

A Review on Public-Private-Partnership in English Language Teaching and Learning

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Abstrak: *Ulasan ini adalah untuk menetapkan trajektori bagi kerjasama awam-swasta terutamanya melalui Program Sekolah Amanah (TSP) bagi mempermudah reformasi pendidikan di Malaysia. Ini adalah rentetan penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris yang masih lemah di kalangan murid selepas menamatkan alam persekolahan menengah. Cabaran menerapkan amalan terbaik untuk memastikan kejayaan reformasi pendidikan dalam kalangan guru juga turut diberikan perhatian. Selain keberhasilan TSP, turut diketengahkan adalah kejayaan-kejayaan kerjasama awam-swasta yang sedia terjalin antara Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia (KPM) dan sektor swasta. Usahasama ini menuntut sokongan berterusan terhadap murid dan guru dalam usaha melahirkan guru yang dilengkapi dengan pelbagai kemahiran dan pengetahuan pedagogi serta murid yang diperkaya dari segi bahasa dengan repertoir linguistik yang hebat. Kepentingan jalinan hubungan yang baik antara pihak KPM dan swasta ke arah sistem pendidikan yang lebih dinamik, progresif dan berdaya saing khususnya dalam pembaharuan kurikulum Bahasa Inggeris amatlah penting. Tambahan pula, KPM telah merangka laluan untuk meneruskan kerjasama awam swasta ke arah kecemerlangan akademik yang lebih tinggi. KPM disarankan untuk terus memberi lebih banyak ruang kepada PPP untuk membantu sekolah secara aktif. Sinergi ini mungkin mampu memberi wajah baharu dalam merencanakan inovasi dunia pendidikan yang semakin mencabar ini.*

Kata kunci: Program Sekolah Amanah, Amalan Terbaik, Kerjasama Awam Swasta, Pengajaran Dan Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris, Reformasi Pendidikan

Abstract: *The purpose of this review is to set the trajectory for the establishment of public-private-partnership especially through Trust Schools Programme (TSP) to facilitate education reforms in Malaysia. The review entails the current status quo of post-secondary hiccups specifically on English instructions and language acquisition. Issues on acceptance on best practices which have sparked off some challenges that requires a proper coping mechanisms and some pertinent issues surrounding best practices and teachers' acceptance of reform are presented. The review also acknowledges the readily established partnerships between MoE and private sectors, besides TSP, which is a promising pursuit. It provides a narrative that underscores the push for continuous support for pupils and teachers in the effort to produce teachers whom are equipped with various skillset and pedagogical know-how and pupils whom are linguistically enriched with great linguistic repertoire. This paper rounds out the importance of reaching out to those in the private to have a stake in the effort towards a more dynamic, progressive and competitive education system particularly in the reform of English curriculum. The literature has shown that MoE has been charting pathways for interested*

business corporation towards greater academic excellence. This review portrays endless possibilities of teaching and learning excitement shall the gatekeeper (MoE) allow more room for PPP to be actively assisting schools. This synergy may capture the possible misinterpretations in the execution of on-site learning which therefore hinders schools from achieving their intended goal.

Keywords: Trust Schools Programme, Best Practices, Public-Private-Partnership, English Teaching and Learning, Education Reform

1. Introduction

A closer look at the two guiding curriculum principles in 21st century in Standards-Based English Language Curriculum by Ministry of Education (2018) that is currently being used emphasises on preparing pupils for the real world as well as readying them to acquiring global competencies. Hence, braving this era of fast-paced digital advancement, public-private-partnership (PPP) strategies are deemed imperative to bridge the gap between breaking the cocoon of working in the analogue world to embracing and ushering in the new epoch of logarithmic, cybernated and automated era. Business corporation alongside teachers may equip pupils with necessary skills to ensure that they will not enter the work force with disadvantage. Business corporations partaking in education is a realistic and indispensable intervention as it is utilitarian in nature amidst Education 4.0 and Industrial Revolution 4.0. The shift from Education 3.0 that values rote-learning and reading-writing-arithmetic method to Education 4.0 which aims to encourage the development of soft skills like teamwork and lifelong learning should enable pupils to think critically, solve issues, and collaborate. However, in addition to the digital technologies advancement that are needed for Industry 4.0, the transformation is not without difficulties for the educational system (Joshi, Kumar, Bharany, Saini, Kumar, Ibrahim, Abdelmaboud, Nagmeldin and Medani, 2024). The business corporation could help in re-aligning the curriculum to meet the demand of the industry by creating a purposive lesson for the pupils to prepare them to be effectual community of practice in the real world. The MoE (2023) had in fact initiated this effort through smart partnership with various sectors in the earlier establishment of smart schools in Malaysia.

2. Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) in Malaysia Education System

Malaysia has been enjoying the positive impact of public-private-partnership. As the country tiptoed and embarked on its journey into digitalisation era, since 2000, the private initiatives engagement with the MOE has been established particularly in creating and providing workforce with ICT expertise. Besides setting up computer laboratories throughout the nation, this smart partnership has thrived in other projects like Schoolnet, GSB Technology Learning in School, Samsung Digital Classroom School Adoption Programme, K-Perak E-Learning Cluster No.1 (KPEC), Cyberkids Camp, e-Learning Project for Life 2 Syarikat Apple, IBM Programme– Kidsmart Early Learning for pre-school, Education Project and dan Human Capital NCIA-KPM(Edu Citi-Hostel) and Value Add Microsoft for “Upholding Bahasa Malaysia and Strengthening the English Language” Programme (Ministry of Education, 2023).

PPP engagement that centres on improving the English mastery among pupils in Malaysia is also reflected in a programme by Yayasan Petronas (2024) that aims at Transforming English in Terengganu (TRENGLISH). It is initiated by the State Government of Terengganu, this programme boosts English communication skills among local students. Since 2015,

PETRONAS has channelled more than RM1.3 million to 40 secondary schools and 10 primary schools all over the state. The initiatives consist of the Mega TRENGGLISH camp, circulation of magazines, newspaper insertions and TRENGGLISH activities in schools. Besides, FBS, a leading global broker and SUKA Society (CSR Malaysia, 2024) organised the English Children Camp and enriched the lives of indigenous children in the Perak State of Malaysia. Guided by its commitment to creating positive change in communities, FBS sponsored English Children Camp syllabus and contributed to the foundation of early learning in the region.

Apart from that, Let's Score 'A' Workshop by Great Eastern Life Assurance (Malaysia) Berhad (CSR Malaysia, 2024) helped the underprivileged children to succeed in their public examination through the PT3 workshop that covers Mathematics and English subjects whilst the SPM workshop covers four (4) subjects namely Mathematics, English, Sejarah and Bahasa Melayu. Joining the effort is RHB Banking Group (CSR Malaysia, 2024) with its RHB X-Cel Star Scholarship Programme. The programme includes putting the students through structured and holistic capacity building sessions such as presentation and communication skills, English courses, leadership training and mentor-mentee arrangements.

This partnership allows government to save the cost of system development, improved overall performance of government agencies, facilitate in data and resource sharing, enhance skills, knowledge and expertise, reduce disparities between more capable and less capable agencies in developing IT applications, coordinate government agencies in the development of IT and contribute to overall national development and economic recovery (Ministry of Education, 2023). Working out on a feasible, realistic educational plan by synergising with the world of corporate should be the focal substance of discussion moving forward. Ultimately, the success stories of the readily established partnerships between MoE and private sectors inspires the study on the discernment of LeapEd initiatives in the teaching and learning of the English language for Sarawak secondary schools.

Driven by the belief that English education is the practical key in successfully transforming lives of many by providing pupils with access to joining the global market during post-secondary phase, preparing them with a solid foundation by offering every possible assistance when they are learning in their secondary schools is vital. Grappling the reality of today's English in the presence of Education 4.0 with the emergence of Industrial Revolution 4.0 demands, the complexity of language education policy in dealing with the divisive opinion on the importance of English mastery has become a chasm that breeds expected apathy among English teachers. LeapEd initiatives catapult the redirection of English reform through congruent language management that captures the crucial dimensions of bilingual education typology.

