

Reviewing Our TS25: Looking from L1 Window

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ABSTRACT

Change is inevitable in any educational organization as new ideas and research shows that there are better ways to complete a task. Changes should be seen positive as we just cannot stop the world from evolving. As for the Malaysia education system, changes are happening when the government introduces the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2050 or to be more specific, the major agenda that is the School Transformation 2025 (TS25). The blueprints listed several key areas that need to be reformed in various aspects including administration, learning, school climate and surroundings that support the 21st century education. In addition, it is to make education in Malaysia at par with the first world countries. Here, transformation of 11 key areas are highlighted in the blueprint proposed to put Malaysia education to be world class. One of the key areas in the blueprint focuses on the students' outcomes (*Kemenjadian Murid*). Based on the plan, transformation in Malaysia education will be looked into the area of standard document (Curriculum), pedagogical aspect and students' evaluation. This paper however will only focus on the pedagogical aspect and a brief glance of students' evaluation as it involves both teacher and students. To address further on the issue of pedagogical aspect, this article will look into the practices in L1 context from the writer's experiences and compare the two contexts.

Contribution/Originality: This paper documents the current issues of changes in education scenario that is happening in Malaysia currently and to what extent it is actually effective in improving education quality in Malaysia. However, the paper tries to see from different perspective that is the L1 context which has established the key features of TS25 planned by Malaysian education system. By comparing, this paper able to contribute to identification of the needs and expectations of TS25 and 21st century learning parallel with Malaysia's hopes in providing quality and advanced education to all.

1. Introduction

There are several articles addressing the Malaysia Education Blueprint such as [Abdul Rahman \(2014\)](#), [Maslawati et al. \(2016\)](#), [Chang et. al \(2018\)](#) and Tony Bush et al. (2018). Here, several changes are recommended in the classroom that involves both students and teachers. Currently, master teachers from overseas are brought in Malaysia to guide teachers engaging in the best practices in teaching and learning. Teachers are to attend courses and following that, a mentor teacher will be assigned to guide the teachers for a period of time. In addition, conduciveness and technology must also be used and applied in the classroom to gear students toward the 21st century education. These are where gadgets and computers are used at the optimum as to be at the par of today's learners that is labelled as digital students.

As all teachers are struggling to digest what is said to be a drastic change in the teaching and learning in Malaysia education, the writer recalled the visit to one of a school in Southeast England three years back. The writer had the good fortune to visit one of the outstanding primary schools in Southeast England. Situated in the heart of main town, this outstanding school housed young learners aged 7 to 11 years old. This school was established as one of the first Free Schools in the country and currently receives an outstanding judgement in all areas whether academic performance or administration.

2. Developing and reviewing the concept

2.1. Environment and sitting arrangement

When the writer walked into the school, the writer was first drawn by the vibrant complimentary colour of purple, green and white in the school ([Figure 1](#)). It certainly added the energy to the classroom and school building as a whole and somehow uplifted the mood of joy and active atmosphere in the school. In each classroom, wall as well, were all decorated with students' works and there was a corner for curling up to read or perhaps having fun looking at their masterpieces as shown in [Figure 2](#) and [Figure 3](#). This atmosphere somehow transformed 'a formal school' to 'a homey place' where they felt comfortable to show their work and even had a space to do things at their own free time ([Figure 5](#) and [Figure 6](#)). Sitting arrangement was also carefully organized where the students were grouped according to the level of their proficiency. The average and weak groups were stationed in front where extra attention could be given, and the good ones could mix around to help each other in learning.

Figure 1: Year 3 class environment



Figure 2: Students' works displayed on the wall



Figure 3: A corner which allowed the students to write their opinions of themselves, what they want and how they feel of certain things that happen in their life



Figure 4: A corner for keeping their books and materials



Figure 5: School library



Figure 6: A corner where the students can rest and read



2.2. Teaching and learning

Schools in UK place 2 to 3 teachers in each classroom, consisting of one main teacher and one or two teaching assistants, in each classroom. With three 'teaching manpower', learners were better entertained and able to be guided individually throughout learning

process. This ensures a more efficient learning where a balance attention of teacher is spread out among the learners. As the writer walked around the class, each teacher would sit down together with the learners to discuss further about the topic that had been taught in the class (Figure 8). Sometimes, the teachers would spend longer time with one individual learner when the learner was a bit confused or weak in certain area. They would help them write, read together and even decode the words that they got stuck on until they understood them better. Teachers' questions like 'Where are we today?' or 'How are you doing so far' had become accustomed among the learners making them more interested to learn and ask the teacher any questions or doubt as depicted in Figure 9. Likewise, teachers' enthusiasm in approaching and guiding the learners obviously evoked learners' curiosity to learn more here. One thing about this environment is there was fluidity between the teachers and the students in achieving understanding in learning. It invigorated a more enthusing environment where reciprocity and collaboration had become part of learning environment.

