Teachers and Equitable Education

# MALAYSIA

Equitable Education Conference 2021

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION MALAYSIA

# Content

# Executive summary: Malaysia

Education plays a central role in any country's pursuit of economic growth and the national development. There is no better predictor of a nation's future than what transpires in its education system. Currently, there are significant variations in student outcomes in Malaysia across states, districts, schools, socio-economic status (SES) and gender. While some of these achievement gaps have narrowed over time, SES remains the largest driver of students' outcomes in Malaysia. Although this is a common problem in many countries around the world, it is of utmost importance that the education system seeks to find solutions for bridging the gaps and address the inequity in education continuously. The equity gaps that the Ministry of Education, Malaysia is currently focusing on are students of low SES background, rural-urban students' outcome, special educational needs (SEN) students and gender gaps.

In recent development and efforts, the ministry has optimised the District Transformation Programme (DTP) initiated by Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013 – 2025 to address the equity gaps on the four focus areas mentioned. The programmes initiated by DTP mainly involve continuous support to District Education Offices (DEOs), school leaders, teachers, local communities and students.

In the current situation of the pandemic crisis, teachers have encountered several main challenges in conducting teaching and learning particularly to cater for students from various background and locations. To address some of the main challenges the ministry has developed a structured home-based teaching and learning or Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran di Rumah (PdPR) utilising Digital Educational Learning Initiative Malaysia (DELIMa) as the main platform for online learning. The ministry has also developed offline and off-site approaches to PdPR to ensure that teachers have more options in delivering teaching and learning to their students particularly for students who have no access to any device or internet connectivity.

Other innovative practices that have been initiated by the ministry to facilitate teaching and learning that have been disrupted due to school closures are the alignment of curriculum, the new Didik TV (educational TV channel that rides on national TV), and online and offline educational resources such as Cikgootube, EduWebTV and e-Guru Portal.

Since the closure of schools due to the pandemic crisis, the ministry has conducted a series of webinars to upskill teachers' competencies in digital learning and information and communications technology (ICT). Furthermore, the digital learning and ICT elements in education are integrated in the pre-service and in-service training for teachers in order to ensure that teachers are competent to conduct online, offline and off-site teaching and learning.

The ministry also acknowledges some of the crucial lessons learnt in its effort to bridge the inequity gap in the education system. Firstly, the pandemic crisis has obliged the ministry to adopt alternatives to face-to-face teaching and learning, secondly, the crucial stages in supporting students using ICT effectively and making the most of new technologies for learning, thirdly, the lack of adequate preparation among teachers and students for the demands that online teaching and learning require and how to overcome them, fourthly, the need for different forms of support from parents and families for their children that teachers need to acknowledge, and finally, the need to support teachers in incorporating technology effectively into their teaching practices and methods to help students overcome some of the difficulties that are associated with online, offline or off-site learning environment.

# Introduction

The Malaysia National Education Philosophy (NEP), formulated in 1988, states that "education in Malaysia is an on-going effort to further develop the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious based on a firm belief in and devotion to God". Such a philosophy is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large.

The Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013 – 2025, which was developed based on the spirit of NEP, outlines the five outcomes of system aspirations which include access, quality, equity, unity and efficiency. In terms of equity, the Ministry of Education Malaysia aspires to halve the current urban-rural, SES, and gender achievement gaps by 2020, by developing more top-performing schools which can deliver the best possible education for every child, regardless of geography, gender or socio-economic background.[1] The education system also aspires to provide greater support and programmes for SEN students, indigenous and other minority groups to allow them to achieve their fullest potential. This new direction will also provide more access to alternative, attractive pathways to education such as vocational education, in order to provide better opportunities for students of diverse interests and abilities in the education system.

1 Ministry of Education Malaysia. (2013). Malaysia Education Blueprint (Preschool to Post-Secondary Education) 2013 – 2025. Putrajaya: Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, p. E-9.

# III

# Summary of Current Status: Equity gaps in education

In MEB 2013 – 2025, the ministry has identified 11 shifts that need to occur in order to deliver change in outcomes envisioned by all Malaysians. Each shift addresses at least one of the five system outcomes of access, quality, equity, unity and efficiency, with the focus on quality as the common denominator across all shifts which requires

the most urgent attention. Education equity is one of the system aspirations in MEB 2013 – 2025 that will address the inequity gaps in the education system.

