



Our
Approach



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Education Philosophy

We believe students must be able to function in the global environment of the 21st Century through five critical life skills of confidence, communication, creativity, critical thinking and co-existence.

At the heart of our philosophy is the central role that learners drive their transformation; by making choices and effecting change.

The 'traditional' approach to education and the role of schools have evolved over the years. Where we once viewed education as rote and scripted, current research calls for a specific focus on self-directed learning.

We see a cohesive system with five dimensions (Learners, Classrooms, Schools, Communities and System), working in tandem to achieve a transformative school culture that is both sustainable and scalable.

Our vision is to ultimately have our learners participate in the design of their own learning. To bring this vision to reality, we work together with the Ministry of Education Malaysia and all our strategic partners.



Students



Classrooms



School Leadership

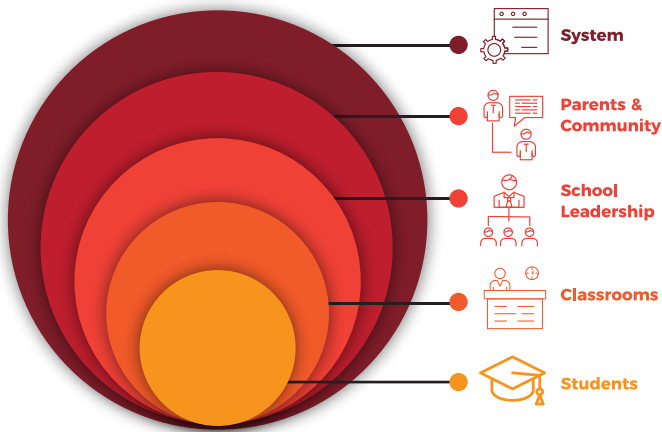


Parents & Community



System

Theory of Change



Our Theory of Change is underpinned by the following interactive principles:

TRANSFORMATION

The potential for greatness resides within each child. This potential is not solely realised through classroom participation; rather by the continuous and full support of teachers, school leaders, parents and the community for their holistic transformative empowerment.

SUSTAINABILITY

For change to be sustainable, transformation must include the change of culture in schools. Here we define culture as the variables of leadership and teachers' attitudes, school processes as well as the system's character and behaviour.

SCALABILITY

Sustainable transformation must be replicable and transferable. This involves the acceptance and assistance of the larger eco-system including regulator, government and industry.

Our Theory of Change resulted from a collaboration between academic expertise and practical experiences that emphasise the central position of a learner. Studies have shown that student engagement is a strong predictor of student learning. Students who have been given more autonomy in the classroom and are asked to take ownership of their learning, are thoughtfully engaged, empowered and able to reflect on their own progress and growth.

In this theory, the learner is at the centre of the ring; the students' needs and interests are prioritised and their voice is central to the learning process. This places students at the core of all we do. However, for the inner circle to be successful, the outer (supportive) circles must also continue to innovate and contribute to a comprehensive, inclusive educational environment. While LeapEd's role is to provide support for these dimensions, ultimately, success is the responsibility of the system.





5 lessons learnt to navigate future of education

Written by **Nina Adlan Disney**
Published in *The Vibes*, 29 August 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted education, with Malaysian schools physically closed for 42 weeks in 2021. Malaysia and our education system are at an inflection point. These are the five key lessons learnt, to help us navigate moving forward.

1. Students and System

Students must be our starting point. However, as central as students are, if they are your only focal point, there will be no long-term improvement to the system as a whole. For sure, an extra English tuition programme might improve exam scores, but will it help students achieve 21st-century outcomes like critical thinking?

Employers are all too familiar with applicants holding a string of As, but lacking the skills, or perhaps, the confidence, to problem-solve, evaluate and collaborate in teams. We can then introduce programmes to specifically address these soft skills, but it will be a never-ending and vicious cycle.

Evidently, all these features should be part of our education culture and embedded in how we deliver our curriculum. We must move beyond piecemeal initiatives. In fact, it can be argued that we have too many overlapping and confusing initiatives.

Too many English, Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, or Digital programmes have come and gone. The problem is, there is no robust impact measurement, and nobody is making strategic choices on which initiatives to prioritise.

Essentially, nobody is looking at the reasons why some initiatives work better than others. It's like a gardener who keeps ripping out plants that don't flourish and planting new ones, without checking the soil conditions. Be it at the federal, state, district or school level, our system is the soil that enables sustainable change to take root.



2. Culture and Cash

So, what are the systemic challenges? Lack of resources? World Bank statistics show Malaysia's total government expenditure on education as a percentage of gross domestic product (4.2%) is on a par with most upper-middle- and even some high-income nations.

Education already receives the largest allocation of our budget (RM50.4 billion in 2021), with an estimated 80% of that spent on emoluments. This gives us an indication of where our focus must lie – teachers.

While having more cash is always useful, we need to focus on optimising what is already there. It is not easy to rally the machinery of a monolithic ministry with 400,000 people, but successes in 94 Trust Schools, and our work in state and district transformation projects offer useful insights.

