Education in Malaysia

Opportunities for Impact

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Education in Malaysia: Opportunities For Impact

Authored by Scope Group Sdn Bhd

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Contents

1. Background and objectives

1.1 Background

This report provides a high level overview of the opportunities for impact in the education sector in Malaysia. It builds on several months of informal research, exploring the hypothesis that whilst foundations provide highly valued support for education in Malaysia, there is further potential to increase impact through collective action.

There have been few initiatives to date to support foundations in developing a clear overview of the issues and opportunities in this sector. This report therefore aims to fill this gap and provide a platform for further action. Specifically, the objectives are to:

- **Identify prominent themes and develop an initial mapping of key issues and who is doing what where**

- **Identify a set of high impact social enterprises and NGOs in the education sector**

- **Inspire practical commitments to further action**

The research was conducted over a very limited (3 week) period and as such it aims to act as a catalyst rather than a comprehensive roadmap.

Photo credits: John Ong; Conny Sandland; The National Autism Society of Malaysia (NASOM) & Drypers

1.2 Methodology

Our methodology was based on a rapid literature review; a scan of some 40 foundations that support the education sector; a survey of nearly 100 NGOs and social enterprises (SEs); and focus interviews with a set of experts and practitioners. The diagram below gives an overview of our approach:

Methodology: overview

Stage 1 — Mapping issues; developing a draft framework

High level literature review ⋯ Expert interviews ⋯ Mapping of issues and prioritisation framework

Stage 2 — mapping and identification of NGOs/ SEs & foundations

Initial identification of education 40 foundations & 100 NGOs/SEs:

Further NGOs/SEs recommended by survey respondents

Screening NGOs/SEs for relevance

Issue survey by email or over the phone (in Bahasa Malaysia and English)

Identification potential high impact organisations

Face to face or detailed phone interviews with potential high impact organisations

Mapping of who is doing what and identification of high impact organisations

For further detail on our methodology and selection criteria, see Annex 1.

2. Education in Malaysia: overview and trends

2.1 Investment and consolidation

Over the past 50 years there has been significant investment in education in Malaysia, both by government and philanthropists. The Malaysian government has consistently prioritised this sector, with basic education expenditure in 2011 at 3.8% of GDP, significantly higher than the ASEAN average of 1.8%[1]. Education is also the most popular focus area for Malaysian philanthropists: a 2010 survey of Malaysian family philanthropists found that over 40% of donations were targeted at the education sector[2].

During this time, the government has succeeded in creating an integrated national system with strong central control. In 1950, 60% of the population had no schooling whatsoever and only 6% had secondary level education. By 2010, over 90% had at least primary level education, with 60% at secondary and 15% at tertiary level.

> *"Education in Malaysia has undergone tremendous development since independence in 1957. From a diverse and fragmented system based on communal needs, it has evolved into an integrated national system."*

> UN Country Team Malaysia, 2011, "Malaysia: The Millennium Development Goals at 2010"

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[1] Ministry of Education, 2012, "Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025
[2] UBS and INSEAD, 2011, "UBS–INSEAD Study on Family Philanthropy in Asia"

2.2 Education system brief overview

The Malaysian education system offers a pathway from early childhood to adulthood for nearly all citizens. The vast majority of schools are run by the state system from ages 6–17, with further state provision at pre-school, post-secondary and tertiary levels. The diagram below presents a basic overview of the system.

Malaysia education system overview[3]

Early years	Pre-primary	Primary school	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	Post-secondary	Tertiary
5 years *Age 0-4*	**1-3 years** *Age 4-6*	**6 years** *Age 6/7-12*	**3 years** *Age 13-15*	**2 years** *Age 16-17*	**1-2 years** *Age 18-19*	**1-5 years** *Age 18+*
•A range of private and govt-funded centres •Under the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MWFCD)	•Not compulsory •Government runs over 10,000 pre-schools through Ministry of Education, Ministry of Rural and Regional Development and a number of other Departments •Over 6,000 private pre-schools cater to higher income families	•96% enrollment •Compulsory, provided free by the state to 94% of children •2% enrolled in private schools •L1: years 1-3 •L2: years 4-6 **Primary School Achievement Test (UPSR)**	•91% enrollment •Becomes compulsory in 2015 •87% at state schools; 4% private •Additional "remove" year for those not meeting entrance **PT3 exam**	•82% enrollment •Becomes compulsory in 2015 •78% state schools; 4% private •Students select an Arts or Science stream based on their lower secondary results **SPM exam**	•Not compulsory; 2 pathways in the government system: •STPM (more demanding); 2 years •Matriculation (less demanding): 1-2 years; 90% of places reserved for Bumiputera students **Either: STPM or Matriculation**	•A range of government and private universities and technical colleges

2.3 Headline trends (1): participation rates

Participation rates are relatively high but not yet universal, especially at secondary level and for minorities:

- **Primary school enrolment grew from 85% in 1970 to over 95% in 2000,** but has failed to reach 100%[4]. UNICEF suggests that up to 125,000 children do not have access to primary education, whilst a 2009 study identified 44,000 school age children who had never attended school. Around 10% of these 44,000 children were Malaysian citizens, mainly from indigenous groups such as Orang Asli. The majority were children of refugees, asylum seekers, foreign workers and illegal immigrants[5].

- **15,000–25,000 children each year drop out of school between primary and secondary levels[6].** In 2005–9, 8–10% year 6 students did not continue to secondary school in the state system. Data is unclear, but it is estimated that 5% moved to the

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[3] Data in this diagram is taken from Ministry of Education, 2012, "Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025"

[4] UN Country team Malaysia, 2011, "Malaysia: the Millenium Development Goals at 2010"

[5] Educational Policy Planning and Research Division, Kuala Lumpur, 2009, "Study on Children without Official Identification Documents in Malaysia" and UNICEF "Reaching the Unreached" website: http://www.unicef.org/malaysia/children_primaryschool.html

[6] Extrapolated from UN Country team Malaysia, 2011, Ibid.

private system and the remaining 3–5% dropped out of school[7]. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many drop–outs may be children with disabilities. Young people themselves cite "lack of interest" as their main reason for dropping out, with more boys dropping out than girls[8].

- **Participation at upper secondary level is 82%, indicating that around 100,000 children per year drop out of school age 15.** Drop–outs are most likely to be from poor families: 75% of upper secondary school age children not in school come from households in the bottom 40% of income distribution[1]. The relatively low number and weak capacity of vocational training colleges is suggested by some as a key factor influencing the high drop–out rate.

The most immediate challenge is to increase participation at primary level to 100%, but the drop–out rate at secondary level is also a key issue

2.4 Headline trends (2): attainment levels

Attainment levels are similar to neighbouring Thailand, but struggling to improve further, as shown in the two charts below[9] which detail Malaysia's performance in international standardised tests.

Reading skills: "44% below minimum standard"
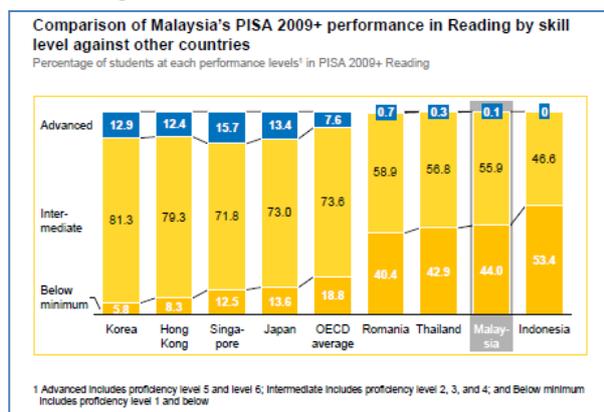
Maths & Science results dropped since 1999
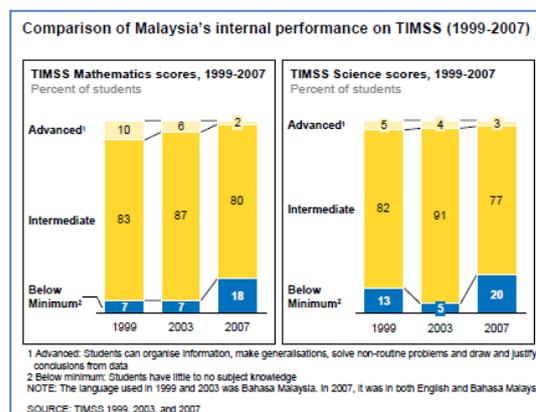
"15–year–olds in Malaysia are performing as though they have had three years' less schooling than [their peers in Singapore and other leading countries]"
Ministry of Education, 2012, "Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025"

2.5 Headline trends (3): attitudes within the system

There is a strong undercurrent of concern around the perceived lack of dynamism or creativity in the system. Almost all interviewees for this research highlighted a general level

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[7] Ministry of Education, 2012, Ibid.

