

## PROCESS EVALUATION OF AN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR REFUGEE, UNDOCUMENTED AND STATELESS CHILDREN IN SABAH

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**Abstract:** *This process evaluation project was conducted on an Alternative Learning Centre (ALC) located in a community of refugee, undocumented and stateless people in the West Coast of Sabah which offered an Alternative Education Programme (AEP). The evaluation exercise applied Stufflebeam's Context, Input, Process and Product (CIPP) Model (1985). This paper reports on the process phase of this qualitative evaluation exercise whereby in-depth data was generated through a series of focus group interviews. The findings of the process evaluation indicated that the agency in-charge of the community contributed significantly to the management of the AEP. Literacy, numeracy and basic vocational education were also found to have been successfully implemented. The ALC demonstrated its efficient function as an agent of change in shaping the behaviour, attitude and values of students, parents and villagers and promoting religious awareness and diligent practice among the community at large. The final section of this report discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the process and provides recommendations for further improvement.*

**Keywords:** *Process Evaluation, CIPP Model, Alternative Education Programme, Alternative Learning Centre.*

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### Introduction

For many refugee, stateless or undocumented children globally, gaining access to mainstream education is an arduous and often futile process. The non-possession of legal documentation renders these children as 'invisible' and as such cannot be privy to available privileges and

facilities normally accorded to residents or citizens of a country. In Sabah, growing awareness of the importance of education as a social enabler and moderator has prompted many concerned stakeholders to establish ALCs as a means of providing a form of educational equity and access to ‘invisible’ children who might otherwise be without recourse or opportunity to improvement and change in their situations in life. Among the main providers of the ALCs in Sabah are the National Security Council (NSC), Humana Child Aid Society Sabah (HCASS), and faith-based non-governmental organisations.

This paper details the process evaluation of one such ALC located in an immigrant settlement in the West Coast of Sabah. The Centre (henceforth referred to as Bayu Learning Centre or BLC), established and managed by Agency A, receives some assistance in the form of basic classroom facilities such as chairs and tables from the Sime Darby Foundation. BLC is managed by a Head Teacher together with three teaching staff; the former also functions in his role as Village Head in the community of immigrants (mostly illegal). The full-time teachers currently receive a monthly salary of RM900 from Agency A.

The first section of this report presents the objective, problem statement, related literature and past studies of process evaluation as a whole. The second part provides a description of the AEP implementation at BLC. The roles of stakeholders such as the Centre itself, Agency A, the community, Village Head, Head Teacher and teachers are subsequently discussed. This is then followed by an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of the AEP in that particular Centre. The final segment of the report details recommendations for possible or viable process improvements that could be implemented in BLC.

## **Objective**

The main objective of this research is to evaluate the AEP at BLC with the approach of process evaluation. This information allows managers or decision makers to gauge the extent to which project activities are being implemented as planned and determine whether the available resources are being used in an efficient or cost-effective manner. From the evaluation, it is also possible to put in place necessary modifications or adjustments of the initial planning, and assess the extent or ability of project participants in effecting their designated roles or work scopes. Additionally it provides a record of the project actually implemented, how it compares with what is intended, and how observers and participants judge the quality of the effort (Stufflebeam, 1984).

## **Problem Statement**

The BLC provides education from Primary One to Primary Six for children of the community as well as from other areas. However, unlike other AEP elsewhere around the globe, where the curriculum and pedagogy would be context-bound with the teaching and instruction loosely based on the specific needs, ability and thrusts of the respective communities, the curriculum in practice at BLC is an abridged form of the current Malaysian primary school education curriculum. Here students are provided with learning in Bahasa Malaysia, English, Mathematics, Science, Civic Studies and Islamic Religious Knowledge.

From the perspectives of the NSC, a key rationale for the establishment of the BLC is the factor of long-term security and a projected need to use education as a deterrent to the manifestation of societal problems related to poverty, illiteracy, and alienation. In a study conducted by the MOE (2009), it was found that 43,973 undocumented children in Malaysia

between the ages of 7 to 17 years old were not attending school for various reasons. These findings were significant in that it led to the establishment of ALCs at various locations including BLC and was the first formal step towards providing access to basic education for refugees and undocumented children in the area.

For the children in Telipok Settlement community, access to mainstream education is mainly constrained firstly by their undefined or dubious citizenship status, and secondly due to the complexity of the documentation process necessary for entry into mainstream education. The second factor hindering school mainstream enrolment involves a complex procedure of gaining documentation for the purpose of education (UNICEF Malaysia, 2011). Undocumented children are actually allowed to access mainstream education by applying for a “student card” and paying foreigner-rate school fees. However, this application process can be both lengthy and daunting, especially for parents or caregivers who are illiterate and without adequate financial resources.

As parents seek part time jobs, children often spend their days loitering in the vicinity of the village. Access to education is not a granted element in the community since many are without birth registration, despite being born in Malaysia, and are therefore unable to register for mainstream education (in government or government- aided pre-school or primary schools) in the various localities in nearby Telipok, Tuaran or Manggatal towns.

