

Teacher is Matter for Education Quality: A Transformation of Policy for Enhancing the Teaching Profession in Malaysia

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Abstract

It has been widely acknowledged that teachers are among the pivotal agents of improving the educational quality, especially in the context of student learning outcome. Accordingly, in raising the education standard and quality, effort towards enhancing teacher professionalism for ensuring quality of the teacher and teaching quality become the important issue in the education policy production. In Malaysia, a lot of efforts have been undertaken to address the question of teaching profession. Recent development of the policy for transforming Malaysian education can be seen in the government action launched an education strategic blueprint the so called Education Development Master Plan (2006-2010) and National Education Blueprint (2013-2025) which aimed at raising standards and quality of Malaysian education. Among the core strategy for enhancing Malaysia education quality is making teaching as a prestige profession to ensure that the school will have a qualified and quality teacher for improving the quality of education in the school system. Related, this paper discusses the continuing effort for enhancing teaching profession in Malaysia based on these two long term education strategic plan.

Introduction

Demand of human capital, the growing needs and high expectations of the society towards education and the rapid changes in social, economic and technology in globalization era has make teaching become more a challenging profession. Teachers are not only expected and regarded as imparters of knowledge but also to shoulder the responsibility of moulding and shaping a better citizenry and human capital (Jamil, Razak, Raju & Mohamed, 2011). This has drawn the policy intention in education development to make the teaching profession and teacher professionalism as among the importance area for raising the education quality in many countries.

The status of teachers within society and education system, their commitment to the professional practice, as well as their working environment and professional well-being can be easily identified as the main motives behind the success or failure of the respective educational reform processes. It is commonly believed that the effort to enhance teaching profession would produce a high qualified and quality teacher which will give a positive

impact on the education development. The favourable impact of teacher professionalism on student achievement has been confirmed by most of the related studies (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss & Shapley, 2007). Harweel (2003) states that competence and quality teacher is important to nurture student's capabilities. It was proven in previous studies on the teacher's effect towards student achievement and there is a strong relationship between the professionalism and quality of teachers and the performance of their students (Desimone, 2009; Yoon et al, 2007; Wei, Andree & Darling-Hammond, 2009). Research also recognises teachers and their classroom practices are central to enhancing student learning and thus ensuring quality schooling and quality learning outcomes (Hayes, Mills, Christie and Lingard, 2006; Hattie, 2009). In this sense, teacher quality is perhaps the most important in-school factor contributing and influencing student achievement (Hanushek, Kain & Rivkin, 2004; Hattie, 2009), and high-quality and professional teachers can increase student learning outcome beyond the amount contributed by a low-quality teacher (Hanushek, 1992). Furthermore, the important role of teacher on the student achievement is also reinforced by international comparative examinations of education systems (such as PISA).

There are some common elements in the policies of the most successful education systems of the world which are focus on the development of teacher professionalism as an important area of education quality. These include an extensive opportunities for formal and informal professional development, professional learning and collaboration, ongoing professional development activities, and involvement of teachers in decisions regarding curriculum and instructional practice (Wei et al., 2009).

The involvement of teaching profession in educational policy reform initiatives has become among an importance component for education development, especially in the context of Asian countries which is currently experiencing a rapid socio-economic and cultural transformation (Petras, Jamil & Mohamed, 2012; Thair & Treagust, 2003). In the policy context, the growing attention of Malaysian education development to enhance teaching profession can be understood as ongoing efforts to achieve the ultimate objective of raising the education quality and standard. In relation to this, policies aiming at the professional development of Malaysian teachers embrace a vast range of action fields and discourses, from the central-government machinery, down to the places where the practice is settled and been influenced by the changing educational needs and teacher professionalism, as well as the social, political, and economic circumstances of education.