[8] T. Patel, 2014 "Dropping out of school in Malaysia: What we know and what needs to be done", IDEAS

[9] The charts above are both taken from: Ministry of Education, 2012, Ibid.

of jadedness or despondency amongst teachers and school leaders within the public system.

This point is highlighted in the government's recent Blueprint and various initiatives have been launched to tackle the issue: for instance, the government's "School Improvement Programme" (SIP) and initiatives through the National Blue Ocean Strategy and 2013–2025 Blueprint to reduce the administrative burden on teachers. However, overall levels of morale and enthusiasm in the system remain low.

Both government and NGOs have launched a range of initiatives to tackle jadedness amongst teachers and school leaders, but the issue remains widespread

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Unmet needs for vocational training

Vocational schools accounted for only 2% of all secondary enrolments in 2011, falling from 62,000 students in 2008 to 52,000 in 2011[1]. The need for a large-scale increase in the provision and quality of vocational training is an issue that is emphasised strongly in the government's Blueprint and was raised by many of the interviewees for this research.

The issue is hugely significant for two reasons:

1. The mismatch between employer expectations and the skills of young people reported in many industries

2. The hypothesis that improving provision of vocational training would help to tackle the huge secondary level drop-out rate

Over the next five years, the government plans to scale up provision of vocational training and practical work placements through partnerships with the private sector. However, the needs for formal training as well as informal career counselling are so great in this area that there is significant additional scope for non-profit involvement as well. Nevertheless, there are relatively few non-profits providing vocational training – and those that do tend to focus specifically on groups with learning disabilities.

*"Interviews with parents, teachers, and principals suggest that some boys **struggle with the mainstream academic curriculum and would probably benefit from greater access to vocational training or more applied coursework. However, the limited number of places in vocational and technical schools prevents this from occurring"** (Ministry of Education, 2012, Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025)*

*"**It is not easy to make schools interesting for students and to make everyone count in a system where having excellent examination results is the only thing that matters.** Effective at-risk school principals recognize that they will lose their children to the streets if these children experience only failure in school, so they endeavour to give their students an experience of success by **encouraging them to excel in what they can do best, which incorporates non-academic endeavours"** (Nor, S. et al., 2009, Turning around at-risk schools: what effective principals do,)*

Notes: 1. Ministry of Education, 2012, *Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025*)

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3. A framework for improvement

This section sets out a framework for how different interventions can help, starting by clarifying the overall goal.

3.1 What is the end goal?

Malaysia's National Education Philosophy reflects two key goals that are commonly cited in education literature from around the world[10]:

- **For individuals:** the opportunity to maximise fulfilment in life
- **For society:** young people who become good, active participants

Achieving this goal depends on the capacity of individuals to acquire knowledge, skills, understanding and values, as shown in the diagram below. Most non–profit education programmes also measure their impact around improved capacity of beneficiaries in one or more of these areas.

What does success look like: four overall outcomes for education


National Education Philosophy for Malaysia:

"…To produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving high levels of personal well–being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society, and the nation at large"
Ministry of Education

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[10] For example, the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All; building on the work of influential theorists and researchers such as John Dewey and Eric Hanushek

3.2 Key drivers of success

Our literature review and interviews highlighted seven key external drivers that combine to support overall success in achieving education outcomes. The most commonly cited drivers are: access to/participation in education; quality of teaching and school leadership; relevant vocational training and support and family and community. A further three key drivers are: curriculum; teaching facilities and equipment; and access to broad and enriching experiences. Meanwhile, another key internal driver relates to individual capacity, attitude, health and wellbeing. We have not included individual attributes in our framework in order to maintain a manageable scope for this research.

Seven interconnected drivers of success
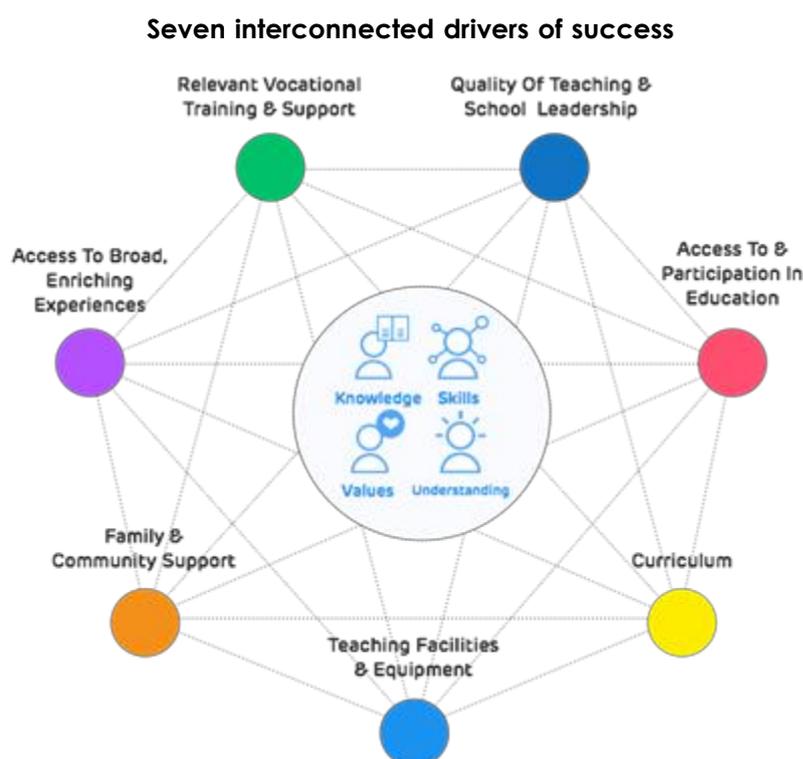
These seven key drivers have been identified through a wide ranging review of research, policy documents and NGO charters, including:

- Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025, which emphasises quality of teachers and school leadership alongside a range of other areas including access and system level efficiency

- Draft Sustainable Development Goals (the global targets that are proposed to succeed the Millennium Development Goals after 2015), which emphasise access, vocational training, facilities and teacher quality

- NGOs and experts interviewed for this research, who variously emphasised all seven of these factors

No single organisation has the capacity to perfect all of these areas: success depends on the collective impact of multiple inter-connected interventions

Photo credits: lets.book and T.L.Chua

3.3 Current status in Malaysia

In Malaysia, our research identified opportunities to improve in each of the seven areas presented above:

- **For family and community support**, the greatest gaps are around provision for orphans and vulnerable children

- **Access and participation** is a particular area of opportunity for improvement, both in terms of basic access for marginalised groups and tackling the high drop-out rate at secondary level

- **Quality of teaching and school leadership** is another key area of opportunity and was raised by many interviewees for this research

- For **curriculum**, **qualifications and assessment**, the opportunity is around moving away from rote learning and encouraging lateral thinking and reasoning ability – an opportunity that the government is currently seeking to address through curriculum reform

- **Relevant vocational training and support** is the third key area of opportunity in Malaysia, with significant opportunities to increase the availability, quality and relevance of vocational training, particularly as a means of tackling the high drop-out rate

- **Access to enriching experiences** is variable across the country, with anecdotal evidence suggesting that music, art and other holistic aspects of the school curriculum are not always given due priority within the public school system, despite the government's guiding philosophy of holistic education

- **Teaching facilities and equipment** vary across the country, with particular gaps for marginalised groups outside the mainstream system and reports of a huge need for improved equipment in technical colleges. As of 2011, 15% of schools had no access to clean water and 27% had no computer lab[11].

The table below shows a high level summary of the current status in relation to each driver.

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[11] Ministry of Education, 2012, "Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025"

Refugees and stateless children

Arguably, one of the most fundamental gaps in education provision in Malaysia is for refugees and unregistered children.

- There are currently over 21,000 registered refugee children aged 3–17 years living in Malaysia[1]. The number of unregistered refugees is very difficult to estimate; however according to some sources it might be a further 20,000[2].

- There are around 40–50,000 stateless children in Malaysia, mainly in Sabah. Among these are the children of: plantation workers, Filipino migrants; sea gypsies; and undocumented Rohingya refugees from Myanmar[3].

These children are not allowed to attend public schools in Malaysia and so access even to basic schooling is a major issue for them. All provision is entirely dependent upon charitable and international support operating outside of the government system.

Basic education for refugees is provided by UNHCR in collaboration with the refugee community itself, as well as a range of faith-based organisations and NGOs operating in the sector. There are however not enough resources to reach out to all refugees; only around 7,000 refugee children take part in the education programmes available for them[4].