The UNICEF global experience reiterates the vulnerability of out-of-school children to increased risks and exposure to exploitation, violence and a continued spiral of non-inclusion. Children not in school, for whatever reasons might be more prone to early entry into the job market and greater exposure to environmental pressure and peer influence. Working at an early age is usually perceived as a solution to augment the family income and help sustain the day-to-day livelihood of parents and siblings. However, the decision to work as a child is seldom the individual’s decision, and usually decided by the parents themselves. The ‘advantages’ here are short-term and viewed as a means to an end that are targeted by the specific needs and circumstances of the family. However, the long-term effect is that the child is deprived of acquiring a sustained form of education that could put it in a position to explore other options or job opportunities in life. The child is therefore subjected to doing the work that is best suited to his level of education and knowledge; his early exclusion from school prevents him from the possibility of developing his full potential, reduces his lifetime productivity and deprives his community and society of the possibilities of his advancements and innovations.

In the Telipok Settlement context, the establishment of the BLC could be seen as a way of minimising, if not altogether overcoming, the cases of children working at an early age. Since the ALC provides a form of formal education that could be sustained for six years, the child’s entry into the job market is therefore deferred for that duration. Within this timeframe, the child’s level of knowledge, awareness, expectations, and overview of his world could be developed leading to the potential for better life outcomes. Therefore, it is important to assess the implementation of the AEP since the establishment of the BLC at the Telipok Settlement community. In this evaluation, process evaluation looked into the intended and actual roles of each of the stakeholders for the AEP implementation, and at the congruency between the intended and actual roles.

## Literature Review

Evaluation is a type of applied research that seeks to solve real world problem through the application of scientific studies (Babie, 2011; Mertens, 2015). Program evaluation can be regarded as a process of gathering information to ascertain the worth, merit or significance about the program that assist clients or stakeholders to make decisions and judgement for program improvement (Stufflebeam, 2000: 280). Griffin (1994) contends that process evaluation can be used to detect defects in the design during the developmental stage, guide programming decisions, maintain a record of procedures, and suggest ways in which the programme can be implemented. Similar interpretations are also propounded by Lane (1996), Martella, Nelson and Marchand-Martella (1999), and Rossi, Freeman and Lipsey (1999).

Process evaluation monitors and records the implementation of project activities, monitors the efficacy of the implemented project, and detects invalidities in strategies (Ohara and Pickard, 1985) with the evaluator expected to provide feedback to the programme staff. Stufflebeam (1984) argues that process evaluation needs to answer the question *“to what extent was the project plan implemented and how and for what reasons did it have to be modified?”* (p. 15); he further suggests that the evaluator should describe the deviations from the plan and *“make special notes of variation within the programme concerning how different persons and subgroups are carrying out the plan”* (p. 24). In process evaluation, the quality of programme implementation is monitored, documented and assessed to detect variations from the agreed programme design (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011; Mertens & Wilson, 2012). Examination is conducted to ascertain the extent of matches between actual and intended processes. Weaknesses and strengths of implementation would also identified, and potential and predicted barriers to success highlighted (Stufflebeam, 2003).

The evaluation of this BLC programme process is focused primarily on the implementation of the project transactions. Feedback regarding the implemented plan is discussed and the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation process highlighted. Apart from this, possible recommendations regarding the implemented plan are also proposed. To clarify the intentions and actual transactions of the project activities, focus group discussion interviews with the teachers were conducted during the project.

According to Ornstein and Hunkins (1999), positive and negative impacts should be taken into account in the implementation of a programme since the evaluation process is also intended to help steer towards the achievement of its goals and objectives. Periodic feedback is integral to control or monitor the implementation process and ensure that the programme is on track towards the envisaged objectives, goals and quality. Stufflebeam (2000) views process evaluation as an ongoing examination of the design and documentation stage; it provides a scope for identifying changes in the design which might become the basis for refusal of the execution of certain procedures. Process evaluation outcomes serve to inform stakeholders on the extent to which the work plan activities are according to schedule or plan and the efficiency of procedures, and highlight problems in the implementation in order that rectification of activities and planning could be initiated if and when necessary.

An evaluation of the process stage of a programme should be able to examine the activity that is planned, ascertain and explain any problems in the implementation, and assess the extent to which staff is responding or have responded to these. An analysis of the documented effort provides a report on how observers judge the quality of the client implementation of the

programme; the assessment process is a source of critical information for interpreting the results of evaluation of the product. Popham (1993) views the evaluation as an essential exercise that should be undertaken as soon as a programme is developed and implemented, with the main aim being to identify any defects in the procedure that is specific to the programme design elements or any practice that is not being implemented as originally envisioned. Any deficit in instructional design can therefore be identified, highlighted or in some cases anticipated. The assessment report is useful for isolating the strengths and weaknesses in order to solve the problem of implementation of instructional design procedures.

