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Defining Student's Achievement Based on The Understanding of National Education Philosophy and Malaysia's Education Blueprint (2013 -2025)

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to define students' achievement based on the National Education Philosophy and Malaysia's Education Blueprint (2013-2025) and propose a proper definition of students' achievement used for future study. This is done by extracting the meaning of students' achievement from the National Education Philosophy and Malaysia's Education Blueprint (2013-2025) and comparing it to existing studies done in Malaysia. Based on the discussion, a proper theoretical framework will be proposed as a definition for student achievement in Malaysia for future researchers in the field of education. This will provide fundamental knowledge and direction for researchers and practitioners to further contribute to the thin knowledge base concerning Malaysia's education field's future improvement.

Contribution/Originality: The paper contributes the first logical definition of student's achievement in Malaysia based on the understanding of National Education Philosophy and Malaysia's Education Blueprint (2013-2025).

1. Introduction

A student is said to be successful if they have benefited from our education system. For example, they have achieved something positive when acquiring knowledge, skills, and attitudes in schools. The aim is to transform children into Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, have high moral standards, and are responsible and capable of achieving high levels of personal well-being while also contributing to the family, society, and nation harmony betterment (Ministry of Education, 2011, 2015). Basic

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language, art, and maths abilities are also necessary, particularly for young pupils. They serve as a springboard for progressing to higher-order levels of achievement.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Competency in Mathematics, Languages, and Sciences

According to Harvard University report (Hanushek, Peterson, & Woessmann, 2012) on American student performance. Mathematics, Languages, and Sciences are critical in defining students' achievements or success in middle school. Additionally, the report compared US students' achievement across countries using the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which the US Department of Education administers, and discovered that gains within the United States have been modest over the last 14 years, averaging 1.6 percent of a standard deviation annually. By comparison, students in three countries—Latvia, Chile, and Brazil—have improved at a rate of 4 percent of a standard deviation per year, while students in another eight countries—Portugal, Hong Kong, Germany, Poland, Liechtenstein, Slovenia, Colombia, and Lithuania—have improved at a rate of 4 percent of a standard deviation per year. They are advancing at twice the rate of American students. Another 13 countries included in the study appeared to be performing better than the US as well Hanushek(Hanushek et al., 2012). Studies have concluded that mathematics, language, and science proficiency as the most critical criteria for students' academic success. For instance, a research on the efficacy of 96 principals and 2,764 teachers, for example, it was discovered that it was positively correlated with student achievement in language and mathematics. (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). In yet another study, the study defines students' achievement as a criterion-referenced test (CRT). This statewide mandatory standardized test is administered following the school year's conclusion and includes subjects such as math, language arts, and science (Shatzer et al., 2014).

In 2015, TIMSS and PISA was administered in 49 International Energy Agency (IEA) member countries and 6 other education systems at grade 4(Age 10), and in 38 IEA member countries and 6 other education systems at grade 8(Age 15) again researcher used the competency in Mathematics, languages and Science as a benchmark for student's achievement. For Malaysia, in TIMMS, we are ranked at 18 out of 39 countries (Kheong, 2017). While in PISA, we are ranked at 52 out of 74 countries that have taken the initiative (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2015). Even though Malaysia has made enormous gain in its education system over the past 50 years, including achieving an adult literacy rate of 92 percent, universal primary school enrolment and one of the highest growth rates in secondary school enrolment amongst developing countries. Malaysia's education outcomes have fallen behind countries like Singapore, Hong Kong and Korea. Alarmingly, the gap within Malaysian student outcomes is also widening, e.g., about 20 percent of Malaysian students failed to meet the minimum TIMSS benchmarks for Mathematics and Science in 2007, compared to about 5–7 percent in 2003 (Jabatan Perdana Menteri, 2010). All the studies and data above have proven that Mathematics, Languages and Sciences' is the primary choice as the standard measuring yardstick for student's achievement in school.

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2.2. Developing 21st Century skills

The second element in student achievement is the school's call to equip every student with 21st-century skills such as non-cognitive skills, higher cognitive skills, and social-emotional skills. More concretely identified as critical thinking and problem-solving; collaboration and leadership; agility and adaptability; initiative and entrepreneurial spirit; effective oral and written communication; ability to access and analyse information; and developing curiosity and imagination (Saavedra & Opfer, 2013). The 21st-century skills alternatively can be defined as a broad set of knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits that are believed to be critically important to success in today's world and can be applied in all academic subject areas and all educational, career, and civic settings throughout life. Without these skills, individuals cannot cope and compete in the globalised world (Tindowen et al., 2017).