Education for stateless children is provided by various non-profit organisations. Among the high profile organisations in this sector are Malaysian social research institute (MSRI), Dignity for Children, Humana Child Aid Society and the Society for the Underprivileged and Poor in Sabah, all providing basic education for refugee and/or stateless children. In addition to these, also UNHCR operates in the field and has various support programmes.

Notes: 1 & 2: UN Malaysia UNHCR webpage; 3. Letchamanan, 2013; 4. UNHCR Malaysia education webpage

School for Stateless and Marginalized Children, Sabah
(photo credit: Dr Shariha Khalid)

Key drivers and opportunities: current status in Malaysia

Driver	Gaps & Opportunities
Family & Community Support	• Wide variety in family attitudes/capacity to support • Specific gaps for orphans and vulnerable children
★ **Access To & Participation In Education**	• Secondary level drop-out rate is a key issue • Basic access issues for certain groups: stateless; refugees; indigenous; remote rural; special needs
★ **Quality Of Teaching & School Leadership**	• Widespread frustration amongst many teachers & others around lack of dynamism, flexibility & support within the public school system, despite relatively high teacher pay and low teacher:student ratios
Curriculum	• Concerns that the curriculum is overly focused on rote learning rather than developing reasoning ability • Government is currently revising the curriculum
★ **Relevant Vocational Training & Support**	• Very limited provision of vocational pathways at secondary level in the public system • High level of stigma for those that do choose this route • Mismatch of skills between employers and job-seekers is a commonly cited issue
Access To Broad, Enriching Experiences	• National philosophy emphasises holistic education but anecdotes suggest that in reality areas like music and art can be sidelined in the public system • Limited opportunities for school trips etc
Teaching Facilities & Equipment	• Variable facilities in the public system • Very poor facilities for marginalised groups • ICT, although most schools now have internet access, connection speed tends to be slow and there is a need for more computers

★ The most significant opportunities for improvement are in the areas marked by a star

3.4 15 key ways that NGOs/SEs can help

Our research has identified 15 basic interventions that NGOs and SEs undertake to address the drivers listed above.

1. **Family & community support**
   a. Provide mentoring/support to parents
   b. Run youth groups covering eg. life skills
   c. Provide holistic support for orphans and vulnerable children

2. **Access to & participation in education**
   a. Run schools for marginalised groups
   b. Mentor/support disengaged youth
   c. Provide scholarships to low income students
   Note that holistic school improvement is highly relevant for this outcome– this is listed below under cross–cutting themes

3. **Quality/style of teaching & school leadership**
   a. Mentor and support for teachers/school leaders
   b. (same as 4a) Provide high quality, low cost supplementary schooling to children in the public system

4. **Curriculum**
   a. (same as 3b) Provide supplementary classes covering areas outside the national curriculum

5. **Relevant vocational training & support**
   a. Supplement school system with apprenticeships; vocational seminars; career counselling
   b. Deliver core vocational training programmes (e.g. for special needs; youth that have dropped out)

6. **Access to broad, enriching experiences**
   a. Offer seminars; performances; school trips and other experiences for children and young people

7. **Teaching facilities & equipment**
   a. Direct provision of facilities and equipment to marginalised groups
   b. Support for ICT or other equipment to public schools

8. **Cross cutting improvement**
   a. Holistic support for radical school improvement at multiple levels
   b. Advocacy , research and knowledge sharing on various system–level issues

Mapping these interventions by potential impact reveals that the majority have high potential for both breadth (potential number people who could benefit) and depth (impact on the life of each individual). Interventions that stand out in particular include: mentoring disengaged youth; supplementary schooling/vocational training and support for teachers/school leaders.

Radical, cross-cutting school improvement stands to have the highest impact if indeed it can be successfully realised.

Interventions by cost per head and breadth/ depth of impact
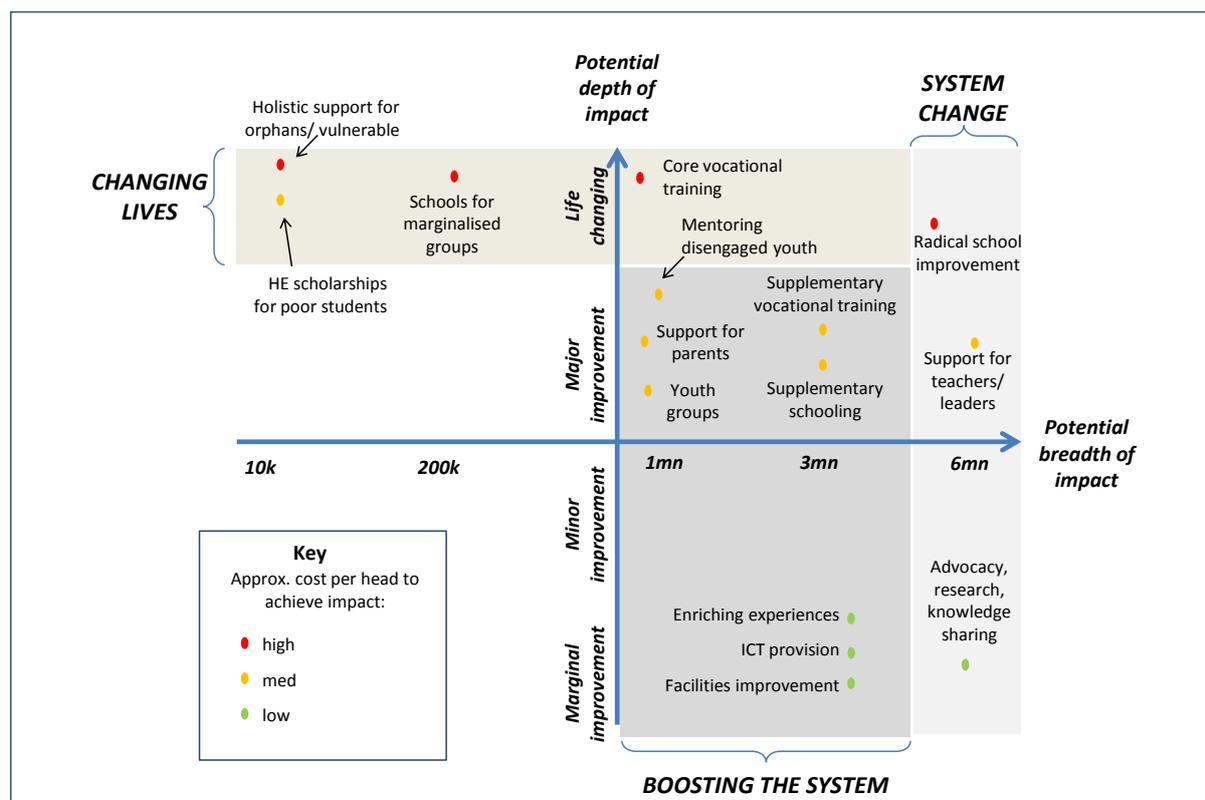
3.5 The role of the non-governmental sector: 3 options

This categorisation points towards three fundamentally different roles for NGOs/SEs in relation to the state: filling basic gaps in state provision (or "changing lives"); supplementing state provision (or "boosting the system"); and multi-sector collaboration to improve the overall system ("system change"). Each category corresponds to a different shaded area on the chart above:

"Changing lives" – *filling gaps in state provision*: this is a classic role for the non-profit sector, responding to various forms of "state failure". For example, this approach includes providing schools for undocumented children or basic vocational training to those that are unable to access it through the state system. Benefits for donors in supporting this approach include potential for profound social impact and the flexibility of working outside of the wider system. However, a key challenge is around working towards longer-term sustainability for services that – by definition of their importance – should not necessarily be reliant on charitable donations in perpetuity. A further drawback is that this approach can also require a relatively high level of investment per beneficiary.

"Boosting the system" – *supplementing state provision*: this approach is a practical response to the natural limitations of government, providing supplementary services aligned to the broader system. For example, this approach includes provision of after-school clubs, mentoring and upgrading facilities in public schools. It can allow for tangible "quick wins",

building on existing infrastructure and systems to make tactical improvements. However, impact can also be relatively marginal and reliant on the influence of many other external factors (for example, painting a school classroom is unlikely in itself yield significant improvements in student grades).

