

Review of Issues on Sustainable Development Education in Malaysia

Amirah Adil, Salmiah Salleh Hudin, Dr. Norfarahin Mohd Zamri

Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM), 86400 Parit Raja, Batu Pahat, Malaysia

Corresponding Author Email: amirahadil86@gmail.com

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v13-i4/23658> DOI:10.6007/IJARPED/v13-i4/23658

Published Online: 29 November 2024

Abstract

The educational sector of Malaysia is one of the areas of the nation that require sustainable development. The rank of the sector is 57th in the whole world. The Educational Ministry of the country is spending a lot on the development of the sector. The sustainable development of the educational sector is the main objective of the sector, the government need to focus on improving the educational sector to motivate the students and encourage them to have higher education to develop themselves and the whole country. Methodology has described the application of interpretivism philosophy, exploratory design and inductive approach. Prisma-related data collection has focused, and systematic literature review data collection method has in the methods section. Results have included the systematic literature review of the study also including the resources, key concepts, aim, methodology and outcomes effectively. The study has effectively described the secondary analysis by evaluating the themes of the research. A brief discussion has also been included in the study for in-depth clarification. Conclusion has been included in the study to clarify the link between main goals and objectives of the study with its outcome. Recommendations have been provided in the study to mitigate the challenges identified such as lack of resources, poor knowledge of teachers and economic crisis in the education sector.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Motivations, Students, Digital Learning, Sustainable Development Education

Introduction

The education system of Malaysia is maintained and developed by the Ministry of Education. This system is divided into five stages: education in preschool, primary education, education in secondary institutions, education in post-secondary framework and tertiary education. Private and national education systems are the additional classification of the education systems. The rank of Malaysia has been found to be 48 and 57 respectively.

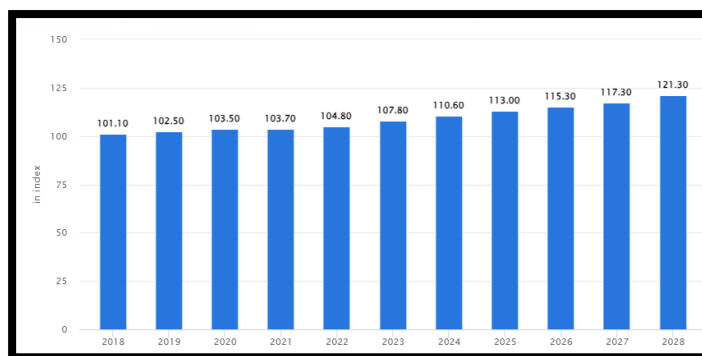


Figure 1: Consumer prices index for education in Malaysia

(Source: Meredith, 2024)

The country is found to be spending a lot on the education sector to improve it. The spending on the education sector of Malaysia is 4.03% of the GDP in 2024 (Meredith, 2024). The consumer index of price in Malaysian education is being forecasted to 110.60 in 2024. In comparison to this, the education system of Singapore is said to be 2nd in the whole world (Jason, 2024). Early Childhood Education is not so important in Malaysia which results in children not going to school before getting enrolled in primary schools. The children of 4 years can be enrolled in primary schools which has been found to be 84.3% as per the annual report of the Ministry of Education in 2017 (Müge, 2024). There have been various private, governmental and religious sectors which provide higher education to people.

There have been various challenges in maintaining the sustainability of the education sector of Malaysia. In the Agenda of 2030, Sustainable Development Goal 4 has allocated 15% of national expenditure and 4% of GDP to public services (Brokenchalk.org, 2024). Despite of a good ratio of student-to-teacher relationships in Malaysia which is 11.66% there are various issues that the sector is facing currently. The *lack of resources and disparity in accessing* them has created a challenging situation in maintaining sustainable student development. This has created the issue of dissatisfied and discouraged students who quit their education very early. The performances of the students and the educational institutions also have gone down due to this. The education sector of the Malaysian Government is the largest spending section of the country. The educational quality cultural and social diversity and various kinds of natural disasters have been the major challenges that the country has faced.