According to Mackey (1970) as cited in Spolsky (2007) the reform includes varieties of language, year or level of instruction, amount of time allocated in the weekly schedule, medium, topic or subject that provided initial education in the vernacular with gradual transition to English as witnessed in the history of English education development in Malaysia. Spolsky (2007) signified that in the aspect of language reform with PPP engagement, such intervention that aims at adding a language cultivation component on top of the use of local or home variety as language of instruction commonly incur the extra expense and trouble of implementation. As far as language management is concerned, Spolsky (2007) connotes that this sets the inevitable bridge between two kinds of language management in managing speakers, what Kloss (1969) labelled status planning and modifying a language or corpus planning.

One of the most promising and successful PPP in education is Trust Schools Programme. U.S Charter Schools, U.K Academics and Sweden's Voucher System are the sources of inspiration for TSP establishment (Mayberry, 2015). U.S Charter Schools operate independently of traditional public-school systems and have more autonomy in curriculum, staffing, and budget management. It receives public funding but often less than traditional public schools. It has flexibility in regulations and adherence to charter agreements. Interestingly, U.S Charter Schools demonstrated varied performance outcomes; some studies show improvement while others highlight disparities. Meanwhile, U.K Academies is funded by the central government in the UK and it enjoys the autonomy over staffing, curriculum, and school management. It is subjected to government oversight and inspections but it may form academy chains for economies of scale. U.K Academies however has some concerns about privatization and equity issues.

On the other hand, Sweden's Voucher System according to Mayberry (2015) is country-wide reforms to dismantle tightly regulated education system. It introduced vouchers to promote competition and parental choice and encouraged the establishment of independent schools funded publicly but operated privately. However, Sweden's Voucher System experienced significant decline in performance and challenges related to privatisation. While all three systems share goals of improving education and addressing inequalities, they differ in their implementation methods, funding mechanisms, and levels of autonomy and oversight. Additionally, each system has faced its own set of challenges and criticisms, highlighting the complexities of education reform. Besides, teaching staff recruitment is under MoE's jurisdiction unlike Charters and Academies (Mayberry, 2015).

For TSP, as the Programme Operator, LeapEd (2024) has been actively involved in improving the quality of education in Malaysia since 2010 through the District Transformation Programme-AMAN (DTP-AMAN), Islamic School Enhancement Programme (ISEP), Ground-up School Transformation (GUSTO) programme, Program Sekolah Transformasi (PreSTasi), Supporting Remedial English Students in Primary Schools (ESRI), CyberWira and TSP. This award-winning social enterprise thrives in being the Malaysia's first homegrown Education Service Provider and rejoices in transforming the education programmes and projects that support the system, school leaders, teachers, students, parents and the wider community (LeapEd, 2024).

With Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013 – 2025 (MEB, 2013) and the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as their framework, LeapEd is motivated to embed sustainable education practices in their endeavour to equip pupils with 21st century competencies. Honing in on whole-school transformation and pupil-centred learning, LeapEd received an unconditional support from Yayasan AMIR and MoE through their strategic PPP benefiting over 239,681 students, 11,235 teachers and 1290 schools across 15 states nationwide (LeapEd, 2024). Yayasan AMIR (2021) stated that the foundation has been working with various other corporations like Khazanah Nasional, Yayasan Hasanah, Yayasan DayaDiri, Westports Malaysia, UEM Group Berhad, Petronas, Yayasan Pahang, Tenaga Nasional Berhad, *Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu* Perlis and LeapEd Services Sdn. Bhd. to accelerate the development of a holistic educational experience for children in Government schools via the TSP.

Assessment for Learning Skills and Differentiation Strategies for English Teachers (EFLA) for instance is one of LeapEd's groundbreaking online programme intervention that underpins all pupils learn through differentiation strategies that teachers put in practice. The staggering 96

percent of the course participants expressed that the contents of the online programme are useful to them. 94 percent felt that the discussion in EFLA is helpful in addressing their current situation in the English lesson delivery and therefore, 97 percent of these English teachers recommended EFLA to their colleagues and other teacher friends. Hence, LeapEd brought some solutions to the table.