Figure 7: Students were given a worksheet as an activity

L.O: To find the new price of a product with a percentage discount

Product	Original Price	Sale Price
Colgate 50% off	£2.80	
25% off	£0.80	
Persil 25% off	£10.00	
10% off	£8.80	
50% off	£5.50	
5% off	£2.00	
75% off	£2.00	
25% off	£1.60	
20% off	£4.20	

I can find the percent of an amount
I can find the new price of a product with a percentage discount

Figure 8: Teacher sat with students in Year 5 Math class to discuss and assist them in completing the worksheet



Figure 9: Another teacher was assisting students in year 5 Math class



The writer could clearly see this environment worked well when visiting Year 6 classroom as shown in [Figure 10](#). This environment somehow blended well with the writing lesson of Year 6. As the writer joined in the writing class, the first thing that caught the writer attention was the mutual trust built between the learners and the teachers. The learners were so opened to the teachers' opinion and they in fact sought for the teachers' comments to further develop their ideas. To be brief, interaction plus responding to each other was something very common in this writing class where questioning and sharing of ideas took place a lot in the process of writing. Apart from sharing and discussing their writing with the teachers, the learners were also encouraged to share and help each other in developing their ideas. They could move freely around the classroom to visit their friends' works or sought another people's opinion as portrayed in [Figure 11](#). Good students were not shy at all to offer help to others and they even asked if their friends needed any of their help. In other words, they were willing to share ideas and thoughts in writing.

Figure 10: Three teachers were helping students in Year 6 Writing Class



Figure 11: Students and teachers moved freely around the class to check each other works



Figure 12: Aims to be achieved for writing class were clearly informed to the students before lesson begins

I can statements Writing Level 6					
Level 6 Achieve a range of writing	AIM: SENTENCES Variety	AIM: SENTENCES Accuracy	AIM: ORGANISATION & STRUCTURE: Paragraphs, Punctuation & Spelling	AIM: VOCABULARY: Imaginative, Descriptive & Figurative	AIM: VOCABULARY: Figurative & Imaginative
	- I use a variety of sentence structures to achieve the purpose and to contribute to the overall effect of the writing. - I use a range of sentence structures to achieve the purpose and to contribute to the overall effect of the writing.	- I use the full range of punctuation accurately to achieve the purpose and to contribute to the overall effect of the writing. - I use a range of features to clearly signal the overall direction of the text for the reader e.g. links between paragraphs.	- I organise the paragraphs to achieve the purpose and to contribute to the overall effect of the writing e.g. using sub-points, sentence order. - I use devices such as paragraphs to contribute to the emphasis and effect of the writing e.g. using sub-points, sentence order.	- I choose my writing material imaginatively and am familiar with the use of a variety of types of writing. - I use about three styles when needed to suit the purpose and audience though they are not always successful in this. - I can put forward a convincing point of view using the writer's own voice and can sustain it throughout the writing. - I can use an appropriate level of formality depending on the purpose and audience. - I try to use a range of stylistic devices to achieve the effect I want, though I may not always be successful in this.	- I choose vocabulary that is generally appropriate to the purpose and audience. - I use a range of vocabulary that is generally used and often appropriate, even though the choice is not always apt. - I make occasional words to complete sentences such as conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, etc.
I can statements Writing Level 5					
Level 5 Achieve a range of writing	AIM: SENTENCES Variety	AIM: SENTENCES Accuracy	AIM: ORGANISATION & STRUCTURE: Paragraphs, Punctuation & Spelling	AIM: VOCABULARY: Imaginative, Descriptive & Figurative	AIM: VOCABULARY: Figurative & Imaginative
	- I use a variety of sentence structures e.g. simple, compound, complex, to achieve the purpose and to contribute to the overall effect of the writing. - I use a range of sentence structures to achieve the purpose and to contribute to the overall effect of the writing.	- I use a full range of punctuation accurately to achieve the purpose and to contribute to the overall effect of the writing. - I use a range of features to clearly signal the overall direction of the text for the reader e.g. links between paragraphs.	- I organise the paragraphs to achieve the purpose and to contribute to the overall effect of the writing e.g. using sub-points, sentence order. - I use devices such as paragraphs to contribute to the emphasis and effect of the writing e.g. using sub-points, sentence order.	- I choose my writing material imaginatively and am familiar with the use of a variety of types of writing. - I use about three styles when needed to suit the purpose and audience though they are not always successful in this. - I can put forward a convincing point of view using the writer's own voice and can sustain it throughout the writing. - I can use an appropriate level of formality depending on the purpose and audience. - I try to use a range of stylistic devices to achieve the effect I want, though I may not always be successful in this.	- I choose vocabulary that is generally appropriate to the purpose and audience. - I use a range of vocabulary that is generally used and often appropriate, even though the choice is not always apt. - I make occasional words to complete sentences such as conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, etc.