Teacher Professional Development in Malaysian Context – A Strategy of Improving the Quality of Teacher

In order to ensure the quality of the education in Malaysia will achieve the international standards and provide all Malaysian children with the high quality education system, the government continuously put an effort to increase access, equity and quality of education, and further improve the efficiency and effectiveness of education management

and practices. This ongoing efforts of education development has saw the Malaysia launched its Education Development Master Plan 2006-2010 (PPIP 2006-2010) in tandem with the Ninth Malaysia Plan (Malaysia, 2006) and the National Mission (as shown in Figure 1) to achieve the main objective of quality education for all. The PPIP 2006-2010 consist of six strategic thrust which the agenda of enhancing teaching profession is among the core strategy to achieve the objective of raising the quality of education. It was clearly stated in PPIP 2006-2010, the role of teacher is increasingly important in order to achieve the national educational development objective which is quality education for all (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2006). Central to this policy intention, the strategy is to enhance teacher’s professionalism; a term which encompasses not only the teachers knowledge, skills and experience, but also their more intangible quality in terms of spiritual, social, intellectual and financial capitals. This involves the government continuous effort in making teacher profession as among the prestigious and respectful profession in Malaysia.

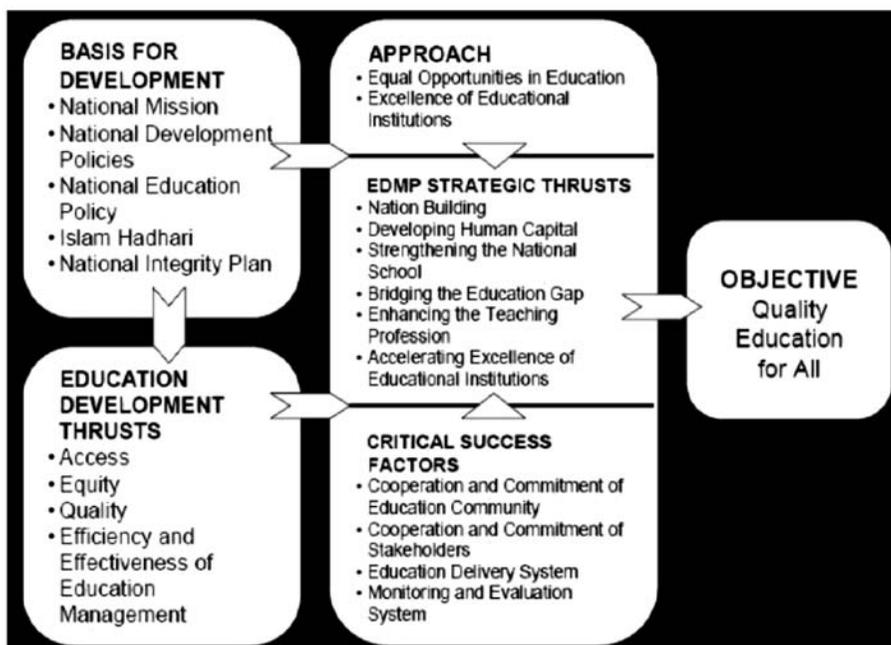


Figure 1: The conceptual framework of Malaysia Education Development Master Plan (2006-2010).

Source: Ministry of Education Malaysia (2006)

Based on the PPIP 2006-2010, the policy strategies of improving teacher professionalism include the program to improve the levels of teacher quality and their commitment to the teaching profession, as well as their working environment and professional status (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2006). It can be identified as the main agendas behind the education reform processes to ensure the improvement of the

education quality and student achievement. This has led to the transformation on the institutional and substantive aspect of teacher education system in Malaysia. The effort to develop an effective teacher education system becomes a prime important policy implementation for improving teaching profession. The first move made by Ministry of Education (MOE) was the transforming of the teacher education system. This involved the upgrading Teacher Training Colleges to Institute of Teacher Education (ITE), and then the revamping of the teacher education curriculum for the preparation of better quality pre-service teachers. The revamping of teacher education curriculum has transformed the duration of teacher training from 4 years to five and a half years degree program which inclusive of a one and a half year foundation programme and four year of degree programme in ITE. This step of revamping the curriculum for teacher education guided by PPIP 2006-2010 can be regarded as a stepping stone towards upgrading the prestige of the teaching profession.