LeapEd (2024) introduced the use of experiential learning to identify common student challenges in English to counter the stumbling blocks that held pupils back from making progress. To make data-informed decisions, LeapEd studied what data to collect, how to collect it, and what to do with it for English students. The data can be used to plan for level-appropriate activities and lessons that included the planning for the differentiated classroom by content, product and process. Differentiating activities for pupils at different levels allows teachers to knowing their pupils that served as the foundation of a well-run English classroom. LeapEd (2024) concluded that planning lessons that engage pupils at all levels of progress within the classroom completed the cycle of data, action, and tracking.

Besides EFLA, LeapEd (2024) introduces another feasible online programme that facilitates primary English teachers in designing and structuring appropriate learning opportunities called Supporting Remedial English Students in Primary Schools (ESRI) to address pupils' specific learning challenges based on the diagnosis drew from the tools, techniques and strategies recommended in ESRI. Within the bound of possibility in bridging the literacy and proficiency gap in the English classroom, this programme looks out for remedial English pupils whom are not given support out of the classroom. To reassure everyone equally learns in an English lesson, this virtual aid provides teachers with specific skills and tools to challenges that the pupils face and then, using a range of diagnostic tools and pedagogical strategies developed in ESRI identifies the root cause of the learning diversity among pupils in an English classroom and proposes some workable solution.

For a classroom with a large number of mixed ability children, LeapEd (2024) proposed teachers to devise tools and techniques to know specifically what each pupil's learning challenges are. Teaching grammar and vocabulary to mixed ability classrooms can be done by creating individual learning pathways through easy-to-use differentiation strategies. Knowing specific learning challenges for each student would be easy by tracking and monitoring student progress with ready-made tracking tools and techniques (LeapEd, 2024). Catering to all student needs in mixed ability classrooms and finding level-appropriate learning materials outside of the textbook required an understanding on how mixed ability classrooms work and planning to optimise student learning time (LeapEd, 2024)

Khazanah Nasional according to Mayberry (2015) has an unequivocal frame of mind on improving pupil outcomes and teaching skills among teachers within the existing system by utilising the existing resources provided by the MoE. This approach allows schools greater autonomy and has been most effective in raising standards with its more progressive approach to learning and classroom practice. Unlike Charters and Academies, Mayberry (2015) exposed that TSP exercises their autonomies only on curriculum, teaching and timetabling as follow:

- i. Curriculum: Schools can introduce new subjects on top of the existing curriculum and determine the most effective pedagogical approach
- ii. Timetabling: Schools can determine the minimum weekly timetable allocation for each subject and add teaching days in consultation with parents

- iii. Finance: The school leadership can manage the operational budget in line with the school improvement plan. In other words, they can allocate money to the areas where they think it is most needed
- iv. Human Resources: Hire additional teachers
- v. Pupil Admission Policies: Up to 20 percent of the intake can be selected
- vi. Procurement: Each school has the ability to manage and enter into contracts with outside suppliers and service providers

Mayberry (2015) stipulated that at the initial stage, on top of the resources channelled by MoE, the state investment fund allocated RM100 million to start up LeapEd besides financing the development of the teaching programmes for the initial ten schools selected for the TSP. Additional funds were raised to support the educational initiatives through a RM1 billion Islamic bond sale. Corporate sponsors were welcomed to fund the operations of LeapEd in developing the teaching and classroom pedagogy modules or materials. Centralising on teaching and learning transformation, LeapEd (2018) plays a vital role in discovering the new teaching approach which teachers in TSP enjoy during the intensive training sessions.

Through the innovative and revolutionary teaching pedagogies, pupils are expected to become more confident, be able to develop thinking skills, succeed in problem solving and become effectively bilingual. In anticipation of these realistic outcomes, the classroom dynamics by creating an effective learning environment that encourages a high level of engagement with pupils during lessons is the reflection of teachers' success in adopting the new pedagogies (LeapEd, 2018). In 2022, TS received one of its highest recognitions. TS was awarded "World Best School Prize: For Community Collaboration, Environmental Action, Innovation, Overcoming Adversity and Supporting Healthy Lives" Besides, SK Kempadang, Pahang, one of the schools under TSP that built an automated system to track student progress was ranked Global Top 3. TS was also listed in Global Top 10 through SMK Kampong Jawa, Selangor that experimented with breakout rooms and collaborative learning structures that offered close peer-to-peer support and ensured small group sessions.