From the writer's point of view, such confidence and comfortability may have been instilled from the initial process of learning that it may have grown in habit and discipline that make the learners enjoy writing and feel good about talking or sharing writing with others. This perhaps consistent with the school's aims in trying

...to develop confident young people, capable of independent learning, ready and willing to operate as responsible and effective members of the community and equipped for the challenges of the 21st century.

Apart from sharing their works with fellow classmates, the teachers also made extra efforts by bringing the lesson to outside the classroom. There was one time when the Year 6 students went out joining the Year 4 students and they shared ideas about their writings and topics that they had learnt. To Year 6, it somehow allowed them to revise topics that they had learnt before and it gave them the ideas that considering audiences for their writing are really important. For Year 4, on the other hand was like a bonus for them to share and convey their masterpieces to their seniors.

2.3. Writing process

We, as a second language learner, do see this 'writing in English' as a very difficult skill to accomplish. However, learning English writing seemed fun and not complicated as it looked when writing task were compartmentalized according to few phases as in this L1 classroom. To ease the strain, teachers would have meeting before the writing class began and they would discuss their roles in writing activities. Technically, writing was taught in stages in this school and in a year the class aimed to achieve four completed essays depending on the level of the learners as can be seen in [Figure 13](#). The lesson began with research and mapping their ideas. They could go out to find information for their topic and discuss with friends as well. This was called Time Slip ([Figure 14](#) and [Figure 16](#)) or Information Text Research ([Figure 15](#)) in which they recorded all information that they thought relevant to their topics. Once they had gathered all the necessary information, they would start writing and they could discuss with friends or teachers.

Figure 13: Targets in Writing are pasted on the front cover of students' essay book

TARGETS IN WRITING STUDENT RECORD WORKING TOWARDS LEVEL 6				EVIDENCE SEEN	SECURE
TARGETS - ACROSS A RANGE OF WRITING					
AF1 - Write imaginative, interesting and thoughtful texts					
AF2 - Produce texts which are appropriate to task, reader and purpose					
AF1 & AF2	T1	I use stimulus materials imaginatively to engage the reader's interest.			
	T2	I am familiar with the conventions of a variety of forms and mostly adapt them to suit purpose and audience.			
	T3	I establish and mostly sustain a convincing, individual voice or point of view.			
	T4	I use a generally appropriate level of formality in my writing to suit the purpose and audience.			
	T5	I attempt to use a range of stylistic devices to achieve effect.			
AF3 - Organise and present whole texts effectively, sequencing and structuring information, ideas and events					
AF3	T1	I control and sequence material taking account of the reader's likely reaction.			
	T2	I use a range of features to signal the overall direction of the text for the reader.			
AF4 - Construct paragraphs and use cohesion within and between paragraphs					
AF4	T1	I construct paragraphs clearly to support meaning and purpose.			
	T2	My use of cohesive devices within paragraphs contributes to emphasis and effect.			
AF5 - Vary sentences for clarity, purpose and effect					
AF5	T1	I make controlled use of a variety of simple and complex sentences to achieve purpose and to contribute to overall effect.			
	T2	I am confident in the use of a range of sentence features to clarify or emphasise meaning.			
AF6 - Write with technical accuracy of syntax and punctuation in phrases, clauses and sentences					
AF6	T1	I use correct grammar and a full range of punctuation consistently in a variety of sentence structures.			
	T2	I attempt to use ambitious sentence structures and punctuation, making occasional errors.			
AF7 - Select appropriate and effective vocabulary					
AF7	T1	My choice of vocabulary is generally appropriate to the purpose and audience.			
	T2	I use a generally varied range of vocabulary.			
	T3	My use of vocabulary is often ambitious, if not always appropriate.			
AF8 - Use correct spelling					
AF8	T1	My spelling is generally correct throughout, including more complex, ambitious and uncommon words.			