"System change" – multi-sector collaboration: a relatively new role for the non-government sector, this approach involves multi-sector collaboration for collective, long-term impact. For example, partnerships between schools, community groups, government, NGOs and the private sector to bring about holistic improvements in a "Trust School". This is potentially the most effective way to achieve large scale improvement, capitalising as it does on the skills and resources from multiple stakeholders. Recent programmes in the USA (for instance, the well-publicised Strive programme in Cincinnati) provide a potential model for this approach. However, such programmes are inevitably complex and challenging to implement; a long time is required to realise results; and success is dependent on many other actors and external influences.

Different approaches to collaboration with the government will be appropriate for support from different donors, depending on objectives, budget and capacity

Three basic roles for the non-governmental sector

CHANGING LIVES
Filling gaps in state

BOOSTING THE SYSTEM
Supplementing state provision

SYSTEM CHANGE
Multi-sector collaboration
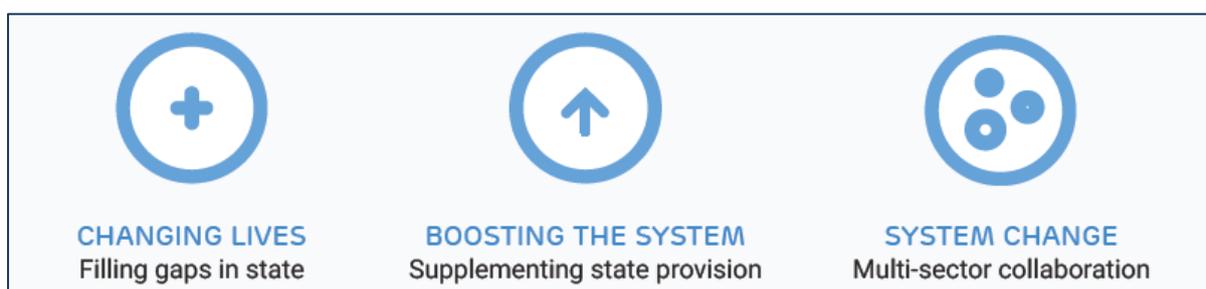
4. Who is doing what?

4.1 Government and donors: a brief overview

Government strategy to improve the system is set out in the 2013–25 Education Blueprint, a broad-reaching action plan that identifies 11 key targets under an ambitious reform agenda. Based on an extensive national consultation, the Blueprint focuses strongly on improving teaching quality and school leadership, amongst other areas.

Many private, corporate and government-linked company foundations also focus on education. Based on a scan conducted for this research, we estimate there are at least 50 corporate foundations and major CSR programmes focused on education in Malaysia, in addition to many smaller programmes. The main focus areas for foundations are university scholarships; school facilities; and basic schooling for marginalised groups:

Education in Malaysia: Opportunities for Impact

- **University scholarships** are the most popular form of support by foundations in Malaysia: over half of foundations profiled for this research provide scholarships

- **Boosting quality and facilities at state schools:** for example, 385 public schools have been "adopted" through the PINTAR programme, supported by 38 corporates and government-linked companies

- **Funding plantation schools:** 10,000 undocumented children receive schooling from the Humana Child Aid society through some 120 learning centres funded through corporate partnerships and donations

At present, the majority of corporate donations are for university scholarships targeting gifted and talented children at higher education level

Example activities of a range of foundations supporting education in Malaysia

(Note: information in the table below is taken from the websites of each of the listed organisations. It does not necessarily reflect the full scope of activities for each organisation)

Foundation name	Activities include:
Amma Foundation	Providing scholarships and loans to Higher Education students; running a Learning Center providing tutoring to low-income schoolchildren in KL; future plans include opening a Malayali Community Center
Berjaya Cares Foundation	Supporting educational and literacy programmes for children and youth
Better Malaysia Foundation	Supporting Sols 24/7 to set up community education centers in remote areas focusing on non-formal education, technology and life skills training
CIMB Foundation	Supporting the PINTAR school adoption programme and providing scholarships to Indonesian higher-education students in Malaysia
Community Chest	School-building and donation of furniture, educational materials and computers (all levels from primary school to higher learning institutions)
Hong Leong Foundation	Providing university scholarships to high-achieving, low-income students; also supporting afterschool care programmes in 5 schools
Intel Foundation	Providing scholarships and supporting events to promote science and technology and girls/women's empowerment through education
Jeffrey Cheah Foundation	Providing scholarships to low-income students to pursue higher education with Sunway Group and travel grants for staff and sudents to conduct research at Harvard University
Kassim Chin Humanity Foundation	Planning an International Vocational Boarding School for ASEAN children aged 15 and above from low-income backgrounds to be located in Machang, Kelantan
Mah Sing Foundation	Providing education assistance in the form of grants to students (all levels)
Maybank Foundation	Providing scholarships and various programmes with schools, including a teacher development programme in partnership with British Council
SP Setia Foundation	Providing scholarships and other forms of subsidy to advance educational opportunities for disadvantaged pupils, including providing them with school uniforms, school bags and books
Standard Chartered Foundation	Supporting education for special needs children
Vijayaratnam Foundation	Running camps for at-risk girls aged 13 – 16 and providing study loans and grants for tertiary education
Yayasan DayaDiri	Providing scholarships to Bumiputera students for university, especially studies abroad in niche or high-opportunity fields
Yayasan Khazanah	Providing full scholarships to high-achieving Malaysians in fields important for the development and growth of Malaysia such as engineering and business
Yayasan Sime Darby (YSD)	Supporting capacity-building for schools and teachers and providing scholarships to high-achieving students for vocational and undergraduate studies
Yayasan Siti Sapura	Providing a range of grants under Islamic principles
YTL Foundation	Providing scholarships and supporting a pilot programme to improve education levels at under-performing schools using the Frog digital learning platform.

4.2 NGOs and Social Enterprises in the education sector

We estimate that there are some 500–1,000 NGOs and SEs actively focusing on education in Malaysia. There are nearly 1,850 education-focused societies registered with the Registrar of Societies (ROS), with anecdotal evidence suggesting some 25% (around 450) are likely to be active at present[12]. In addition to this number, there are many other education organisations with different legal structures that are therefore not registered with ROS, including companies limited by guarantee (CLG) and for profit social enterprises. Meanwhile, an internet scan and outreach for this research identified 135 education-focused NGOs, SEs and community initiatives. This search was fairly thorough but not exhaustive, so we assume that in reality there are many more organisations in existence. Building on the ROS figure, this leads us in total to an estimate of 500–1,000 organisations, although many of those are expected to be very small, informal entities.

Prevalence of NGOs per capita varies widely across the country and does not correspond to need, especially in Sabah which has high poverty but few NGOs

Education sector societies per capita vs % children in poverty[13]
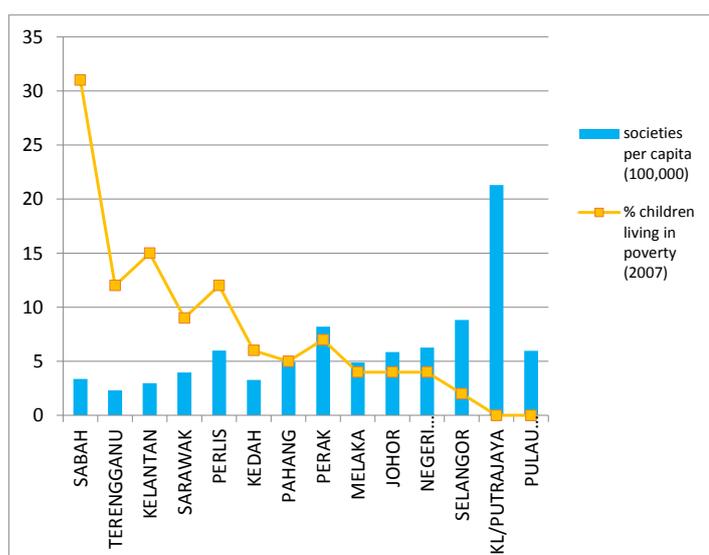
4.3 NGOs and SEs surveyed for this research

Of the 135 education NGOs and SEs identified for this research, a short survey was sent to 96 organisations. The remaining 39 (29%) were excluded since they were either: overtly religious; large private institutions (such as universities); political or governmental; purely

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[12] Data provided by ROS November 2014; anecdotal evidence suggested by expert interviewees for this research

[13] Population data: Malaysia Department of Statistics, 2010; child poverty data: UNICEF and EPU, 2013, "Profile of Children in Malaysia" (citing 2007 data)

commercial companies or no longer actively working in the sector. 31 organisations responded to the survey – a response rate of around one third.

Engagement by the NGOs/SEs with the survey was relatively low, despite multiple follow-ups also emphasising that the survey was to inform potential donors. This could suggest that there is a fundamental lack of capacity in many organisations.

