PART 11

DOES MALAYSIA NEED REFLECTIVE TEACHER?

By insisting on a more school-based, student centred and constructivism approach in teacher education, the government is asking that learning to be a reflective teacher be more firmly conceptualised in the school than it has been in the past. The nature and the quality of teaching and learning in that context are clearly important when focusing on teacher knowledge (Siti Hawa, 1995:3). The following discussion examines how the Teacher Education Division (TED) of the Malaysian government has raised issues about embarking reflective practice in order to enhance professional development among teachers in Malaysia.

The Cabinet Committee Report on the Implementation of Education Policy in Malaysia (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 1996) demonstrated that Malaysia is a nation experiencing rapid economic, social and cultural changes. Associated with these changes are the problems of changing values in society and increased disciplinary problems in schools. Under the Sixth Malaysian Plan (1990-1995), the Prime Minister of Malaysia, the Hon. Dr. Mahathir Mohamed (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 1990), formulated guidelines for the direction of national development to the year 2020. These guidelines, known as 'Vision 2020' envisaged that Malaysia could be a united nation, fused by strong moral and ethical values with an economy that is competitive, dynamic, and resilient.

1. EMBARKING REFLECTIVE MODEL
TO TEACHERS IN MALAYSIA 1996 - 2020

Steps to reflect this attentiveness towards human development had been incorporated into the Integrated Primary School Curriculum (Ministry of Education 1991). The Ministry of Education produced the 'Primary School Philosophy of Education' that asserted that the concept of human development was the central concern of primary education. Thus:

> *... In general, primary education is concerned with a holistic development and not with any one particular aspect alone. It is hoped that every pupil*

will undergo a well-balanced intellectual, spiritual and physical development…(Ministry of Education 1991:5)

This statement was inspired by the efforts made by the Malaysian Ministry of Education in 1982 to enhance the philosophy that incorporates primary, secondary, college and university levels. Careful analysis pertaining to the concept of human development was undertaken and it became the basis for the designing of the National Educational Philosophy. The official statement is as follows:

… Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess a high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the betterment of the society and the nation at large…(Ministry of Education 1982:2)

To achieve this vision, it is imperative that the national educational system must change and be sensitive to future demands in order to prepare pupils to meet new challenges. It is stated clearly that one of the priorities in education and training is to improve the quality of teacher education. With regard to formulating changes in teacher education programs, the government expects teacher educators and teachers to fully understand the 'Vision 2020'.

In order for student teachers and teacher educators to fully understand the Malaysian 'Vision 2020' the preparation programs for Malaysian teachers should also be responsible for inspiring their souls. To produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, all student teachers in Malaysian Teacher Training Colleges are trained to develop a firm belief and devotion to God through the Moral Education Curriculum. In addition to Moral Education there is also Islamic Religious education with the same objectives in Malaysian school curriculum. Malaysia is a multi-cultural society (Malay, Chinese, Indian and others) in which Islam is the official religion for the country. Non-Muslim believers include Christians, Buddhists and Hindus. Although the society is multi-racial, Malaysia has understood that knowledge is the basic cause of progress and development of a society ('*Ummah'*). Malaysia has managed

to build up the structure and character of a multi-cultural society on the firm basis of knowledge acquired through its proper sources, namely, divine revelation and reasoning.

For Muslim society, the divine revelation and active guidance endowed the Prophet Muhammad (Sallawah Alaihi Wassalam- S.A.W) with a clear vision that enabled him to weave an exemplary pattern of life. The Al-Qur'an explicitly encourages the gaining of knowledge and education as well as the value of learning from experience. Abdul Hamid (1988: 95) in his article on Islam claimed that the first revelation called upon the Prophet and humanity to seek education and acquire knowledge in accordance with the divine guidance. Thus:

…Read and understand in the Name of thy Lord and Cherishes…

Abdullah Yusuf Ali 1992, [(Qur'an, Surah Al-Qalam, 97):1]

In connection with the development of knowledge in the teaching profession, Zafar Iqbal (1996:125) argued that teacher education in a Muslim society should develop all requisite abilities in a teacher. This is so that under the teacher's guidance, his/her pupils, according to their own levels of maturity, should develop faith in Allah; acquire the knowledge and understanding which enables them to think and develop a spirit of inquiry for discovering the laws of the Supreme Creator operating in the universe; and use the knowledge, skills and understandings to improve themselves and the society.

