



REFLECTIONS ON THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IN MALAYSIA: SOME ISSUES AND CHALLENGES Relating to Mission Schools in Particular

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Introduction

The early missionaries were the pioneers in establishing schools in Malaysia. They set up mission schools not too long after arrival. Quite a number of our national leaders were groomed and trained in these once prestigious schools where quality education was carried out by dedicated and qualified teachers. In the early days of pre- and post-Merdeka, teachers were well-trained in good teachers' training colleges both locally and abroad (e.g. Malayan Teachers' Training College at Kirby¹, England). The luminaries of the mission schools, among others, are: Bank Negara Governor Tan Sri Dr Zeti Aziz, Mercy Malaysia president Datuk Dr Jemilah Mahmood, and Datin Seri Jeanne Abdullah, the First Lady. Even our Prime Minister Dato Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had his sixth form education in a mission school in Penang.

Education liberates a person from being trapped in an environment that gives few opportunities for personal development, partly due to lack of knowledge of the world around him. The trap limits a person's range of employment and economic opportunities. All other things being equal, any education process should lead to transformation and empowerment of an individual.

A life imbued with personal skills and high ethical character will enable a person to thrive well in a complex society. Sadly, many schools today, including the government-aided ones, seem to have neglected the more important aspect of character building and inculcation of high moral values and personal coping skills. While it would be irresponsible and unfair to say that shortcomings in school system contribute to dropouts, social misfits, teen pregnancy, drug abuse, and gangster activities (in schools

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and society at large), the system has certainly failed to develop a child in a holistic manner.

Broad Goal of Education

Schools are preparatory institutions. In summary, a general goal of education is the development of good character and personhood of individuals according to their gifting, so that they will become useful contributing citizens in their own country and in a globalized world. In other words, the conceptual framework of education is to equip, transform and empower a child to live and function as a useful citizen in his community and in the “global village” to use Marshall McLuhan’s terminology.

The above statement necessitates consideration of three major factors namely 1) pupils, 2) society and 3) the world and ‘globalization’.

Pupils

It is required to study the learner and find out about his interests, aptitudes, family background and needs in order to effect the development of personhood and character transformation. Teachers have a crucial role to play in the formation of young lives, e.g. inculcating effective coping and problem-solving skills, besides imparting knowledge of academic subjects. The right attitude of work ethics, commitment to achievement, and self motivated learning as a life-long process instilled in a child while young will carry him through life more effectively than a child who is lacking in such values. Therefore, school must also be a place for character-building and development of personal skills and good attitudes during the formative years.

Society

Educators must take into consideration the societal needs as well as its norms and culture. One major problem facing our society today has to do with *morality and rising crime rate*. Some of the challenges faced are dealing with problems of drug addiction, integrity, and social ills such as violence, rape and murder amongst young people. Therefore sound moral education, if properly carried out, should help to inculcate good moral values. Unfortunately crime rate is on the increase amongst students. Changes have to be made about moral education. At present, it is taught as an examination (SPM) subject for non-Muslim students; many complain about having to ‘memorize differing values taught for the examination.’ It has been reported that the Ministry of Education is reviewing the subject to bring about holistic change.²

Another category of societal needs is the impending *shortage of certain food items in the world*. The government has realized the urgent need to increase our own food production and to reduce dependence on imports which drains our currencies. As reported by the press, Prime Minister Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi called upon all state assemblymen to implement the 'Bumi Hijau' programme in their respective constituencies.³ This exercise is to promote and assist those in the rural areas to get into cultivation by providing land, equipment, fertilizer and seeds. Can such useful exercises begin at the public school level on a miniature scale?

At the personal level, agricultural activities will certainly help families to cushion high inflation costs which we now face. Spending on food can be reduced if each family is able to grow their own vegetables or even rear fish in their own ponds. Moreover, they are guaranteed that they are not eating food with harmful pesticides used by unscrupulous vegetable producers and businessmen.

