality and quantity of science and technology learners in line with the National Education Philosophy to produce flexible and trainable workforce so as to meet the needs of the industry and national trade. The technical Stream reform includes reviewing the technical subject curriculum through school based assessment (SBA)

employability skills and reducing technical schools whilst focusing more on vocational and skills training. While the vocational stream reforms include implementation of competency-based education, integration of hands-on and heads-on, articulation to institution of higher learning and entrepreneurial elements across VSSs courses.

Lastly the Ministry of Technical Education strives to attain the quality and quantity of science and technology so as to produce flexible and trainable workforce to meet the needs of the industrial sector and national trade.

Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria, Executive Director of Yayasan Strategik Sosial summarized his focus into 10 points. First it is important as educators to realize that people are at different levels of learning and able to absorb differently, and as such educators need to adapt to different students and different environments. Second, there is a need to differentiate and realize that there are the theory and practice components. If schools can have basic character, values, and writing, reading and thinking approach, that is a good start. The skills/ technical/ vocational training has brought a new revolution to acquire knowledge in a step-by-step process.

Third, there should be different training schemes for a wide range of students. Fourth, Community Colleges need to have greater industry input to the quality of their training; it should be revived through the changing of times. Fifth, there are qualified educators but due to a lack of industrial experience and links to the industry and what are the types of educators and pedagogy content? Sixth, it is hard to develop industrial exposure, as private industries are very different.

Seventh, Giat MARA who uses trainers from the army do bring about quality entrepreneurship and industrial training and this should be the way in other training centres. On the eight point, the industrial link is an important factor, the private sector can be brought in to prepare people in these training schools to be competitive and relevant. Ninth, character, value, discipline are emphasized as being equally important as the training. Lastly, training should start at step 1 and then step 2, level by level in a systematic means. And that the academic route is not superior, as too the vocational route is not inferior, both have its advantages

In the **Question and Answer** session, these issues were raised.

Government declared to have achieved millennium goal to provide education for all levels – yet an increasing number of children are excluded from the education system. Are there any studies to identify the groups of students who are excluded? In answering this question, any form of certification is okay for children to go to school. Resources like education and official certificates are needed to address the pockets of communities.

What is Giat Mara's reason for doing well? Is it cause of its usage of English? In answering this question, Giat Mara started with a neighbourhood workshop, with 15 students a class and experienced trainers

and that led to a good level of learning. Giat Mara can be improved with more hands on training, apprentice models, and an investment in training centres.

Session Nine - Schools of Excellence: How Cluster Schools can transform Malaysian Education

Moderator **Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria, Executive Director of Yayasan Strategik Sosial** introduced the panelists for session nine.

Tan Sri Chan Choong Tak, Member of the Cluster Schools Advisory, Ministry of Education, commented that cluster schools in Malaysia are schools of excellence with international standards in terms of facilities, school management and student performances. These are schools with national standards with the potential to be developed to international level, schools with need of special assistance such as the rural schools and schools for *Orang Asli* and schools in isolated areas.

Only 60 of the originally planned 300 cluster schools have been selected, of which 30 have already been announced. They have been selected based on various criteria such as academic performance, character building, leadership training, school environment, school management, efficient utilization of human resources, expertise, performance and dedication of teachers and the head of the school.

The aim of the schools being set up is for schools of excellence to be role models. They are to lead, cooperate and to interact positively with the other schools, with the aim of helping them to elevate their standards. Recommended changes include allowing well-managed schools to have autonomy. The MOE announced that cluster schools have autonomy in five areas, of human resources, school funds, student intake, teaching, learning, examinations and evaluations.

The challenges included the need to change the mindset of many officers and teachers and the need to recruit new teachers or to retrain many of them. New buildings have to be constructed for single sessions in schools. Negative attitudes of some parents, politicians and members of the public should be changed in relation to upgrading the importance of the English language, cooperating with the schools in the maintenance of discipline and the very important training of teachers before implementing the changes. The lack of qualified staff to implement the changes for example the provision of ITC facilities without the required human resources is also a challenge. Possible solutions include setting up a department that will ensure a smooth implementation of the cluster schools, including a quality-monitoring sector to guide, motivate and monitor the progress of the cluster schools.

Dato' Siva Subramaniam, Human Rights Commissioner of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) said that education in Malaysia should move towards the future. He notes that greater autonomy is vital for schools. The weaknesses of the education system are bureaucracy and paperwork (unnecessary administration work for teachers and unnecessary policies for the system), and an exam oriented system. Strategies to

improve should include the fast flow of decisions, a 'speed-boat' attitude and that the children's interest should come first. The pitfalls and challenges include an education for all, to recognize fundamental rights (quantity education is not quality education), to treat all schools the same, to monitor implementation and learn from the past. Levels of efficiency are measured by a paperless methodology, guided by professionals, having special supervisors trained to monitor cluster schools. Implementation is key.