Research Objectives

- To analyse the importance of sustainable development within the education sector of Malaysia
- To identify the challenges impacting sustainable development education in Malaysia
- To recommend strategies for mitigating the identified challenges impacting education in Malaysia

Literature Review

Importance of Sustainable Development within the Educational Sectors of Malaysia

Sustainable development along with education has helpful for learners to increase their level of knowledge by generating effective information. As per the comment of Secundo et al. (2020), sustainable development has gained popularity in the sector of education. It has an

effective role in enhancing their skills related to their own perspective field which has been helpful for their development. Sustainable development has been one of the concepts of development of the present without disrupting the future generations' needs. It has been helpful in mitigating needs with effectiveness and sustainable growth. Sustainable development within the educational sectors of Malaysia needs to be implemented to enhance the level of education in the country. It has been found that there has been an increasing popularity from the 90's which has been relatable with various development approaches. It has been helpful for learners to develop their decision-making skills by aligning with sustainability which has been helpful for effective growth. Sustainable development within the educational sectors of Malaysia has been helpful for the improvement of socio-cultural relationships in the country. As argued by Bali Swain & Yang-Wallentin (2020), sustainable development goals have been criticised by the UN for their broad perspective. It has been important to develop sustainability within the educational sectors of the country to create encouragement to preserve resources.

Challenges in Implementing Sustainable Development Procedures in the Education Sector in Malaysia

There have been various kinds of challenges related to the sustainable development of the educational sectors in Malaysia which has been affecting the development process. As per the comment of Tsalis et al. (2020), sustainability development has been directly related to the concept of corporate sustainability. It has been found that instability in economic performance along with political aspects have been the most important barriers for the country. It has been difficult to maintain sustainable education among all the learners of different institutions because of the different ideologies and different thoughts. Most of the time it can be observed that the process of sustainable development has not been suitable for the learners, and it has been affecting the educational sectors along with the process of education. Sustainable development in education has been important for the country to increase sustainability to maintain the ability of sustainable development which has been related to skilled leaders. As per the argument of Lee & Kim (2021), effective leadership has been important for enhancing creativity. The lack of skilled leaders within the educational sectors in Malaysia has been slowing down the process of sustainable development. Insatiable political aspects also have been the reason for government issues with the concept of sustainable development in the educational sector.

Strategies for Mitigating Challenges of Sustainable Development in Malaysian Education

Technological development within educational sectors has been helpful in mitigating almost all kinds of challenges to sustainable development. As per the statement of Secundo et al. (2020), technological implications have been helpful for sustainable development. It has been found that the implementation of technology has been helpful for the development of the educational sectors of Malaysia. Challenges of economic instability can be enhanced by the use of technologies which have also been helpful for the economic growth of the country. The development of technological equipment can play an effective role in enhancing the skills of learners and helpful for generating development with the help of sustainability. It has been important to enhance learning about reduction and reuse within the organisational sectors among learners to increase their knowledge of sustainability. With the help of reduce and reuse process educational organisations can be able to maintain organisational budgets for sustainable development. As per the view of Iqbal et al. (2020), sustainable leadership has

been helpful in enhancing sustainable development. The introduction of effective policies within educational sectors along with effective leadership strategies such as transformational leadership has been helpful in mitigating the challenges related to the lack of skilled labourers.

Application of Institutional theory for Sustainable Development in Education

Among various kinds of sustainability development theories, the institutional theory of sustainable development has been effective for growth within the educational sectors of Malaysia. As highlighted by Leal Filho, Salvia & Eustachio (2023), the UN sustainability goals have a direct impact on the sustainable development of educational institutions. The concepts of institutional theories define the process of developing institutional structure by mitigating organisational norms and practices to improve social relationships and cultures. With the help of institutional theory, the educational sectors of the country can be able to develop its goals and educational aspects. On the other hand, Grady et al. (2019) stated that psychological aspects of media culture play an important role in emotional control to mitigate conflicts between ethnic and racial groups. The development of psychology with the help of media culture has also been helpful for the development of a sustainable approach in the education sector of Malaysia.