In addition to the teacher education curriculum reformation, the introduction of Malaysia Teacher Standard (SGM) in 2009 provides a benchmark standard to be achieved by all teachers, was further enhance the ongoing effort to improve teacher professionalism. Most recently the Teacher Education Division (BPG) which was responsible for Institute of Teacher Education developed and introduced the New Teachers Development Programme according to the SGM as a new initiative to enhance quality among new teachers. All these efforts are being carried out to ensure schools are supplied and staffed with quality teachers in order to provide students with the best learning opportunities.

As teacher professional development (TPD) is an issue that is present from the very beginning of the preparation for teacher profession (Jovanova-Mitkovska, 2010), most of education institutions in Malaysia have a commitment to support the professional development of their teachers' knowledge and practice, so as they grow in quality to the world standard of teaching. At the central of TPD matter, the TPD policy acts as the mould in the process of producing the quality teachers. Derived by the strategic thrust of enhancing teaching profession, the policy of TPD is implemented in Malaysia through an ongoing process of teacher professional development, beginning at the very start of teacher careers, whether through graduate studies, non-credit courses, workshops, or other informal learning experiences. Malaysian teachers are encouraged and motivated to pursue courses in critical and relevant areas by offering remuneration packages and potential promotions. This involve the continuously effort by the government in making effort to have 100 percent of secondary and 80 percent of primary teachers as degree holders (UNESCO 2008). Teachers are also encouraged to have Master's degree and even PHD with various scholarship scheme offered by Ministry of Education. In Malaysia nowadays, most of secondary school teachers are Master's or first-degree graduates, while primary school teachers are predominantly first-degree or diploma graduates.

In overcome the disparities in qualification, salary and prestige between primary and secondary school, teachers are divided by various groups, titles and incentives, such as primary and assistant teachers, 'excellent teachers', teachers of crucial subjects, teachers

who teach in remote locations, and several age groups based on the years in service (Petras et al., 2012). This policy initiatives are being pursued to provide high qualified teachers to deliver quality education to the student. It hopes to have direct impact to develop a strong status of a teacher and give impact on their professional identity in relation to their prestige (Rao & Jani, 2011).

In increasing the teaching profession status and improving the career path of the teachers, the teacher educators and teachers whose performance is excellent are rewarded through a graded system of remuneration, inclusive of bonuses. There is also a master teacher scheme (promotional scheme; ET scheme) which was introduced in 1993 and gives both professional and service recognition to teachers. Heads of departments identify excellent teachers for observation and assessment by Federal inspectorate of schools, who in turn attest the teaching performance of the teachers. The objectives for ET (excellent teacher) promotion scheme are as follows (Hamzah, M. S. G., Hapidah, M. & Ghorbhani, M. R., 2008):

- i) acknowledge teachers who are good in their field or subjects
- ii) to improve the quality of teaching,
- iii) be a role model to other teachers,
- iv) to enhance school excellence by utilising the experience and expertise of the ET,
- v) expand the horizon of promotion in educational services,
- vi) promote teachers without their leaving teaching behind or changing to administrative duties

An allowance is given to teachers teaching critical subjects like English, Science, Mathematics and Technical subjects. Costs were approximately RM 638 million, a significant amount of the RM 30 billion set aside for education in 2008 (Government of Malaysia, 2008). In 2007 a special hardship allowance was given for teachers teaching in remote areas, ranging from RM 500-RM 1500 in accordance to the remoteness. A Part of the RM 30 million budgets was used in the implementation of the PIPP 2006-2010 which includes a Cluster of excellent school programmers', enhancing and developing the quality of the teaching profession, and reducing the gap between rural and urban schools. An additional RM450 was allocated by the MOE in 2008 to fund the educational programmers' under the First Economic Stimulus Package. The educational budget has further increased in the 2009 budget to RM 47.7 million and an additional RM 1.95 for education and training under the Second Stimulus Package (see Government of Malaysia, 2008, Government of Malaysia, 2009).