The largest equity gaps among students remain SES, and this is inevitably seen in the education system in Malaysia. Education disadvantage, whereby how much students' parents earn and where they go to school correlate with students' achievement, is a phenomenon experienced by many education systems around the world.[2] In Malaysia, the percentage of students receiving basic financial assistance under the Poor Students' Trust Fund, or Kumpulan Wang Amanah Pelajar Miskin (KWAPM) illustrates the gravity of low SES background amongst students in the education system. This is because students who qualify for KWAPM financial aid need to meet the eligibility criteria of coming from a low income household.

Gaps in education performance between students attending schools in urban areas versus schools in rural areas is also a pertinent issue in education inequity in Malaysia. States with higher proportion of rural schools, for example Sabah[3] and Sarawak[4], on average, underperform states with fewer rural schools. However, Malaysia has made significant progress in this area in which the gap between urban and rural schools has been gradually closing over time. This will be further expounded in the next section of Recent Development and Efforts.

Malaysia's position with regards to SEN students has always been consistent with national and international policies. Some of the national policies that are in use include Persons with Disabilities Act 2008, Special Education Regulations 2013, Special Educational Needs Students Code of Practice 2015 and MEB 2013 – 2025, as well as international policies such as Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO 1994), Dakar World Education Forum (2000), and the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific (2012).

For 2020, the programmes to address inequity for SEN focus on PLCs for Inclusive Education Programme (PPI) in primary schools, promotional programmes for SEN students to attend formal education at primary and secondary levels, CPD programmes for mainstream teachers for PPI, and marketability for SEN students in terms of job prospects and opportunities to further studies.

Another significant issue in terms of inequity in education outcome in Malaysia is the gender gap. Girls consistently outperform boys at every level, in which the gap in performance increases over a student's lifetime up to university level. In 2020, female student enrolment in public universities comprises approximately 62.3% in contrast to male counterpart[5]. While this phenomenon is not unique to Malaysia, it does require attention to ensure that the country does not have a cohort of **"lost boys"** who either leave school early or with low education attainment levels to become a valuable source of human capital for the country.

2 Ryberg, R. & Nielsen, N. (May 05, 2020). To address achievement and attainment gaps, we need a better understanding of educational opportunity. Child Trends: Bethesda, MD USA. http://childtrends.org. Retrieved on 11 September 2021.
3 Sabah: Urban schools = 180 (Pr: 116, Sc: 64), Rural schools = 1,116 (Pr: 959, Sc: 157). (Data as of 31 August 2021. Source: MOE Malaysia website).
4 Sarawak: Urban schools = 243 (Pr: 175, Sc: 68), Rural schools = 1,215 (Pr: 1,090, Sc: 125). (Data as of 31 August 2021. Source: MOE Malaysia website).

# IV

# Recent development and efforts

In the effort to address the current SES, urban-rural, and gender achievement gaps by 2020, the ministry has strategically implemented various programmes and interventions through one of MEB 2021 – 2025 initiatives via the District Transformation Programme (DTP). DTP specifically addresses the inequity issues of SES and urban-rural gaps by empowering the District Education Offices (DEOs) based on the concept of support and accountability. The DEOs provide support and accountability in four main components namely, upscaling local leaders' capabilities, providing support to organisations in need, and increasing access, quality and equity as well as discipline for monitoring, for solving problems and executing actions.

One of the significant achievements through DTP initiative is students' outcome. Students' outcome is currently measured through the Malaysia Certificate of Education (SPM) which students take at the age of 17+ or at the end of Form Five of secondary school. The percentage of students qualified for SPM has significantly increased for

the past four years consecutively. There has been an increase of 4.45% in SPM 2017 till SPM 2020 as illustrated in Figure 1[6].