Indeed, technical and vocational education under the Ministry of Education has been incorporated into the curriculum even at the primary level. However, the attention given is still far-fetched. Food management and agricultural subjects, for example, are merely electives at the upper secondary level.⁴

Another societal need is the *shortage of certain categories of workers*, be it blue-collar workers or specialists and researchers in the universities and hospitals. The school curriculum can be geared towards training our young people to fill gaps in the labour market. Through education it is also hoped that the transformation of mindset of students will ultimately lead to transformation of the community where there is high respect for all categories of workers who are gainfully employed to make honest living. It is in school and home where we can inculcate respect for blue-collar jobs and dignity of honest labour. However, much is required of teachers and parents who must first be renewed in their own mindset. A hardworking mechanic, hawker or farmer may earn as much if not more than an academician in a university.

Globalization

As the world has become a global village, we must train our students to think globally and to keep up with the world affairs so as to be competent at the international level. In view of our Education Ministry's policy of promoting 'Education Excellence in Malaysia' and making Malaysia an 'educational hub' of Asia and regions beyond, we need to set high standards and goals comparable to that of the developed nations. One of the new projects of the Ministry of Education is to have certain public universities mentoring 'selected cluster schools' with the purpose of encouraging high academic achievers.

According to Datuk Dr Zulkefli A. Hassan: “This programme will help to identify and nurture students with strong potential to fulfil our aim of having about 100,000 PhD holders in 15 years under the MyBrain programme.”⁵

To achieve this goal, admission of students and teachers/lecturers to schools, colleges and universities has to be based on merit. Students must learn to compete fairly with one another in school in order to excel. The spoon-feeding method of instruction does not help to build up stamina and independent learning habit required in a fast changing world where knowledge increases at a phenomenal rate.

To transform the community into one that is not afraid of hard work and able to succeed in whatever job, we must begin in the school right from standard one. Teaching pupils to enforce self-discipline in doing their homework, and changing their “couldn’t care less” attitude to one that is eager to perform well and to excel in their school projects and examinations should be on-going practices.

Issues and Challenges

Curriculum and Pedagogy

One of the challenges faced by students in school is the large amount of content with too many subjects that they have to plough through in order to pass examinations. Those who are less academically inclined and prefer outdoor activities find it burdensome; many give up totally. Often non-academically inclined students (from Form Two to Form Five) are merely in school because of parental pressure. This has led to numerous discipline problems.

Discipline problems

Many disciplinary challenges arise partly because pupils completely lose interest in what goes on in the classroom. Schooling becomes meaningless. They play truant and choose to spend hours playing computer games in cybercafés, loitering in parks or getting involved with gangsters and drug pushers outside the school perimeters. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education to see how education can best be carried out on this group of youth, and how curriculum can be tailored to cater for their needs. High dropout rate is likely to lead to increased social ills. Perhaps subjects that require hands-on activities may be of greater relevance and interest to them.

Using Vegetable Gardening as an Integrative Approach

For those who love outdoor activities and are not afraid to soil their hands, farming or gardening could be a meaningful learning process. Crops that are successfully planted on an economical scale can be sold to the school community through students-run cooperative stores. In the process, students learn about trading, quality control, marketing, book keeping, sales promotion, interpersonal relationship, honesty and integrity in business dealing. Subsequently, schools may achieve meeting the needs of students who are not able to handle academic subjects as well as contributing towards solving the problem of impending food shortage in the society. Profit gained could be used to help needy students, instilling a sense of care for the poor. Such experiences are of great value. Indeed 'school leavers can make it in agriculture'⁶ if they are interested and are not afraid of hard work in the field.

The above advantages can be gleaned from an integrative approach to education if teachers and school administrators are keen to make it a success. This calls for a positive mindset that is not afraid to try out uncharted course of action to face challenges confronting education today. Negative attitude, be it from the students or teachers, can be a stumbling block to progress. We are inclined to believe that, all other things being equal, an integrative approach to capture the attention of non-academic-oriented students is viable given the time, encouragement and resources needed.

Declining Standard of Education

It is obvious that the standard of education has dropped, particularly in public schools, giving rise to increasing demand for enrolment in private schools. Many parents choose to send their children to good private schools if they can afford it and if places are available. Others spend substantially on their children's tuition outside school hours. If Malaysia hopes to be a 'regional education hub', change for the better has to take place. Brain-storming and consultation between leaders and educators, innovative ideas, and pilot projects will pave the way for holistic change for the better.