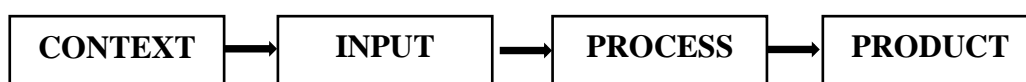
Students as the primary receivers for the implementation of a process of teaching and learning will usually abide by their teachers' instructions. Therefore whatever is planned by the teacher in the process of programme implementation would be reflected by his students' work outcomes unless they refuse to commit as directed by him. For example, the teacher might plan to use the constructivist approach, strategy of centered materials, methods, group discussions and a trial and error experimental technique appropriate to the achievement of learning outcomes in teaching internship. This is similar to Timpson's (1999) determination of the components in the design of teaching and learning. However, Patton (1990) argues process evaluation in itself is dedicated to the evaluation of experiences, teaching and student learning. Based on these definitions, the researchers conclude the assessment process as inclusive of the following:

- a) ways of teaching and learning;
- b) the manner in which teachers assess practical work or projects;
- c) the method of service of teachers;
- d) the process of conducting activities;
- e) the process of implementing programmes;
- f) the level of the recording and reporting of programmes;
- g) the monitoring and coordinating of scores;
- h) the review process involved during the programme that is currently implemented; and
- i) the development of the teaching and learning phase applied during teaching pedagogy.

In Sabah, a research on Alternative Education Programme (AEP) has been conducted at Numbak Education Centre (NEC) in Kuala Sepanggar on the outskirts of Kota Kinabalu. The Federal Sabah Task Force (FSTF), under the ambit of the National Security Council (NSC), was tasked with the overall administration of the AEP in NEC in terms of the management of financial accounts, appointment of teachers for the Centre and ensuring the security and safety of students, teachers and the local community (UNICEF, 2015b). The FSTF also assisted in the general day-to-day operation and periodic maintenance of the Centre as well as the procurement of textbooks and teaching aids. The FSTF assumed a three-pronged function at NEC (UNICEF, 2015b): firstly, it facilitated access of other stakeholders into the Kampung Numbak community; secondly, the FSTF coordinated support and assistance between the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MoE) and NEC in textbook distribution, teacher recruitment and organising of short-term training courses for them; and thirdly, the Task Force managed the administration and disbursement of funding from UNICEF to NEC. Comparison of findings between the planned and actual roles of the various NEC stakeholders indicated UNICEF, MoE, NSC and FSTF as having effectively played their designated roles in ensuring the collective success of the AEP implementation at the Centre since the project inception.

## Methodology

The Context, Input, Process and Product Evaluation (CIPP) Model is a comprehensive framework for guiding evaluations of programmes, projects, institutions, and systems particularly those aimed at effecting long-term and sustainable improvements. Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (2007) claimed that in comparison with professional standards for program evaluations, the best evaluation approaches were the CIPP model. The CIPP model allow for the possibility of conducting a single type of evaluation for example context evaluation or input evaluation, or some combinations subjected to the needs of those involved in the planning and administering the projects (Stufflebeam, 1983).



**Figure 1: CIPP Model**

Source: Stufflebeam *et al.* (1971).

Thus, process evaluation which is a component of the Context, Input, Process and Product (CIPP) Model was used to evaluate the implementation of the AEP at this settlement. The process evaluation in this study was conducted using the qualitative method which included in-depth and focus group interviews with parents, students, teachers, villagers, representatives from the *Jawatankuasa Kemajuan dan Keselamatan Kampung* (JKKK or Village Development and Security Committee) and school leavers (alumni) of BLC. The evaluation exercise considered the following aspects in ensuring the rights of the stakeholders and the children were protected:

- i. Voluntary participation: Participation was voluntary and arranged through the Head Teacher of the Centre. The team met with the volunteer participants (parents and villagers) and obtained their consent before interviews were conducted. All stakeholders were represented by informants.
- ii. Privacy and confidentiality: In protecting the identity of the participants, pseudonyms are used throughout this report.
- iii. Informed consent: An informed consent form was prepared, distributed and duly signed by all participants prior to the data collection.

The qualitative method involved in-depth interviews and focus group interviews. These interviews were facilitated with the use of interview questions developed by the evaluation team through a series of meetings and workshops. All qualitative methods are summarised in Table 1. Before the interviews, all participants, who were voluntary, were asked to fill in an Informed Consent Form before the interview. The interviews were voice recorded and later transcribed verbatim. Content analysis was performed on the transcriptions to obtain the findings.

**Table 1: Qualitative methods and respondents involved in interview**

Method	Respondent	Number of respondents
In-depth interview	NSC officer	1
	Head Teacher cum Village Head	1
Focus- group interview	Teachers	3
	Villagers	8
	JKKK members	4
	Total	17

## **Result**

The day-to-day administration and management of BLC which has an enrolment of 249 students is headed by a Head Teacher with the assistance of three other teaching staff. The Head Teacher has a somewhat unique dual role in that he is also the resident Village Head of the settlement. The overall programme implementation and procurement of resources and funding in BLC is however under the purview of Agency A. The Head Teacher is in charge of preparing teaching schedules for his staff of three and planning class time-tables spread over two school sessions (7:00am-10:00am and 11:00am-2:00pm).

The official enrolment for the two Year One classes is 109 students, the largest size compared to the subsequent class years. It is notable that this enrolment progressively decreases as the class year progresses i.e. the number of students decreases as they advance on to the next level. Due to the large number of students in Year One, the teaching and learning process here can be considered challenging in terms of the class control element and physical capacity of the classrooms. Student age ranges from 7 to 15 years old, though not necessarily according to class years (for instance, not all Year One students are 7 year olds).