Organisations identified and surveyed (#)

39 did not meet the criteria

- commercial company
- no longer active
- political/government
- large private institution
- no current education projects
- religious
- surveyed

96 included in the survey

Survey response rate

31 organisations (32%) responded

- responded by email
- responded by phone
- face to face interview
- did not respond

Two thirds (65) did not respond
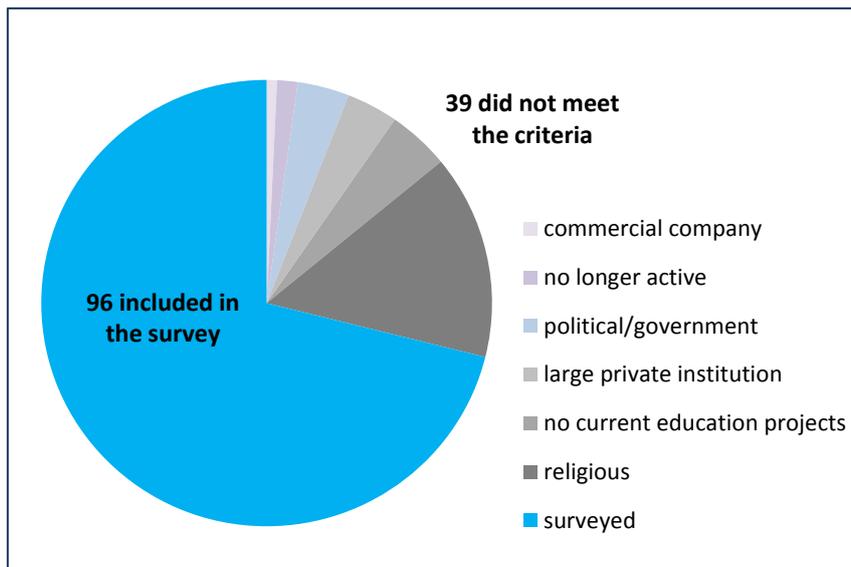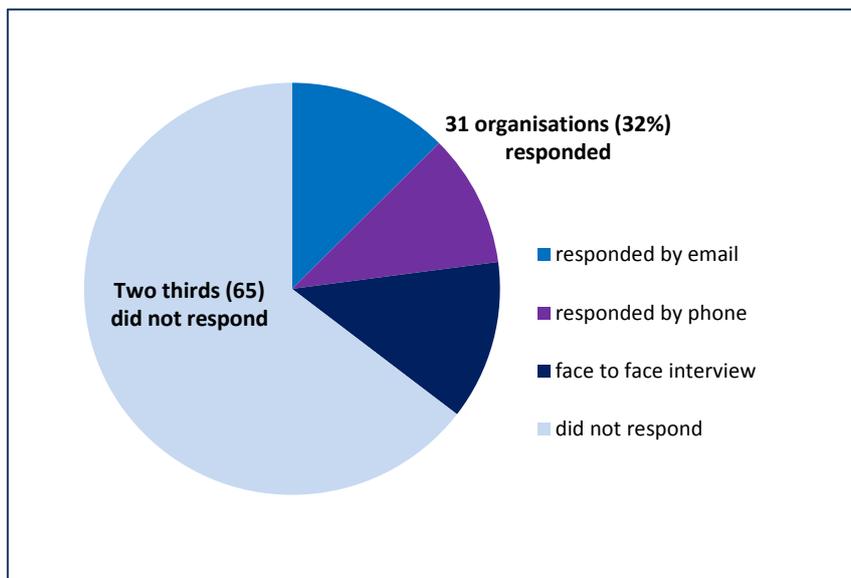
Our key findings from the survey are as follows:

1. **The majority of respondents identified themselves as societies or charities, with relatively few "social enterprises".** This low number of social enterprises aligns with the fact that social enterprise is an emerging concept in Malaysia, with only 50–100 self-defined SEs estimated to be operating across all sectors[14]. Based on our survey results and this headline figure, we estimate that in total there are only 5–10 SEs currently active in the education sector.

Structure of organisations surveyed
(respondents could select as many categories as relevant)
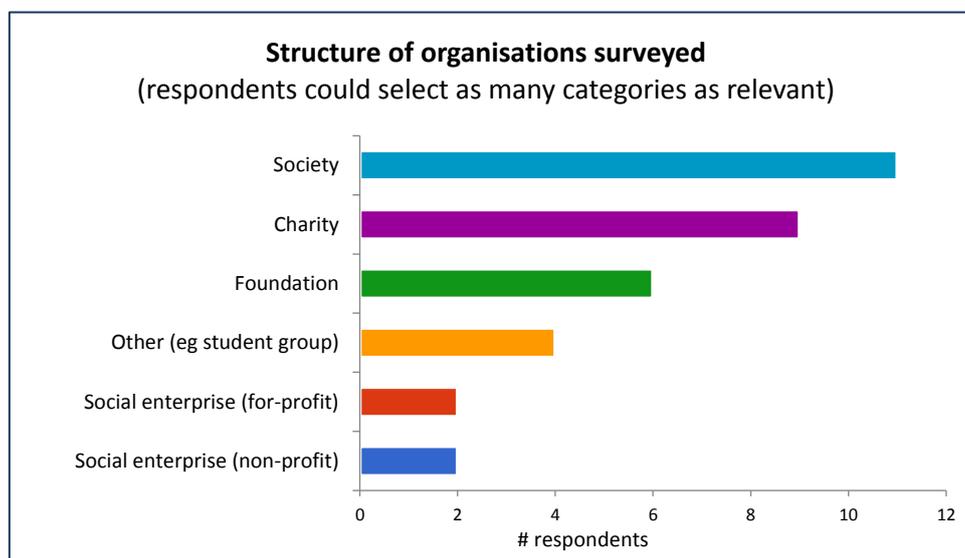
2. **Most organisations have relatively limited impact:** nearly 60% of respondents report impacting fewer than 500 children/teachers/parents per year, with only eight organisations reporting impact of over 2,000 children/teachers/parents. The two organisations that achieve fairly major impact for a relatively high number of beneficiaries are: SOLS24/7 and Malaysian Social Research Institute (MSRI). SOLS24/7 provides English education, life skills and other supplementary support to children from poor and marginalised communities. Meanwhile MSRI targets refugee children, providing home schooling, English classes and other support.

Annual reported impact of survey respondents: breadth and depth

		Breadth (number impacted)		
		Low (0–500 children/ teachers/parents per year)	**Medium** (500–2000 children/ teachers/parents per year)	**High** (2000+ children/ teachers/parents per year)
Depth (level of impact on each child)	**Minor/marginal improvement**	4	3	6
	Major improvement	10	1	2
	Life changing	4	1	0

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[14] Malaysia SE Collective submission to ASEAN Social Enterprise Forum, October 2014

3. **The most common target beneficiaries amongst survey respondents are vulnerable, institutionalized and poor children.** Disabled children are also a key target group – in fact likely to be under–represented in this sample as we excluded overtly religious organisations, many of which work with disabled groups.

Target beneficiaries
(respondents could select as many categories as relevant)
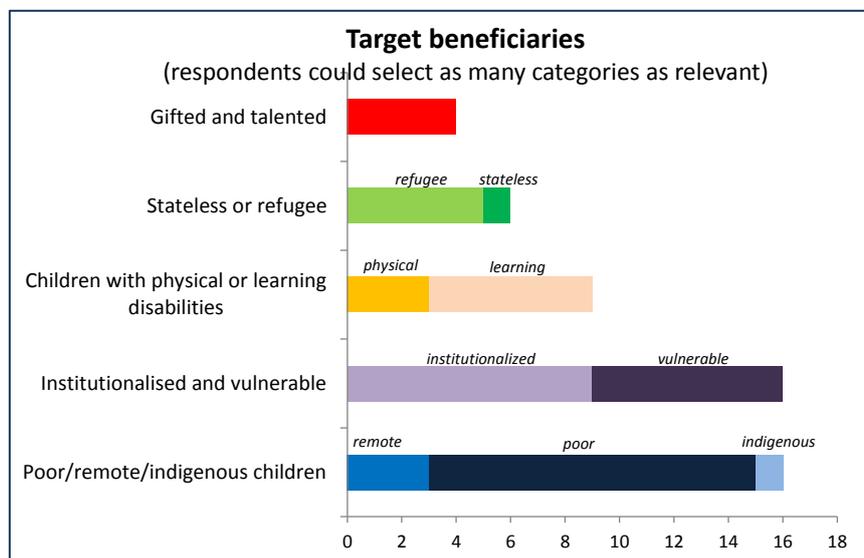
4. **The most common interventions relate to access/drop–outs and supporting teachers and family.** Over two thirds of respondents identified improving access as one of their main objectives and around half identified improving family or community support and working with teachers. Meanwhile, relatively few respondents (less than 20%) reported addressing the issue of vocational training, even though the needs in this area are particularly great.

