

The Importance of Psychological Development for Malaysian Students in Facing Vision 2020

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to discuss the importance of psychological development for Malaysian students in facing Vision 2020. Firstly it introduces the students and scenario of development in Malaysia. Secondly it elaborates the psychological impacts of national and global development such as the impact of economics, social and political development on students' psychological development and well-being. Thirdly it discusses the importance of psychological development for students in preparing them for vision 2020. Fourthly it highlights the preparation for students' psychological development and its challenges to Malaysian Government. Lastly it suggests the ideas and approaches in preparing (overcoming) the students' psychological development in facing the Vision 2020.

Keywords: Adolescence, counseling, mental health, personality, psychological development.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT FOR MALAYSIAN STUDENTS IN FACING VISION 2020

Vision 2020 is a National Mission that had been translated into the developmental agenda in Malaysia. Within 15 years time from now the success of Vision 2020 depends on the present students. This is because they are the key players of Vision 2020 and without them there is no continuation of this National Mission. As a result, preparing the students for Vision 2020 is a great challenge to the present government.

The Malaysian government in its Eight and Ninth Malaysian Plan (Rancangan Malaysia) putting students' development as a major focus in human capital development [3,4]. The development of students towards Vision 2020 should be a total development. It should cover both, the development of quality of human intellect and skills and also the psychological development. They are important in preparing students to face the developmental change to achieve Vision 2020.

Therefore, this paper discusses the importance of psychological development for Malaysian students in facing Vision 2020. Firstly it introduces the students and scenario of development in Malaysia. Secondly it elaborates the psychological impacts of national and global development such as the impacts of economics, social and political development on students' psychological development and well-being. Thirdly it discusses the importance of psychological development for students in preparing them for vision 2020. Fourthly it highlights the preparation for students' psychological development and its challenges to Malaysian Government. Lastly it suggests the ideas and approaches in preparing (overcoming) the students' psychological development in facing the Vision 2020.

1. Students' excellence and national development in Malaysia

Students' development is closely related to students' excellence in academic and human potential. This is because the focus of the developmental agenda is to prepare the students to be the excellent heirs of Malaysian nation. Besides that, through education students are prepared to be a good human capital in playing effective roles to ensure the continuity of Malaysia development and advancing.

Therefore, the form knowledge and skills that need to be provided to the students are vital to prepare them to be good human resources. It means the government is preparing the balance development of students to ensure the balance human quality and good conducts [3,4]. For instance, the Deputy Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak is inspiring the nation to develop *glokal* Malay personality (and also *glokal* Malaysian personality) in facing the world advancement. Besides that, the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi himself advocates the towering Malay personality (and also towering Malaysian personality) to be developed in building Malaysian nation [8, 18, 19].

The seriousness of the government in developing good citizens can be traced back through allocation of budget in its five years Malaysian Plan [3,4]. For instance, the focus is given to develop a quality education, family, youth and status of social economy of Malaysian citizens. The responsibility of the government is also translated to its agencies such as the roles of Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and Ministry of Youth and Sports.

In addition, the evidence can be seen with the numerous growth of public and private institutions of higher learning (IHL) to ensure the opportunity to furthering study are assessable for every Malaysian. Besides that, in primary and secondary education, government is preparing good students development with *sekolah bistari* or *sekolah wawasan*. In fact, the government is trying to integrate this multiracial nation to unity. And the technical and vocational training are also not neglected by the government in preparing the development of students holistically.

The role of government in developing the students is not ended at the secondary education. Malaysian government puts attention in developing students' quality to survive through National Services Program (Program Latihan Khidmat Negara) [4]. It is vital in molding the personality and human potential and also the spirit of patriotism among students.

However, a major concern to be tackled by the government is to define the quality of excellence in students in order to make it responds to and in line with Vision 2020. Therefore, the question is, should the definition of students excellence focuses only on academic excellence, or moral or *sahsiyah* excellence, or excellence personality only?