3. Philanthropic Responsibility

The practice of exercising Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) among the private sectors is not new. The close analysis on the CSR Pyramid by Carroll (1991) suggested that PPP engagement as a part of education is emanated from its philanthropic responsibility, pledging a shift from improving business performance to fulfilling moral obligation which aims at being good corporate citizen by the practice of subsidising educational activities, funding health initiatives, donating to communal causes and supporting community garden and even landscaping projects. These PPP initiatives enhance shareholder returns besides meeting the needs of other key stakeholders. Approaching PPP engagement philanthropically indicates that the business corporations pledge a shift from improving their business performance to fulfilling their moral obligation by establishing a strategic public-private-partnership (PPP) through "*a long-term contract between a private party and a government entity, for providing a public asset or service, in which the private party bears significant risk and management responsibility and remuneration is linked to performance*" (The World Bank, 2022). Figure 1 shows the pyramid of CSR by Carroll (1996).



Figure 1: Carroll 's CSR Pyramid
Source: Carrol (1996)

Carroll's "Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility" (1996) consists of four types of responsibilities. The foundation is based on economic responsibilities which is to ensure the corporation to be profitable. The second tier of the pyramid lays emphasis on legal responsibilities that required the businesses to conform to certain standards, rules or law. Being law abiding demanded the businesses to adhere to ethical responsibilities which is concerned with doing what is right even when the businesses are not compelled to do so by law. At the peak of the pyramid lies philanthropic responsibilities that is best described by the practice of sharing resources for social, educational, recreational or cultural purposes.

Anheier and Leat (2006) in turn, differentiated corporate philanthropy into charity or service, scientific philanthropy and new scientific philanthropy approach. Translating philanthropic approach in education spectrum fulfils the requirement by the International Organization for Standardization or ISO (2010), as this educational philanthropic responsibility is taken when poor welfare (dilapidated school building or damaged teaching aids) and poverty (homeless or malnourished pupils) have become the concern for the businesses. In situation like such, ISO (2010) mandated the organisation to:

- i. consider itself as part of, and not separate from, the community in approaching community involvement and development;
- ii. recognise and have due regard for the rights of community members to make decisions in relation to their community and thereby pursue, in the manner they choose, ways of maximizing their resources and opportunities;
- iii. recognise and have due regard for the characteristics, for example, cultures, religions, traditions and history, of the community while interacting with it; and
- iv. recognise the value of working in partnership, supporting the exchange of experiences, resources and efforts

Additionally, unusual community support from other organisations, such as parent associations, non-government organisations, community groups and the business community, whom view schools as essential to national growth and to the creation of the kind of society they wish to become amplify the need to welcome partners from the industry on board (Master, 2022). Co-designing or redesigning the learning system through PPP would see an improvement in the education reform as a whole. On that ground, Schnurbein, Seele and Lock (2016) clarified that "corporate philanthropy generally takes on three different forms: corporate giving, corporate volunteering and corporate foundations."

4. Enhancing Best Practices Through Public-Private-Partnership

Lockheed and Levin (2012) described a successful education system advocates the use of supportive teaching practices that ensure both pupils and teachers alike benefit the most from the learning environment. Teachers have to play a very important role in creating a stimulating and ideal climate to engage pupils' active participation during the lesson delivery. A favourable classroom setting where teachers provide constructive feedback promotes commitment to learning. Such an environment provides pupils with opportunities to demonstrate the learned skill sets in various or across multiple disciplines. By the end of the lesson, successful teaching and learning or impactful education according to Dewey (2002) are the product of the meaningful practice of enhancing learning or the acquisition of proficiencies, knowledge, beliefs, morals, and behaviour among pupils.

