

COMMENTARY PAPER

NEW MEDIA AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY: AN EVOLUTION (HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT)

(MEDIA BAHARU DAN KEMAHIRAN BERBAHASA INGGERIS: SATU EVOLUSI
(KONTEKS PENDIDIKAN TINGGI))

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Introduction

Education has always been the main focus for a country's economic growth. The education system of a country plays a crucial role in shaping the future of the nation as education is a vital catalyst in developing and generating skillful students; i.e. generation, who can confidently gain a competitive edge in this era of Information Communication Technology (ICT). The main aim is to inculcate students' critical thinking skills, effective communication skills as well as competence in English language communication skills. The most challenging task for the Malaysian educational system in the 21st century is in producing a workforce that is educated and skillful in all sort of aspects new technologies. The Malaysian government aims to increase the use of information communication and technology in the educational system. Technology should benefit the users and in education context, students are among who should have all the advantages. As the assigned ministry, Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) has structured plans strategically for the future of the educational system to enable students to face global challenges. Thus they need to enhance the infrastructure to ensure the integration of the facilities and methodologies of teaching, learning, research, management and administration of schools, colleges and higher education with an emphasis on the concept of e-learning, e-governance and e-community in all aspects of teaching and learning.

Since the Malaysia's Cabinet reshuffle in July 2015, MOHE has continuously working

real hard in empowering and strengthening the higher education field of Malaysia. With 20 UAs (Universiti Awam) under their eyes, these institution plays a big role and highly expected to place Malaysia at better world ranking from year to year. In 2015, MOHE has identified 5 top issues highlighted during stakeholder-students engagement which are; 1. Relationship with industry, including curriculum design and delivery, research and development, and funding, 2. Quality of graduates, such as communication skills and English proficiency, 3. Quality of higher learning institutions, including rankings, 4. Autonomy and financial sustainability of higher learning institutions, as well as financial accessibility for students, and 5. Ability to successfully implement the strategies and initiatives developed (Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025, 2015). This article will mainly focusing on the quality of a student; specifically the English language proficiency and how New Media will help in shaping a well-rounded generation.

As defined by Cambridge Dictionary, New Media is products and services that provide information or entertainment using computers or the internet, and not by traditional methods such as television and newspapers. It is a product that now essential and to use, one has to be proficient in the focused language. Language proficiency is one of the proposed student and graduate attributes mentioned in Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 and students at higher education level are expected to be proficient in Bahasa Malaysia and English besides mastering another foreign

language. Yet, to date, English language proficiency is still being the highlighted issue during stakeholder engagement with them. Many knows that Multimedia technology, information technology (IT) and information communication technology (ICT) had encroached the Malaysian universities and enhanced the field of teaching and learning. The infusion of IT and ICT into teaching and learning has modified and enhanced the traditional teacher-centred method of teaching that has been used for decades in Malaysia. The incorporation of multimedia technology seems to boost students' motivation, which leads to increased usage and proficiency (Noraïen Mansor *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, MOHE has structured a very well-planned blueprint for the Higher Education and one of the focused shift is to globalised online learning.

Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015 – 2025 (Higher Education)

Globalised online Learning is the 9th Shift of Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025. It has been describe that future online learning in the Malaysia higher education system is premised on global quality standards, improve access to higher learning and equity that ensures disadvantages groups are able to benefit from it. Thus, Ministry has pushed on Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) as the medium for online learning and make it accessible to all. Why MOOCs matters? There has been a big increase in Malaysia internet users between year 2000 to 2013 (Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025, 2015) and with this increase, it means opportunities for higher education to widen access, enhance teaching and learning quality, promoting Malaysia as the most affordable education and by that, English language proficiency of the student must and should improve.

MOOCs is Malaysia's national program and by doing that, Malaysia is the first country in the world to implement that ("Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia", n.d.). Having English as the medium, proficiency should and

able to improve students language proficiency. Interactive learning has a great impact in developing language development. MOOCs gives the freedom to the students to learn and educate them self on topics that interest them. This serve as platform for teacher-students communication from anywhere of this world and platform for discussion among mutual topic learners.

New Media: Aspiration for New Generation

MOOCs is among of the example of new media that is hopefully will help in solving the language proficiency dilemma in Malaysia's higher education besides having to increase the standard of higher education in Malaysia. Social media; for instance like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc., is proven in helping mastering English. Bosch (2009) and Kabilan *et al.* (2010) both agreed that Facebook is currently the leading social networking site and being recognized as a respectable e-learning platform. In fact, many studies proven that Facebook not only benefits the students, but also the teachers (Pempek, 2009; Roblyer, 2010).

Again, technology should benefit the users. Students can widen their perspective and broaden their knowledge. Educators are not limited to the old-school teaching method; restricted in classroom and computer laboratory. Internet offers unlimited opportunity of learning from any location for as long there is internet connection. MOHE should be given credits in always improvising the education in Malaysia. Many efforts has been done, funds has been distributed and by having the blueprint, it will transform Malaysia education to better standards.

Rankings are not only meant to generate competitiveness, but also to always inspire people to place themselves at better level. With new media widely implemented in Malaysia education, it is hope to curb issues in education, setting a better standard of education and Malaysia education will boost

and made Malaysia among the competitor in education hub.

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