The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 - A Continuous Development of Raising the Quality and Professionalism of Teachers

The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 is a recent master plan for Malaysian education development set to transforming the Malaysia's education system to raising the educational standard, quality and to pave the way towards a better educated-Malaysia

(Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013a). This education development plan is in tandem with the aim of Malaysian Economic development strategy in relation to education to revamping the education system to significantly raise student outcomes (Malaysia, 2010, p.196). It is a continuum of its predecessor, Education Development Master Plan (PIIP 2006-2010). Its aimed to meet the “rising international education standards, the country’s aspiration of better preparing Malaysia’s children for the needs of the 21st century, and increased public and parental expectations of education policy” (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013a, p.E1). There are 11 strategies and operational shifts in the blueprint that intend to transform the current education system from its core,

1. Provide equal access to quality education of an international standard
2. Ensure every child is proficient in Bahasa Malaysia and English Language
3. Develop values-driven Malaysians
4. Transform teaching into the profession of choice
5. Ensure high-performing school leaders in every school
6. Empower State Education Department (JPN), District Education Office (PPD) and schools to customize solutions based on need
7. Leverage ICT to scale up quality learning across Malaysia
8. Transform ministry delivery capabilities and capacity
9. Partner with parents, community and private sector at scale
10. Maximize student outcomes for every ringgit
11. Increase transparency for direct accountability

The Malaysian government has signalled a serious commitment towards transforming the education development in Malaysia in line with this long term strategic plan to enhance Malaysian education international standard. In 2014 national budget, the Malaysian government has allocated RM54.6 billion or 21 percent of the total allocation in 2014 to ensure that the implementation of the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 will achieve the objective to raise the standard and quality of Malaysian education. This is including the continuous efforts to improve the teaching profession in order to attract a highly professional human capital into the teaching sector.

While the government has make an ongoing effort to attract the best candidate into the teaching profession, teaching is still not a preferred career option among the school leavers who are obtained an excellence result in their academic performance at the high school level. In the 10th Malaysian Plan (2011-2015) document, it been reported that only 7 percent of the teacher training applicants who had the excellent result in their Malaysian Certificate of Education examination (Malaysia, 2010). This has been seen by the government as an obstacle to achieve the aimed of rising the Malaysian education quality by having a highly capable human capital into teaching profession. Hence, among the most important strategy of the Malaysian education transformation agenda to rising the standard and quality of education and schooling process is to ensure that the teaching

profession will be the profession of choice to gain the excellent and high qualified teacher into this profession. This was clearly stated as the 4th strategy in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 which is aimed to transform teaching into the profession of choice (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013a). This strategy is among the core agenda of Malaysian education policy which aimed to rising the standard and quality of Malaysia education to meet at the international or global standard.

The 4th shift in Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2014 (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2013a) has put the most focuses on the improvement of the quality and professionalism of teachers. Under this shift, several educational policies in relation to teacher professional development have been introduced to address the issues of teacher's quality. In the context of ensuring to get the best candidate into teaching profession, the Ministry has made a change to the process of recruitment of the new teacher. Based on this new policy or teacher recruitment, the Ministry will rigorously enforce entry standards to ensure that 100% of every teacher training intake meet the minimum academic requirement. The rigorous selection criteria and stringent requirement is to ensure that only the best candidate will be recruited for entry the teaching profession. In 2012, from 62,000 candidates who applied for the Postgraduate Course Teacher Training, only 7,800 were selected (Mohd, Nawi & Zaidi, 2013).

The ministry also introduced a more thorough screening process for the induction of the initial teacher to be appointed as a teacher in a public school. This policy has removed the previous practice of the automatic induction of initial teachers into the teaching profession in the government school and initial teachers who do not 'qualify' would be weeded out. It was clearly stated in the policy text that only the trainee teachers that achieved the best performance and qualified will be offered the position. The abolishment if guaranteed placement is to set minimum quality requirements for new teachers (Malaysia, 2010). This has led the ministry introduced a new teacher recruitment policy which is aimed at recruiting 30 per cent of the top scorers of the education faculties and teacher education institutions to be a teachers in public school (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013a). This means that only the brightest graduates will be selected to the teaching profession to ensure teachers is a high level profession which will be the profession of choice of excellent student. This approach is considered to be an attempt to model and localize the Finnish teacher education system. Teaching in Finland is regarded as a prestigious and highly-respectable occupation (Sahlberg, 2011; Hancock, 2011). Similar approach in recruiting teacher can be found in Australia, Singapore, Korea and Japan. The high entry requirement is one of the factors that attract the talented and the enthused candidate into the teaching profession.

