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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS FOR REVITALIZING SCHOOLING IN MALAYSIA

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1. INTRODUCTION

Formal schooling in Malaysia began in 1816 with the establishment of the Penang Free School. Other schools were soon established in the Straits Settlements of Penang, Singapore, and Malacca, the Federated and the Unfederated Malay States. With the opening up of schools, the Malay Teachers College was established in Singapore in 1876-95, in Malacca in 1900, and in Tanjung Malim in 1922. The Malay Women Teachers’ College was established in Malacca in 1935. In 1923, the Sultan Idris Teachers’ College (SITC), Tanjung Malim, established the Department of Letters, which later became the Language and Literary Agency in 1956. The Translation Bureau of the Language and Literary Agency became the National Institute of Translation in the 1990s. The SITC became the Sultan Idris Education University in 1997. In the 1960s, and the Brinsford and Kirkby Teachers Colleges were established in England to cater for the training needs of Malayan teachers. From the 1960s, other teachers colleges were established in the various states of Malaysia. In 1979, the Malaysian Education Staff Training Institute (MESTI) was established to provide training for educational administrators. The field of educational administration, management, and leadership is approximately 50 years old. In Malaysia itself, the field of study of the art and science of education management is approximately three decades (Awang Had Salleh, 1980).

2. DEVELOPMENT OF POST SECONDARY COLLEGES, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

The development of education in Malaysia is directly interwoven with the planned national development agenda of the nation. Since independence in 1957, Malaysia has formulated eight development plans. During each five-year phase of the Malaysia Development Plan, many programs, projects, and activities were planned and implemented. In the education sector, most of the projects planned had to do with infra-structural development of schools, polytechnics, universities, and teachers training colleges. While most of the developments were funded by
allocation from the national budget, several large projects were undertaken by loans from such international agencies as the World Bank, of which include loans for development of buildings, the purchase and acquisition of equipment, and loans for training and staff development at Masters or Doctoral levels. The main institution in the country responsible for the Training of School Principals is Institut Aminuddin Baki (IAB) or, in English, the National Institute of Educational Management and Leadership (NIEMIL) (IAB, 1997b).

In 1957-2000, 27 teachers training colleges were established. These colleges provide general pre-service training to beginning primary school teachers as well as in-service training for practicing teachers. While most of the teachers training colleges provide general training, several of them specialize in particular subject areas, such as mathematics and science, language education, Islamic studies, sports, and technical and vocational education. As the education system develops, the teachers training colleges continue to provide not just more but a wider range and variety of programs of in-service training for teachers. There are also plans to offer training programs for teachers from private educational institutions and for teachers from other countries (Bajunid, 1998b).

Before the 1970s, there was only the University of Malaya catering for the higher education and higher level skill needs of the country. Then, very few Malaysians went abroad for higher education if they could not receive such funds from international agencies as the Colombo Plan Scholarship, Commonwealth Scholarship, or Ford Foundation Scholarship. In the 1980s, more and more Malaysians went abroad for higher education. There was a shift in the policy of higher education, moving away from the elitist British tradition towards the mass access to higher education of the American system. As there was an expansion of mass secondary education, the expansion of higher education followed. The second

IAB, initially called the MESTI, was established in 1979. The campus in Genting Highlands, Pahang, was built on a World Bank loan in 1979. Again in the late 1980s, a small sum of loan was allocated to the Institute for staff training programs, specifically to develop the corpus of relevant materials in the field of educational management and leadership. In the early 1990s, the Northern Branch of the institute was established and, in 1995, the Branch in Bintulu, Sarawak, was established. The City Campus or the Kuala Lumpur Branch of the Institute was established in 1998. Also, in the 1999-2000 period, the Principal's Institute, affiliated to the Faculty of Education, was established in the University of Malaya.

In the year 2000, it is estimated that there are approximately 5.5 million school children in Malaysia. Because of the population growth, there has to be the creation on annual basis of approximately 500,000 new school places for the first year of schooling accordingly. There are approximately 1,600 secondary schools and 7,200 elementary schools with additional numbers of remote and under-enrolled schools. There are approximately 300,000 teachers and 50,000 education support workers and several hundreds of civil service personnel in the educational system. There are several thousand small religious schools and other private schools throughout the country. In all, there are over 590 private colleges, 11 public universities, and 6 private universities. The figures indicate trends which are relatively stable but are not accurate to the unit because of the speed and dynamism of development. There are plans to establish several more public universities and to invite the establishment of more private universities in the next decade.