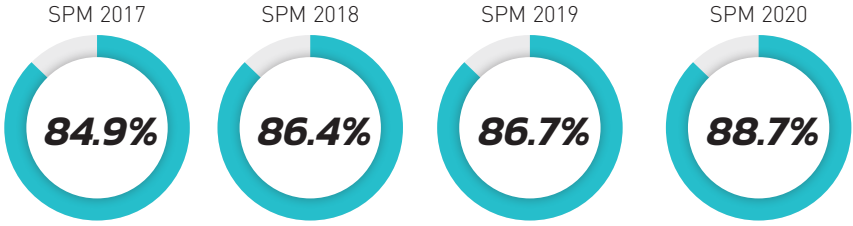


Figure 1. Percentage of students qualified for SPM in 2017 until 2020.

5 https://www.mohe.gov.my. Retrieved 11 September 2021.

Another initiative that the ministry has implemented in the attempt to address the issue of inequity in education is transforming the education of marginalised schools specifically for the indigenous and native students of Sekolah Orang Asli (SOA). For 2020, the initiative focuses on improving the attendance of indigenous and native students across the nation, improving the attendance of native and Dusun Bonggi students in Sabah, improving the attendance of Penan students in Sarawak, and facilitating transition of indigenous students from Year 6 primary school to Form 1 secondary school across Malaysia.

The Movement Control Order (MCO) ruling during the pandemic crisis has significantly affected the attendance of the indigenous and native students to schools. Their participation in PdPR is also difficult as the students do not have access to internet or device. However, the ministry manages to seek active collaboration from Tok Batin (leaders of indigenous community) and local indigenous and native communities to support their children's learning by collecting learning materials for their children and sending them back to their teachers in school. This helps to ensure that their children are not missing learning time despite the lack of access to internet and required device.

The active community involvement which comprises the village committee members, Parent Teacher Association (PTA) committee members, Tok Batin and local communities and their full commitment helps to assist the school in giving information

and awareness of the importance of education to the parents of indigenous and native students. This collaborative effort has resulted in significant increase of attendance for the past five years. The percentage of average attendance of indigenous and native students is illustrated in Figure 2[7].

6 Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia. (2021). Laporan Tahunan 2020 Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia 2013 – 2025, pp. 62. https://www.padu.edu.my/ar2020. Retrieved 11 September 2021.

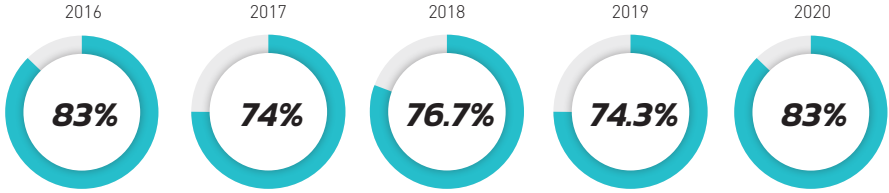


Figure 2. The percentage of average attendance of indigenous and native students in SOA 2016 – 2020.

In the attempt to facilitate the transition of indigenous students from Year 6 primary school to Form 1 secondary school across Malaysia, the ministry has initiated syndications and close cooperation with Department of Orang Asli Development (JAKOA) and various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as MyKasih Foundation, East Coast Economic Region Development Council (ECERDC) and Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER) towards improving support and assistance for the indigenous students. This encompasses hosting career awareness programmes, which are designed to create motivation and encouragement for students to pursue their education to a higher level in order to have good careers later in life. The percentage of the transition of indigenous students from Year 6 primary school to Form 1 secondary school across Malaysia is illustrated in Figure 3[8].

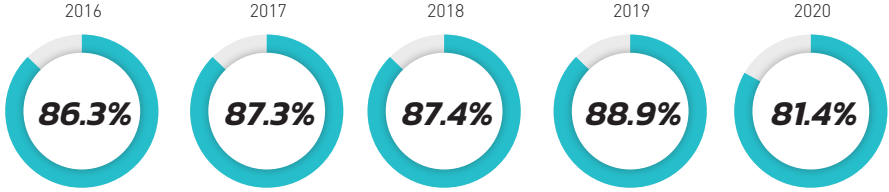


Figure 3. Percentage of transition of indigenous students from Year 6 primary school to Form 1 secondary school across Malaysia 2016 – 2020.

