

Key Factors in Effective Implementation of Education Standards and Quality Assurance: The Malaysian Experience

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Our experience and involvement in effective implementation of education standards and quality assurance are cognizant to the existence of several factors. One truly outstanding factor is having a great and visionary leader that is our Prime Minister, Y.A.B. Dato Seri Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad who points that the way forward to educational excellence is through meritocracy. Thus we cannot be complacent; we have to be competitive so that our nation can be successful and progressive in the true sense. It is also our Prime Minister's worldview that eventually the nation's citizens can stand tall, speak straight, and walk with dignity anywhere. In a keynote address for the Second World Knowledge Conference in Kuala Lumpur, March 2000, our Prime Minister said, *"If Vision 2020 was the first strategic step into the Information Age, Malaysia is now ready for the second step. We are now ready for a concerted, comprehensive and committed quantum leap which will re-make Malaysian Corporations and re-invent Malaysian society. This second step will be called Strategic Initiative of the 21st Century"*. Therefore, while others walk we cannot be lackadaisical but to intensify our efforts in equipping the students and the future generations to face the challenges of the globalisation, the demands of a knowledge-based economy and the rapid advancement in information and communication technology.

Next, our centralised education system supported by a strong educational infrastructure helps facilitate implementation of policies and regulations. At the same time, sufficient and continuous financial allocation is given for the development of education to meet the economic, political and social agenda of the country. This is evidenced from the high annual appropriation for educational purposes by the government of Malaysia. The appropriation for educational purposes for year 2000 took up 20.68% of the operating expenditure and 15.45% of the capital expenditure. In year 2001, it was 22.65% of the operating expenditure and 22.08% of the capital expenditure.

As the Malaysian society moves forward, the right to a higher quality driven education is increasingly regarded as a basic entitlement. Society is also demanding for an educational system that would eventually produce self-actualised citizens who possess ideal attributes of the time, adept at changes yet maintaining their identity. Therefore, educational policies need to be carefully designed such that they become the instrument for the construction of a new civilization and consequently enabling Malaysians to be world leaders. The way forward thus should be bold, fast, and exact through comparison, competition, challenges, consultation, collaboration, conjugation and change (7C's) (Rahim Tahir, 2000). This definitely entails changes in the education system, which has always been the key determinant for shaping the progress of the nation, especially to develop and produce global citizens, besides being the means of integrating the various races of the country.

The launching and implementation of the Excellence Culture Movement (*Gerakan Budaya Cemerlang*) in 1989 in the public sector, as well as in schools, has awakened schools to the concept of quality work culture. The subservient, centralised and bureaucratic nature of our education system and its practices facilitate policy implementation. Nevertheless its practices were limited, more often merely following prescribed directives from the state education departments such as formulating and implementing the clients' charter and desk-files. Globalisation and the challenges of a world-class K-economy on the other hand call for an adoption of excellent teaching-learning practices as well as quality educational development in schools, namely being receptive to changes and continuously improving to suit the new requirements. However, any form of change without a specific purpose and direction is likely to create chaos and loss of energy. Changes especially educational changes should be deliberately and consciously planned; they need not necessarily follow any linear or sequential pattern but it may occur separately or in unison: instantly or following a prescribed time frame, all of which depend on the strategies and approaches employed.

The Inspectorate of Schools (IOS), an independent body in the national education system and structure was established in 1956 as a result of the certification of three reports namely the Barnes Report (1951), the Razak Report (1956) and the Rahman Talib Report (1960). With the enactment of the Education Act 1996, the prime responsibility of IOS is defined. Under Section 117, the functions and roles of IOS are "ensuring that an adequate standard of teaching is developed and maintained in educational institutions". When I took over as Chief Inspector of Schools in 1999, together with the top calibre staff, we

formulated, developed and implemented the Higher Standard Quality of Education (HSQE). As an educationist at heart, having risen from rank and file and with my fingers on the pulse of the industry, I know exactly how education should be administered to bring about transformation. I have continually design and implement programmes to increase the knowledge and skill sets of individual students. Notable among these are the learner-centred education system based on experiencing curriculum, the self-actualised schooling system and the intra-psychic processes of pedagogy and pandragogy. The unconditional support that I get enabled me to function at high velocities to bring about change in our education system. I am a man of vision and am determined to elevate the standard of education. I have successfully combined my experiences and sophisticated knowledge (with firm support from the Ministry of Education and its stakeholders-pupils and parents, employers and community, the government and country) to create a unique model known as Higher Standard Quality of Education for Malaysian schools. This dynamic model, which encompasses the whole input-process-output of the school system, was engineered to propel schools to continuously improve by leaps and bounds.

Stages of Change for the Implementation of HSQE

The conception and implementation of HSQE in schools were consciously deliberately and strategically planned such that its operations and results are tangible, measurable, and quantifiable and affect other organizational changes, for instance, the schools' educational programmes and culture so that they are aligned with the nation's philosophy of education. To minimize resistance to this change and to ensure smooth adoption, adaptation and assimilation of this model, five stages of implementation were identified (Table 1).