Literature Gap

It has been found that there have been some previous discussions about the educational sectors of Malaysia in some other articles. There have also been identified some discussions on the topic of sustainable development which has not been aligned with the educational sectors of Malaysia. The previous studies related to this topic have failed to align these two important topics properly. This literature gap has been addressed by discussing the topic of sustainable development in the educational sectors of Malaysia. The key purpose of this study has been to measure the impact of sustainable development on the educational sectors of Malaysia.

Research Methods

Interpretivism research philosophy has focused on this method as the responsibility for giving flexibility and it is relevant in secondary data collection. Interpretivism was responsible for focusing more on the motivations and meanings and becoming helpful in the product of a complex research study. As stated by Sanchez et al. (2023), interpretivism and positivism have been combined in international business research. The exploratory design has been used due to its low cost and its ability to help in further research methods. Sustainable development in Malaysian education-related data has been collected and for that inductive approach has focused. This approach is responsible for helping in the collection of sustainable education development data and new concepts have been easily generated through that. Other philosophies such as positivism and design as descriptive have been avoided as these have been relevant to the primary data collection and that has been avoided.

There has been a focus on secondary qualitative data collection methods for the collection of articles and journals. Articles and journals have been collected from Google Scholar and data before 2020 have been completely avoided in this section. As mentioned by Thelwall & Nevill (2021), virtual groups have been focused on the collection of qualitative

data. There has been a focus on a systematic literature review for the analysis of collected data and that has become helpful in understanding the outcomes of the study. Authentic sources have been included and unauthorised information has been excluded from the study research. Survey and interview methods have been part of primary data collection, and the time-consuming nature of these methods has become the reason for avoiding these methods. The cross-sectional study has been focused on the time horizon as the data related to sustainable development in education has only been collected once. Data Protection Act 2018 is responsible for the prevention of the information of individuals and personal data re-identification (Legislation.gov.uk, 2024). Privacy and confidentiality have been maintained and the sources have been kept safe in their original places.