In the **Question and Answer** session, these issues were raised.

Schools with newer and better buildings are getting more students as compared to the old buildings of premier schools in Taiping, Malacca, Ipoh, Penang, Seremban, KL and Selangor. Cluster schools should give autonomy to the board of governors to be able to push up standards of many of the good schools.

Session Ten - New challenges Facing Malaysian Educators

Moderator **Prof. Dr. Hamzah bin Ahmad, Director of Centre for Global Studies, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris**, introduced the panelists for session ten.

Mr. Hanif Othman Merican, Chief Executive Officer of Sri Kuala Lumpur Group of Schools stated boldly that the education philosophy of the MOE is suffused with the idea of unity, yet the actual process to achieve this aim is less encouraging. Concerns of the students in Malaysia include the rise in unemployment rates and the poor standards of the education system in Malaysia. In pursuit of equality, we have embraced mediocrity, turned our backs on considerable intellectual achievements, in pursuit of an affirmative action that will only bring diminishing returns along the highways of social reform. The truth is, we have allowed the education policies of successive governments since 1969 to divide our country racially, religiously, linguistically and economically in the name of nationalism and communalism – and ultimately, more for the protection of the party political elites than for their constituents.

Vernacular schools are the logical result of party political communalism supported by the racially denominated parties all striving to prove their ethnic credentials by being champions of their respective language communities.

The irony is that the effect of the Malay policy has been to achieve the exact opposite of its intended consequences to build a Malay-based identity for Malaysia. Today's Malays with little or no facility in English are still limited in their employability as they were in 1905. There also exists religious coercion in schools, inadvertently allowing the overbearing influence of religious curriculum to take place.

In his proposals for action, Mr. Hanif was explicit in saying the following:

- a) Public school education for Malaysians should be secular and free from religious interference. Outside the statutory Agama class education should be free of religious overtones.
- b) English should be made the prime medium of instruction for all schools at all levels, Malay must then be a compulsory subject and the language of formal occasion. Such efforts should be focused on children between the age of 2 and 7, as they are most receptive to language learning. The question of preserving the language and by extension the customs of the Chinese or Indian communities is a valid one.
- c) Teachers should be recognized through training and pre-qualifications that are required from them to get into teaching into the first place.

He emphasized that our education system has been wearing the same clothes for more than 40 years. They have become old clothes and only now are people listening to the voices in the crowd telling us the naked truth.

Mr Andrew Crow, Education Industry Director, ASEAN, Oracle Corporation, said that knowledge building and sharing is to create the support for creating representations of pedagogical knowledge, to encourage teachers to review, critique and learn from peer's represented knowledge, to enable teachers to integrate the knowledge of others into their knowledge and to provide avenues for sharing experiences and evidences to improve practice. Oracle invests in customers (its largest single user group), support systems, research and development, current solutions (applications unlimited), partners, acquisitions and community.

Schools are talking to Oracle firstly about continued competition as funding is tighter and more restrictive and innovation and capability attracts the best, secondly through more collaboration through multi-disciplinary programs/ globalization/ internationalization and community, private and public partnerships, thirdly through cost containment through a focus on best practices, heavy burden maintenance and lifecycle approach to management (student, assets, HR and grants), fourthly through information management through identity management, security of personal and enterprise data, performance accountability and assessment and enterprise workflow strategies and lastly through sustainability of succession planning and sustaining revenue and growth.

If it were possible to define generally the mission of education, it could be said that its fundamental purpose is to ensure that all students benefit from learning. Learning becomes a constant and time is the variable. Participative learning needs to be rethought.

In the **Question and Answer** session, these issues were raised. New challenges are actually an old challenge; vernacular schools are irrelevant, national schools are deserted. The failure of the national schools stems from "missing teachers", when in reality it is a duty for teachers to attend to their students. The National Union of Teaching Profession recommended that the Government should cut bureaucracy and unnecessary paperwork.

It was recommended by delegates that challenges facing educators, planners and policymakers should be discussed thoroughly. Finally, participants were thoroughly disappointed with the lack of Government representatives at the Summit, since the actual implementers should be absorbing recommendations made during the conference firsthand. The organizers (Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute) noted that this would be taken into consideration. The Summit's Proceedings would also be forwarded to the relevant ministries.