Table 1 – Stages of Change

Year	Changes initiated
1999	Conception and formulation of HSQE and contact with schools
2000	Accommodation - acceptance of HSQE
2001	Assimilation – understanding and self-evaluation
2002-2003	Institutionalisation – embrace standards and quality culture
2004	Self-Actualisation – independent, continuous improvement

Our experience shows that effective implementation of standards in education should not be viewed in isolation. Standards should be clearly understood, possess attributes that exceed expectations, are quantifiable

and measurable hence be able to convince, guide and commit schools to change and adopt them. Standard can be viewed as an enabler to quality but what is far more crucial here is the change of mind set, the willingness to admit existing weaknesses and the tenacity to adopt, adapt, change and improve continuously. Bearing this in mind, apart from the planned and guided change as shown in Table 1, the IOS has published five books which explain the concepts, the standards, the quality policies, the methods and procedures of implementation, the control mechanisms and the installation of HSQE to be used as references to ensure correct and proper understanding and implementation of HSQE.

The HSQE Model

HSQE is derived from the General Systems Theory and the Self-Realisation-Actualisation Theory. Figure 1 explains the intricate processes the IOS went through when formulating HSQE. The desirable criteria of higher standard quality education are embodied within eight imperatives and sixteen elements, which work within and around the existing established education system systemically and systematically. Table 2 presents the eight imperatives and the sixteen elements schools need to improve and develop in order to achieve the desired outcomes of a quality education.

Table 2. Imperatives and Elements of Higher Standard Quality Education

Imperatives		Elements	
1	Vision, Mission and Conviction	i	Well-conceived, Commitment, Review
2	Organisational System	ii	Structure, Function, Management
		iii	Teaching-Learning Resource Development
		iv	Human Resource Development
		v.	Reward System
		vi.	Strategic Alliances for Synergy
3	Organizational Climate	vii	Healthy, Conducive, Innovative Physical and Social Environment
4	Strategic Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organizational development • educational development • management development • human-person resource development 	viii.	Developmental -Long-Term, Short-Term Tactical and Action Plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take-Off-Value (TOV) • Operational-Targeted-Increment (OTI) • Expected-Targeted-Result
		ix	SWOTACSIPS analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats, Advantages, Challenges, Sacrifices, Idiosyncrasies, Prejudices, Sentiments)
		x	Maximum Development of Pupils' Potentials and Abilities
		xi	Teaching-Learning Tailored to Pupils' Potentials and Abilities, Experiencing Curriculum, Learner-Centred, Flexible Time-Table, Integrated Curriculum and Co-Curricular Activities
5	Operations, Control System	xii	Supervision, Monitoring, Control System, Internal Quality Audit
6	Feedback, Evaluation	xiii	Homework
		xiv	Formative and Summative Evaluation
7	Management of Information and Documentation System	xv	Functional, Effective, Efficient
8	Pupils' Performance and Achievement	xvi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preschool • Primary School – Year 1,2,3 • Primary School - Year 4,5,6 • Lower Secondary School • Upper Secondary School • Post Secondary School

Self-Evaluation (Internal Quality Control)

Planning, leading, organizing and controlling are fundamentals of a good management of any school. Before these fundamentals are activated it is important that head-teachers perform self-evaluation to ensure correct information and data are fed into the management process. Self-evaluation also acts as a form of organizational sensing mechanism for schools to limit and assess issues, identify problems and challenges, and measure teachers' and pupils' potentials. Since most head-teachers are not equipped with the know-how, IOS has designed a quantitative and measurable self-evaluation instrument for use in schools. This instrument provides an in-depth analysis of the schools' current health status.

The self-evaluation instrument mentioned above measures each and every pupil's potential, individual teacher's quality of work and overall school potential thus providing a take-off-value (TOV) for schools to chart their expected-targeted-result (ETR) and operational-targeted-increment (OTI). This vital information enables school managers to understand their strengths and weaknesses thus customised developmental and operational plans according to the projected target, prospect and potentiality of pupils and schools in general.

Initially schools were apprehensive of the HSQE self-evaluation system, thus resistance was inevitable. To minimise this resistance to change, IOS provided 'hands-on' and 'minds-on' guidance to motivate schools to understand and carry out self-evaluation. Using the data (scores) obtained from self-evaluation, schools then match and rank themselves as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Levels of Achievement of Schools

Rank	Levels of Achievement	Scores (%)
7	Par-Excellence	96-100
6	Excellent	90-95
5	Good	70-89
4	Average	50-69
3	Weak	30-49
2	Very Weak	10-29
1	Extremely Weak	0-9

In 2001, for the first time in the history of the Malaysian education system, self-evaluation was implemented nationwide. As of April 2002, 61% of the schools have carried out self-evaluation. By August 2002, all schools are expected to have completed this exercise.