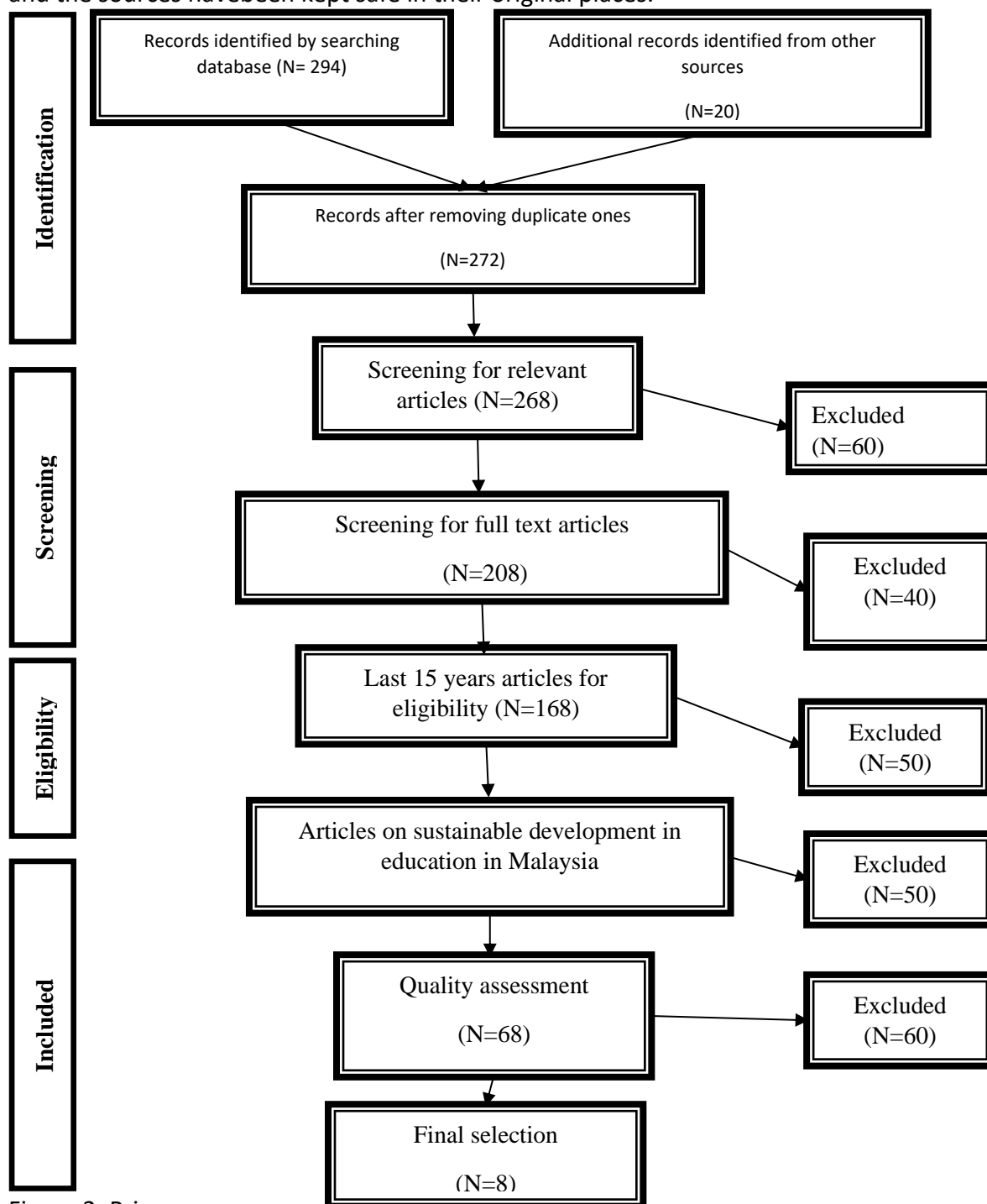


Figure 2: Prisma

Prisma has been focused on the selection of relevant data sources from various sources. There have been almost 272 data sources after removing duplicate ones and 268 data sources have been screened as relevant articles. Data have been excluded as per 15 years of eligibility and articles on the study topic and after all processes there have been 8 authentic sources finally selected

Results

Systematic Review

Table 1

Systematic review

Resources	Key concept	Aim	Methodology	Outcomes
Yassin et al. (2020)	Challenges affecting education	To analyse issues related to educational development	Primary	Challenges such as lack of resources have been affecting educational development in Malaysia have been identified
Azar (2020)	Impact of educational development	To develop effective education	Primary	Impact of educational development on student performance
Bujang et al. (2020)	Digital learning demands in educational learning	To evaluate the digital learning demands in Malaysian education	Primary	The benefit of digital learning demand for future education in Malaysia
Aziz (2021)	ESL learners' challenges	To identify the challenges faced by ESL learners in speaking English	Primary	ESL learners have been facing challenges in speaking English in Malaysia
Hays (2020)	Sustainable learning and education	To identify the importance of sustainable education and learning	Secondary	Sustainable education and learning have been important in the educational system
Ruiz-Mallén (2020)	Sustainable education to	To understand the importance of education in	Secondary	Education has been important in

	meet agenda of 2030	promoting sustainability		promoting sustainability
Hasin (2021)	Use of ICT in Schools in Malaysia	Effectiveness of information and communication technology	Primary	Benefits of advanced technology in the educational system of Malaysia
Balakrishnan (2020)	Sustainable development education	To analyse the importance of sustainable development in education	Primary	Importance of Sustainable Development Education in Malaysia

Secondary Analysis

Impact of Effective Educational Development on Student Performance in Malaysia

Effective educational development has been critically impacting the performance of students in Malaysia by improving their academic achievements and enhancing student engagement. As stated by Azar (2020), effective educational development has been impacting the empowerment of students to achieve their goals effectively and smoothly. The development of effective education in Malaysia has been helpful for students to gain achievements and enhance their knowledge base eventually. Effective education in Malaysia has been playing an important role in developing a brighter future for students and ensuring a suitable learning environment. Additionally, educational policies have also been playing a significant impact on the development of students' brighter futures. It has been helpful for Malaysian students to improve their skills and mitigate their knowledge gaps effectively for better academic achievements and improvements.