Key drivers targeted by NGOs/SEs
(% respondents identifying each driver)
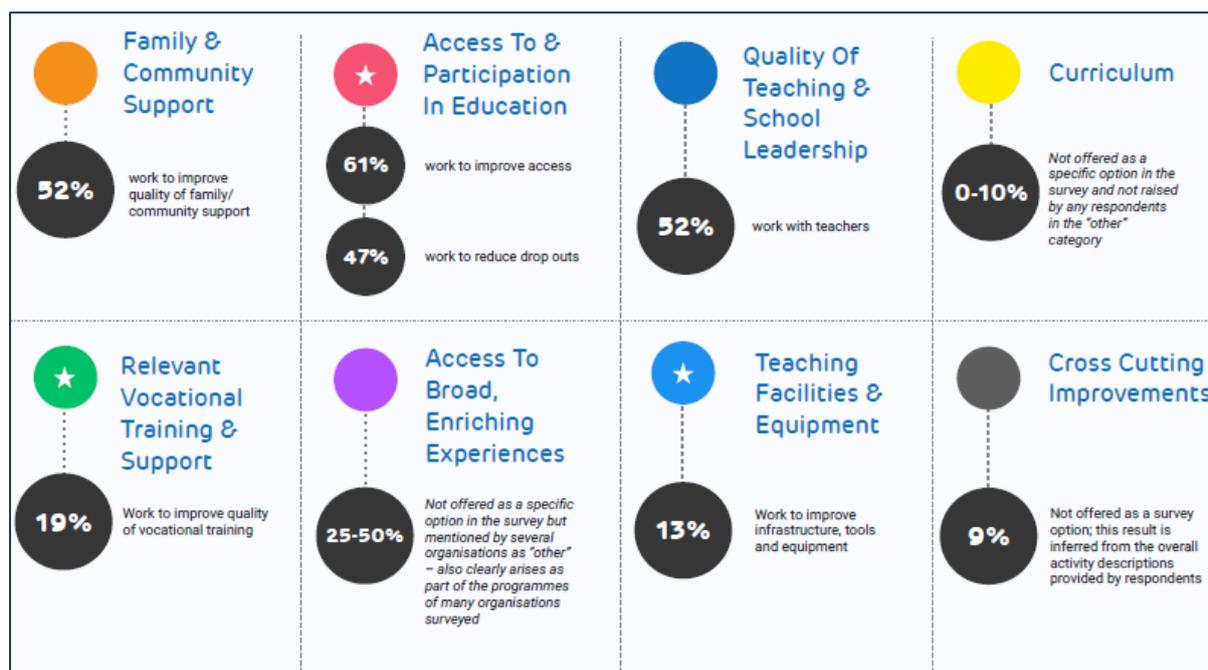
4.4 Common types of NGO/SE

In reality, most NGOs/SEs provide a bundle of services spanning several areas of the interventions framework presented in the previous section. After screening the respondents to exclude organisations that were very informal; provided incoherent responses; were purely commercial outfits; or were not directly focused on education, the remaining 23 respondents fell into six basic groupings:

1. **SUPPLEMENTARY MAINSTREAM EDUCATION** – **boosting the system:** supplementary education and mentoring for urban poor and other underprivileged children in mainstream education (7 respondents in this category)

2. **VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR DISENGAGED YOUTH** – **boosting the system:** vocational training/life skills for disengaged and marginalised youth (2 respondents in this category)

3. **RADICAL IMPROVEMENT OF THE MAINSTREAM SYSTEM** – **system change:** system level initiatives designed to support quality of teaching across the public system (3 respondents in this category)

4. **BETTER SUPPORT FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES** – **boosting the system/changing lives:** holistic support for children with learning disabilities (5 respondents in this category)

5. **BASIC SUPPORT FOR REFUGEES AND STATELESS CHILDREN** – **changing lives:** schools or supplementary education for refugees and stateless (5 respondents in this category)

6. **SUPPORTING VULNERABLE CHILDREN – changing lives:** holistic support for vulnerable children (1 respondent in this category)

Categorising the organisations in this way further highlights the finding that there are relatively few organisations providing vocational training and life skills coaching to disengaged or marginalised children. This is despite the fact that over 40% of respondents had identified reducing drop–outs as a key target issue. The NGOs and SEs highlighting drop–outs tend to be approaching the issue from the perspective of providing enriching experiences and supplementary education, rather than through vocational training as a means of re–engagement.

Photo Credit: Asian Development Bank

4.5 High potential NGOs/SEs

The table below sets out 23 NGOs/SEs that emerge from our survey as having high potential for impact. These organisations met the following selection criteria:

1. **Responsiveness:** the NGO/SE responded to our survey

2. **Clear communication:** the NGO/SE clearly articulated what it does and why

3. **Relevance:** the NGO/SE has significant ongoing projects that focus on education

4. **Social mission:** the NGO/SE is driven by a social mission and is not a purely for–profit enterprise

Annex 2 presents six case studies of NGOs/SEs from amongst this group of 23. These case study organisations were selected to represent a range of different legal structures and target beneficiaries, whilst also having:

- Strong social impact (breadth and/or depth)

- A clear, compelling articulation of their work

Please note that further due diligence would be required to confirm the details relating to all of the organisations listed – for example, a site visit to verify the scale and quality of operations and management and a review of financial records.

Screening process and criteria used to identify high potential NGOs/SEs

135 **135 NGOs/SEs identified through original scan**; screened to remove organisations that are overtly religious; political/governmental; large private institutions (eg. universities); not active/no longer engaged in education; purely commercial companies (the above criteria were judged by reviewing each organisation's website

96 **96 NGOs/SEs surveyed by email, phone and face to face**

31 **31 responses to the survey**

23 **23 identified after screening survey responses** to remove organisations that were shown through the survey to be highly informal; not directly focused on education; purely commercial; not coherent in their responses

6 **6 organisations profiled (see Annex 3) and recommended for detailed further follow up.** These 6 were selected to represent a range of key approaches, with each organisation having strong impact (either breadth and/or depth) together with a clear and professional articulation of their work. Further follow up also recommended with the remaining 17 shortlisted organisations, depending on alignment with foundation objectives

Summary of high potential NGOs/SEs

Grouping	Name of organisation	Description
SUPPLEMENTARY EDUCATION: *Boosting the system* Supplementary education and mentoring for urban poor and other marginalised groups	**The Kalsom Movement**	Enriching experiences for poor or marginalised children - eg motivational camps
	Sols24/7	English education and life skills to the urban poor and also children living in remote communities
	MyKasih Foundation	Supplementary education for urban poor
	Persatuan Prihatin Bukit Subang	Supplementary education for poor children
	Persatuan Kebajikan Generasi Gemilang	Academic guidance & personal mentoring programme for primary and secondary students and supplementary school for urban poor
	Yayasan Salam	A volunteer organisation supporting a range of projects such as: infrastructure in schools, enriching experiences, supplementary education
	LH Learning Group	Supplementary education in schools for mainstream children plus advice to teachers and parents
DISENGAGED YOUTH: *Boosting the system* Vocational training/life skills for disengaged and marginalised youth	**MySkills Foundation**	Intensive vocational training and guidance programme for disengaged youth
	Cybercare	ICT and life skills training for children in care, refugees and other underprivileged groups
RADICAL IMPROVEMENT: *System change* System level initiatives designed to support quality of teaching across the public system	**Yayasan Amir**	In depth advice and support to public schools through the YA-MOE "Trust School" programme
	EduNation	Free online videos and weekend tutoring events aligned to the national curriculum
	Teach For Malaysia	Placing high caliber graduates to teach in challenging state schools and building a pipeline of future leaders in the sector
LEARNING DISABILITIES: *Boosting the system* Supplementary education/vocational training for children with learning disabilities	**Asia Community Service**	Supplementary education and vocational training for children with learning disabilities
	P'tuan Kanak-Kanak Istimewa Kajang Selangor (PKIK)	Day-school, vocational training and other support for children with learning disabilities
	Special Children Society of Ampang	Supplementary education for children with learning disabilities
	Bold	Supplementary education for children with learning disabilities and support for parents
	Dyslexia association of Sarawak	Supplementary education for dyslexic children and training for teachers on how to support dyslexic children
REFUGEES & STATELESS *Changing lives* Schools or supplementary education for refugees and stateless	**Yayasan Chow Kit**	YCK provides a wide range of support to undocumented children, including youth groups, mentoring, vocational training.
	Refuge for the refugees	Supplementary education for refugees and awareness raising
	School for Stateless and Marginalized Children	A small school providing basic education to stateless children
	Malaysian Social Research Institute	Providing home schooling, english classes to refugees children
	Chin Student Organization	Supplementary education for refugees and awareness raising
VULNERABLE CHILDREN: *Changing lives* Holistic support for vulnerable children	**Persatuan Kebajikan Kasih**	Care home providing holistic support to vulnerable girls

(Note: the organisations listed below emerged from the high level screening process used in this research as potentially having capacity for high impact. However, further due diligence is required to confirm the detailed status and impact of the organisations listed here)

5.Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Collective impact?