7 Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia. (2021). Laporan Tahunan 2020 Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia 2013 – 2025, pp. 58. https://www.padu.edu.my/ar2020. Retrieved 11 September 2021.
8 Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia. (2021). Laporan Tahunan 2020 Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia 2013 – 2025, pp. 59. https://www.padu.edu.my/ar2020. Retrieved 11 September 2021.

Based on the four focuses in addressing the issues of inequity for SEN students in 2020, there is an optimistic performance overall with the ministry embarking on a holistic model for PLCs in PPI in 533 primary schools, which is one of the many strategies to increase access and quality in education for SEN students from pre-school until post-secondary nationwide. Some of these programmes include team teaching, lesson demonstrations, buddy support system, smart partnerships between schools and local communities, and collaborative teaching.

Another strategy outlined for 2020 is CPD for mainstream school teachers in relation to PPI for SEN holistic model. The CPD includes intervention programmes for school leaders, a standards framework for general competencies for SEN students, a standard training module for SEN teachers, and extension for PLC for SEN holistic model. The ministry has also collaborated with stakeholders in determining the marketability of SEN students in securing opportunities for job placements and pursuing higher education. The increase of 67.95% of SEN students' marketability in 2020, albeit in the pandemic situation, compared to 30% in 2018 can be considered a tremendous achievement.[9] This is further reinforced by the increase of 68.2% SEN students who qualify for SPM in 2020 compared to 61.3% in 2019.[10]

9 Ibid.
10 Source: Lembaga Peperiksaan, MOE Malaysia.

In Malaysia, the gender gap between female and male students is another issue of concern to the ministry as we need to engage male students in education to ensure that they become a valuable source of human capital. The dropout rates in secondary schools tend to be associated with male students as they seem to struggle more with the mainstream academic curriculum and would probably benefit from greater access to vocational training or more acquired coursework. Furthermore, male students from poor families are more likely to dropout from school to start work early in order to support their families.[11] In the attempt to address the gender gap between female and male students, the ministry has implemented several programmes to curb the issue of male dropouts especially in secondary schools through the outreach Program Sifar Murid Cicir (PSMC) and other intervention programmes which involve local communities and relevant external agencies. The ministry leverages on the local communities and these agencies as its smart partners to deliver the message on the importance of education for high-risk dropouts especially those who are highly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Table 1 illustrates the decreasing percentage of dropout rates in secondary schools which suggests that the intervention programmes implemented by the ministry has a positive outcome.

| Year | Dropout rate secondary schools | | Total number of students |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Percentage | Number | |
| 2020 | 1.13 | 22,526 | 1,993,408 |
| 2019 | 1.14 | 22,885 | 2,007,496 |
| 2018 | 1.21 | 24,706 | 2,041,798 |
| 2017 | 1.36 | 28,547 | 2,099,033 |

Table 1. Dropout rate in secondary schools 2017 – 2020.

11 Ministry of Education Malaysia. (2013). Malaysia Education Blueprint (Preschool to Post-Secondary Education) 2013 – 2025. Putrajaya: Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia.

# V

# Current situations and challenges that teachers have encountered

In Malaysia, school closures and learning disruption is still the top priority discussions at the ministerial level in view of the continuing pandemic crisis. Apart from deciding whether schools should be completely or partially closed in respected states or districts, tackling school operations is in fact the key challenge. Teachers are advised to find the best alternative ways to deliver lessons, and as a result, PdPR has taken place, amidst several other continuing challenges which mainly involve reaching out to rural and indigenous students where resources (device, books – apart from textbooks, internet access) are limited. This means that in accordance with physical distancing requirements, teachers have generally begun shifting their teaching activities from traditional classroom meetings to distance learning (online, offline or off-site), by utilizing electronic facilities or e-learning.

Undoubtedly, the reality of conducting PdPR is quite different across the country. With students situated in various geographical locations, especially in the remote areas of Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak[12], PdPR could not be easily executed to benefit all students. In remote or underprivileged communities, those challenges are magnified due to lack of consistent electricity supply, no or minimum access to any device, limited space for learning, the parents' SES and the digital divide. Furthermore, connectivity is persistently seen as a major problem for online learning, not just for the remote students, but also the urban poor.[13] In the case of students with very limited access, some teachers made efforts to travel to deliver worksheets to remote areas and indigenous communities to ensure students remain engaged in learning during MCO, with the assistance of the District Health Office and upon approval of DEOs. This ensures students remain engaged with education during MCO.