## **Role of Stakeholders**

The roles of stakeholders such as BLC, Agency A, Village Head, Head Teacher, teachers, the community and the *Jawatankuasa Kemajuan dan Keselamatan Kampung* (JKKK) will be discussed in detail under this subtopic.

## **Bayu Learning Centre**

BLC is one of the alternative centres located in the West Coast town in Sabah (UNICEF, 2015a). The Centre functions as an agent of change to the community settlement of mostly refugee, stateless and undocumented immigrants. Previously known as Sekolah KAFA 3M which started operation in 2007, it provides education opportunities to the ‘invisible’ children in the settlement and the surrounding areas who are not able to access mainstream education in government schools due to lack of documentation, legal identities and existing national policies on educational access and equity. As reported by one of the teachers in BLC, ‘... *the children do not have documents to study in government schools... [as such] they can [only] study in this school here in the village*’ (Interview with Teacher A, 28/4/2015).

Apart from conducting classes, BLC also provides opportunities for students to gain valuable experience and exposure through educational field trips to places outside the school and the settlement. The purpose of this, as shared by the Head Teacher, is to help widen their perspectives and allow the children ‘... *from time to time to ... see the world*’ outside of their confines of their homes and settlement (Interview with Head Teacher, 28/4/15).

The age range for the primary- school level education at BLC is diverse: the youngest students at the school are 7 years old and the oldest 17. However, there have been instances of parents coming to see the teachers with the hope of registering their 5 year olds in the school. Such requests are usually accepted on condition that the young charges are ‘independent’ in terms of managing their own toilet requirements (toilet- trained). ‘...*Some children are only 5 years old... we know that some children cannot handle themselves when going to the toilet.*

*As teachers, we do not only focus on the problem. So, as long as we are able to handle the problems, we will accept them...* (Interview with Head Teacher, 28/04/2015).

Regardless of age or size, students seeking enrolment at BLC who had never been to any other school are placed in Year One; there would therefore sometimes be cases of 17 year olds in class with much younger classmates. The justification for this practice in BLC is the illiterate status of these first- time registrants would work against them if they were to be placed in a class year more befitting their age (for example, a 12-year old illiterate registrant will not accrue much benefit if placed in Year 6). This method of placement is perhaps unique in AEP centres compared to mainstream government schools in the country. *'Some are 17 years old but illiterate... we have to arrange that way even though it might be difficult for them to accept [the placement]... they need to [be able to] read first before going to the next step'* (Interview with Head Teacher, 28/04/2015).

Raising awareness on the importance of education was a very gradual process among the largely illegal immigrant community in the settlement. The children who attend BLC are ultimately exposed to a learning environment which enables them to acquire the rudiments of reading, writing and arithmetic to a level where the ability could be utilised for self-improvement and job-seeking purposes. By sending their children to the school, parents become more aware of the enhanced opportunities available to their children. *'There are improvements... [parents] understand the meaning of education... this has brought positive improvements to themselves...'* (Interview with Village Head, 28/04/2015).

Another significant aspect that has emerged from BLC is in how it has had a clear role in instilling awareness among the community on the need for a clean rubbish- free environment. The inculcation of this moral value among the children is an integral in the learning process in the Centre and part of the students' daily activities whereby they are collectively responsible for ensuring the cleanliness of their classes and surrounding areas. The inherent hope here is that this practice would have a spill- over effect on the community, either as examples to the rest of the people in the settlement or as an ingrained or acquired behaviour in the students themselves. *'We bring the children to clean the rubbish around the village so that the villagers can learn from them'* (Interview with Village Head, 28/04/2015).

## **Agency A**

In as much as the involvement of the settlement community in the sustainability of BLC is of paramount importance, the main stakeholder however is Agency A whereby its role is centred on the advocating and justifying of the establishment of the AEP itself and facilitating for the continued existence of the programme. The overall management of BLC is under the jurisdiction of Agency A which is tasked with the sourcing and appointment of suitable teachers, preferably from within the community, for the Centre. To ensure that the teachers attain a level of competency and professionalism that commensurate with their roles and duties, short teacher training courses are arranged by the Agency for the teaching staff.

In essence, Agency A has five main functions: firstly, facilitating access into the settlement community for outsiders; secondly, coordinating support and assistance by way of short-term training courses for the Centre teachers; thirdly, sourcing and recruiting teachers; fourthly, overseeing the management of BLC; and lastly, providing funding for the payment of teachers' salaries. Agency A periodically inspects BLC to check on management of centre,



implementation of teaching and learning procedures, and address issues and problems related to the overall set up of the Centre. An example of the type of issues which needed to be addressed was teacher commitment and punctuality whereby ‘... *sometimes teachers are not punctual... sometimes they are absent without any reason... we therefore need to monitor the teachers*’ (Interview with Agency Official A, 21/04/2015).