Why students are important? To understand the important of students, one needs to understand their roles to the nation. In fact Malaysian students are the legacy of Vision 2020. Therefore, they need to be molded in a proper way in order to ensure the continuity of the nation generally and the Vision 2020 specifically. Besides that, they are the agents of change in the community. As a result they should reflect the national inspiration and vision. In future national development, students will play a multiple roles for their nations. For instance, a role as politicians, businessman, policy makers, legislators, entrepreneurs, educators, administrators, the unskilled workers to the white collar labors, etc. Whoever they are, they are also contributing to the problems and decadence of the nation if they are not developed and socialized properly.

2. The psychological impacts of national and global development

There are a lot of physical impacts of socio-politics and economical development on students. Under the label of development students sometimes become the victims of national and international development. In fact, some students are involved in political conflicts such as in Indonesia, Thailand, and Korea etc. The physical impacts are the migration, pollutions, the burden of poverty and economic loss, political and economic conflict, unemployed and downsizing giving. All of these impacts influence their family life and relationship, and also change the family structures [6,15]. However, the most important thing is the impact of economics, social and political development on students' psychological development and well-being [6,16].

Living in a changing and rapidly developing nation call for a better psychological strength for the students. It calls for their adjustment and inner strength. This is because without proper social and psychological interventions the challenge of Vision 2020 is even greater than the present impacts of development. Here are a few of the psychological impacts of development on students.

The first impact is related to the socialization and identity development issues. The rapid social and political changes left the negative impacts behind them such as impacts of acculturation and assimilation. Therefore, students try to adjust their cultural identity and absorb the new culture. At this point the globalization and national development contribute to the one-culture or homogeneous culture and it is inevitable. Besides that, students also experienced identity confusion and role confusion in their adolescence development [5].

The second impact is related to well being and mental health issues. Development process demands the students to be able to cope with the new development and new environment. However, some of them fail to cope with this situation. As a result failure to cope with the environment and change contribute to mental health issues such as problems in adjustment, stress and suicide. This is because to some extent the development giving impacts to their quality of life [14].

The third impact is related to behavioral issues. As a result of failure to maintain their identity or without their inner personal strength, students tend to be involved in negative activities. These negative activities reflect in their behavior such as antisocial and vandalism and also the dysfunctional or malfunction behavior [5]. If these situations continuously occur the students will not be able to contribute for the betterment of the society and nation. And the worst thing is they will be the obstacle of the achievement of Vision 2020.

3. The importance of psychological development for students in preparing them for Vision 2020

The psychological development of students is related to the development of students' personal/individual quality and personality growth. This involves their development of personality, thinking, behavior and emotion.

The importance of psychological development

(a) Personality

Firstly the psychological development is vital in developing a good and sound personality [5]. This is because it prepares students with inner strength that will make them able to contribute for the national development. In fact, the positive individual personality can be built and developed. The government is putting effort in developing proper personality for Malaysian such as the idea of *Glokal Malay* and the idea of “towering Malay” personality [8, 18, 19]. Therefore, through psychological development the positive norms and values can be internalized and socialized in students’ personality.

(b) Thinking

The psychological development is also focus on cognitive development. Therefore it prepares students with proper cognitive issues such as mental picture, mental health, positive thinking, and critical, creative, and innovative thinking. These cognitive developments are vital in making the students utilize their cognitive ability in the personal life and also for the betterment of the nation.

(c) Behavioral changes

The third importance is psychological development contributes to behavioral changes. Through proper education method such as social learning and conditioning a proper behavior can be taught, learned, modified and used. It can be achieved through conditioning principles such as shaping, modeling and reinforcement [5]. At the end a proper psychological development related to positive and functioning behavior will be the end result.

(d) Emotion

The fourth importance of psychological development is in helping students to understand and manage their emotion. This is because if emotion is fail to be tackled and canalized properly it could lead to self destruction and at the same time will affect others. Through proper psychological development, emotional issues such as anger, stress, anxiety and other psychological issues can be managed through anger management, stress management [5, 14]. And the most importance thing students must be able to develop a proper Emotional Intelligence or Emotional Quotion (EQ). This is because in daily life, students are not only dealing with their personal issues but deal with others and of course sometimes it is related to emotional issues with other individuals.

(e) Other psychological aspects (such as motivation and leadership)

The other importance of psychological development is related with other aspect such as motivation, psychological adjustment (related to role and status), issue of leadership development and other related aspects. All of these aspects are related to the importance quality of students’ psychological development for Vision 2020. Therefore students should master these psychological aspects.