The same standards are put in place in the teacher training programmes in Public and Private Higher Education Institutions (Malaysia Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013a, p. E14). By denoting that 'we want the best brains in the country' and making the entry bar highly competitive, it is clear indicate that the state policy strives to uplift teaching profession to be an high prestige profession similar to doctors, engineers and

other high profile profession. As part of the initiative to improve the quality of teachers, the supply the school teacher will eventually be opened not only to the public universities and teacher education institutions, but to private institutions as well (Malaysia, 2010 -10th Malaysia plan, chapter 5). In fact private universities and colleges are now offering teacher education programmes both for primary and secondary school teachers. One of the major implications of this open market approach in teacher recruitment policy is the concept of competition and competitive advantages – the teacher education institutions would be forced to compete in the open market to sell their products and enhance the quality of their teacher education program.

In ensuring the policy of attracting the best candidate into the teaching profession, the government continues its effort to improve the teaching profession by improving the teacher service scheme in terms of remuneration and promotional opportunities (see Figure 2 and 3 on the status of Malaysian teacher salary).

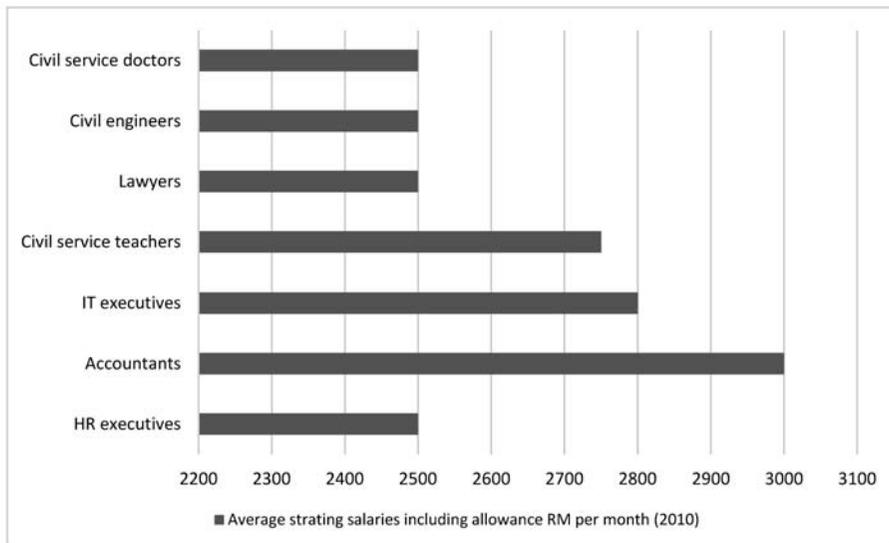


Figure 2: Average starting salaries of teachers in comparison to other professions in the public and private sector within Malaysia

Source: Ministry of Education Malaysia (2013a, p.143)

Note: Private sector includes only base salary as allowance usually provided reimburse out-of-pocket expenses and do not form a significant portion of compensation

Note: Weighted average starting salaries of graduate teachers based on teacher trainee data, assuming average approximately RM2000 (range RM1786 to RM2510) basic salary and RM750 in allowance