This research set out to explore the hypothesis that there is further potential to increase impact through collective action. We have presented a framework to show that overall improvement depends on the collective impact of multiple organisations addressing an inter-connected set of drivers. As such, it is naturally efficient and desirable for donors, NGOs/SEs and government to align their initiatives and cooperate so that "the sum of the whole is greater than the sum of the parts"

Our survey of NGOs/SEs and foundations found that at a basic level, most NGOs/SEs and foundations do indeed align their work with the wider system. Typically, this happens either by filling gaps in government provision or by providing supplementary services to boost the basic quality of the public system. Often for NGOs/SEs, this relates to a specific beneficiary group in a specific location, for example supplementary English classes for urban poor in KL or schooling for stateless children in Sabah. In many cases for foundations, it relates to scholarships for gifted and talented individual students to access high quality universities. Hence, to an extent many organisations naturally have a level of collective impact simply by each addressing different gaps and opportunities in the wider system. However, the majority of initiatives supported are extremely small relative to the broader context of need and so impact tends to be fairly limited.

Donors already achieve a basic level of collective impact, however only at a limited, incremental level

Through assessing the overall gaps and opportunities, as well as the current landscape of "who is doing what", **we have identified two key areas where there may be greater potential for impact through collective action**. One is around improving teaching and learning quality in mainstream schools and the other is around vocational training to tackle disengagement and under-achievement. Each of these opportunities is discussed below.

5.2 Recommendation 1: a school quality task force

One opportunity for further impact through collective action is around teaching and learning quality in mainstream schools. This approach would involve targeting teacher and leadership quality, supported by widely accessible online content and other scalable supplementary education services that can complement the classroom experience:

A number of connected initiatives have emerged over recent years that are spearheading this approach. These initiatives include:

- Teach for Malaysia (building a network of high calibre young teachers and leaders);
- Yayasan Amir (support and guidance for existing teachers and leaders);
- EduNation (providing free online classes linked to the national curriculum) and
- Frog Asia (inspiring events and supplementary online classes channelled through the emerging school intranet system (1bestarinet))

This approach would be highly challenging and require long-term, multi-faceted investment. All four organisations listed above are still in the early stages of development, have only achieved relatively limited impact to date and are still in the process of establishing effective and efficient operating models. Furthermore, the process of effecting system change requires close collaboration with the government and many other actors and is subject to a wide range of external dependencies that are not possible to control.

Nevertheless, by tackling the issues at system level through the shared initiative of multiple organisations, this approach **offers the greatest potential for overall impact in the long-term**, potentially playing a major role in improving the education of millions of children across Malaysia.

Recommendation 1: Convene a school quality task force with MOE, schools, foundations and the above NGOs/SEs to develop a shared set of goals and a plan of action

Photo Credit: Lan Rasso

5.3 Recommendation 2: a vocational training collective action programme

The second area of opportunity for large-scale impact is around vocational training and life skills coaching to tackle the huge issue of school dropouts and student disengagement. **Tens of thousands of children drop out of school at lower and upper secondary level and many more fail to achieve academic qualifications**. A significant number of interviewees for this research pointed to the lack of widespread, high quality vocational pathways as a major factor contributing to the high dropout and failure rate.

Yet there are relatively few NGOs/SEs tackling this issue at present – fewer than 20% of our survey respondents provide vocational training compared to nearly 70% working to increase access to education. Those that do provide vocational training tend to have a specific focus on learning disabilities, rather than for a broader segment of youth. **There is as yet relatively little momentum for change in this area and indeed there is a significant lack of robust information on this issue.**

Further work would be necessary to map out this opportunity in greater detail, but we believe that there is significant potential for impact in this area:

- **A natural fit for corporate foundations:** There is a natural synergy between vocational training and the job skills required by corporates. Corporates are well placed to support this area both through financial contributions but also in kind through employee volunteers as mentors, career counsellors and trainers.

- **Less momentum but also less complex?** Despite a smaller number of existing initiatives to drive change in this area, we believe it is potentially less complex than the issue of teacher quality and may yield quicker (and no less significant) results in the medium-long term. This is because initiatives could potentially take the form of supplementary training, layered on top of the public system rather than integrated, complex system level change.

- **Building on existing initiatives:** NGOs such as the vocational training provider MySkills Foundation could act as key partners in scoping and designing the initiative. The research institute, IDEAS has also done some valuable research on the issue of drop-outs through its Giving Voice to the Poor Programme and could be another potential contributor. A key partner would also be the MOE, working with existing initiatives such as the current programme to develop improved qualifications and curriculum for a range of vocational subjects and to partner with the private sector in delivering on-the-job courses.

Recommendation 2: Convene a vocational training working group to explore potential for a new multi-sector initiative in this area

School for Stateless and Marginalized Children, Sabah (photo credit: Dr Shariha Khalid)

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Interviewees

Annex 1: Methodology detail

Annex 1: Methodology Detail

Stage 1 — Mapping issues; developing a draft framework

High level literature review:
- Policy papers
- Academic & other research
- News articles

Expert interviews:
Small number of experts including MOE representatives; academics; UN agencies; teachers; parents

Mapping of issues and prioritisation framework

Stage 2 — mapping and identification of NGOs/ SEs & foundations

1 — Initial identification of education 40 foundations & 100 NGOs/SEs:
- Literature review
- Internet keyword search
- Scope Group's network
- www.hati.my (NGO listing website)
- www.ngohub.asia (NGO listing website)
- Registrar of Societies
- Karnival Pertubuhan Kebangsaan 2014 Event (01/11/14)
- Expert interviews

2 — Screening NGOs/SEs for relevance:
Excluding organisations that are religious; political; large private institutions (eg universities); inactive

3 — Telephone to verify email address

4 — Issue survey by email (in Bahasa Malaysia and English)

5 — NGO/SE fills in survey online

6 — NGO/SE does not fill in survey online

7 — Follow up phone call – researcher fills in survey whilst speaking to NGO/SE on the phone

Further NGOs/SEs recommended by survey respondents

8 — Identification potential high impact organisations:
- Through recommendations by experts; review of survey responses and NGO/SE websites

Selection criteria:
- Relevant intervention type
- Professionalism – judged by quality of website; articulation of message and responsiveness to our research
- Impact – strong evidence of impact
- Note that we did not conduct a detailed screening of factors such as finances; governance and management efficiency and so the NGOs/SEs highlighted in this research only represent examples of those with potential for high impact.
Further due diligence would be necessary to corroborate findings.

9 — Face to face or detailed phone interviews with potential high impact organisations
We met face to face with 12 organisations and conducted detailed phone interviews with a further 3

10 — Mapping of who is doing what and identification of high impact organisations

Annex 2: case studies

Annex 2 presents six case studies of NGOs/SEs from amongst the 31 respondents to our survey. These case study organisations were selected to represent a range of different legal structures and target beneficiaries, whilst also having:

- Strong social impact (breadth and/or depth)

- A clear, compelling articulation of their work

Please note that further due diligence would be required to confirm the details relating to all of the organisations listed – for example, a site visit to verify the scale and quality of operations and management and a review of financial records.

ORGANISATION NAME
Yayasan Amir (YA)

System change
Teachers, Leaders & Overall

Overview

For further information:
http://www.yayasanamir.org.my/

Yayasan Amir provides a 5-year programme of management and technical support to public schools through their Trust School programme, delivered in partnership with MOE. Aiming to develop the potential of students so that they become more competitive on the labor market, Yayasan Amir provides support in four areas: school leadership, teaching techniques, "student potential" and community involvement. The programme centres on providing consultancy support by international and national advisors.