Paradigm Shift in IOS inspections

IOS uses HSQE Inspection Instrument (HSQE-II) to inspect schools. HSQE-II consists of a list of critical performances schools need to accomplish to achieve higher standard quality education. HSQE-II has been distributed to all schools in Malaysia so that head-teachers and teachers know how they are evaluated. This transparent form of evaluation fosters a closer cooperation and creates a conducive working relationship between schools and IOS. Prior to 1998, inspections by IOS focused on schools' compliance to policies, circulars and school plans. Presently, IOS has reengineered and re-patterned its focus according to the changes it has made in the context of HSQE. The emphasis now is on educational management (EM) with emphasis on experiencing curriculum, organizational development (OD), human-person-development (HPD) and management development (MD). HSQE-II measures and quantifies systemically and systematically five dominant dimensions of school education as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Dimensions of HSQE-II

Dimension		Weight
1	Development of School's Vision, Mission and Conviction	5%
2	Development of School's Organizational System	15%
3	Development of Schools' Climate	20%
4	Development of Education Programmes a) Strategic Planning b) Curriculum Management and Implementation - experiencing curriculum c) Teaching and Learning - knowledge application - homework d) Co curriculum Management - character development	50%
5	Desired Outcomes of School Education	10%

Support and Linkages

Apart from setting clear, tangible and quantifiable standards, our multicultural heritage provides vibrant collaboration in bringing about positive changes to our educational system. Our success is largely due to the active participation and support from the stakeholders, teacher-unions and all divisions of the Ministry of Education. Figure 2 shows the

collaboration between IOS and the divisions of the Ministry of Education to bring about continuous quality improvement in schools. The IOS inspects schools to ensure that higher standards are developed and maintained. After every inspection, a full report is prepared, which after being endorsed by the Chief Inspector, is presented to the Minister of Education. Any mention or directives by the Minister shall be conveyed to the respective divisions for them to carry out follow-up and follow-through measures. Simultaneously, schools will also be informed of its performance and the corrective actions needed. Schools are then required to submit their improvement plans. State/District education offices will carry out close supervision and monitoring (follow-up and follow-through) to ensure schools undertake the mentioned corrective actions.

Award System

To expedite HSQE work culture, reinforce best educational practices and to acknowledge achievements of school, two awards are given out annually to exemplary schools. The awards are:

- The National Aspiring School Award (*Anugerah Sekolah Harapan Negara*)
- The Minister of Education Quality Award (*Anugerah Kualiti Menteri Pendidikan*)

The National Aspiring School Awards are presented in conjunction with Teachers' Day celebrations. They are presented to schools that have achieved HSQE scores of between 70%-89%. Three best schools from each of the seven categories are recipients of these awards. Successful schools are awarded certificates, plaques and building funds.

In 1996, the Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU) instructed all public agencies including public schools to obtain ISO certification. To spur schools to establish quality system and eventually qualify for ISO certification, the Minister of Education Quality Award was initiated. Schools are chosen based on their all-round excellence, best practices, and achieved HSQE scores of above 89%. Three best schools from each of the eight categories are awarded with certificates, plaques, building funds and cash prizes.

These award-winning schools serve as benchmarks for other schools to emulate and hence there exists a healthy competition among them to further improve and propel them to greater heights of excellence.

Guidance and Intervention

Striving for quality improvement has become more relevant in view of the emerging trends in accountability, and whether desired outcomes have been achieved against the amount of resources allocated. While striving for a balance between bureaucracy and flexibility in the system, it is our legal duty as IOS, based on Section 117 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure quality educational standards are maintained and improved. As the standard-bearer of quality education, IOS, in its periodical inspections conduct on-site development; and act as consultant by giving advice to head-teachers and teachers to plan and develop their schools' and pupils' potentials to the fullest.

Conclusion

The initial steps towards achieving HSQE have been paved and henceforth schools can no longer afford to be complacent. They need to review, readjust, re-pattern, realign their educational practices to inculcate the work culture that is expected of HSQE. To facilitate and expedite the above processes, the IOS has identified the following initiatives:

- Tele-monitoring: tracing and tracking performance of each and every school to obtain the necessary up-to-date and authentic data on schools, teachers and pupils.
- Enlisting the help of state education officers and district education officers to monitor schools that are not covered by IOS
- Encouraging schools to conduct process and product auditing
- Simplifying and restructuring inspection reports
- Increasing the number of IOS to monitor all schools effectively and efficiently. At the moment the ratio of IOS to schools is 1:30.
- Changing the conventional 'mind set' of school inspectors to that demanded by HSQE.
- Training school inspectors to adopt new innovative techniques of school evaluation.
- Enhancing the role of Master Principals and Master Teachers to act as catalyst of change and excellence to complement and supplement the role of IOS

- Making the IOS a ‘closed service’ to ensure it functions without fear or favour with the ultimate goal of achieving world-class education.

The crucial challenge to further effect and affect implementation of standards in the Malaysian education system will be through realigning the functions of the various divisions into a proper structural system so that linkages and interfaces among them create symbiotic synergy that can transform the education system into one that produces world-class K-workforce.