Figure 14: Information Text Research

Natasha

Information Text Research
L.O. To carry out effective research

Staying Safe
What to do if someone gets shocked: Do not touch victim (you = shocked 2). Find adult right away. Ask adult to turn off the power at service panel - call 911. If in public keep people away. Don't plug more than one extension in one wall socket. Make sure all wires are tucked away. Don't ever climb fence of electrical substation. Stay away from power lines.
Don't yank a cord from wall. Keep electricals from water.

How it gets to your home
Generated
Voltage increased at station
Travels across province on transmission lines
Neighbourhood station decreases voltage
Carried to neighbourhood distribution lines
Transformer on pole decreases voltage before entering the house.

Form of energy which is
Generating
Wind turbines - r
Wave & tidal turbines - r
Coal - n
Natural gas - n
Solar power - r
Water (hydro) power - r
Geothermal power - heat in the earth's core - r
Biomass - plant, crop & animal waste - r

Modern civilisation relies almost entirely on the convenience and versatility of electricity, however there are many dangers are present upon

- I have selected appropriate sub-headings to research
- I have used internet search engines efficiently and safely
- I have made sensible and useful notes

Figure 15: Time Slip Story

Claudia

Time Slip Story
L.O. To plan the outline of a time slip story

OPENING Where does your modern character go?	EVENTS What happens during and after the first time slip event?	RESOLUTION How do things start to get sorted out?
My character is a boy called Tom who is sent to his Auntie's house because his parents are going ~~the~~ ^{on holiday} ^{* in the countryside} 2002	Whilst Tom is in summer time he meets a slave called Mary and she needs something so Tom needs to ~~the~~ go back and get it for her. * Food, money, clothes.	Then after a while Tom's Auntie calls him for dinner so he has to say goodbye to Mary.
BUILD UP Where and how does your character find the time slip? He didn't want to be inside so he decides to go outside, and he finds a whole in a tree. * He was fed up	What happens during the second time slip event? She is then given lots of money, food and clothes so she is able to live a much nicer life, not being a slave.	ENDING Does the time slip get closed? How? Or does it leave it open for it to happen again? Why? Time slip get closed and hole disappears.

- I have a clear idea of the journey my story will take
- I have included relevant events from each time in history
- I have thought carefully about the ending of the story

Figure 16: Time slip that helps students to brainstorm words related to character