(F) (A) (Q) (C)

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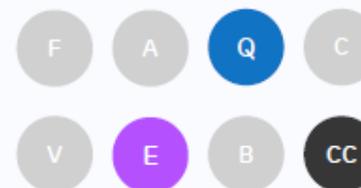
Successes & aspirations

Robust model established: Currently Yayasan Amir is working in 30 schools and an impact assessment done in 2013 reveals the programme is on the right track.

Next step is to mainstream impact: In order to increase impact and affect the system more broadly, Yayasan Amir aims to develop a network of "reference schools", ultimately with one in each district across the country. However, the funding requirements are significant.

Quick facts

What: In depth advice and support to public schools through the YA-MOE "Trust School" programme

Where: Sarawak, Johor & Selangor

Impact: 30 schools in 2014

Source of funds: Established by Khazanah Nasional on the instigation of MOE; other sponsors include Yayasan Dayadiri; UEM and Westports

Established: 2010

Structure: Foundation

Note: this case study is based on a short interview with Yayasan Amir conducted in November 2014 by the Scope research team

ORGANISATION NAME

Yayasan Chow Kit (YCK)

Changing lives
Refugees & Stateless Children

Overview

YCK provides holistic schooling to urban poor and undocumented children between the ages of 7-18 years old through its centres in Kuala Lumpur. These children are urban poor children who are unable to attend public school due to lack of documentation even if they were born in Malaysia. YCK provides a day care for children under 6, a literacy program, vocational training, counselling and enriching experiences through arts and cultural programs etc at their activity centre for children (aged 7-12) known as Pusat Aktiviti Kanak Kanak and their teenage (aged 13-18) centre familiarly known as Kuala Lumpur Krash Pad.

For further information:
www.yck.org.my ; YCK Annual Report 2012-13 (available on YCK website)

(F) (A) (Q) (C)

(V) (E) (B) (CC)

Successes & aspirations

Changing lives: There is strong evidence to suggest that YCK has impacted the lives of its beneficiaries, working with 500 registered children and young people with high levels of need that are mostly unmet by the public system.

"Overwhelmed": The centres report being overwhelmed by an increasing number of students. It is difficult to meet the level of need due to space constraints and a lack of man power.

Quick facts

What: School for urban poor children

Where: Chow Kit, Kuala Lumpur

Impact: 500 current students

Source of funds include: Khazanah Nasional Berhad and Ministry of Women, Family & Community Development[1]

Budget: RM2.6mn total income (2012)[2]

Established: Initially in 1995, formally registered as YCK in 2010

Structure: Company limited by guarantee

1. These funders are listed in YCK Annual Report 2012-13; 2. Reported in audited accounts 2012, available on the YCK website

ORGANISATION NAME

School For Stateless And Marginalized Children (SFSAMC)

Changing lives
Refugees & Stateless Children

Overview

For further information:
http://www.sfsamc.com/

SFSAMC provides basic schooling to undocumented children age 6-16 in Sabah who are unable to access mainstream education. The school has seven staff and classes take place in three small wooden buildings, one of which does not yet have electricity. The children receive 2.5 hours a day of tuition (due to lack of space). Subjects covered include maths, Bahasa Melayu and English, as well as arts, sports, computer studies and religious studies.

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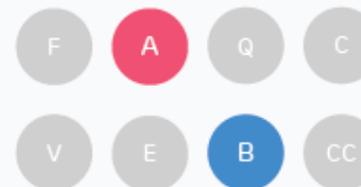
Successes & aspirations

Profound impact but at limited scale: The school has had a profound impact on the lives of over 400 children who have received a basic education that they otherwise would not have been able to access.

How to scale up? The school is only meeting a fraction of the total need in Sabah and is unable to scale up due to lack of funding.

How to improve quality? Further training is required for staff, as well as skilled volunteer teachers

Quick facts

SFSAMC

What: school for stateless children

Where: Kota Kinabalu

Impact: 480 current students

Source of funds: private donors, UNHCR, Islamic Aid, PUNB, Takaful, Baitulmal

Annual budget: RM65,000 (2014)

Established: 2005

Structure: Registered Society

Note: this case study is based on an interview and site visit to SFSAMC conducted in November 2014 by the Scope research team

Teach for Malaysia (TFM)

System change
Teachers, Leaders & Overall

For further information:
http://www.teachformalaysia.org; Annual Performance Report 2010-13

Overview

Teach for Malaysia recruits high calibre graduates into the teaching profession using a well known model from the USA and other countries worldwide. Currently in its third year of operation, TFM has attracted significant interest for its ambitious agenda to effect system level improvement, working in partnership with MOE as well as corporate sponsors. TFM "Fellows" receive intensive mentoring over a 2-year work placement in a struggling school.

F A Q C

V E B CC

Successes & aspirations

Building a network of leaders in the sector: Whilst some TFM fellows achieve impressive results in the classroom, the real aim of TFM is to effect change at a more macro level, seeding a generation of passionate and capable leaders within the education system and beyond.

An accessible platform for piloting other innovations: With its small but growing network of teachers and its professional, open approach, TFM offers an accessible platform for other organisations looking to pilot innovations within the system. Current TFM partners include digital learning initiatives such as EduNation and Frog Asia .

Not without its challenges - recruiting fellows is tough: TFM has struggled to recruit graduates who meet the high standards of their programme: as of 2013, TFM had recruited 74% of its target number of Fellows (250 against a target of 340)[1]
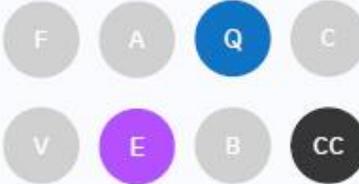
Quick facts

What: Placing high calibre graduates to teach in challenging state schools to grow the pipeline of leaders within the education system

Where: 7 states across Malaysia

Impact: 28,000 students (2014)

Source of funds: 50/50 Corporate foundations and MOE

Annual budget: RM11mn (2015 forecast); RM8.5mn funding gap

Established: 2009, started operations 2012

Structure: Foundation

1. Sources: TFM interview November 2014 and 2010-13 Annual Performance report. PHOTOS from TFM website fellow profiles

ORGANISATION NAME

MySkills Foundation

Boosting the system
Vocational Training / Life Skills

Overview

For further information:
http://myskills.org.my/

MySkills Foundation operates the Primus Institute of Technology, a training and support centre for disengaged youth who have dropped out of mainstream education. The Institute offers accredited technical and vocational training courses, together with mentoring, life skills and other holistic support.

F   A   Q   C

V   E   B   CC
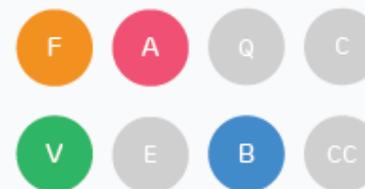
Successes & aspirations

One of few organisations identified in this research that is actively tackling the huge issue of teenage drop-outs: MySkills Foundation stands out for its efforts to develop a holistic programme of vocational training and support.

Aiming to build new facilities and expand: The organisation has expanded fairly rapidly since launching in 2011 and is currently raising funds to build a large scale campus on the outskirts of KL . The planned "Transformation Campus " will enable MySkills to expand its activities significantly, reaching up to 1,000 students.

Quick facts

MySkillsFoundation

What: Providing vocational training and guidance to disengaged youth

Where: Selangor

Impact: 200 disengaged youth

Source of funds: Private donations; earned income from vocational training projects

Established: 2011

Annual budget: RM1.2mn

Structure: Non-profit social enterprise

Note: this case study is based on a short interview with MySkills Foundation conducted in November 2014 by the Scope research team

ORGANISATION NAME
LH Learning Group (LHLG)

Boosting the system
Mainstream Education

Overview

LHLG provides affordable training and coaching to secondary school students on accelerated learning techniques. It is a for-profit social enterprise aiming to help disengaged students build their confidence and attitude to learning. LHLG also provides tools for teachers and support for parents through its holistic approach.

For further information:
http://www.lhlg.com.my ; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SlgxdSe1kzU

F A Q C
V E B CC

Successes & aspirations

Impressive initial results: LHLG has achieved some impressive results during its initial phase of operations, with highly positive feedback from some teachers and students

Struggling to scale up: LHLG is a for-profit social enterprise driven by a strong social mission to make accelerated learning courses accessible to poorer and middle income families. As such, its business model relies on cross-subsidised programmes, boosted by sponsorship from donors. Under this model, the business is struggling to scale up and expand its reach.

Quick facts

What: Helping students to achieve their full potential

Where: Selangor

Impact: 6,000 students (2013)

Source of funds: Participant fees and sponsorship from donors

Annual budget: RM200,000

Established: 2012

Structure: For-profit social enterprise

Note: this case study is based on a short interview with LHLG conducted in November 2014 by the Scope research team

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