Polarization and Racial Imbalance of Teachers

Racial polarization and racial imbalance among the teachers in public and government-aided schools may have also contributed towards the current decline in education. Compared to the time when mission schools were staffed with large number of dedicated and efficient teachers of different races in the early decades, the quality of teachers today is generally far below standard. If racial imbalance could be redressed, it would be a big step towards improvement. The government has to look into the current system

concerning the intake of teacher trainees to ensure that enough places are given to all races without compromising on quality.

However, it has also been said that the imbalance is due to the lack of interest among the non-Malays in teaching profession. If this is the case, we have failed in our responsibility to help educate and shape the character of our youth. The important question is whether we would come forward and serve. Again, a new mindset is required. Reassessment on recruitment of teachers and training programmes are called for.

Reappraisal of Teachers' Training

Changing mindset and attitude starts with the teachers. This has to be incorporated in the teachers' training programme as well as the intake of educators in the universities and teachers' training colleges. It will do well for the Ministry of Education to seriously reappraise teachers' education programme because the quality of teachers has a bearing on the quality of education our young people receive.

Trained teachers must be able to deliver the goods. Therefore selection system for new intake of teacher-trainees and teacher-trainers needs to be reviewed. With little resources and having 'education excellence' as goal, we can no longer afford to take those who have no genuine interest in education.

To produce excellent students we need proficient and responsible teachers. This calls for high standard of teachers' education. Efficacy, integrity, responsibility and diligence must be the order of the day. To achieve education excellence in our nation we need outstanding and hardworking instructors whose attitude and behaviour can be emulated by the students. Very often, a transformed life of a young person comes from a transformed teacher whom he admires and imitates. Hopefully in the days to come we have many more dedicated role models and mentors of high calibre in schools.

It is also hope that the recruitment of trainees and trainers will be beyond ethnicity and religion. Ethnic/race-based mentality of any kind must be discarded. Everything possible must be done to eliminate the 'curse' of polarization in classroom and staffroom. Those who criticise the system – the non-Malays in particular – must change their views about teaching profession and take proactive action.

Let us pray that the Christian community will rise to the challenge and actively involved in one way or another in educating the young generation. Regular promotion of 'teaching as vocation' must be forthcoming from the pulpit, Christian parents and the youth workers. Sadly, many parents are devoted to encouraging their children to become doctors, accountants, engineers and lawyers.

However, the writers of this paper are grateful to our parents for encouraging us to go into teaching profession of which we have no regret. Looking back and based on the feedback from our former students, we can truly say that teaching is a meaningful and worthwhile vocation despite challenges along the way.

Now, how can we as a Body of Christ be more involved in educating the younger generation, which is an important aspect of nation building?

The Role of the Church in Education and Nation Building

The following pages focus primarily on the mission schools. It is an attempt to reconsider the role of Christian mission schools in the overall context of the national education system. Specifically, it is an effort to rethink the role of the Church in education and nation building vis-à-vis Christian mission schools. As such, we would like to acknowledge our predecessors who provided valuable information and insights on the subject matter.

Brief History of Mission Schools

For a brief and concise history and other interesting information about mission schools, we would like to refer the reader to a series of articles which appeared in *The Star* (Education) on 4 July 2004. They are also posted on *Assunta Alumni* website under ‘Malaysian Mission Schools News Archive.’⁷

Penang Free School, the first and oldest English school in Southeast, is formerly a mission school founded by Reverend Robert Hutchings, an Anglican minister, in 1816.⁸ It was later handed over to the government to administer.

In 1852, the Catholic Mission established St. Xavier’s Institution (Secondary) and St. Xavier’s School (Primary) through the La Salle Brothers in Penang.⁹ In Sabah, the Catholics had also opened their first primary school, St Mary’s Primary in Sandakan in 1883. Indeed the majority of mission schools we see today are those established by the Catholic Mission, e.g. Convent Light Street in Penang, St John’s Institution in Kuala Lumpur, and St Paul’s in Seremban, just to name a few.