Benefit of Digital Learning and ICT to Develop Sustainable Education in Malaysia

Digital learning has been beneficial for the development of sustainable education in Malaysia as it facilitates effective collaboration and generates more resources for improvement. The rapid growth of digital learning in the education system has been helpful for students to improve their learning strategies and engage them in learning effectively with the help of digital tools. As per the statement of Bujang et al. (2020), digital learning has been an effective approach to improving the learning experience of students with the help of advanced technology. Highly advanced technology in Malaysian School helps the students to gain much flexibility in learning at their convenience and meet their interests. As opined by Hasin (2021), information and communication technology has been enhancing the education system of Malaysia by enhancing efficiency and inclusion in the teaching and learning process. ICT has been assisting the management and administrative tasks of the Malaysian educational system to make education sustainable and facilitate the learning environment.

Effectiveness of Developing Sustainable Education and Learning

Sustainable education and learning have been effective for students in Malaysia to empower their decision-making skills and improve the quality of education. As per the

comment of Hays (2020), sustainable learning and education help in creating and proliferating sustainable curricula and methods of teaching and learning. Furthermore, effective sustainable education and learning have been effective in developing critical and creative thinking skills among students of Malaysia. It has been an effective approach to promoting ethical values in the educational system with empowering action for the development of an impactful future for students of Malaysia. The development of sustainable education in Malaysia helps in promoting social and individual well-being and develops unique learning opportunities for students. Malaysia has been focusing on sustainable education and learning development to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education along with the promotion of learning opportunities for students.

Issues Affecting the Development of Sustainable Education in Malaysia

Malaysia has been facing various issues in the development of sustainable education that have been impacting the students' performance initially. The education system of Malaysia has been going through the issue of a lack of resources and disparities in access that have been impacting the performance of students. Furthermore, Malaysia has also been facing the issue of complex operations and unequal footing that has been reducing the opportunities and possibilities of future achievement for students. Lack of proper knowledge among teachers has been the main issue faced by the Malaysian education system to develop sustainability. As stated by Yassin et al. (2020), intercultural barriers to learning have been the main challenge faced by students of Malaysia that hinder the student's sustainable learning approaches. Poor quality learning experiences among students have been creating impactful barriers to sustainable education development in Malaysia.

Importance of Sustainable Development in Education in Malaysia

Sustainable development in education has been important for increasing the quality of education of Malaysian students. It has been a helpful method of significantly developing future achievement opportunities for students and protecting the learning environment effectively. As stated by Balakrishnan (2020), sustainable development education in Malaysia has been helpful in ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting learning opportunities. Sustainable development education has also been beneficial in mitigating the challenges faced by Malaysian students in learning and educational opportunities.

Sustainable development has been very important for the cognitive and personal development of the students. The method has been helpful in maintaining a positive educational environment for the institutions. This can provide better future achievements and opportunities to the students (Balakrishnan, 2020). The sustainable development of the educational sectors in Malaysia has been found to be creating an inclusive educational environment. The country is involved in maintaining the equality among the students from diverse backgrounds. Sustainability is very important to maintain equality in the education that is being provided to the students of each institution.

Strategies to Mitigate the Identified Issues for Sustainable Development Education in Malaysia

The issues identified in the review can be mitigated through implementing effective strategies for mitigating such as the use of advanced technology, maintaining a budget system and implementing educational policies. As stated by Hasin (2021), the

implementation of information and communication technology in the educational system of Malaysia can be helpful in increasing students' interest and engagement in learning. It can be an effective strategy for improving the flexibility of students' learning and enhancing collaboration effectively. Furthermore, the implementation of educational policies in the educational system of Malaysia can also be helpful for sustainable development education.

The mitigation strategies that have been developed in the article to mitigate the issues faced in educational sectors can develop the sector positively. The article has already mentioned the strategies that can be taken by the sector to maintain sustainability in a positive context. As opined by Hasin (2021), communication among students and teachers and vice-versa can be helpful for the sector to develop connectivity. This can improve the education system and maintain transparency in the sector. Educational policies that can be developed by the government and implemented in the sector can be helpful in supporting the sustainable development of the sector legally.