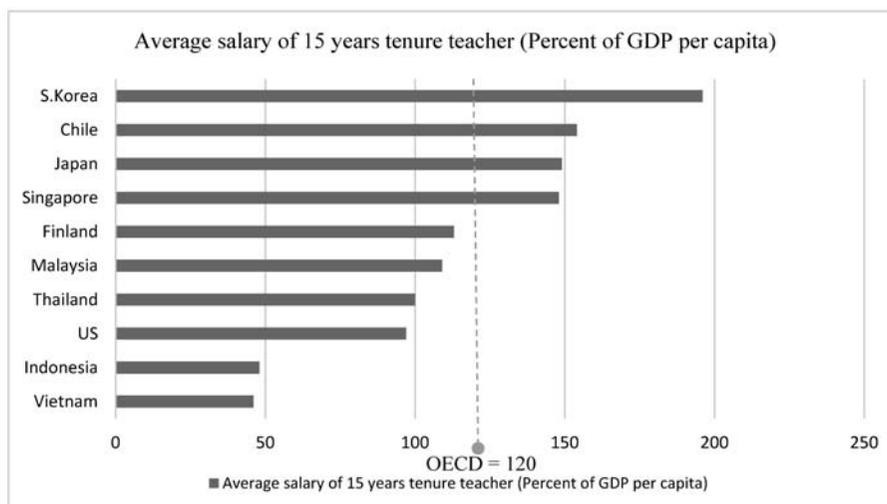


Figure 3: Mid-tenure salary levels of teacher in Malaysia and peer systems

Source: Ministry of Education Malaysia (2013a, p.143)

Note: Singapore based on 2007 data, Malaysia based on 2011 data with monthly salary of RM3434 as an average for teacher with tenure of 15 years and Grade DG44 with allowance RM400 for housing, RM400 for remuneration allowance and RM100-300 from cost of living based on location.

Career development is another new initiative in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025, which is not specifically mentioned in the previous policies, as it allows development opportunities for both normal and excellent teachers (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013b). The current policy will increase the number of career development in the realms of leadership and expert teachers in the various subject by 2016. Career development does not only involve the capability to attain positions in the teaching profession but also a higher pay rise. In the 10th Malaysian Plan (Malaysia, 2010), it has learned that teaching profession offers among the highest starting salary in the civil service. This indicates that financial reward is among the important aspect considered by the government to encourage more outstanding candidates to choose the teaching profession.

The ministry has also provide various scholarship and programs to increase the numbers of qualified teacher who obtain a teaching certificate or to have a Bachelor’s degree in enhancing the prestige of teaching profession. Based on the Malaysian strategic plan for improving teaching profession qualification, the ministry embarked in a programme to upgrade the teacher’s qualification, intending to develop its teachers professionally. Teachers were encouraged to upgrade their teaching qualifications through distant education and in-service training in local or foreign universities. There have been numerous in-service teacher education programmes to upgrade teacher’s academic

qualification in Malaysian public universities and Institute of Teacher Education including the special program the so-called Graduating Teachers Program (Program Pensiswazahan Guru) for the primary school teachers that have almost exclusively been requested by the Ministry of Education.

However, these programmes were mainly considered as exercises to upgrade the teachers' rank and salary category. Malaysia needs a proper teacher professional development programme because teaching is still a rather 'flat' career with very little opportunity for "...recognition and leadership roles for experienced classroom teachers who demonstrate expertise in the teaching and learning process" (Taylor et al, 2011. p. 85). This has bring the Ministry to introduce a new approach for improving the career path of the teachers by introducing a competency and performance based carrier progression. Based on this approach, teachers will be also assessed by the principals annually and it will be a new evaluation instrument focusing on the teacher professional practices in classroom. High performance teachers will get promoted faster, whereas low performance teachers will still receive coaching support from the Ministry. In addition, based on this transformation program of enhancing teaching profession, the Ministry has introduced a variety of leadership pathways to the teachers which are more flexible. The teacher could choose their desired leadership pathways including be it leadership role, subject specialist or master teachers.

Much broader in scope than career development, TPD is defined as a growth that occurs through the professional cycle of a teacher (Kedzior & Fifield, 2004). The experiences and ideas of teachers about their career, working conditions, prestige and achievements have a great impact on their actions, as well as on the quality and effectiveness of their teaching (Grion & Varisco, 2007). The continuous and gradual formation of TPD may serve as an influential tool in the hands of policy-makers to improve the effectiveness of teaching (Alsup, 2006; Ross & Bruce, 2007). It is the improvement of the teaching skills and practices of educators, based on their work experiences, the constant and systematic examination of their own teaching, as well as their participation in formal and informal development activities. It is a complex process requiring cognitive and emotional involvement of teachers both individually and collectively, a process occurring in particular educational policy environments or school cultures, some of which are more appropriate and conducive to learning than others (Avalos, 2011). This is the core in Malaysian Education Blueprint for the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) program of the teachers' which put more emphasis on the development of the teachers beyond the training they have received, qualification and induction.

