

Transformation of Malaysia's Higher Education System: Malaysia Education Blueprint (2015-2025)

Malini Ganapathy
School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Globalisation and technology have completely transformed sectors such as finance, services and telecommunications and the higher education sector will likely face the same transformation or as a matter of fact is already experiencing disruption from new models such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). Competition among universities is intensifying internationally for students, for staff, and for resources. New technologies are creating new opportunities for students to access higher education, and to close the equity gap for disadvantaged communities. The Ministry recognises the need for radical change, rather than incremental steps in order to meet the challenges of higher education in the 21st century. The Malaysian higher education system has matured significantly over the past few decades where the impact is realised through an increase in student enrolment, surge in global recognition on key dimensions such as research publications, patents, and institutional quality, as well as a focal destination for international students. These achievements are an attestation to the positive spirit and innovation of the Malaysian academic community, the support of the private sector and the profound contribution that the Government has made. Malaysia's commitment to being a world-class knowledge economy and a regional education hub propels the Ministry of Education towards ensuring that the education system has to perpetually evolve dynamically to stay aligned with global trends where disruptive technologies such as advanced robotics, the Internet of Things, and the automation of knowledge work are expected to dramatically reshape the business and social landscape from what it is today. Preparing Malaysian youth to thrive in this complex and ever-changing future will require an equally fundamental transformation of how the higher education system and higher learning institutions (HLIs) currently operate.

The birth of the Malaysia Higher Education Blueprint (2015-2025) consolidates the Ministry's overriding aspiration to create a higher education system that ranks among the world's leading education systems and that enables Malaysia to compete in the global economy. The newly launched Malaysia Higher Education Blueprint is grounded in the system's achievements to date and proposes major changes in the way the Ministry and system will operate in order to realise this goal. Specifically, the Ministry aspires to:

- Instil an entrepreneurial mindset throughout

Malaysia's higher education system and create a system that produces graduates with a drive to create jobs, rather than to only seek jobs;

- Construct a system that is less focused on traditional, academic pathways and that places an equal value on much-needed technical and vocational training;
- Focus on outcomes over inputs and to actively pursue technologies and innovations that address students' needs and enable greater personalisation of the learning experience;
- Harmonise how private and public institutions are regulated, and to transition from the current, highly-centralised governance system for HLIs to a model based on earned autonomy within the regulatory framework; and
- Ensure the financial sustainability of the higher education system by reducing HLIs reliance on government resources and asking all stakeholders that directly benefit from it to contribute as well.

The latest blueprint introduces 10 shifts in support of the five system aspirations that focuses on access, equity, quality, efficiency and unity. Education Minister II YB Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh had emphasised that "among the most important shifts were creating holistic entrepreneurial and balanced graduates. This is important because we want better quality students and lecturers in the coming years. Besides that, the blueprint will also give more autonomy to universities, besides providing them with more sustainable financial management." The other shifts include higher learning talent excellence; nation of lifelong learners; quality of technical and vocational education and also training graduates; financial sustainability; empowered governance; innovation ecosystem; global prominence; globalised online learning; and transformed higher education delivery.

The shifts outlined in the Malaysia Education Blueprint are ambitious and geared towards delivering a comprehensive and necessary transformation of the higher education system. It is pivotal that the Ministry takes the lead in this transformation by role modelling the transformation itself. By leading the way, the Ministry can be a catalyst for transformation not only among private and public HLIs, but the entire Malaysian civil service. These changes—sequenced over three waves—aim to build successively on one another as the system's capacity and capabilities, and

the readiness levels of HLIs improve. The first wave will focus on establishing the building blocks for the transformation; the second wave will introduce more structural improvements to accelerate the pace of change; and finally, the third wave will strengthen the global prominence of Malaysia's higher education system. It is only through the collective efforts of every single stakeholder that the higher education system can be transformed to prepare Malaysians for the challenges and opportunities of an ever-changing world.

“By leading the way, the Ministry can be a catalyst for transformation not only among private and public HLIs, but the entire Malaysian civil service.”

The Malaysian higher education system needs to undergo comprehensive transformation if it is to rise to meet the nation's ambitious vision and aspirations. The transformation is envisioned to occur over a period of 11 years, and is a process of great complexity in both breadth and depth. A well-conceived plan is only the starting point as the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) will not succeed without effective implementation and monitoring of its sustainability. The Ministry of Education also cannot successfully deliver without the commitment and collaboration of relevant stakeholders and HLIs. Higher education delivery encompasses all facets of the Ministry of Education functions, from formulating policies and regulations, to implementing programmes and overseeing higher education institutions. The holistic blueprint is more outcome-driven rather than process-driven where it is pertinent that the organisational structure, operating model, key processes, and internal capabilities of the Ministry all function efficiently and effectively to ensure the smooth facilitation of its delivery.

Four principles will guide the Ministry in the transformation of the overall delivery system for higher education in Malaysia:

1. Focus on outcomes and performance – The Ministry will focus on ensuring delivery of outcomes and performance, beyond just inputs, resources and processes. This is to ensure greater return on investment as well as faster tangible results to the *rakyat*;
2. Involvement of relevant stakeholders – The Ministry will continue to communicate and to engage extensively with stakeholders throughout the implementation of the MEB (HE), including students, parents, the academic community, Ministry staff, and employers;
3. Greater transparency for greater accountability – Stakeholders will have access to regular and

transparent information about progress against the MEB (HE). This will lead to more accountable and more responsive implementation; and

4. Clarity in roles and expectations – The success of the MEB (HE) requires all relevant parties to contribute, to play their respective roles and to deliver on their commitments, including the Ministry, HLI leadership, university boards, and relevant government agencies.

