

**Innovative Management In Education:  
The Malaysian Perspective  
The Malaysian Smart School Management**

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**Introduction**

Malaysia is fast moving towards becoming a united and fully developed nation by the year 2020. Towards this end, Malaysia need to strategize and take steps to ensure that the nation will achieve its goals. Like all other developing nations, Malaysia need to be innovative to venture into new fields and focus on new emphasis in order to be able to compete with other developed nations. Extra efforts must be taken to face new challenges ahead in this era. Challenges which the nation need to face are mostly from globalization and liberalization as well as from the rapid development of information and communication technology.

As Malaysia develops, emphasis will be given to the creation of a strong human resource base to support the development of knowledge-based economy in order to enhance productivity and competitiveness. The government has taken efforts to develop an efficient and responsive education and training system to meet the demand for a labour force that is knowledgeable, highly skilled and equipped with positive values. In view of the increasing need for knowledge manpower, the overall capacity of education and training institutions will be increased through

the expansion and upgrading of existing institutions, as well as the establishment of new institutions by the public and private sectors.

Efforts have already been taken by the government to re-orientate the education system to enable students to acquire high level of knowledge as well as thinking and entrepreneurial skills. The student-centered approach of learning will be strengthened. This can be done through the improvements in curriculum and teaching approach. Efforts will also be focused on increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of education and training delivery system to ensure an adequate supply of high quality manpower. Efforts will also be made to develop a knowledge-seeking culture among Malaysian in view of the rapid changes in technology and the increasing knowledge.

With the rise of K-economy, the new economic challenges and the knowledge-based workforce, Malaysia needs to manage its education system in a more creative and innovative manner. One of Malaysia's latest innovation in basic education management is through the Smart School Project. It is hoped that this project will help to revolutionize the education system and at the same time bring in innovations in the education management and eventually be able to produce workers who are ready to face the challenges of this new millennium.

## **Objectives and Management System of the Smart School**

The Smart School project has been identified as a critical enabler to transform radically the Malaysian school system. In the first stage 90 schools have been converted into this project and by the year 2010 the rest of the primary and secondary schools in the country will become smart schools.

The smart school curriculum is designed to :

- Help students to achieve overall balanced development
- Integrate knowledge, skills, values and correct use of language
- Achieve intended learning outcomes for different ability levels
- Offer multidisciplinary, thematic, and continuous learning
- Foster the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes suitable for the information age.

The primary aim of the smart school management is to support teaching and learning functions within schools by managing resources and processes more efficiently and effectively. The smart school management is made up of school governance, student affairs, educational resources, external resource, finance, human resource , security and the use of technology.

- **The school governance** deals with school policies and regulation. It ensures efficient communication between relevant agencies and stake holders, and make decisions on curriculum management to fit the schools' local environment and to tailor it according to students' needs.

- There is also the **Student Affairs Component** of the smart schools management system which deals with all the issues that relate to students teaching and learning and welfare needs. It maintains a comprehensive database of student records.
- **The educational resources component** manages a teaching-learning resource database that is quick and easily accessed by students and teachers.
- The **external resource component** maintains a comprehensive database on available external resources that are relevant and applicable to the teaching – learning scenarios in schools. It should also provide and manage resources to enable “virtual visits”.
- The **finance component system** handles the fiscal management portion. It consists of a comprehensive educational accounting system with direct interface to the District Education Office and the State Education Department.
- The **facilities component** maintains and manages the utilization of the school’s facilities. It contains comprehensive records of inventories and is capable of tracking for movement of removable assets.
- The **human resource management system** which tracks the individual staff members development programmes. It manages the staff members to attend or participate at seminars, conference and

workshops for professional development. It also manages staff's promotion and transfers.

- A system is required to ensure **human safety as well as physical safety** of the school. Measures required include the need for proper identification or authorization for access into school or access into certain database of the school communication system.
- The **technology component** of the smart school management system manages the technology components of the school and includes IT hardware and IT resource management, network management and technology designs upgrading.

## **Findings of study carried out on the project**

### **IT Facilities**

The smart school project has been successfully launched and implemented in all the pilot schools. Constant monitoring is carried out by several divisions of the ministry to ensure the smooth running of the programme and also to overcome some of the teething problems. Most of the schools are able to equipped themselves with enough IT equipment (1 laboratory with 21 computers, 10 computers for teachers, 5 computers for administrative purposes, and 10 computers in the resource centres.)

It was found that school heads or principals play an important role in determining the success of the project. The implementation in some of the schools are more successful than others because the principals are dynamic, creative, and become role models for teachers in the schools. The principals have to constantly plan for staff development and ensure

that all the teachers incorporate smart teaching-learning and at the same time come up with activities in order to persuade the resistant teachers to be more IT literate.

### **Problems Faced in Implementing the Smart School Management System**

In implementing the project the school management faced several problems such as the following:

- Constant breakdown of electricity supply especially in the rural schools. This is due to the inability of the existing system in schools to cope with increase usage of electricity
- A high cost in sustaining the programme
- Lack of safety gadget to safeguard the equipment
- Smart learning concept has not become fully understood
- The problem of large classes
- Lack of computer laboratories
- Lack of staff to supervise the network
- Lack of exposure to the concept of smart learning among school principals
- Need to coordinate smart learning to smart assessment
- Movement of teachers (need to train new teachers once a trained teacher has moved to a new school)

### **Challenges and Recommendations**

The great challenge Malaysia is facing at the moment is to extend the concept of smart learning to all schools ( there are about 8000 primary schools and 3000 secondary schools).

Special efforts are made to provide the infrastructure in order to provide equality in terms of facilities and quality of education to rural schools (almost 60 % of the primary schools are located in rural areas).

There is also a great need to train and retrain teachers to the new concept of teaching-learning. Teaching should be student-centered whereby learners are allowed to access knowledge at their own pace. Teachers should be innovative and use the Internet as an important resource.

The government has also set up the Malaysian Grid For Learning (Mgfl) to enable teachers and students to access international as well as indigenous content.

Malaysia highly recommends that each Asian country will set up a similar learning portal so that networking can be established among countries in this region,

## **Conclusion**

The pilot phase of the Smart School Project has ended. Apart from the normal glitches of any innovation, the management has proved to be remarkably useful and comprehensive in bringing all aspects of school management into one central integrated system. School heads who exploit the system fully find their role and functions easier to execute

and manage. In time, beginning with 2003, this system will be gradually expanded to include all schools in the country.