Agency A is responsible for formulating and designing the AEP curriculum for BLC; currently, this curriculum includes Reading, Writing and Arithmetic with the possibility of Handicraft to be included at a later stage. This is in view of Handicraft being a type of Living Skills which has immediate and direct applicable benefits to the doer. ‘*We do not have Handicraft now, but we are trying to include it [since] it can help them be self-employed in their future...*’ (Interview with Agency Official A, 21/04/2015). Agency A has also instructed the school to set up an Environment Club which would be in charge of the care and cleanliness of the school compounds. ‘*We have suggested the school to establish an environmental club...[which] we hope will clean up the school once a week... we want the children to learn from young*’ (Interview with Agency Official B, 21/04/2015).

The Agency frequently conducts programmes at BLC that emphasises the need to adhere to the proper procedures for a legalised marriage among the community. This is important to ensure that future application of documents such as birth certificates and identification cards for the resulting children from the marriages would be without problems or queries. Possession of these relevant documents would greatly assist the children from such marriages to access mainstream education in government schools. ‘*We have programmes which educate them to obtain proper documentation for their marriage, which include documents from the religious office and marriage registration. This helps their children obtain proper documents later so that they can attend government schools. We educate them about law and regulations*’ (Interview with Agency Official A, 21/04/2015).

As part of the BLC effort towards self- sustainability, a monthly fee of RM3 is imposed on every student. The amount collected is channelled towards miscellaneous school expenditure such as photocopy of test papers, excursions, and the purchase of cleaning equipment (e.g. brooms). The fee amount is fixed by Agency A with the approval of the Agency Director. ‘*We allow them to collect school fees so that they can use the money to purchase any necessities... [at] RM3 per month per head...*’ (Interview with Agency A Official 1, 21/04/2015).

### **Community and JKKK**

Parental and community support for BLC has been extended in various ways since the inception of the ALC. The first demonstration of backing was when these two integral stakeholders provided assistance in the construction of the school buildings in the form of actual physical labour, a definite labour of love since they were in no position to donate monetarily. It was likewise in the construction of the settlement *surau* where labour was contributed in lieu of money. Another form of support extended to BLC by parents is in the level of active fee payment made to the school every month whereby very few default in honouring this commitment. Yet another form of support by the community towards the provision of educational access to their children is their keen hope that a learning centre of secondary-school level might be built in the settlement to provide learning continuity for the students in BLC. ‘*There are suggestions to establish a secondary school... JKKK supports the move but currently we are not sure if it will happen...*’ (Interview with JKKK Committee

A, 28/4/2015). *'Everytime we have meetings, we discuss with the JKKK on what will happen to our children after completing their primary education'* (Interview with Village Head, 28/04/2015).

The role of the JKKK is confined to ensuring the upkeep of the BLC infrastructure; any repair or construction work is thus voluntarily provided by JKKK which would mobilise villagers to do the necessary work e.g. fixing leaking roofs or building extra toilets. *'The school building was built by the villagers... there was no salary paid... they wanted to contribute to the village...'* (Interview with Head Teacher, 28/04/2015). *'JKKK helps to repair the school buildings...'* (Interview with JKKK Committee A, 28/4/2015). By participating in the building, construction or maintenance of BLC, members of the community become invariably invested in the subsequent progress or outcome of the Centre, students and even the learning itself. A sense of ownership or expectation is thus instilled in the 'donor', whether on how the students eventually turn out to be or on how the Centre should or would best be managed. The role of the community is to ensure their children become better persons in the future, and be on a level that is an improvement from their parents' in terms of achievement, attitude and social progression.

### **Village Head**

The appointment of Village Head in the settlement is under the purview of Agency A and not by election. In short, the villagers do not have any say on deciding who should lead them or represent the settlement in any official capacity. Agency A justifies this method of selecting the community leader as a means of avoiding fight or discord among the immigrants. According to the current Village Head, an important element in the selection of village leader is trustworthiness, courage and being of vociferous nature; Agency A would only appoint a person whom they can trust and is vocal in raising issues and the needs of the people during meetings. *'We used to have elections... now we just appoint... we had conflicts during the elections...[and] Agency A did not like how the election went... so [now] they just appoint a person whom they think is able to represent the village and voice out their needs during meetings...'* (Interview with Village Head, 28/04/2015).

At BLC, issues and problems are usually discussed in meetings which involve only the Village Head and the JKKK of the settlement. Other stakeholders such as Agency A and parents are not involved directly in such meetings; however, the Agency would be informed by the Committee whenever there are unresolved issues. The Village Head had also successfully mobilised friends from the settlement to discuss the establishment of *Sekolah Tahfiz*, a school specifically for religious education. However, this idea is yet to be mooted to Agency A due to concerns over budget constraints or the availability of funds to build the school. *'I have discussed with other villagers on establishing a religious school to educate our children on the Al-Quran, but we lack funds... we have not discussed the details yet... it is important to keep the children in school and avoid drop-out'* (Interview with Village Head, 28/04/2015).

The Village Head has also been instrumental in inculcating citizenship values not only among the children in BLC but also among the settlement community. The importance of observing the facets of Malaysian customs and way of life, in short to portray themselves as Malaysians and not transient communities is continuously emphasised. The Village Head argues that there is a need to adapt, adopt and look inward as part of the assimilation process if the people

at the settlement is in any way serious about wanting to integrate and become part of the Malaysian people tapestry. *'We educate the children on the ways of living here in Malaysia... and emphasise on this aspect... it is important to follow the way of living here'* (Interview with Village Head, 28/04/2015).