Methodist mission schools had their beginnings in the 1880s when Reverend William F. Oldham started the Anglo-Chinese School in Singapore on 1 March 1886. Five years later in 1891, an Anglo-Chinese School was set up in Penang.¹⁰ Mission schools were also established by the Presbyterian Church, the Brethren, the Borneo Evangelical Mission (Sidang Injil Borneo, SIB) and the Seventh Day Adventists. Currently, there are 227

mission schools in the Peninsula and 235 in Sabah and Sarawak, making a total of 462. Of these, 338 are primary schools and 124 secondary.¹¹

In his paper 'Christian Schools in Malaysia', David Boler¹² outlines three distinct phases of mission schools. The first phase 'Pre-Merdeka Era' was when the Christian missionaries who established the schools also administered them. Next, the 'Unified Teaching Service' was implemented following the *Razak Report* (KPM, 1956).¹³ Each school was responsible for selecting its own teachers through its Board of Governors. The third phase came with recommendations made by the *Aziz Commission*¹⁴ where teachers would now become government servants; their appointment and deployment were determined by the Teachers' Service Commission.

Boler's analysis helps us understand better how the Christian ethos and traditions in mission schools have gradually eroded over the years. The loss of this original sense of identity has been keenly felt that many mission authorities have begun rethinking the future of mission schools.¹⁵

The Plight of Mission Schools and its Need for Restructuring

We believe good practices and traditions carried out during the early decades of mission schools need to be revived and new ideas tried out. If mission schools are given the autonomy and responsibility to administer and select their own principals and teachers, and if they are able to inculcate high standard of moral values amongst the pupils – through good moral and Religious Knowledge classes (or even weekly chapel services that include non-Muslim students as had been done in the past) – they may then be able to once again produce men and women with high moral standard and calibre for the betterment of Malaysians. Unfortunately today's mission schools are no longer as effective as they used to be, partly because of shortage of dedicated Christian teachers; and in this regard they have lost their cutting edge.

It is hoped that the Ministry of Education in conjunction with Mission School Boards could look for ways and means to rebuild mission schools to their former standard if not higher, so as to enhance their role in providing quality education to all.

Multi-Ethnic Composition in Mission Schools

As a matter of fact, of all the existing schools in the country, mission schools are the ones that maintain a good composition of various ethnic groups in student population. It can be said that the schools are ideal places to forge intercultural communication and further enhance racial harmony in a multiracial Malaysian society. To encourage racial

appreciation and unity, teachers have to watch out for racist or religious extremist remarks and attitude. Any such negative attitude will only lead to mistrust, prejudice and hatred amongst the races; they do not augur well for a multiracial and multi-religious community, and must be nipped in the bud.

In August, some 500 angry Indian parents and Indian community demonstrated at a school entrance. They were outraged by racial slurs on Indian students and were upset with the teacher who made those remarks. Judging from their reaction, it seems that Malaysian citizens are becoming less tolerant of racism. The Ministry of Education also took the incident seriously. Deputy Education Minister Dr Wee Ka Siong said that “the teacher might be sacked if the allegations were proven true.”¹⁶

Teachers and students must know that if Malaysia is to have a place and a future in a globalized world, it requires full participation, contributions and cooperation of all races. Polarization is to our disadvantage in the face of stiff competition in the international arena. Unity within is strength, while racism, disunity, polarization and strife can only lead to weakening, decline and destruction of a society. Ultimately the entire nation spirals downhill, and all people groups suffer as in the case of Afghanistan.

Mission Schools Bridging Racial Divide

A culture of polarization, prejudice, mistrust and hatred was unheard of when the mission schools were run by dedicated Christian pioneers and administrators in the early days. Can they once again model a multiracial and multi-religious community of loving, caring, God fearing diligent people where race or religion is not an issue? Everyone helps one another to progress regardless of race or creed, realizing that every human being is worthy of due respect. This is the kind of progressive caring society that will be a blessing to all and is pleasing to God. We believe that it is God’s desire to bless Malaysia and to see her fulfilling her God-given destiny as a multiracial nation.

Mission schools can play a more proactive and effective role in inculcating the idea of racial harmony in children from a young age, besides promoting the universal values of compassion, kindness, justice, peace and integrity. Racial pride and hatred should not be encouraged. Children must be taught from young in homes and schools to respect and care for one another irrespective of race or creed. Let mission schools bridge the racial divide once again!