Accordingly, as the performance in English is concerning, espousing innovative strategies and reaching out for educational empowerment are the pre-requisite to be in tandem with the fast-evolving world of education. It is only reasonable that braving the today's education landscape in this post-pandemic era demands different and sturdier scaffolding if a more positive outcome is desired. Choi (2024) is in favour of autocatalytic process of learning through engagement, discussion and application of knowledge learned to real-world challenges, both local and global, to refine and expand it. This profound shift repurposes learning and knowledge acquisition through engagement with others while shaping the pupil's character. Successful and meaningful learning get on with engagement activities, where students interact with peers, teachers, and the broader community in which pupils share their knowledge, test their ideas, and refine their understanding.

OECD (2023) revealed that poor teacher quality is one of the barriers that hampers the efforts in producing quality lesson and desirable learning outcomes. This unfortunate report is expected as a consequence of recruiting teachers whom did not have the necessary qualifications. For a Bachelor of Education programme, with only three percent of offers were made to applicants with high performance, the other 93 percent have questionable ability to shoulder the responsibility of becoming a teacher (UNICEF Malaysia, 2019). Even with the allocation of RM58.7 billion for education sector, which is the largest in Budget 2024 (MoE, 2023), funding and distribution of resources for teacher development, strengthening educators' abilities, facilities improvement, and improving the school learning environment seem scarce (Goh and Wong 2014). Lazarus (1966) shared that when humans appraise a potential threat, a coping mechanism is employed to deal with the imminent threat. Therefore, to fulfil the Four Teaching Ethics Core and Standard 4: Learning and Facilitation set by MoE, identifying fitting and practical coping mechanism strategies like establishing public-private partnership in education has become the central discussion of this study.

Nawi and Nor (2023), Khair and Shah (2021) and Su and Ling (2020) expressed their apprehensions on the education reform that has taken place in Malaysia particularly on English language. The challenges range from curriculum, instructions, and assessments. Nawi et al (2023) exhibited their restlessness with Affendi and Aziz (2020)'s revelation that the teaching and learning of literature has received backlash due to its selection of texts, context, and themes as well as language style. All these issues related to literature made the teaching and learning of English in general difficult and uninteresting, thus leading to poor English competency among Malaysian students (Nawi et al, 2023).

In the case of CEFR-aligned curriculum for instance, despite the government effort of preparing a soft-landing approach through intensive cascade training and sharing of best practices for the teachers to familiarise themselves with the new reform, Khair et al (2021), anticipated some bumps on the road as some studies have surfaced, revealing a few conundrums and issues surrounding the CEFR integration onto the education system. In spite of numerous sharing session and training conducted for English teachers nationwide, teachers are still overwhelmed with helplessness once again when it comes to implementing the best practices shared during the workshop at their school. Grouling (2023) highlighted few reasons that contribute to the failure of best practices in facilitating the struggling teachers.

- i. It ignores context
- ii. It presumes a universal “best” for everyone
- iii. It’s reductive, evaluative, and subjective
- iv. It can mean wildly different things
- v. It favours similarity and the status quo

Su et al (2020) therefore proposed the important role of English Course Coordinator in the supervisory feedback environment, someone who can monitor the progress of the reform implementation to ensure the successful implementation of the English Language Reforms. This is where LeapEd’s role comes in handy. LeapEd has an excellent track record in ensuring the smooth delivery of English reform in TSP. For a start, Grouling (2023) advocated teachers to critically examining those practices and intelligibly exercise their judgment if the best practices make sense at the personal level and for the school context. Studying the change of dynamic of one’s teaching is also a consideration worth thought out of. Teachers have to first identify the problems that have to be solved and foresee the potential pitfalls for the teaching context as well as the suitability of certain practices to be incorporated alongside others. Grouling (2023) reminded that teaching is an exercise in humility, and “best practices” often frames it as the opposite, as something that can be “figured out.”

5. Summary

The review has rounded out the importance of reaching out to those in the private to have a stake in the effort towards a more dynamic, progressive and competitive education system particularly in the reform of English curriculum. The literature has shown that MoE has been charting pathways for interested business corporation towards greater academic excellence. This chapter portrays endless possibilities of teaching and learning excitement shall the gatekeeper (MoE) allow more room for PPP to be actively assisting schools. This synergy may capture the possible misinterpretations in the execution of on-site learning which therefore hinders schools from achieving their intended goal.

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