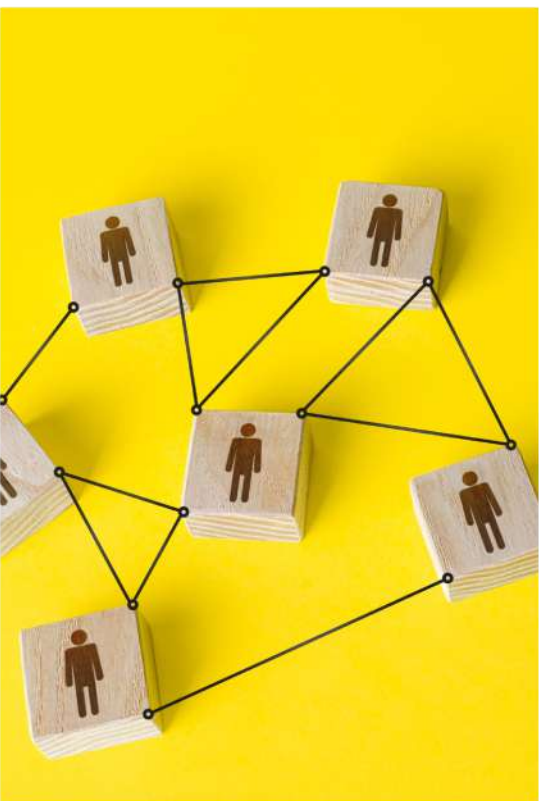
Cultural transformation takes patience, tenacity and time, leveraging “change agents” already within the system. There are many brilliant teachers and officers who are not always given the support to grow.



3. Autonomy and Authenticity

Improved capacity and relationship building through trust leads to autonomy. Trust schools control their own budgets because they are supported to be fully accountable. Our current system is far too centralised, and schools are not empowered to make decisions.

There is a reluctance to take ownership for fear of consequences, and the hierarchical deference to dictates and directives. The default position is always to stick with the status quo, which leads to a “tick box” mentality and the consequent lack of authenticity in reporting.



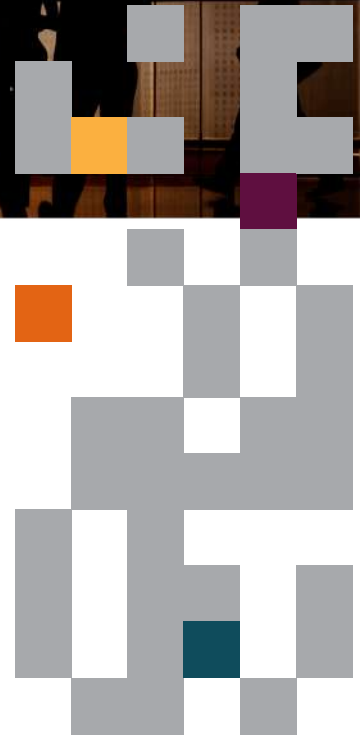


4. Capacity and Calibre

Once you establish trust, it is then time to identify gaps and support capacity-building. Here, we must be open to learning from others. While most teachers are familiar with basic pedagogy principles, such as differentiation or assessment for learning, there is often a need to demonstrate how this can be applied effectively in a classroom context. School leaders need to become leaders of learning, model best practices, and lead by example.

In Trust Schools, Middle Leaders and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) conduct regular “learning walks” to fully engage with what is happening in the school. Formal learning observations also take place, not to “find fault”, but in a “safe space” to support teacher development.

SLT also receives upskilling in areas such as financial management to ensure operational efficiency. When these competencies and practices are entrenched in the school culture, we see schools becoming more resilient in adapting to change. So, amid the pandemic, learning walks and lesson observations can still continue, albeit tweaked to meet the needs of learning online, offline, or offsite.



5. Data and Development

This brings us to data. We need more rigorous evidence-based approaches in our planning and policymaking. Instead of blanket interventions, let's be guided by baseline data to really understand the take-off value of each school.

We need agility within our system to respond to different needs. For instance, with the pandemic, some schools might have to accelerate literacy and numeracy, while others focus on students and teachers' socio-emotional needs.

We are all stakeholders in education. The private sector cannot sit back and claim it is the "ministry's job" to provide them with a talent pool. We owe it to our children to create a better future for all.

LeapEd is just one of the many entities, like Teach for Malaysia or the Financial Industry Collective Outreach, trying to work with the ministry to make a difference.

In an ideal world, after 10 years of implementing TSP, our 10,000 schools will undergo this cultural transformation. And when all schools are student-centred and engaging with independent learners, we will be in a much better place to deal with unforeseen crises.

Students will drive their own learning, be it digital or remote, and school leaders and teachers will be equipped to deal with volatility and uncertainty.

We are not yet quite there. Transformation is about the journey, not the destination. So, let's take the current while it serves and keep sailing forth, with our North Star guiding the way. – The Vibes, August 29, 2021