A Village Head is responsible for the overall well-being of his charges. Since he is the representative of his fellow villagers and becomes their 'voice' in official discourse with other agencies or outside parties, there is a need for him to be well-versed on specifics such as the size and number of the settlement population. The Village Head in this case is familiar with the family links of the 10,000 odd population spread across 910 households and spanning over two generations in the settlement. Many have in some way or other obtained Malaysian citizenship; for this group of people, their children would have no difficulty accessing mainstream education in government schools. For the children without Malaysian citizenship however, BLC becomes their only option if any form of learning is to be obtained. *'Some first generation migrants are still here... they have many children, some 15, some 10... I estimate there are about 10000 of us here... some have obtained citizenship status... so they attend schools outside the village because it is easy for them to be accepted into those schools'* (Interview with Village Head, 28/04/2015). For those who cannot avail themselves to either of these types of learning for a multitude of reasons, the Village Head gathers them in the mosque and offers them religious lessons so that they could still hopefully improve themselves and bring positive change to themselves. *'We bring them to mosque to learn from the elders... [with the] hope that they will be blessed as they learn to be good persons...'* (Interview with Village Head, 28/04/2015).

### **Head Teacher**

The Head Teacher who also assumes the role of Village Head oversees the teaching schedules of the other three teachers in BLC. All four teaching staff feel the need for more teaching manpower to cope with the big number of students and at the same time ensure that the quality of teaching and learning and teacher- student interaction is not compromised. The Head Teacher believes that in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, students should be exposed to a more 'balanced' curriculum i.e. education should be a veritable mix of textbook learning and practical application or experimentation outside the confines of the classroom. As such, students occasionally need to go out of the school to learn other things to avoid boredom and routine. Educational field trips are one such activity that could be utilised to assist classroom learning. *'In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, we cannot only focus on reading and writing... children also need to go out of the school... bringing them out of the school will make them better persons... sometimes, we can see that they are bored in the classroom [so]...bringing them out makes them happy... we need to let them learn by playing...'* (Interview with Head Teacher, 28/04/2015).

The funding for the various educational field trips organised for BLC students is procured from parents. In this aspect, the Head Teacher has been successful in convincing the parents of the need to include these types of extra-curricular activities for their children. Given that the majority of the population at the settlement are labourers and minimal wage earners, the willingness of parents to pay for school excursions is very significant in that it indicates (1) awareness of the importance of inclusion of learning beyond classroom walls, and (2) awareness of the importance of education hence the readiness to pay, if need be. The Head Teacher shared that parents are on the whole usually very positive and supportive to whatever

BLC require from them for the sake of their children's education (Interview with Head Teacher, 28/04/2015).

Ensuring the upkeep and sustainability of BLC is a core component in the work of the Head Teacher; in short, he has to be well-versed in the current situations and requirements of the school, anticipate future demands, needs, student enrolment, and teaching staff capacity and ability. An immediate need in BLC is for additional teachers to be recruited. As the Head Teacher pointed out, '*... four teachers are not enough... we need ten teachers... [but] we need funds because we need to pay their salaries*' (Interview with Head teacher, 28/04/2015).

Apart from additional teaching manpower, enhancing teacher professionalism and upgrading knowledge capacity among the existing body of teachers is a major factor in the sustainability of BLC; the Head Teacher reasons that good and competent teachers would in turn produce good and competent learners. As such, the level of teacher knowledge, competency and professionalism should be continuously developed and nurtured. '*[Although] it is not easy to obtain funds... I hope this school will be continued until the next generation... we need a lot of improvements especially in teacher training... this is important because we need to provide the best to the children, how the children can be taught best...*' (Interview with Head Teacher, 28/04/2015). Continuous professional development ensures teachers are kept abreast with current or successful teaching- learning methodologies or strategies. One such example of training which benefitted BLC teachers was a session which exposed them to various approaches in encouraging, motivating, and nurturing the habit of reading among students (Interview with Head Teacher, 28/04/2015). Exposure to approaches such as two- way classroom interaction, direct or personalised communication with students, and adopting a more 'buddy' stance has greatly helped promote a more effective teaching- learning environment. '*I prefer explaining to the children... communicate with them... [for them to] see me as a friend. We need to befriend the children to be closer to them*' (Interview with Head Teacher, 28/04/2015). '*Before this, we did not really know how to teach effectively...but by joining the course we began to implement what we have learned ... and the students seem to have interest to learn... we have built a loving relationship with the children to support them when they fail to learn... they can learn better when they feel loved and cared for...*' (Interview with Head teacher, 28/04/2015).