Due to this, starting 2017, KSSR curriculum(revised) for student in primary one and KSSM for students in form one was being implemented with emphasis on 21st-century skills: communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking explicitly (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2015). Firstly, every student will acquire critical thinking skills such as analysing complex problems, investigating questions for which there are no clear-cut answers, evaluating different points of view of sources of information, and drawing appropriate conclusions on evidence and reasoning. Secondly, acquired collaboration skills referring to students' ability to work together to solve problems, answer questions, work effectively in teams, accomplish a common goal, and assume shared responsibility for completing a task. Thirdly, obtained communication skills that are referring to students being able to organise their thoughts, data, and findings and share them effectively through a variety of media and orally and in writing. Fourthly, develop creativity and innovation skills where students can generate and refine solutions to complex problems or tasks based on synthesis, analysis, and then combining or presenting what they have learned in new and original ways. Fifth, having self-direction skills refers to students taking responsibility for their learning by identifying topics to pursue and processes for their learning and reviewing their work and responding to feedback. Has global connections in which students can understand global, geopolitical issues, including awareness of geography, culture, language, history, and literature from other countries. Sixth, attaining local connections that refer to students can apply what they have learned to local contexts and community issues. Finally, become an expert in using technology to learn a situation where students can manage their learning and produce products using appropriate information and communication technologies (Tindowen et al., 2017).

2.3. Good Attitude and High Moral Standard

As students are preparing to be a contributing member of society. Where, they collectively will form an informed electorate, upholding our country's core values of liberty, justice, and equality. It is crucial that they demonstrate respect and tolerance for others, have a higher moral standard, stand up for vulnerable groups, and reject violence and crime. This is yet another indicator of a student's achievement. Studies in Javed, Kausar and Khan (2010) and Kitjaroonchai (2015) found out that their study examined the impact of teaching a values program on children. The children who received moral value lessons were better on moral values than the control group across all ages. For example, in the study, holding morning assemblies to deliver moral lessons to students explained better moral values among private school children. This means inculcation of good attitude and

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high moral standard among students will likely produce a better country's citizen (Gill et al., 2017). This was further elaborated in other studies that besides preparing students to be well-rounded citizens with public-mindedness in serving others selflessly in their community. Ethical and moral activities and religious-related activity in school will likely enhance students' academic performance (Kitjaroonchai, 2015).

In the Malaysian context, cultivating good moral values instilled as earlier as in primary school, in the form of a subject such as Islamic Studies and Moral Education, historically this was done continuously since the British ruling (Balakrishnan, 2010). In this light, the Cabinet Report 1979 when tabled in the parliment recommended that the morality building to be introduced as an examinable school subject (PAC, 1980). Stated that:

> *In building a disciplined, cultured and united society, the Cabinet Report (1979) recommended that while Muslim students study Islamic Religious Knowledge, and this includes other pupils who choose to follow this subject, non-Muslim pupils should be taught Moral and Ethics education. All pupils who study this subject, Moral and Ethics Education, must take it in the examination. In both these subjects, respect for the individual and the freedom to embrace any religion in a multi-religious society must be cultivated* (PAC, 1980).

However, initially, because Malaysian consists of different racial makeup, the effort is somehow too confusing as there are many standards to follow. About this time, there was a growing global concern on the modern and social problems such as drug abuse and moral deterioration among the youth that drew the attention of the educationists and public alike both locally and internationally. Schools could no longer remain neutral in terms of educating moral character. These concerns were similarly expressed in the Parliament, and there was a need to provide some form of moral guidance that schools should be responsible for (Chang, 2013; Mukherjee, 1983). It was beginning in 1988, after various evaluation and changes by the Education minister. It was finally reduced into Moral Education as a core subject for non-Muslim students in Malaysian schools and complemented Islamic Studies taken by Muslim students. With the subsequent implementation of a transformative syllabus starting from the year 2011 in Malaysia. The syllabus content is divided into several learning areas that prioritise spirituality, humanity, society, and culture. Learning fields given primary importance are: Values related to Self-Development, Family, Environment, Patriotism, Human Rights, Peace and Harmony and Democracy (Balakrishnan, 2010).

In the Education Blueprint, it is stated that there is a need to develop values-driven Malaysians as students faced numerous challenges that would require them to have leadership skills and strong universal values such as integrity, compassion, justice, and altruism to guide them in making ethical decisions (Ministry of Education, 2011). It is also vital for students to know how to balance global citizenship development with a strong national identity. In this context, it is essential that in developing the values and guiding students at different schooling levels (primary and secondary) in making ethical decisions, the comprehensive components of moral reasoning, moral feeling and moral acting should be the core components in those subjects. These values would provide the standard or objectivity for defining moral or noble character and responsible citizens that will enable them to lead a fulfilling life and contribute towards harmony and stability in Malaysia and globally (Chang, 2013). There is a real need for schools to promote character development and teaching moral education in schools to provide students with the skills

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needed to wrestle with moral dilemmas that they will encounter in latter parts of their lives (Dolph, Lycan, & King, 2008).