The holistic blueprint is more outcome-driven rather than process-driven and in order to ensure that the system is not overtaxed, the ministry has carefully planned the strategies and initiatives of the 10 shifts across three waves. The first wave focuses on establishing the building blocks of transformation; the second introduces more structural improvements to accelerate change and the third strengthens the global prominence of Malaysia's higher education system. Basically, the HLIs are encouraged to transform graduates into job creators instead of job seekers while facilitating the grounds for producing students who are knowledgeable in their respective areas and practise good moral values. The Minister of Higher Education Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh said that “the government wishes to bear graduates brave enough to be creative and independent in coming up with their own field of work”. At the same time, universities should also think of ways on how students may learn courses or subjects that are always relevant to the demand in career opportunities. There is a leeway created for HLIs to facilitate more flexible learning opportunities, increase quality benchmark of available programmes and create awareness and interest towards learning among the society while simultaneously promote lifelong learning. The Ministry's role takes a back step in terms of giving more autonomy to HLIs while they regulate the system and policies. This will result in HLIs to develop the capacity to churn out graduates who are marketable and are able to reflect benchmarks of global standards. The main emphasise of the current blueprint is to vie for excellence as Malaysia is in the top 10 destination for international students. There is a pressing need to elevate the nation's higher education brand even further, from an attractive destination known for good value for money and quality of life, to one that is also recognised, referred to, and respected internationally. The significant impact of MOOCs and online learning broadens the horizons of quality content, improve the standards of teaching and learning, decrease the cost of delivery and collectively heighten opportunities in terms of networking and collaboration among Malaysian academics in the context of the global community. Much has been done, but the new education framework will see the nation stay abreast, if not ahead, of global trends if we can achieve the goals with these 10 shifts situated in the Malaysia Higher Education Blueprint (2015-2025).

CALLING FOR ARTICLES

Guidelines on Submission of Manuscripts

1. Manuscripts should be written in English, typed using Times New Roman 12 point font, and double spaced on only one side of A4 size paper with ample left and right margins on Microsoft Word.
2. The length of the manuscripts should not exceed 1,500 words. An abstract of about 150 words should be included.
3. Authors are responsible for obtaining permission to use any published material. The publisher shall not be held responsible for the use of such material.
4. Citations in the text should include the author's last name and date of publication, e.g. (Ashton, 2001). If quotations are used, page numbers should be indicated, eg. (Ashton, 2001: 30).
5. Endnotes may be used.
6. Include tables and figures within the text. Number tables and figures consecutively.
7. The reference list should be arranged in alphabetical order and should include only works cited in the text.

Examples:

Altbach, P. G. (2004). *The costs and benefits of world-class universities*. Retrieved 23 October 2005 from <http://www.aaup.org/publications/Academe/2004/04jf/04jfalbtb.htm>

Mahadhir, M., Ting, S. H. and Carol, D. (2006). *Learning materials and human factors: Looking at the chemistry in the genre-based approach classroom*. Proceedings of 2nd Science and Art of Language in Teaching International Conference, 'Change: Bridging Theory and Practice', 20 - 22 November, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Pulau Pinang.

Watkins, D. (1998). A cross-cultural look at perceptions of good teaching: Asia and the West. In J. J. F. Forest (Ed.), *University teaching: International perspectives*. New York: Garland.

Wolfe, R. N. and Johnson, S. D. (1995). Personality as a predictor of college performance. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, Vol. 2, 177-185.

Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

8. All submissions should include a cover page containing the title, name of author(s), designation, affiliation, mailing/e-mail address and telephone/fax number. A brief biographical note of the author(s) should also be included.
9. Manuscripts submitted must not be those already published or those which have been offered for publication elsewhere.
10. Manuscripts received will be acknowledged but not returned.
11. Submission of a manuscript will mean that the author agrees to transfer copyright of his/her article to the publisher if and when the article is published. Authors who wish to send their articles to be published elsewhere should seek the written agreement of the publisher.
12. Manuscripts may be sent via e-mail attachment (ipptn@usm.my or munir@usm.my) or via post together with the compact disk.

The *Bulletin of Higher Education Research* welcomes short articles, opinions, comments and information about people and events related to higher education in public and private institutions in Malaysia and abroad.

Please address your correspondence to:

The Editor-in-Chief
Bulletin of Higher Education Research
National Higher Education Research Institute
Universiti Sains Malaysia
Block C, Level 2, sains@usm
No. 10, Persiaran Bukit Jambul
11900 Bayan Lepas, Penang
MALAYSIA

Tel: 604-653 5758 (Administration);
653 5760 (Research)

Fax: 604-653 5771

Web: <http://www.ipptn.usm.my>

E-mail: ipptn@usm.my

Editorial Board

Advisor:

Munir Shuib (Universiti Sains Malaysia)

Editor-in-Chief:

M. K. Kabilan (Universiti Sains Malaysia)

Editors:

1. Koo Yew Lie (Charles Darwin University & SOAS University of London)
2. Sarjit Kaur (Universiti Sains Malaysia)
3. Qiang Zha (York University)
4. Malini Ganapathy (Universiti Sains Malaysia)
5. Susan Mayson (Monash University)
6. P. Pushkar (Birla Institute of Technology and Science)
7. Chuah Kee-Man (Universiti Malaysia Sarawak)
8. Robyn Phillips (University of Tasmania)
9. Jasvir Kaur (La Trobe University)

Assistant Editors:

1. Noraini Mohamad Yusof (IPPTN)
2. Ooi Poh Ling (IPPTN)
3. Clarene Tan Chern Chieh (IPPTN)

Graphics and Layout:

Noraini Mohamad Yusof (IPPTN)



Materials in this bulletin may be reproduced. Please cite the original source of publication. Opinions expressed here may not necessarily reflect the views of IPPTN.