Exploring Issues and Challenges in Education among Youth in Selangor

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Abstract
Education has always been regarded as the cornerstone of any society's growth and prosperity. It's the pathway to dreams realized and ambitions achieved. However, for an alarming number of young minds in Selangor, this pathway is strewn with obstacles, making their journey to knowledge and enlightenment an arduous one. Therefore, this study will explore the educational issues faced among youth in Selangor. This study employs a qualitative research method through interviews (with informants selected via purposive sampling techniques. The criteria for informants are essential in this study to ensure they represent the voices of youth in Selangor. The method of focused group discussions (FGD) using open-ended and unstructured questions was conducted to gather feedback from informants, particularly regarding the issues faced in education among youth in Selangor. The focused group discussion sessions have aided the researchers in gaining insights into the views and aspirations of the youth in Selangor within the domain of education. In these discussions, three (3) main themes. The findings also indicate a lack of guidance for youth regarding their paths after the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM). Therefore, the state government

needs to disseminate information about education initiatives to youth using more youth-friendly mediums.

Keyword: Youth, Educational Issues, Selangor State

Introduction
Selangor, often known as Malaysia's, most developed and economically robust state, stands as a testament to progress and modernity. With its bustling metropolises and thriving industries, Selangor seems to have all the right ingredients for success. However, beneath the surface lies a pressing concern, one that casts a long shadow over the state's future: the state of education among its youth.

Education has always been regarded as the cornerstone of any society's growth and prosperity. It's the pathway to dreams realized and ambitions achieved. However, for an alarming number of young minds in Selangor, this pathway is strewn with obstacles, making their journey to knowledge and enlightenment an arduous one.

According to DOSM (2022) 458,000 candidates from Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) are estimated not to pursue higher education within a three-year period since 2020, raising concern about the future of the nation's youth. Statistics indicate that 35.16 percent, or 115,939 individuals, of the 2020 SPM graduates and 48.74 percent, or 180,680 graduates from the 2021 examinations, did not continue at the tertiary level is expected to have an impact on the country's human resources, particularly in the effort to achieve a 35 percent highly skilled workforce in the economic sector by 2030. (DOSM, 2022).

A recent survey by the UCSI Poll Research Centre found that only half of the SPM graduates who participated in the study intended to pursue their studies at the tertiary level. Just 51% said they planned to continue studying, while 39% said they would look for a job and 10% had no plans. Most SPM graduates are more interested in working in the gig economy or e-hailing sector apart from the manufacturing sector. This trend is very worrying, and it is expected to affect the country's human resources in the future. Right now, Malaysia have only managed to reach the target of around 28 percent of highly skilled workforce (MOHR, 2023). Therefore, this study will explore the educational issues faced among youth in Selangor.

Youth Development in Selangor
Youth comprise the largest age category in most of the world's populations. The Youth Index Statistics of Malaysia in 2020, conducted by the Malaysian Youth Development Research Institute (IYRES), found that a total of 1.5 million residents in Selangor fall within the youth category, aged 15 to 30 years old. Based on statistics released by the Department of Statistics Malaysia, there are approximately 6.7 million Malaysians residing in the state of Selangor. This means that approximately 22.4% of Selangor's population is represented by youth aged between 15 and 30 years old.
The National Youth Policy of Malaysia (2015) and the Selangor Youth Policy (2015) define youth as individuals within the age range of 15 to 30 years. This age limit, when translated into a source of energy, exerts a highly significant influence on the formation of the nation, encompassing political (voting), social (unity), and economic (human capital) aspects. The youth age limit is categorized into three main groups: early youth (15 to 18 years), mid-youth (19 to 24 years), and late youth (25 to 30 years).

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research method through interviews (Merriam & Tisdel, 2018) with informants selected via purposive sampling techniques. The criteria for informants are essential in this study to ensure they represent the voices of youth in Selangor. The method of focused group discussions (FGD) using open-ended and unstructured questions was conducted to gather feedback from informants, particularly regarding the issues faced in education among youth in Selangor. The researchers conducted this FGD online for approximately three hours via the Zoom application.