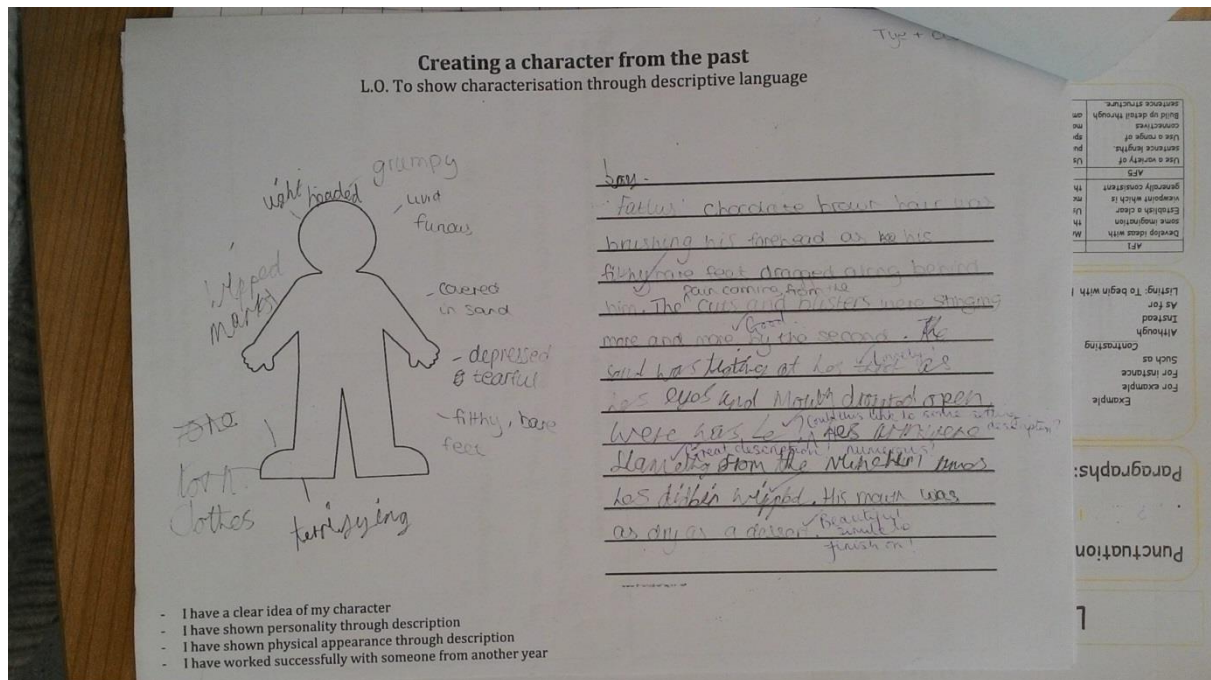
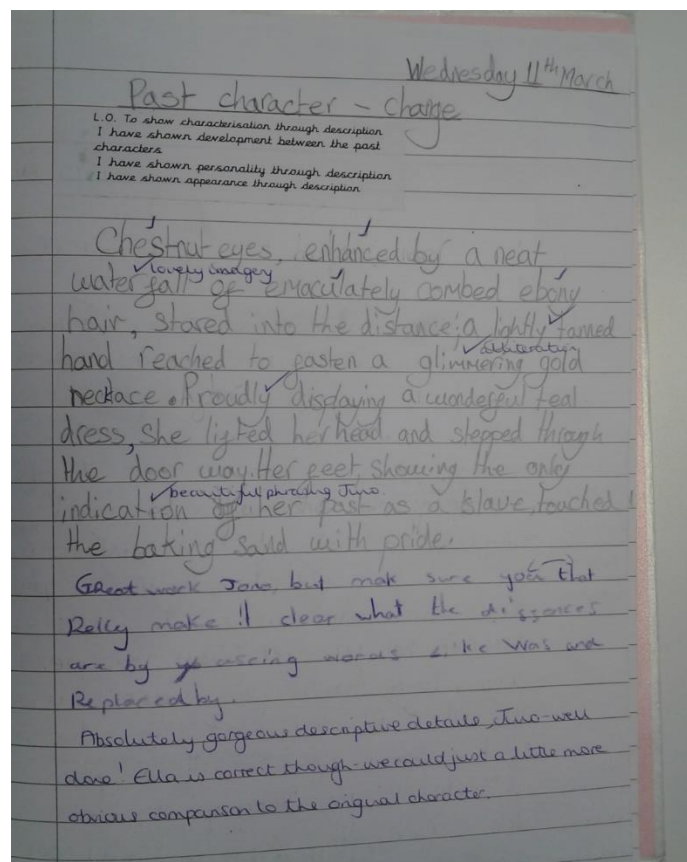


Figure 17: Students' first draft with two feedbacks given. First comment was given by his friend and the second was his teacher.