Discussion

The effective development of educational institutions in Malaysia has been positive and required to develop the condition of the sector. This can be helpful in impacting the performances of the Malaysian students which have been found to be deteriorating due to the weak educational systems. According to Azar (2020), the empowerment of the students may be possible with a strong educational background. The effective educational institutions of the country have been found to be playing a key role in moulding the future of their students. The implementation of technological advancements in the sector can be helpful in developing ways of providing and gaining learning, the technological implementation of ICT and Digital learning software benefits sustainable education in the country. Effective collaborative learning and the generation of more new resources have been possible in Malaysian countries with the help of educational systems.

The students have been able to develop the strategies learning skills and digital tools that can support further education. The advanced technological tools in Malaysian schools have been helpful for the country to gain flexibility in the convenience of learning processes. As per Bujang et al. (2020), the students of the country have been able to gain the empowerment and sustainability in their learning process. Their decision-making skills have been empowered with the help of the improved quality of their educational processes. The sustainable educational processes have been helpful for the sector to maintain the improved performances of the students. The individual and social well-being of the students and their improved quality has been the major factors to improve the sector.

Conclusion

The development of sustainable development in the education sector in Malaysia should be considered an urgent priority, as it is undeniable that the benefits it can bring to both individual and societal development are countless. Despite heavy investments by the Malaysian government and increased awareness of its crucial role, various challenges are still set against it: a lack of resources, unequal access, poor training of teachers, and bureaucratic red tape that prevents it from moving forward. This study underscores the significance of surmounting these barriers as a crucial factor in the promotion of inclusive and equitable educational practices that would guarantee lifelong learning opportunities and enhance

student performance. This becomes very important in the integration of new strategic approaches to empower not only the students but also the educators using advanced technologies such as ICT and digital learning tools. This is where technological advancement improves learning flexibility and solves limitations of resources and economic instability. Moreover, proper educational policies and leadership methods, particularly those referring to transformational leadership, can bring about serious and long-lasting changes in this area. These practices give substance to the principles of global sustainability and provide a framework by which an educational system can foster the resiliency needed to persist through future challenges. Seeking sustainable development in the Malaysian education sector is, after all, not strictly a domestic affair, but part of efforts planned to improve the nation's international profile and ensure a quality future population. Thus, with a view toward accessibility, equity, and innovation, Malaysia can build strong educational infrastructure that will help its population achieve all-around development while steadily moving toward its collective sustainability goals.

Recommendations

- **Leadership development:** The development of effective leadership such as transformational leadership has been helpful for the proper implementation of sustainable development within the educational sectors of Malaysia. Transformational leaders have been able to motivate people easily and increase work engagement (Monje-Amor, Abeal Vázquez & Faíña, 2020). It can be appropriate for the sustainable development of educational sectors by mitigating all sustainability issues.
- **Implementation of technology:** Technological implementation such as artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things within the sectors of education in Malaysia has been helpful in developing sustainability. AI and IoT help in increasing the accuracy of the activities by detecting trends and this would assist in avoiding issues related to sustainability and ensure growth in the education sector.

Acknowledgement

This study did not receive support from any public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors. Appreciation goes to all quarters who contributed directly and indirectly to make the publication of this article possible.