4. The preparation for students’ psychological development for Vision 2020

In preparing students’ psychological development for Vision 2020, a few major questions need to be considered. First, what should be the objective of students’ psychological development in Malaysia? Second, what psychological skills need to be focused? And thirdly, what aspects of students’ self/personal development need to be improved?

Firstly, regarding the objective of students’ psychological development, its objectives are to build a psychological strength within the individual students. Therefore, the preparation should focus on building a strong identity, empowering self-esteem [see 9, 10, 11, 12, 13], and building the *jati diri* [17]. The objective also should focus on development of mentality and psychological wellbeing.

Secondly, regarding psychological skills need to be focused in students’ psychological development. The psychological skills such as the coping skills, stress management, psychological adjustment, leadership skills, awareness on the importance of mental health and psychological well being and last but not least stressing on the importance of the quality of life and healthy life style should be the focus too. They are vital tools in helping the students to manage their daily personal and situational issues.

Thirdly, the aspects of students’ self/personal development that need to be considered are decision making, problem solving, and interpersonal skills. By having these skills the students will be effective decision makers and the problem solvers in both decision making and problem solving. Indirectly it will improve their interpersonal skills and be better human beings in their social circle. As a result those skills must be equipped in students’ psychological development. The preparation of students’ self/personal

development also should cover four aspects. The aspects are identity and self, skills, leadership and patriotism and mental health.

For instance, in the aspect of identity and self development, students must be able to develop identity that suits the governmental agenda and aspiration. The other important psychological developments are the development of self-esteem and also *jati diri* [17]. These three elements are vital because they play a vital role in students and adolescence development.

In addition, the skills that help their psychological development must be put into consideration also. Those skills are coping with situational problems, stress management, coping change and development, and psychological adjustment. Besides that, aspect like leadership and patriotism must be not neglected. This is because the development of proper leadership skills is one of the important values added in preparing the students' development for a better nation building.

Lastly the preparation for students' self/personal development should also cover the aspect of mental health. This is because in order to be good citizens and contributing for the national development, students should be able to function well not only in implementing their roles as students but the other social roles such as sons, daughters, citizens, volunteers, civil servants, etc in the future. The other aspects are the aspect of psychological well being and quality of life. These two aspects are vital because they contribute to the betterment of national mental health in Malaysia. Because of its importance the issues of mental health can not be neglected from national development.

Challenges to Malaysian Government

There are numbers of challenges that possibly will be faced by Malaysian Government in preparing students' psychological development. The challenges are as follows:-

(a) Stimulate and catalyst students for paradigm shift

The first challenge is in stimulating and catalyst students for paradigm shift. At the students' side, are they willing and ready for change and preparing themselves to fit in the change and contribute to national change. In the other words, is government ready to stimulate students to change and make them ready to change for national development? At the side of government, are the agencies, strategies and methods to ensure students' paradigm shift is available?

(b) Forming Malaysian students identity

The second challenge is in forming Malaysian students' identity. Does it is easy and possible for the government to form Malaysian identity despite the various racial and ethnic groups available. In fact, it is a big challenge to transform Malaysian multiracial identity to single Malaysian identity. This is because there is not shortcut in forming Malaysian national identity crossing the multicultural boundaries.

(c) External influences

Besides that, external influences such as globalization, advancement of ICT, and peers do contribute challenge for the government to educate and molding the personality of Malaysian students. In fact, the students will get unnecessary information that will affect their mentality and idealism. It does not end at that point but also will influence the psychological development of the students.

(d) System and culture of learning

In addition, government is facing challenge in providing a good learning culture and system in its educational agenda. Therefore, students must be promoted not only toward the academic excellence but total development in their objectives of learning. Besides that, the government must ready to modify the existence educational system in order to fit in the students' psychological development through education. This situation will be a challenge for Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education in outlining the quality of students for Vision 2020.

(e) Providing conducive environment for students development

The next challenge for the government is in providing a conducive environment for students' psychological development in educational system. To ensure its achievement some unethical practices must be demolished such as eradicating negative norms practiced in civil services such as corruption, inefficiency, etc. Besides that, it does not only cover school and educational settings but also the community and family, peers setting holistically.