Rethinking the role of the church in relation to mission schools

Being faithful and responsible stewards

Whatever reservations we have about mission schools, the fact remains: they were brought into being through prayers and sacrifices of the godly pioneers and missionaries. They have been entrusted to our stewardship, and there is a real sense in which we will be held accountable. Our response will need to be more than just a simplistic 'give them up' or 'take them back from the government'.

Having a clear policy

Mission schools were turned into government-aided schools in 1971; they have since lost much of their original character and ideals. What shall we do when we do not have the resources to maintain the schools? Do we decide to close some and keep the others? How do we revitalise those we decide to keep?

Realising the gradual deterioration of educational standard in national schools, the Ministry of Education seems to be more open to new ways of solving problems; this may provide mission schools the opportunity to play more relevant role. Again, with the current policy of teaching Mathematics and Science in English, coupled with general awareness of the importance of the language, mission schools may stand better opportunities to raise their profile given the full support and encouragement from the government.

Taking stock of our limited resources

We have many schools but limited resources. In particular, we do not have enough Christian teachers to 'supply' the mission schools. Alas, there seems to be reluctance on the part of Christian parents to encourage their children to take up teaching as mission and vocation.

Rethinking 'reclamation'

Although there have been calls to 'reclaim' mission schools, the Christian community must be clear about what it is that we want to reclaim. The more basic questions are: What is the vision and mission? What is the underlying philosophy with regards to education? The more challenging issue would be how mission schools adapt to current socio-political situation and, at the same time, be sensitive to the contextual realities of our national education system. How, for example, can our vision and mission statements be explicit on Christian ethos and traditional values whilst taking into account ethnic and religious sensitivities?

Persevering in prayer amidst challenging times

We are reminded once again that the mission schools were founded on prayers and faithfulness of the missionary pioneers. We worship the same God who says, “I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?” (Jer 32:27). He is also the Lord who says, “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know” (33:3). Even for the modern day Christians, prayer is never meaningless and it is certainly not an exercise in futility. Jesus told his disciple, through the parable of a widow pleading with a judge, to pray at all times, and not to lose heart (Luke 18).

A Call to proactive involvement in our mission schools

Serving on the school Boards

The *Aziz Commission* in Recommendation 8.52 states:

It has been represented to us that, particularly in respect of mission schools . . . , the status quo of the Boards should be maintained as the Boards have been responsible for the founding and development of their schools since their inception.

The Education Act 1996¹⁷ also provides for the formation of the Board of Governors for mission schools. The Malayan Christian Schools’ Council has produced its own *Instrument of Government/Management of Government-Assisted Schools*. The school Boards have a crucial role, especially in maintaining the ethos and traditions of mission schools. Furthermore, the chairperson is usually appointed by the mission authority concerned.

The Board, functioning as an arm of the mission authority, is strategically placed to negotiate with the Ministry of Education with regards to the selection of suitable candidates to head mission schools. As stated in Recommendation 8.53 of the *Aziz Commission*:

To allay any misgiving as regards the status and the special character of . . . , particularly the mission schools . . . , we would suggest that in exercising the powers of deployment and assignment of teachers, especially the head teachers, there should be maximum consultation between the deployment authority and the individual Boards of the school so that this character is maintained.

Although often overlooked or set aside by the Ministry, the principle of ‘maximum consultation’ should be pursued by the mission authority concerned at every opportunity.

Joining the Parent-Teacher or School Alumni Associations

As with the school Board, both the parent-teacher and school alumni associations provide potentially powerful and legitimate avenues for the Christian community to maintain the ethos and character of mission schools.

Being involved in the school's co-curricular activities

Certain co-curricular activities of the mission schools are distinctive. Christian Fellowships and uniformed bodies such as the Boys' Brigade and Girls' Brigade have been in existence for many years with official recognition from the government. The nature of these activities is such that they require Christian teachers as overseers or advisors. In some schools, Christians Fellowships are often called off because there are no Christian teachers available.

Being available as resource personnel

Many mission schools sit in close proximity with the churches, often within the same compound. How can the Christian community ensure the continuity of the activities which have long been part of the mission school tradition?