2.4. College and Career Readiness

The operational definition for college and career readiness is often considered similar but not necessarily the same. College readiness generally means the ability to complete a wide range of general education courses, while career readiness refers to readiness for courses specific to an occupational area or certificate. A student who is ready for college and career can qualify for and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses leading to a baccalaureate, certificate or career pathway-oriented training programs without the need for remedial or developmental coursework. However, analyses of college courses required for degrees and certificates find that the learning skills and foundational knowledge associated with college success go beyond those necessary for success in certificate and training programs that lead to careers (Conley, 2011, 2012).

In our setting, students will either enrol in university or college for further certification after completing secondary school or directly joining the existing workforce. This can be deducted from the statistics; for example, in 2010 alone, 58.0 percent of the Malaysian labour force had only a secondary level education, 13.2 percent had primary level education, and 2.6 percent had no formal education. That implies nearly three-quarters (73.8 percent) of the Malaysian labour force in 2010 is low-skilled, albeit only finishing their secondary education. From the report, only 26.2 percent of the workforce has completed their higher certification in colleges or universities (OECD, 2013). This poises us with a unique problem that the talent base of the workforce of Malaysia has lagged behind the standard of high-income nations. The country also suffers from a scarcity of skilled workers, weak productivity growth stemming from a lack of creativity and workforce innovation.

Because of many secondary students chose not to go for higher certification, they must be readied to have the skills to sustain themselves in financially viable careers and contribute to a thriving national economy characterised by high levels of innovation and entrepreneurship while still in secondary. In term of gender, as one of the study found out, male undergraduates are reported to be less anxious when making a career choice, possibly due to that they are facing minimal problems and have greater control when dealing with career decision-making. While females were more burdened with being homemakers and professionals and dealing with controlling parents, they face difficulties in choosing their careers. Therefore, it is essential to highlight that career readiness levels are different between male and female undergraduates in Malaysia's public universities(Salleh, Prikshat, Nankervis, & Burgess, 2017). As such, educators and the government need to initiate programs or courses to assist them in making career decisions. Results from other studies also do not look promising, with many participants still in the dark about what skills they need to acquire for Industry 4.0 and how they must hone those skills before entering an uncertain working world. In general, they are not ready for future career (Adnan et al., 2021; OECD, 2013).

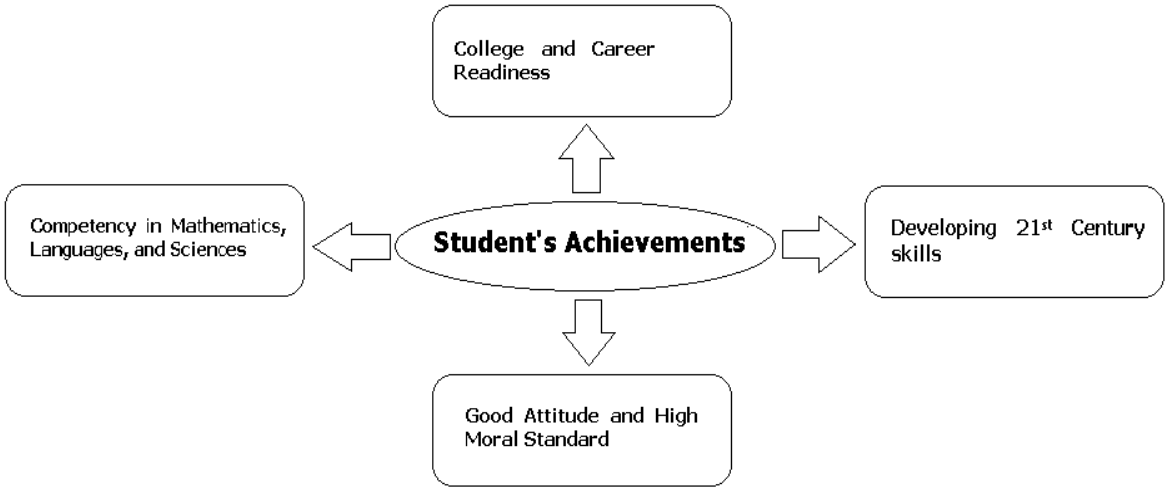
3. Conclusion

Based on the understanding of the National Education Philosophy and Malaysia's Education Blueprint (2013–2025), it appears that student achievement can be defined using the following theoretical framework (Figure 1). Student achievement is a metric

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that assesses how successfully a student has completed short- and long-term educational goals. The Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025) imply that student success can be measure by competency in Mathematics, Languages and Science, success in developing 21st Century skills, has acquired good attitude and high moral standard and well prepared for college and future career.

Figure 1: Proposed model of Student's Achievements based on National Education Philosophy and Malaysia's Education Blueprint (2013 -2025)



Sources: Adapted from Ministry of Education (2011, 2015)

In preparing for future education research, it is hoped to define student achievement clearly. This will help other researchers formulate their research direction when looking for a suitable definition of students' achievement according to the Malaysian context. However it is, the four dimensions of achievement are broad and varied depending on the study's engagement level. This is another area where a student's achievement definition can be further developed.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest in this study.

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