The 4th Shift in Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2014 again places great emphasis on Continuous Professional Development (CPD), the professional development of in-service teacher. From the RM54.6 billion total national budget allocation for education in 2014, RM209 million would be provided to enhance the teacher professional development with emphasis on teaching, improving teaching methods and proficiency

in Bahasa Malaysia and English. The changes policy and approach of CPD for in-service teacher in Malaysia indicated the serious concern of the state policy in education towards the demands of the global, social, technological, education and learning outcome in pedagogies of teachers which required teachers to have various capitals in their professional practices. Based on the Malaysian Education Blueprint, the policy and practice of teacher training will be diversified to cater the teacher's professional needs. The individualized CPD programme has been introduced for all teachers, in which there are predetermined trainings required to be taken by all teachers and a selection of trainings that teachers can pursue out of their own interests. It is derived from various sources beyond formal training, such as workshops, seminars, monitoring, reflection, observation and performance of activities, each of these forms leading teachers towards the use new methods, techniques and approaches in their practice. This policy of teacher's CPD embarks a holistic concept of teacher professional development which taken into account the position and role of subjective factors in the learning process of teachers (Avalos, 2011) and the context in which the professional development occurs (Borko, 2004). For teachers who find the CPD courses irrelevant to their practices (Petras et al., 2012), this may a viable solution to the problem.

This transformation of CPD concept and policy for teachers suggest that ministry is empowering teachers to decide for themselves what they want to learn and improve on in enhancing their professional practices. In this context, teachers are given autonomous individuals capable of improving their professionalism and their career pathway and strive towards self-betterment. However, the blueprint does not address another persisting problem faced by many teachers in Malaysia: ample time for quality CPD programmes to take place. Some studies state that the working condition of Malaysian teachers is taxing (Adnan & Smith, 2001; Petras et al., 2012). Teachers have to manage various responsibility and juggling an overwhelming number of unfamiliar issues such as administrative works, teaching preparations for some large classes, school culture, coordinate co-curricular activities, parents demand and fulfil various and high expectation of the stakeholders.

Among the other most important step taken by the government for improving Malaysian teacher professionalism is a continuous effort in enhancing the utilising of ICT in a teaching and learning process. The efforts of transforming the educational system are known as Shift 7 is clearly stated in Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013a) which aim to leverage ICT so that the teaching and quality can be enhanced. Accordingly, this has bring the Ministry to implement a special program to address the issues of ICT usage in teaching and learning process and thus transforming the way of teacher professional practice in school. The first initiative is the promoting of virtual learning environment by introducing 1 Bestari Net to all schools in 2013. Under the 1 Bestari Net program, 4G network would be available in schools and teachers could use it to create virtual learning platform. The Ministry continuously provides ICT competency training for all teachers, and increase the facilities of technological devices for students.

This policy transformation in ICT agenda in education aimed to enhance teacher's professionalism in their practice providing them with various education resources and helping teacher to cater the needs of the student of new generation who are the digital natives and used to the use of technology.

In fostering the utilisation of ICT in school, the Ministry provides online video library with exemplary teaching resources. The teachers are able to access to daily lessons of different subjects presented by the top Excellent Teachers in the country. This teaching resources hope to inspire teachers to improve the teaching quality with an appropriate and good model of teaching provided by the experience and excellent teacher across the nation (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013b). Furthermore, in addition to the conventional learning approach in a school system, the transformation efforts for enhance education quality also bring the Ministry to increase the use of ICT for distance learning for the school student. This is aimed to enable the student to learn different subjects according to their level of performance and progress through distance learning program without having the constraint of time and space. In this circumstance, the teacher would only need to be the facilitator rather than a content provider in helping student learning process beyond the classroom (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013b). This initiative is to bring the change to teacher in their professional practice in school.