The Christian community should seriously consider rallying a pool of human resource to support mission schools in the areas such as career guidance, counselling, or staff professional development. This is especially pertinent in view of the Ministry's requirement that school staff undergo a stipulated number of hours of in-house professional development training. There is no lack of expertise – e.g. managerial, financial and legal, among other things – within the local church community. The big question is how to mobilize these experts to contribute towards the development of the teachers and pupils.

Nonetheless, there is a pressing need for Christians who are willing to avail themselves to teach Bible Knowledge (BK) in schools.¹⁸ The Ministry has challenged us to increase the number of those who take BK to 3000 by 2010. Therefore parents, pastors and church leaders are urged to make concerted effort to promote 'taking BK as SPM subject.'

Being salt and light

Consistent with the Lord's exhortation to the Christian community as salt and light (Matt 5:13-16), the church can provide vocal expression of key spiritual perspectives and feedbacks in the formulation and implementation of the official educational policies and programmes. The call was issued more than 17 years ago by Dr Chan Kok Eng¹⁹ at a

seminar on 'Educational Challenges in the Malaysian Society: A Christian Response' organised by the NECF on 18 May 1991.

It is heartening to note that the Malayan Christian Schools' Council (MCSC) and the Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) have from time to time articulated their concerns through media on issues related to education and mission schools. On 28 October 2000, at the first nationwide symposium on 'The Future of Mission Schools', 94 delegates comprising Christian leaders and prominent representatives of the mission schools drafted a statement calling for 'all managing authorities of government-aided mission schools to pursue the principle of maximum consultation with the Government in the appointment of principals to mission schools'. The statement was released by the CFM on 3 November. The symposium also called on the schools to maintain their rich heritage and spiritual identity.

Although highlighting issues in the media does not guarantee change, it does create awareness and will in the long term initiate a paradigm shift in people's thinking. At the very least, it is a step towards being salt and light in our society.

The Private School Option

Many opine that the socio-political factors in Malaysia are unlikely to allow revitalisation or restoration of mission schools to what they were in the early years. Therefore, converting to private schools seems to be a viable alternative for the mission schools to preserve Christian values and ethos. For the La Salle Mission, it means 'going independent', that is, 'removing the La Salle schools from the national system of education and reconstituting them as independent or private schools', thus enabling them 'to reclaim a measure of autonomy so that the Lasallian Mission can be re-instilled in the everyday running of these schools.'²⁰ Similarly, other mission authorities such as the Methodist and Anglican can set up private schools with clearly articulated vision and mission statements explicitly reflecting their distinctive philosophical basis and Christian values.

As finance is a major issue in private education, the mission authorities would have to rethink the basis of their involvement, and be careful to put in place procedures for good governance and financial accountability.

Private education offers unique opportunities to meet the educational needs of the disadvantaged and marginalized – e.g. the *Orang Asli*, hardcore poor, and children with disabilities or special educational needs. There may be a constant tension between profit-making and ministry-oriented, in spite of the fact the two are not necessarily

mutually exclusive. Bill Gibbons²¹ of the HOSTS (Help One Student To Succeed) programme puts it aptly:

We will invest our talents for maximum return. There is no mission for an organisation without a profit margin, but profit margin must never drive the mission. We strive to grow profitably in both our experiences and our finances, believing that God honours those who honour Him with pure motives.

Private Teacher Training Option

If we are serious about establishing private schools, we have to give due consideration to sourcing qualified teachers. In lieu of the dire shortage of dedicated and well-trained teachers, the Christian community may think about setting up its own teachers' training college. Permit has to be obtained from the Ministry of Education just like private hospitals training their own nurses. Before launching into such a project, the implications and feasibilities involved must be carefully studied, even though private colleges are springing up rapidly all over the country and are apparently doing fairly well financially.

Teaching as Mission and Vocation

Much has been written about the crucial role of teachers in education, particularly in the context of mission schools. The landmark MCSC-CFM symposium presented eight resolutions to the Church 'as a collective response to God's call to serve the needs of the young, even as we acknowledge with gratitude the sacrificial obedience and rich heritage of pioneer educators and their successors.' Resolution VI states:²²

Central to many of the problems faced currently by mission schools is the dearth of suitably qualified and committed Christian teachers. We therefore strongly urge all churches to encourage parents and young people to view teaching as a vocation and mission.

