

1st Regional Seminar and Workshop
“Strengthening Cooperation on Education to Achieve ASEAN Caring and Sharing Community”
23 -25 February, 2009 Bangkok, Thailand

Country Report **Malaysia**

Topic : ASEAN Young Leaders Empowerment

Introduction:

Malaysia has initiated and implemented several programmes in youth leadership training to prepare them to play a more meaningful role in facing the challenges posed by globalization. The process of globalization has moved ASEAN nations rapidly towards integration and regional interdependence more than ever before. In both public and private sectors there is a need to create as many potential leaders who are competent and skilful. There is a need to nurture resilient and responsible ASEAN youth who can contribute significantly to ASEAN’s prosperity and progress taking into account their capacities, potentials and vulnerabilities.

According to the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato’ Seri Najib, “organisations should take the question of leadership seriously and invest in learning and making of leaders.” He also suggested institutions of learning and non-profit organizations to conduct leadership programmes.

Young Leaders Empowerment

Malaysia today is far more open and willing to embrace younger leaders to run organizations and corporations. While younger leaders may lack the experience and wisdom, they compensate with creativity and their willingness to learn and accept new ideas.

Towards this end Malaysia has embarked on systematic nurturing of the youth before empowering them with leadership responsibilities.

At the school level

Core values are incorporated in the school curriculum to build a sense of identity both national and being ASEAN. The challenge of MOE is to ensure the curriculum is able to develop students’ character to become citizens with noble values through specific subjects like Islamic Education and Moral Education.

Leadership training also takes place during co-curricular activities. The policy of compulsory involvement of every student in one club, uniformed body and sports all leads to leadership training. By means of marching drills, self-development camps and competitions, students learn to be disciplined, articulate and understand the importance of teamwork.

National Service

Every end of school year approximately 85,000 school leavers attend compulsory 'National Service' organized by the government. In this program young trainees are moulded through a 3- month course based on various leadership training modules such as physical training, nation building, character crafting and community service.

The Malaysian youth who has reached 17 years of age is exposed to marching, jungle trekking, survival training, international affairs, community service such as building public amenities and environmental restoration and protection. It is all about citizen's responsibility, instilling good values, self confidence and leadership.

This is an early preparation and empowerment of the Malaysian youth to develop their competencies and skills to meet future leadership challenges.

'Rakan Muda' (Young Partners)

On 29 October 1994 the Prime Minister of Malaysia launched the 'Rakan Muda' programme. 'Rakan Muda' is an all encompassing, innovative youth-based strategy created to make Malaysian youth purposeful and active contributors in nation building. 10 'Lifestyle' programmes that have strong youth appeal were identified. They are Sports, Martial Arts, the Environment, Culture and Arts, Innovations, Entrepreneurship, Physical Fitness, Community Service, Recreation and Uniformed Corps.

Ultimately, the 'Rakan Muda' seeks to provide Malaysian youth the direction, strength and confidence to face future challenges. Malaysia's 'Rakan Muda' is a "Malaysia Incorporated" effort whereby the resource of every sector is pooled for one singular purpose: the strengthening of its youth.

The NGOs, associations and other relevant parties provide the core infrastructure for the organization of events and activities. The government through the Ministry of Youth and Sports acts as the channel directing applications to the relevant parties concerned and with the private sector underwriting the cost of the programmes.

Private Sector Initiative (HYLI)

Malaysian students also participate in many private sector initiated leadership programmes. Significantly, the bi-annual youth forum – ‘Hitachi Young Leaders Initiative’ (HYLI) may be regarded as a key platform for Asia’s future leaders. This initiative is aimed at providing a forum for ASEAN’s brightest tertiary students to mingle and exchange views on current issues with fellow students as well as leaders from the public and private sector. It gives students opportunities to foster cross-cultural understanding while broadening their outlook on regional and global issues.

Hitachi’s young ambassadors have to research months before the conference and come up with their own ideas of what the future should hold for the region. Hitachi Ltd creates challenging and varied programmes for the HYLI to groom tomorrow’s leaders for tackling the region’s pressing issues to caring for and engaging society’s underprivileged. In addition to the conference and workshops the students participate in community work like working with children with disabilities from the Christian Care Foundation in Bangkok; all meant to nurture leadership qualities.

Participation at the ASEAN level

The ASEAN Students Exchange Programme

This programme is directed towards the strengthening of the ASEAN spirits by cultivating a sense of awareness and appreciation of their own country and efforts towards nationhood among students in South-East Asia

Malaysia plays host to ASEAN best and brightest students aged between 15 and 18 years old, having the following criteria:

- Display leadership qualities
- Independent and highly motivated
- Active in both curricular and extra-curricular activities
- Possess a general awareness of ASEAN own national culture

Malaysia ASEAN School Linkages

The main programmes and activities comprise the following:

- ‘Homestay’ Programmes
- ‘One Day At School’ Programme
- Independence Day Countdown
- Cultural Presentation and Sharing of Experiences

ASEAN School Tour (Initiated by ASEAN Secretariat)

This is an outreach programme to promote better understanding and regional awareness of ASEAN among youth in the region. The 2007 Tour involved over 450 students from 4 schools and the 2008 tour involved about the same number of students from 4 schools.

Suggestions

1. In line with the ASEAN sharing and caring community, Malaysia's 'Rakan Muda' model can be extended to other ASEAN members. Concerns on social deviance, juvenile delinquency, drug abuse and crime among youth may be tackled with the cooperation and involvement of NGOs, private sector and government bodies. Youths from member countries can be invited to participate in any of the Lifestyle projects.
2. The 'Entrepreneurship Programme' under 'Rakan Muda' may be established as an ASEAN network for skills-training for ASEAN youth in member countries in view of the financial crisis on labour and employment in the region. Youth can be empowered with the necessary leadership skills and qualities to prepare them for future leadership responsibilities.

Conclusion

ASEAN's youth will be one of the critical factors in whether ASEAN will achieve her goal of a sharing and caring community in 2015. The challenges that lie in wait for ASEAN in the future will undoubtedly be tackled by the young leaders.