These training initiatives too serve to validate the ability and competency of the BLC teaching staff in the eyes of the settlement community and parents (of either current or prospective students). In the past, a main bone of contention among parents was their perception that the teachers were 'not good enough' to teach their children since they (the teachers) were untrained, did not have proper teaching certification, and had themselves studied 'only' up to secondary school level. However, although the Head Teacher concurred with this 'painful' truth, the teachers challenged themselves to improve and sought the help of the NSC to provide them with teacher training courses (Interview with Head Teacher, 28/04/2015). '*We learn from challenges... challenges help us become better examples to others...*' (Interview with Head Teacher, 28/04/2015).

Teamwork is heavily emphasised in terms of managing BLC. The Head Teacher works together with his three teaching staff to address any issues in the school. This collective effort has borne positive results in that the other teachers do not perceive any barrier in communicating opinions and ideas to manage or solve emergent problems. '*In terms of*

*administration, we focus on teamwork... and work together to solve problems. We are equal, they are like me, I am like them...* (Interview with Head Teacher, 28/04/2015).

Apart from the present curriculum in BLC, the Head Teacher has proposed for the inclusion of the learning of Living Skills which could be utilised directly to benefit the students and their families. One such skill would be handicraft whereby students could be taught basket-weaving and making small ornaments (keychains etc.) which could then be sold to generate income. These do not require any large financial outlay and could be undertaken by anyone with the know-how. The end-products too are easily and immediately marketable.

## Teachers

The teaching and learning in BLC is divided into 6 class levels from Year 1 to Year 6. In Year One, lessons consist of Bahasa Melayu, Mathematic, English and Religious Knowledge. In Year Two and Three, a fifth subject – Science – is introduced into the curriculum. In the upper primary school classes of Year Four, Five and Six, Civics is included to complement the existing five subjects. All these subjects are taught by the four teachers in BLC with the classes spread over the morning and afternoon sessions (Interview with Teacher A, 28/04/2015). Teachers become multi-taskers in so far as teaching all the subjects on offer ‘... because we only have four teachers... so we have to teach all subjects’. Although the learning in BLC emphasises on acquisition of reading, writing and arithmetic skills, the students have been found to be more inclined towards writing eventhough the teachers would have preferred them to focus more on reading (Interview with Teacher A, 28/04/2015).

In addition to implementing the academic thrust of BLC, the teachers are also tasked with the organising of extra-curriculum activities for their students. These range from clubs and sports activities, educational field trips to locations outside of the settlement (zoo, museum, farm etc.) and inter-ALC sports tournaments. According to Teacher B, football is a particular favourite among BLC students. Badminton and volleyball are also well-participated sporting activities. ‘*[The students] really like to get involved with activities conducted after teaching and learning time*’ (Interview with Teacher C, 28/04/2015). On most Saturdays, students would be asked to help in beautifying the school area (planting flowers etc) and erecting slope retentions to prevent soil erosion (BLC is sited on a low slope located in the middle of the settlement).

**Table 2: Roles of Stakeholders**

Stakeholder	Role	Summary
BLC	Agent of change for community in settlement. Provides refugee, stateless and undocumented children with education opportunity. Provides children with valuable experiences via educational field trips outside of the school. Inculcates awareness towards importance of education. Enhances awareness for need of clean environment.	BLC functions as agent of change in the community by providing learning opportunities for marginalised children. Tangible results are the inculcation of awareness on the importance of education and the need for a clean environment. Students are also exposed to other aspects of learning during knowledge related educational field trips.
Agency A	Appoints teachers for BLC. Facilitates access into settlement. Funds the MYR500-MYR600 monthly salary of teachers (amount since increased to RM900). Coordinates support and assistance by organizing	Oversees the overall management of settlement in terms of management and access into the area, setting up of BLC (infrastructure and curriculum) and its provision, and raising

	<p>short-term training courses for teachers.          Designs AEP curriculum for BLC.          Emphasises importance of adhering to proper marriage procedures in the community.          Encourages establishment of school environment club to take charge of cleanliness of school compound.</p>	<p>awareness on the need to follow proper procedures for marriage.</p>
<b>Community and JKKK</b>	<p>Provide support to BLC by constructing school buildings.          Parents honour commitment by paying their children's monthly school fees.          Help voluntarily to build village <i>Surau</i>.          Extend unequivocal support and backing for the need to provide secondary AEP in the settlement.</p>	<p>Provide support in terms of school construction, payment of monthly school fees, building of <i>surau</i>, and concerted effort for the setting up of a secondary-school level ALC.</p>
<b>Village Head</b>	<p>Highlights issues and problems in meetings which involve only the Village Head and <i>JKKK</i>.          Mobilised community to discuss plans for a <i>Sekolah Tahfiz</i> for religious education.          Gathers the community or children unable to attend BLC in village mosque to provide them with religious lessons.          Inculcates the values of being Malaysian (patriotism).          Provides statistical information on the community.          Discusses matters regarding the future of settlement children after completion of study in BLC.</p>	<p>A voice to present village-based issues and problems; rallied the community to discuss viability of establishing a <i>Sekolah Tahfiz</i> as a venue for religious knowledge education for the community.</p>
<b>Head Teacher</b>	<p>Prepares teaching schedules for teachers.          Manages expenses for educational field trips/ visits.          Anticipates needs of BLC in aspects of facilities, teacher training and school sustainability.          Instils awareness among parents on the need to continuously support BLC e.g by sourcing for learning materials and books for their own children instead of being fully reliant on the NSC/ FSTF.          Inspires students to pursue learning and participate in sporting activities.          Utilises effective teaching strategies.          Manages BLC by emphasising on teamwork.          Attends teacher development course(s).          Provides feedback to Agency A on the current need for additional teachers.          Proposes for the inclusion of Living Skills such as Handicraft in the learning curriculum.</p>	<p>Oversees management of school in terms of time- tabling, facilities and resources, training of teachers, student and parent motivation, and effective teaching and learning.</p>
<b>Teachers</b>	<p>Implement teaching and learning according to schedule.          Provide motivation to students to learn by emphasising the importance of education.          Organise educational field trip excursions to places such as the Lok Kawi Zoo, State Museum and Crocodile Farm.          Inculcate among students self and environment cleanliness values.          Organise inter- ALC sports and co-curricula activities such as football matches and cultural associations.</p>	<p><u>Tangible</u>          Implementing assigned teaching duties and extra- curricular activities.  <u>Inherent</u>          Motivating students and inculcating love of environment and cleanliness among them.</p>