References

- Azar, A. S., & Adnan, E. J. (2020). The impact of effective educational leadership on school students' performance in Malaysia. *Education Quarterly Reviews*, 3(2). <http://doi.org/10.31014/aior.1993.03.02.127>
- Aziz, A. A., & Kashinathan, S. (2021). ESL learners' challenges in speaking English in Malaysian classroom. *Development*, 10(2), 983-991. <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v10-i2/10355>
- Balakrishnan, B., Tochinal, F., & Kanemitsu, H. (2020). Perceptions and attitudes towards sustainable development among Malaysian undergraduates. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 9(1), 44-51. <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v9n1p44>
- Swain, R., & Yang-Wallentin, F. (2020). Achieving sustainable development goals: predicaments and strategies. *International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology*, 27(2), 96-106. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504509.2019.1692316>
- Bujang, S. D. A., Selamat, A., Krejcar, O., Maresova, P., & Nguyen, N. T. (2020, April). Digital learning demand for future education 4.0—Case studies at Malaysia education institutions. In *Informatics* (Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 13). MDPI. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/informatics7020013>
- Grady, J. S., Her, M., Moreno, G., Perez, C., & Yelinek, J. (2019). Emotions in storybooks: A comparison of storybooks that represent ethnic and racial groups in the United States. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 8(3), 207–217. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000185>
- Hasin, I., & Nasir, M. K. M. (2021). The Effectiveness of the Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Rural Secondary Schools in Malaysia. *Journal of Education and e-Learning Research*, 8(1), 59-64. <https://doi.org/10.20448/journal.509.2021.81.59.64>
- Hays, J., & Reinders, H. (2020). Sustainable learning and education: A curriculum for the future. *International Review of Education*, 66(1), 29-52. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-020-09820-7>
- Iqbal, Q., Ahmad, N. H., Nasim, A., & Khan, S. A. R. (2020). A moderated-mediation analysis of psychological empowerment: Sustainable leadership and sustainable performance. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 262, 121429. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.121429>
- Jason, L. & Jennifer, L. (2024, January 24). *Strengthening our education system*. https://thesun.my/home_news/strengthening-our-education-system-CH10711614
- Leal Filho, W., Salvia, A. L., & Eustachio, J. H. P. P. (2023). An overview of the engagement of higher education institutions in the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 386, 135694. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2022.135694>
- Lee, Y., & Kim, J. (2021). Cultivating employee creativity through strategic internal communication: The role of leadership, symmetry, and feedback seeking behaviors. *Public Relations Review*, 47(1), 101998. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2020.101998>
- Legislation.gov.uk, (2024). *Data Protection Act 2018*. Retrieved from: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/contents/enacted> [Retrieved on: 25.01.2024]
- Meredith, A. (2024, December 23). *Consumer prices index for education in Malaysia*. <https://www.statista.com/outlook/co/socioeconomic-indicators/education/malaysia#education-spending>

- Monje-Amor, A., Abeal Vázquez, J. P., & Faíña, J. A. (2020). Transformational leadership and work engagement: Exploring the mediating role of structural empowerment. *European Management Journal*, 38(1), 169-178. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2019.06.007>
- Müge, C. (2024, January 24). *Education Challenges in Malaysia: Low Quality of Education in a Rising Economy*. <https://brokenchalk.org/education-challenges-in-malaysia-low-quality-of-education-in-a-rising-economy/>
- Ruiz-Mallén, I., & Heras, M. (2020). What sustainability? higher education institutions' pathways to reach the agenda 2030 goals. *Sustainability*, 12(4), 1290. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/su12041290>
- Sanchez, J. I., Bonache, J., Paz-Aparicio, C., & Oberty, C. Z. (2023). Combining interpretivism and positivism in international business research: the example of the expatriate role. *Journal of World Business*, 58(2), 101419. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2022.101419>
- Secundo, G., Ndou, V., Vecchio, P. D., & De Pascale, G. (2020). Sustainable development, intellectual capital and technology policies: A structured literature review and future research agenda. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 153, 119917. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2020.119917>
- Thelwall, M., & Nevill, T. (2021). Is research with qualitative data more prevalent and impactful now? Interviews, case studies, focus groups and ethnographies. *Library & Information Science Research*, 43(2), 101094. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2021.101094>
- Tsalis, T. A., Malamateniou, K. E., Koulouriotis, D., & Nikolaou, I. E. (2020). New challenges for corporate sustainability reporting: United Nations' 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and the sustainable development goals. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 27(4), 1617-1629. <https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.1910>
- Yassin, A. A., Abdul Razak, N., Qasem, Y. A., & Saeed Mohammed, M. A. (2020). Intercultural learning challenges affecting international students' sustainable learning in Malaysian higher education institutions. *Sustainability*, 12(18), 7490. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/su12187490>