A study conducted by Arshad, Ismail, Fesol, and Ismail (2021) found that youth character development varies according to the targeted youth group categories. According to the 2015 Youth Policy, there are 9 target youth group categories: Minority Youth, At-Risk Youth, Low-Income Youth, School Youth, Higher Education Youth, Youth in Associations, Professional Youth, Entrepreneurial Youth, and Youth with Potential. However, this study focuses on youth in 8 categories: 1. School Youth; 2. Higher Education Institution (IPT) Youth; 3. Working/Professional/Entrepreneurial Youth; 4. At-Risk Youth; 5. Minority/Vulnerable/B40 Youth; 6. Youth in Associations; 7. Mass Youth; 8. International Youth. These categories encompass youth aged 15 to 30 years from the 9 districts in the state of Selangor.

Once the interview sessions are over, the next step is to transcribe the content exactly as it was spoken. Next, the researcher initiates the process of data analysis by thoroughly examining the full transcript. This involves generating open codes and categorising them until three main themes emerge in the study.

Findings and Discussion

Discussion in the focused group discussions (FGD) involved 7 informants, each representing a specific youth target group in Selangor. The informants were identified as 'Informant 1,' 'Informant 2,' and so on. Table 1 below provides a detailed summary of the profiles and background information of the study informants:

Table 1
Informant Profile

Informant	Age	Education Level	Youth Category
Informant 1	15	UPSR	School Youth
Informant 2	22	Matrikulasi	Higher Education Institution Youth
Informant 3	30	Ijazah Muda	Working Youth
Informant 4	20	SPM	At-Risk Youth
Informant 5	30	Diploma	Youth in Associations
Informant 6	26	SPM	Mass Youth
Informant 7	30	Ijazah Muda	International Youth

The focused group discussion sessions have aided the researchers in gaining insights into the views and aspirations of the youth in Selangor within the domain of education. In these discussions, three (3) main themes have emerged:

1. Issues Faced by Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) Graduates.
2. Insufficient Emphasis on Talent and Skills in Schools/IPT (Higher Education Institutions)
3. Lack of Dissemination of Information Regarding Selangor State Government's Education Initiatives

Issues Faced by Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) Graduates

The issue of Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) graduates was also discussed by the study informants. Among the issues shared by Informant 7, who mentioned the difficulty of finding employment without an SPM certificate: "In Selangor, it's hard to get a job if you haven't completed your SPM. But there are many students who haven't completed their SPM yet. So, they can't improve their living standards because their education isn't complete..." (Informant 7).

Informant 4 supported the views of Informant 7, stating that even with an SPM certificate, it's challenging to find employment: "...but it's tough. Even though I only have an SPM certificate, it's tough to find a job." (Informant 4).

On the other hand, Informant 6 mentioned that youth who don't continue their education after SPM are wasting money, and studying after SPM might make it harder to find a job. According to Informant 6: "Some of them think that just continuing to a diploma is okay. At least they can get a job. They don't want to gain more knowledge to continue further. Sometimes they are afraid of wasting money on education because they think that if they spend too much time on education, they won't get a job. Some people think like that." (Informant 6).

In contrast, Informant 3 mentioned the lack of guidance for students after completing SPM as an issue for SPM graduates: "When we go through everything, we feel like we don't have any guide or guidance on 'what do we want to be in the future?' I really didn't know. I admit it. I'm expressing my own experience. I 100% rely on my family. My parents or older siblings know." (Informant 3)

It was found that financial constraints were also a challenge for SPM graduates who wished to continue their education. According to Informants 4 and 3: "Like me, to ease the burden for those who can't afford it. Sometimes, it's true what people say, just study up to SPM, but after SPM, they want to find a job to earn money. Some can't afford to continue their education because they don't have the money." (Informant 4). "One of the issues is definitely related to finances. That's what I think. Because everyone has different circumstances. Maybe someone has an interest, but there are financial constraints. Maybe someone thinks, 'Okay, that's enough, I'll stop here with my education.' But financially, they might be able to afford it. So, it depends on each person's experience." (Informant 3).