Discussion and Conclusion

In Malaysia, teachers represent one of the largest professional occupations and can be regarded as a mass profession in the country. There are 417,749 school teachers in Malaysia (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013a) which make the education sector is the largest in terms of total public service workforce, constituting 36 per cent of 1.27 million public servants (Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam, 2009). As a mass profession along with other complex features of the teaching profession, which form the basis of a range of interrelated policy issues surrounding teachers' salaries, career paths, promotional tracks, and issue of teacher and teaching quality, this create a great challenges for the government in enhancing teaching profession aimed at retaining and improving the quality of the teacher in Malaysia.

Therefore, the highly emphasized by the Malaysian government at ensuring the professionalism and the prestigious of the teacher is at the high level indicate that the important of retaining and getting the capable and enthusiasm human capital into the teaching profession in achieving the aim of raising Malaysian education quality. This policy discourse of making teaching as a prestigious profession which aim to raise the education quality and standard is representing by the policy production and enactment based on the Education Development Master Plan (2006-2010) and the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025. Both policies contain specific focus on teaching profession including the career path, professional development strategy and human capital development which indicate that the government is seriously concern on the important roles of teacher in developing a good human capital for the Malaysian

economic development. The ministry believed that the quality of teachers is crucial to the performance of the student. Discourse of teacher professional development in Malaysian education strategic plan, therefore, demands Malaysian teacher to enhance their professionalism for coping with uncertain future and ensuring the learning quality of the student.

The strategies used to enhance the teaching profession in the Malaysian education development blueprint seem to be echoed with strategies proposed within the 2007 McKinsey Report (Barber & Mourshed, 2007), as well as other international reports (e.g. OECD, 2005), especially with respect to the emphasis on high quality teachers. The OECD reports (2005, 2009) suggest that a clear developmental career stages, good compensation schemes and salary systems will help in attracting and retaining good teachers in the profession and in the classroom. OECD's report (2013) also suggests the importance of Malaysian education policy to ensure the continuous training of high quality teachers who are able to respond to complex educational and social needs. To a certain extent the mission of enhancing teaching profession in Malaysia is similar to that of the United States, France, Germany, Japan, and New Zealand, Singapore, where the main concern is "the importance of a well-trained teaching force to preparing students to function competently within an increasingly technologically information-based society" (Wang et al. 2003, p.1). Thus, the policy development in improving education quality in Malaysia which focuses on teachers exemplified a great deal of policy borrowing and travelling of policy ideas across nations (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004). Snook, Swennen and van der Klink (2011) assert that the need of active international policy exchange for teacher professionalism is vital to learn how other countries are exalting. This indicate that the way of policy production in developing teaching profession in Malaysia is also 'governing through comparison' (Novoa & Yariv-Mashal, 2003) and the reconstitution of international development and policy ideas on the importance of teacher's role in education quality of the nation.

In the context of Malaysian educational policy development, teachers are always been focused for education improvement and development. While other factors (such as socio-economic context, locational effect and societal structures) are sometime marginalised in policy production for enhancing education quality, it shows that in Malaysia policy development in improving education quality, the in-school factors, particularly teacher quality has been put as a strongest potential policy levers for the Ministry to affect student learning outcomes. Hence, in the Malaysian education development policy discourse, it is believe that teacher is much related and contributed to the education quality, and teachers are always been regarded as vital to the success of education system in the country. This has place teachers as a key aspect for ongoing education development process in Malaysia.

There still has a long way to go in enhancing professionalism and prestigious of the teaching profession in Malaysia. While there was a continuous effort and various policies in order to promote teaching profession and teacher professionalism by the government,

there is still a question of what is the best way to retain and motivating high performing teachers in the classroom. For example, beside the current excellent teacher program as a career path for outstanding teachers is enabled them to stay in the classroom with a specific task on teaching, the teachers were also under pressure to contribute in ways beyond their classroom work, for instance to policy and curriculum development and to the professional development of other teachers which is impeded their teaching work and quality time in classroom.

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