Looking at the lesson, the writer noticed that the teachers treated 'writing' as a mean of communication in the classroom. It leads to social interaction as shown in Figure 17 in which the class members giving comments to each other and everyone can say or ask

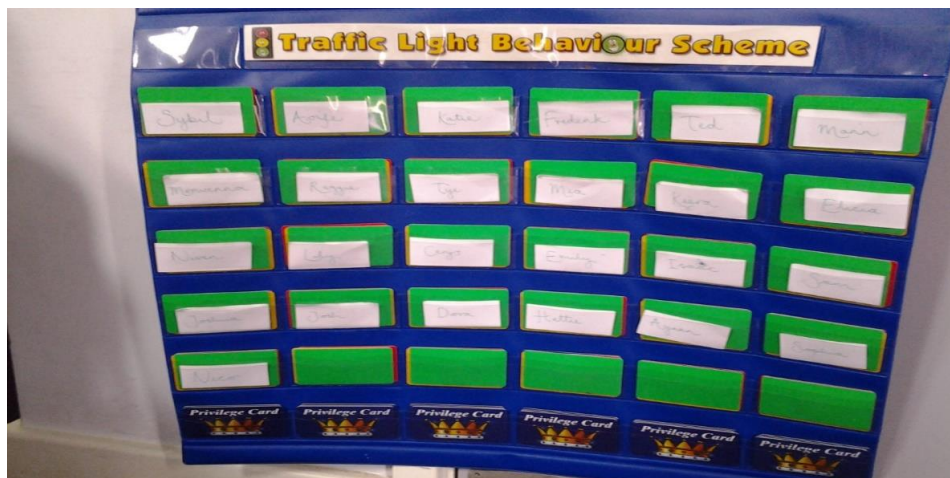
anything about each other writing to help clarify their ideas. They can even share thoughts and most important thing they still respect one another's ideas.

3. Implications

3.1. Discipline

Despite the freedom that the students had in learning, they seemed to remember that freedom is always in context with community thus respect and responsible to others should always be adhered to. This school seemed to merit every good deed that the students did. They even had the charts called *Traffic Light Behaviour Scheme* (Figure 18) that showed how they behaved all day in school. Any wrongdoing in class like making noise and not doing work would be 'punished' by displaying the penalty card on the chart and if the student was having hard time to follow rules, the teacher would ask them to sit in one special seat reserved and positioned in front of the classroom. The writer could see the teacher would sit with this learner at the end of the lesson and somehow rationalized their behaviour in the classroom by explaining and advising him. Apart from that, this merit and chart system in the way control the classroom and at the same time encouraged the students to do good deeds. Throughout writer's stay at the school, the writer was constantly approached by students asking whether the writer need help or need direction to go anywhere in the school. They appeared to having fun when they were able to help someone with something.

Figure 18: A chart in Year 4 showing two students having discipline penalty



Apart from good deeds, the students are awarded with a certificate (Figure 19) when they performed well in academic. This included in any aspects of academic including handwriting, attendance and not just restricted to scores in tests.

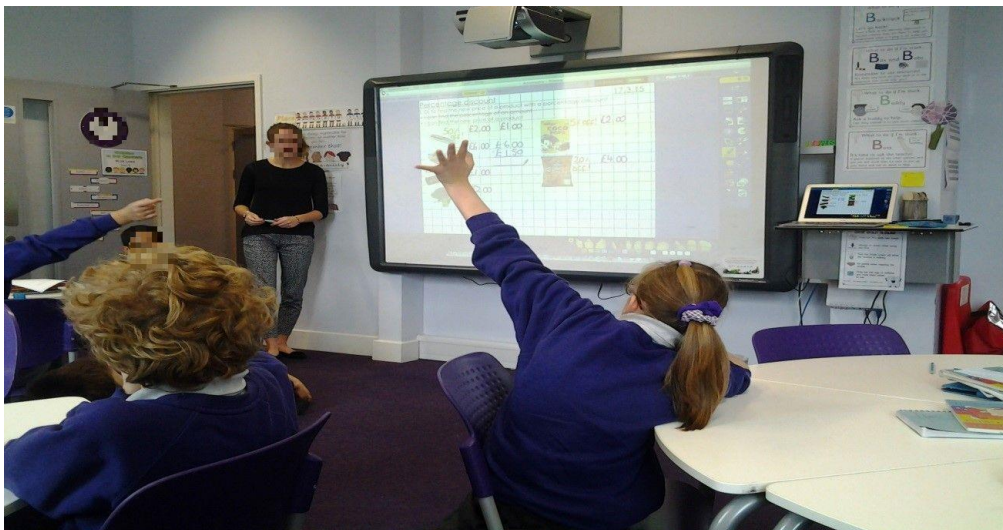
Figure 19: A certificate awarded to a Year 5 student for having a good handwriting