## **Discussion**

The findings indicate that on the whole, the various stakeholders in their various designated roles have significantly contributed towards the continued viability of BLC. All parties are inherently aware of the expectations placed upon them, the responsibilities entrusted on them, and commitment and wherewithal necessary to ensure the opportunities presented by BLC are sustained and fully exploited. Data analysis indicate that the Centre has successfully functioned as an agent of change in the community particularly in encouraging religious practice among the students and villagers, providing schooling experiences and opportunities to undocumented children, exploring their abilities and talents, and the molding of positive characteristics. Findings also point to the community indicating commitment and belief in the learning at BLC by way of overall support (payment of fees and keen participation in their children's schooling experiences) extended to the Centre. Although any administrative issues or matters pertaining to BLC are discussed in meetings involving only the Village Head and the *JKKK* committee, other stakeholders are duly informed by Agency A of outcomes, decisions or matters yet to be settled.

In terms of teaching- learning implementation, BLC is not subjected to any supervision and monitoring from the Malaysian Ministry of Education. Instead, Agency A periodically inspects input, process and outcomes of the AEP provided by the Centre. The day-to-day running of BLC becomes the responsibility of primarily the Head Teacher with any important or emergent issues relayed to Agency A for decisions and subsequent action.

## **Conclusion And Recommendations**

Several measures could be put in place to further strengthen the overall management of the Centre and increase efficacy. In terms of financial sustainability, the various stakeholders could collaborate and move as one entity to source for direct funding allocation from the governments of host country and migrant home country, or procure monetary assistance from international bodies such as UNICEF.

In terms of teaching manpower, capacity building programmes could also be initiated in collaboration with institutions such Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) or the various teacher education institutes in Sabah. Help could be obtained from non- governmental organisations (NGOs) either as occasional/ part- time teaching staff.

For educational resources, there is a need to ensure that teaching and learning materials are current and compatible with the curriculum in force and the vision and mission of BLC. Specific stakeholders could be entrusted with the procurement of educational materials either new or pre- loved. Big corporations could be approached to contribute to the upkeep or purchase of learning materials or equipment (whiteboards, soft boards, marker pens, fans etc.) as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes.

The involvement of the settlement community could be further intensified through the establishment of an active Parent Teacher Association (PTA) which would become the avenue for the discussion of ideas and opinions to bring BLC on a enviable level of success in terms of outcomes and management. The PTA involvement here ensures the concerted participation and engagement of the community in BLC. The interaction between parents and teachers would provide ease for (1) the former to obtain news on the progress and conduct of

their children in school, and (2) for the latter to provide information, support, motivation and advice to parents on the potentials (or pitfalls) of their children.

The training for teachers is very critical not only for the benefit of the students but also as a form of validation and dignifying the profession for the teaching staff. On a more personal level, the teachers themselves are willing to undergo training and acquire some form of certification to justify their positions and the work that they do.

For undocumented persons, protection and security matters are paramount. Non- possession of documents renders this group of people 'invisible' thus vulnerable to various acts and penalties simply by being 'there'. The feeling of uncertainty is pervasive in the settlement; Agency A could perhaps emphasise more on the fact that raids are only conducted on those not registered with Agency A databases and those listed officially fall under their 'protection'.

Agency A has contributed to the management of BLC in human resource management, as service provider for basic education, and in its capacity as an advisory body to the community. BLC on its part has efficiently functioned as (1) an agent of change in shaping the behaviour, attitude and values of the students, parents and villagers, (2) a centre to encourage religious practice among the students and villagers, and (3) an educational channel of literacy, numeracy and basic vocational skills through the emphasis on basic education (reading, writing and arithmetic).

The community also discharged their roles by their commitment on providing school uniforms for their children, ensuring the prompt payment of fees, and demonstrating tangible support for BLC in the form of labour and service in the construction of the Learning Centre. The Village Head in his dual role as Head Teacher executed his role as leader and informer for both Agency and settlement effectively and was able to mobilise a cohesive team of teachers and villagers committed in their common quest of attaining a better future for their children.

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