In his article entitled 'Working with God in His Vineyard', Chairman of MCSC Mr Yap Kok Keong writes:²³

Teaching is a worthy calling for Christians. Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ was a teacher. Christians have always been challenged to imitate His life. Over the course of a teaching life of 28-30 years, a teacher would have had the privilege to shape thousands of lives and perhaps touch the lives of some for eternity . . . Because we have Christ, we have so much to offer the needy children and young people of our

land. The lonely call of God to the ancient prophet – ‘Who will go for me? Whom can I send?’ – should echo in every Christian’s heart.

We need to challenge our young people: ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’ (Isa 6:8). As we pray for the Spirit’s conviction on parents and youth, we believe more will respond: ‘Here I am. Send me!’

NOTES

¹ In 1951, the government of the Federation of Malaya set up the Malayan Teachers’ Training College at Kirby, Lancashire for the training of Malayan teachers.

² Karen Chapman, ‘Moral Education up for Review’, *The Star* (3 August 2008), p. N8.

³ ‘Help rural folk, state governments urged’, *The Star* (29 July 2008).

⁴ Ministry of Education Malaysia, Official portal, accessed on 29 Oct 2008:
http://www.moe.gov.my/tayang.php?laman=mata_pelajaran_menengah&unit=pelajar&bhs=en

⁵ Tan Shiow Chin, ‘Public varsities to mentor cluster schools’, *Sunday Star* (27 Jul 2008), p. N10.

⁶ Chin V. K. ‘School leavers can make it in agriculture,’ *The Star* (5 Aug 2008), p. N51.

⁷ <http://assuntarian.com/media/040704a.html>

⁸ G. Gomez, ‘A bit of history’ (2004). Retrieved 21 July 2008 from
<http://assuntarian.com/media/040704a.html>.

⁹ F. Brown, *La Salle - Brothers: Malaysia and Singapore 1852-1952* (Petaling Jaya: La Salle Publications, 1997).

¹⁰ S. O. Ho, *Methodist Schools in Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Board of Education, The Methodist Church in Malaysia, 1964).

¹¹ G. Gomez, ‘Preparing students for life’ (2004). Retrieved 21 July 2008 from
<http://assuntarian.com/media/040704c.html>. H. Pillay, ‘The impact of mission schools on national integration and development’ (Kuala Lumpur: MCSC Seminar, 2003), unpublished paper.

¹² David Boler, ‘Christian schools in Malaysia’ (1986), unpublished paper.

¹³ Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, *Report of the Razak Education Committee 1956* (Kuala Lumpur: The Government Press, 1956).

¹⁴ Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Bin Mohd Zain, *Revised Report of the Royal Commission on the Teaching Services, West Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers, 1971).

¹⁵ Malaysian Lasallian Education Council, *The Way Forward for the Lasallian Mission in Malaysia* (MLEC, 2007).

¹⁶ 'Parents protest outside school over alleged slurs', *The Star* (5 Aug 2008), p. N22.

¹⁷ Legal Research Board, *Education (Act 550) & Selected Regulations* (Kuala Lumpur: International Law Book Services, 2004), para. 53 & 54.

¹⁸ Y. L. Moey, 'Why Christian students should take Bible Knowledge at SPM level,' *Bible Knowledge* (Petaling Jaya: Teachers' Christian Fellowship (TCF), 2006).

¹⁹ Chan K. E., 'Challenges and opportunities: Some options for the Christian community,' *Educational Challenges in the Malaysian Society: A Christian Response* (Petaling Jaya: NECF, 1993).

²⁰ Anil Netto, Khoo K. J., Johan Saravanamuttu *et al.*, *The Way Forward for the Lasallian Mission in Malaysia* (Malaysian Lasallian Education Council (MLEC), 2007), p. 9.

²¹ B. Gibbons, 'Student aid: A million mentors make their mark,' *Giving back: Using your influence to create social change*, M. J. Oster & M. Hamel, eds (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2003), pp. 160-170.

²² 'Resolutions,' *MCSC-CFM Symposium on 'The Future of Mission Schools in Malaysia'*, Awana Resort, Genting Highlands, Pahang (2000), unpublished paper.

²³ K. K. Yap, 'Working with God in His Vineyard' (Malayan Christian Schools' Council, undated), unpublished paper.