3.2. Gadget in learning

With the emphasis on critical thinking and independent learning, technology has become a must to complement the learning process. One technology that impressed the writer enough was the use of smartboard as the main tool of teaching in each classroom. Under the funding initiative from the Department for Education and Skills, schools in United Kingdom (UK) can now use SMART Board interactive whiteboards and it has become necessities for all teaching and learning in UK. It certainly revolutionises the way the teacher teaches, or shall we say no more 'chalks and talks' but 'all in just one single click'. Attending one of the Year 5 Math class and this smartboard really turned Math into something more interesting and fun subject to learn as depicted in [Figure 20](#). There are moving pictures, colourful objects and sound that help students to visually see how numbers work magic. Though it's very expensive to have it installed in all schools, this immersive technology is certainly allowing for impressive feats in teaching and learning.

Figure 20: Smartboard used in Year 5 Math Class



3.3. Reading culture

Reading has become a concern for all teachers in this school and UK as a whole. From a glimpse, the writer could see students were practically reading anywhere they go, and it had become a common practice among the students to read while they had free time.

One thing that caught the writer eyes was the use of kindle among these learners. The school provided kindle for the students and it made them enthusiastic to read as the features and function of kindle are so much different from one 'physical' book. They were able to refer to dictionary anytime by just touching the words they did not understand on the screen, learnt about the word usage and even better they had a wide range of books selection that they could buy or borrow from Amazon without even going to a shop. Apart from using this technology as a tool for reading, the students also seemed to compete in reading. When asked to one of the students, the student expressed in pride that she had managed to read a very thick novel within one week in comparison to her friends. The teachers as well showed their interest in what the students are reading. They constantly asked any new reading they had been doing now and when the students expressed what they had read, the teachers amazingly able to share thought with these students as if they had read the same books before. All in all, there seemed to be 'reading culture' immersed in the school and the best part was these students were not just reading for their own leisure but it seemed like a platform to connect or establish contact with others by sharing their thought with the teachers or friends. This somehow instilled the love towards reading in students during their time at school.

4. Discussion

4.1. Sharing and caring?

The main thing that stands out about this school is that mutual trust and understanding between the teachers and students. Kids in nature are always asking questions but teachers as an adult here show interest in helping them understand the world or in other words fulfil their curiosity. Ultimately, it has become an empowering conversation for the child and they in the end are willing to try and share everything that they do with others. Apart from that, what interest the writer is that the students have the chance to take ownership over learning in which they are allowed to ask questions and to share thought with others. In addition, they are aware of their own pace and teachers are there to help, working shoulder to shoulder. It portrays an active learning in motion and yet still under control where one respects another. There certainly is a culture embedded in this school that encourages cooperation where people are working things out and doing the problem solving together.

5. Conclusion

Turning back to our situation in Malaysia, it will take several years to materialize what education in UK has been doing. We have stated in our blueprint that

- i. Teachers will be immersed in a culture of collaboration and professional excellence. They will collaborate with one another to tackle issues and share best practices. They will have greater pedagogical flexibility in the classroom in their quest to ensure that every student learns;
- ii. Students will have a richer school experience, both academic and non-academic, so that they can excel in life. There will be more project and group-based work to develop students' higher-order thinking skills and ability to work both independently and collaboratively in groups. Students will have greater say in shaping their learning experience;
- iii. Teachers will work with them and their parents to set their own learning targets. Teachers will also encourage them to be advocates for themselves so that teachers understand what learning styles work best for each of them. In

return, students will always be asked to try their best and to work collaboratively with their teachers to reduce disruptive classroom behaviour. All students will have the collective responsibility to help make their school safe and conducive to learning.

Clearly, Malaysian education system is moving towards a more productive and active learning where experiential learning, which has been practised in the UK education system, is given more emphasis this time. Collaborative, higher-order thinking skills, independent learning, pedagogical flexibility and creativity in teaching are the main keywords in Malaysian education transformation. The impact of the transformation was experienced by the writer during the visit to this school in, UK. The writer managed to walk through what the transformation inspired for. Looking back the experience in South East England 3 years ago, perhaps it might take more than 3 years from now to see part of the changes the government dream of. However, the blueprint is a step taken to the journey of education reform that will one day make Malaysia be excellent in the education world.

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Conflict of Interests

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