Across the country, teachers are deploying various methods to reach out to students, especially those who are in the remote areas, where online PdPR is almost non-existent. For example, teacher Andy Janang, 40, despite having over a decade of teaching experience at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan (SMK) Luar Bandar Sibu, Sarawak, still needs to equip himself with the knowledge to face PdPR challenges, especially in relation to his students. He first needs to identify the students living in the rural areas who have difficulties with access to the internet and whose parents cannot afford to provide their children with a smartphone. Andy's strategy is to get those who have smartphones to interact directly with him and make these students pass on the information and knowledge they have gained to their friends in the rural areas who have no access to the internet.

13 The number of poor households increased to 639.8 thousand households in 2020 as compared to 405.4 thousand households in 2019. Absolute poverty has also increased from 5.6 per cent (2019) to 8.4 per cent, hardcore poverty is estimated to increase from 0.4 per cent (2019) to 1.0 per cent which involved 78.0 thousand households (2019: 27.2 thousand households). The incidence of absolute poverty by state shows that Sabah recorded the highest percentage of 25.3 per cent (2019: 19.5%). Kelantan recorded a significant increase in poverty by 8.8 percentage points to 21.2 per cent from 12.4 per cent (2019), followed by Terengganu by 5.9 percentage points to 12.0 per cent from 6.1 per cent (2019) (DOSM, August 6, 2021).

Apart from building a close rapport with his students, Andy, who is from Kuching, also deals directly and communicates frequently with his students' parents to monitor his students' studies and performance. He says,

> **"At the initial stage, it seemed impossible to conduct online learning and teaching in rural schools, but this should not be an excuse to deprive students of an education as there are alternative ways of doing it."[14]**

> **"For example, when the students have completed their homework for each topic, they can send them at the school guardhouse for the teachers to collect them later."[15]**

Another challenge that teachers currently face is handling the technological aspects of PdPR, in which they need to upskill their competencies. A lot of teachers find that seeking for ways on how to upskill their digital competencies in order to implement PdPR while concurrently designing online lesson plans is very challenging and stressful. Nonetheless, it seems that teachers somewhat manage to establish a good networking and PLCs with their counterparts as they share and discuss their professional practices and issues with regards to PdPR using other suitable mediums of communication via social media applications.

With the increased pressure that teachers are facing in handling the technological aspects of PdPR while at the same time navigating their life at home as parents, the ministry recognises the need to pay attention to these challenges that teachers are facing during PdPR. This includes the need to provide support for teachers' welfare and well-being in order for teachers to maintain professionalism and motivation.

14 Bernama. (7 July 2021). Synergy between teachers, students and parents important for PdPR to succeed. https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2021/07/705922/. Retrieved 3 September 2021.
15 Ibid.

# VI

# Innovative practices to address teachers' challenges during pandemic

While realizing that the challenges faced by teachers in the pandemic crisis are larger than just the issue of executing teaching and learning for students, the ministry is addressing the pressing issues and challenges according to priorities. Since the closure of schools across the country is indefinitely, there has to be concrete measures and solutions that need to be in place in order to ensure that students are not left behind in their learning. One basic solution, albeit an important one, is the alignment of the curriculum, both for the primary and secondary levels. The exercise involves the alignment of the curriculum contents of all Curriculum Alignment Documents 2.0 subjects in Primary School Standard Curriculum (KSSR), Secondary School Standard Curriculum (KSSM), Transitional Class Standard Curriculum (KSKP) and Pre-School Standard Curriculum (KSPK). The curriculum alignment involves the reorganization of content, pedagogy and assessment based on the intended learning outcomes to meet the specific needs of the subject. It serves as a new curriculum map for teachers in deciding the day-to-day lessons for their students in the PdPR environment, and also to ensure students could master the subjects and modules during the shortened teaching period.