(f) Students / adolescents and social development

Moreover, government is responsible in ensuring the negative impacts of development on students are minimized. Therefore, in line with the development, the students' social problems and family and adolescent issues must not be neglected [2]. It must be put in as the main national agenda in ensuring the balanced development of students.

(g) Students and leadership

The next challenge for the government is in preparing the successors in leadership in ensuring the continuity of Vision 2020. As a result the young leadership must be trained and developed. To achieve this mission the challenge for the government is to internalize and mold leadership among young students. These leadership efforts will outline the quality of students and adolescents leadership for Vision 2020. In fact, this leadership is not only equipped with the academic strength but also psychological strength.

(h) Measuring students development achievement of Vision 2020

The last challenge for the government is in measuring achievement of students' development achievement for Vision 2020. In measuring the achievement government must develop proper measurement standard and tools that can tap the particular aspects of achievement. Besides that, the measurement tools /yardsticks are not only focused on students /adolescence but at the same time be able to check and balance the system. In the other words, it must be able to check and anticipating looping, able to provide feedback for betterment of students' development.

5. The idea and approaches in preparing (overcoming) the students' psychological development in facing the Vision 2020.

The preparation for students' psychological development should not only focus on the educational levels but also at the community levels. Therefore, the focus should cover a) areas of teaching in school and institutions of higher learning, b) motivational programs at school/ institutions of higher learning, c) motivational programs in community, d) guidance and counseling services at school and IHL, e) guidance and counseling services in community and f) mental health services in community.

(a) Teaching in school and institutions of higher learning

The basic understanding and knowledge of psychology should be taught in secondary schools. The basic principles of psychology such as motivation, cognition, emotion and behavior can be taught to help the students to understand themselves and others. At institutions of higher learning, this teaching will help them to understand themselves and preparing to provide proper services to people who need psychological services. Even in institutions of higher learning some psychology courses are taught in some public and private universities and colleges. However, the number of courses offered must be increased. Therefore, syllabus and curriculum on psychology must be available both at school and IHL.

(b) Motivational programs at school/ institutions of higher learning

Besides that, at the school and IHL levels, the psychological development of students also can be implemented through motivational programs. Motivational program such as camping, seminar, and workshop can prepare them to have psychological strength in building their individual characters and contributing to national youth development.

(c) Motivational program in Community

Besides that, at the community level, mass and scaled motivational programs are also vital tools in preparing the students' psychological development in facing the Vision 2020. It can be implemented from the rural and urban levels to the state and national levels.

(d) Guidance and counseling services at school and IHL

In addition, the psychological development of students also can be overcome by counseling strategies. The counseling can be implemented at school and also IHL. Therefore, the mechanism must be

made available to ensure the implementation of its role in delivering proper and efficient guidance and counseling services [1, 7].

(e) Guidance and counseling services in community

Besides that, counseling and guidance should not be limited at school or institutions of higher learning setting. It is also applicable at community setting. It does not only focus on psychological problem or crisis but also for personal development [1, 7].

(f) Mental health services in community

In complementing the guidance and counseling approach, the mental health services also can be implemented in helping the psychological development. The hospitals and community health care centers can provide in-patient and out-patient services. The concept of one stop center or day care centre also can be used in delivering mental health services in order to respond to immediate crisis and after-care mental health services. So it will help the students and adolescents deal with mental health issues such as psychological adjustment, depression, behavior problems such as conduct disorder and delinquency, and substance abuse [14].

6. Conclusion

Preparing the student for Vision 2020 is a big challenge to Malaysian government. This is because it demands for a comprehensive effort both its agencies and also the nongovernmental organizations. Therefore, in responding to this challenge the government should not only focus on the development of physical preparation but at the same time to balance the development with the development of psychological development within the students self.

Therefore, developing the students for Vision 2020 means to prepare them to be the leaders, good successors and at the same time to be good followers. This challenge calls for all parties such as the students, parents, educators, teachers, policy makers and other relevant individuals to work collaboratively in ensuring the best preparation of students to face the National Mission, Vision 2020.

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