Lack of Emphasis on Talent and Skills in Schools/IPT (Higher Education Institutions)

Talent and skills refer to abilities beyond academic studies. The study informants emphasized the importance of these skills for the youth in their future lives. According to Informant 5, education doesn't focus enough on these skills. He stated: "What we see now in the field of education, especially in Selangor, they don't emphasize skills much. Where it's about survival mode as a student. Because we learn, yes, academics are important. But after the academic part, in terms of survival, in life. So, what we see here, the application of skills and talents is not given much attention. We once went to Hulu Selangor, where we met many enthusiasts and talents in Selangor, especially among the youth. What we observed there, they don't have a suitable platform." (Informant 5).

This sentiment is supported by Informant 1, who mentioned that youth are unable to showcase their talents. According to Informant 1: "Two years ago, my senior who had completed SPM, he said, 'Ah, SPM is nothing. I don't need to go to university; I can do my own work.' But when he was in SBP (boarding school), he didn't showcase his talents or charisma. For example, he didn't stand out, even though he didn't have any other knowledge. For example, even if we didn't excel in SPM, if we have knowledge in a specific field, Insha-Allah, we can succeed. With knowledge and our experiences. But if it's just SPM, in my opinion, there's no need to study." (Informant 1).

Informant 5 also added that there's no dedicated place for creative skills among the youth. He stated: "Because if you have skills in vocational areas, you have MARA (a government agency). If you're into sports, you have the Ministry of Youth and Sports (KBS). Under KBS, there are sports schools. But when people talk about creative skills, we don't have a place for it. You must find it yourself, creative skills, studios, and so on. So, creative skills, in my opinion, are one of the significant industries. So, youth generate skills there. Because what we see, they can paint, they can play music, they can dance, they can act, they can speak, they can become streamers. All of these falls under creative skills." (Informant 5)

Selangor State Government's Education Initiatives

The informants were also asked whether they were aware of the education initiatives under the Selangor State Government, as shown in the table 2. Out of the 7 informants, only 3 were aware of these initiatives, while the other 4 informants were not aware of them.

Table 2
Initiatives Selangor State Government

Initiatives	Informant 6	Informant 5	Informant 3
Program Pendidikan Anak Pekerja Ladang	X	Social media	x
Program Khas Peduli Siswa	x	/	x
Program Tuisyen Online	x	x	x
Program Tuisyen Rakyat Selangor	X	X	X
Program Bantuan Sekolah Negeri Selangor	X	News paper	X
Hadiah Pengajian IPT	Facebook Page Selangor	Family	x
Inisiatif Kemahiran Teknikal dan Iktisas Smart Selangor (IKTISASS)	X	Friend	Searching website

Conclusion

Therefore, families, schools, communities, and stakeholders need to empower youth from their school years through various means so that the potential of youth can be highlighted. For example, parents and the youth of Selangor themselves emphasize the importance of

nurturing talent and leadership skills at the school, higher education institution, and community levels, and providing opportunities for lifelong learning to adapt to modern trends. This is because there are youth who have fallen behind in education and lack opportunities to continue their education or acquire skills, while there are also youth who want to continue their education but cannot do so due to financial constraints. The findings also indicate a lack of guidance for youth regarding their paths after the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM). Therefore, the state government needs to disseminate information about education initiatives to youth using more youth-friendly mediums. The Selangor state government could consider the following youth-friendly mediums for example social media campaigns which is utilize platfroms like Instagram, TikTOk, and X to share information in a visually appealing and engaging manner. Create short videos, infographics and interactive content to make the information more digestible and shareable. And also appoint youth ambassadors or influencers who can help spread the information to their peers. These ambassadors can create content, host events, or simply share information through their social networks.

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