PdPR is one of the first initiatives developed by the ministry, the government and other partners[16] in the country to support education continuity by utilising electronic facilities or e-learning, with adequate technology infrastructure. In the attempt to facilitate PdPR to be utilised nationwide faster, the initial approach taken by the ministry was to allow PdPR to be conducted based on suitability and convenience of teachers and students. Some teachers conducted classes online, while some send homework manually to their students where parents could return the completed worksheets to the teachers at the schools or via the PTA. Although this was difficult, parents understood the challenges teachers were facing and managed to continue PdPR to ensure no learner was left behind.[17]

In relation to the utilisation of PdPR, the ministry provides and distributes the PdPR manual to assist schools and teachers in ensuring students' maximum access to teaching and learning. This manual serves as a reference for teachers, school administrators, DEOs and the State Education Departments (SEDs) to help teachers

implement PdPR effectively. The first version of the PdPR Manual was launched in October 2020 and the upgraded PdPR Manual 2.0 was launched in February 2021.[18] The ministry has introduced three methods of PdPR namely, online, offline and off-site in which teachers may select any one method suitable for their students' situations and available facilities. They may also opt to adopt a blended approach or in cases of remote schools they might choose to do it off-site.

16 Yayasan Hasanah (YH) reported that 150,000 laptops and tablets under the CERDIK initiative announced in the 2021 budget will have been distributed to students at the end of September 2021, with 50,000 devices were already distributed by end of May 2021. YH said that funding for the pilot project had solely been generated from GLC/GLICs and corporate donors. Among the initiative's corporate donors include Khazanah Nasional Bhd, Yayasan Petronas, Permodalan Nasional Bhd, the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) and Lembaga Tabung Haji.
17 Arumugam, T. (06 March 2021). Education during pandemic and beyond. https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2021/03/671430/education-during-pandemic-and-beyond. Retrieved on 3 September 2021.
18 Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia. (2021). Manual Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran di Rumah Versi 2. https://www.moe.gov.my/pekeliling/4081-manual-pengajaran-dan-pembelajaran-versi-2-2-feb-2021-1/file. Retrieved on 11 September 2021.

Online PdPR can be implemented when there is connectivity to internet and access to device for students to engage in lessons in real time. Online PdPR can be executed on platforms provided by the ministry such as DELIMa, Cikgootube, EduWebTV and e-Guru Portal. The ministry also uses DELIMa to provide educational materials to students and teachers as well as leverages on the capacity of DELIMa which allows unlimited number of teachers to upload lesson modules and lesson plans for sharing purposes. At the same time, DELIMa allows teachers to host a small group tutoring sessions for students who need extra help. Apart from DELIMa, the ministry also provides other platforms such as Cikgootube, EduWebTV and e-Guru Portal in which teaching and learning materials in the form of videos can be accessed online and offline. In the event where students and teachers are not able to access any online educational material, the ministry provides Didik TV which is aired through the national TV channels across the country. This is seen as logical since on average 96% of households have access to free-TV. This approach enables students from remote locations, where internet connectivity is a problem, to get access to all learning sessions aired by the ministry.

For students located in rural and remote areas, off-site PdPR is an alternative approach whereby students are placed in a localised and pre-selected areas such as community centres for face-to-face lessons. Learning may occur individually or with the support of an Academic Support Team (AST) consisting of officers from the DEOs or selected teachers from schools appointed for the off-site PdPR.[19]

19 Ibid.


# Teachers' professional development and support

## In-service professional development

When PdPR was first introduced by the ministry nationwide, it was found that teachers faced significant challenge to conduct online or offline lessons efficiently and effectively. Teachers, as well as students and parents, seem to have difficulties with the e-learning situation. This was mainly due to inadequate basic hardware and software facilities as well as unconducive environments which make the adoption of PdPR even harder.

Moreover, working from home during the MCO entails its own problems for parents as well as teachers, since many teachers are also parents themselves. Many are caught in challenging situations that require striking a balance between work, household chores and care work, as well as enabling and supervising their confined children's learning at home. Teachers are increasingly affected and challenged by the pandemic crisis not only professionally, but economically, socially and mentally. Throughout the nearly two years of the pandemic in which schools are still closed indefinitely, the ministry continues its effort to support teachers by providing CPDs to upskill teachers' competencies especially in relation to PdPR both in the aspect of technology and contents. A series of webinars on online teaching and learning, mostly guided by excellent teachers from various curriculum backgrounds, have been conducted and accessed by most teacher population in the country. Table 2 illustrates the areas of programs and activities developed, aired and viewed by teachers across Malaysia, which include webinars, online and offline courses focussing on curriculum, pedagogical approaches, technology and digital upskilling, health and well-being as well as motivation.

| Field/Topic | 2020 | | 2021 | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No.of webinars | No.of hits | No.of webinars | No.of hits | No.of webinars | No.of hits |
| Curriculum | 14 | 104,952 | 14 | 104,952 | 23 | 737,102 |
| PCK | 11 | 103,019 | 11 | 103,019 | 20 | 323,191 |
| PdPR | 6 | 679,947 | 6 | 679,947 | 12 | 1,188,140 |
| Digital/ICT Skills | 2 | 392,241 | 2 | 392,241 | 5 | 426,104 |
| Values & Well being | 7 | 448,941 | 7 | 448,941 | 16 | 699,843 |
| Others | 14 | 333,704 | 14 | 333,704 | 54 | 770,280 |
| Total | 54 | 2,062,804 | 54 | 2,062,804 | 130 | 4,144,660 |

Table 2. The number of webinars conducted from 2020 until August 2021.

According to the ministry's Training Management System (SPLKPM), there are nearly 300,000 hits every month[20] for all professional development program recorded in SPLKPM, meaning that teachers are actively accessing the various programs developed for them by the ministry, using SPLKPM as the CPD platform

20 SPLKPM as of 8 September 2021.

## Pre-service training for teachers

The two main teacher education programmes offered by the Institute of Teacher Education (IPG), which are the Post-Graduate Diploma Programme (PDPP) and Bachelor Degree of Teaching Programme (PISMP) integrate courses that address equity in education. They are offered in PDPP through the compulsory courses of sociology and sociology of education, social stratification and social institutions, socio-cultural development at schools, and social mobility and changes in education. Similarly, PISMP offers a course where students learn to understand and be aware of the sociocultural diversity in Malaysia, and be able to create a cultural friendly classroom environment.

In line with the ministry's aspiration to formulate measures and plans to empower teachers and educators for digital learning, the ministry has integrated digital learning and awareness of Industrial Revolution 4.0, as well as New Pedagogies for Deep Learning (NPDL) to provide prospective teachers with the knowledge and skills to produce meaningful learning through the latest digital technology.

## Lessons learnt

A few important lessons learnt from the past two years in determining the most feasible and accessible education system to all students regardless their situations:

i. The current COVID-19 crisis has obliged the ministry to adopt alternatives to face-to-face teaching and learning, in which the education system has moved to activities online, offline, off-site and the use of Didik TV to allow instruction to continue despite school closures;

ii. The crucial stages in supporting students using digital learning effectively and making the most of new technologies for learning. There is also persistent concern of the ministry in order to maintain students' positive attitudes towards learning, self-regulation and intrinsic motivation to learn, especially should online learning continue indefinitely. Furthermore, the concern for the absence of universal access to infrastructure (hardware and software) especially among the disadvantaged students at various levels and situations;

iii. The lack of adequate preparation among teachers and students for the unique demands that online teaching learning require, which sometime may pose potential stress to both parties in trying to conduct meaningful teaching and learning situations, hence more teacher and students support are needed;

iv. The need for different forms of support from parents and families, including parental emotional support are found to be crucial for the development of positive attitudes towards learning and can ensure students' attitudes to maximise their ability to make the most of online learning opportunities. The ministry recognises that some families are struggling to provide such support because of lack of conducive home environment for learning, a lack of basic infrastructure to support online learning, lack of time, insufficient digital skills or lack of curricular guidelines by their children' schools; and

- The need to support teachers in incorporating technology effectively into their teaching practices and methods and help students overcome some of the difficulties that are associated with online, offline or off-site learning environment. Providing and supporting teachers' training about the use of digital resources for pedagogical practices and promoting teaching practices adapted to this context is key to ensure that ICT is leveraged effectively.

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