Conceptual Model of Teacher Education In Malaysia

In the context of the Malaysian school curriculum, the instilling of values and ethics in school is the direct responsibility of the moral and religious education programs. Islamic Education or Islamic Religious Education has been a mandatory subject for Muslim schoolchildren since Malaysia became independent from Britain in 1957 (Educational Planning and Research Division, 1994).

The curriculum of teacher training and the school system, which had been previously similar under western government, had purposely isolated the installation of religious education in the formal classroom (Educational Planning and Research Division, 1994). As a consequence of that system, the Malaysian education of

teachers for almost one century emphasized only cognitive and physical development. Developments of moral and spiritual elements were buried. Thus development of the whole person had been neglected. Islamization of the knowledge and the future of 'ummah' (generation) took place when the Malaysian government was led by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Muhammad (1995) who has tried to develop a reflective society with an emphasis on the moral and spiritual dimension through 'Vision 2020'. In his paper presentation at the International Institute of Islamic Thought, he invited Malaysians to reflect on this:

> *...We have not reflected the essence of Islam, which was once the pacesetter of humanity. Our future must reflect a new approach; we must have clearly crystallized ideas and well-articulated goals. We can carry out orderly and constructive work only when the planning is thorough and we labor toward recognized and acceptable goals. Unfortunately, the vast majority of Muslims, including intellectuals and those involved in the Islamic movements, have overlooked what to most builders is obvious. They know they must go somewhere but they do not know exactly where to go. We must therefore plan for the future and this means we need to analyze the past and take stock of the present... (p.19).*

Corresponding to these serious issues, the leader of a country such as Malaysia, must bear in their mind that action toward reformation in economy and movement in political matters must be parallel with moral and spiritual dimensions. Neglect of moral and spiritual dimensions in our reflection and action might drive us into the age of darkness. Therefore reflective thinking was mandated in Malaysia in 1990 by the Teacher Training Division, (Educational Planning and Research Division, 1994).

The subject of Islamic Religious Education is a specialized option in Teacher Education, which caters for the needs of qualified religious teachers in schools. Muslim student teachers who do not specialize in this area are required to take the subject 'Islamic Education', a subject under the 'Teacher Dynamics Component. The concepts and the practice of reflective thinking in Islam can be found in the Al-Qur'an. The source of thought from an Islamic point of view can be seen in the Muslim guide, Al-Qur'an (Taha Jabir al Alwani, 1996:24) and Waddy (1994:15).

In Al-Qur'an there are many statements asking human beings to think (fikr) about whatever they do. Many of these statements tell human beings to think in

terms of the mighty Allah. Four important concepts in Islam that have connections with reflective activity are 'aql', (mind) 'fikr', (think) taffakur (thinking) and 'dhikr' (reason) (Dawilah al-Edrus 1990). 'Aql (mind) distinguishes human beings from animals. Through the mind ('aql') human beings can think ('fikr') and obtain knowledge ('ilm'). From the perspective of Al-Quran, there are three types of' fikr'.

'Fikr fi al-khalq' is thinking about the greatness of God and the Creator; 'fikr fi al-ayat' is thinking of the power of God, and 'fikr fi an-nafs' is thinking about your self. Only God has given human beings the ability to think. So human beings are the main focus in this 'linkage' of thinking concepts. Al- Qur'an often instructs human beings to think about themselves as the creation of God.

When human beings think about nature and the signs of the mighty Allah, they will think deeply, 'taffakur,' and whenever their thinking rises to a higher level, it means they practice reasoning, 'dhikir'. So thinking, 'fikr,' and reasoning, 'dhkir,' could be thought as two important aspects in understanding religion. There is one statement 'one hour spent on thinking is better than one year praying' (Umaruddin, 1962:182).

In short we could say that, the way Islam approaches reflective thinking involves an active connection between the brain, 'aql', thought 'fikr', reasoning 'dhikr' and deep thought 'tafakur'. 'Fikr fi an-nafs' does not need memorized spiritual words. However one could write it down in writing form so that it would help one to recall the memory and analyses. The second is known, as 'hablu min-an-nas'. This is truly a process of thinking 'fikr,' that is based on memorization: the reflective thinking that involves other people. A person communicates with another person about the same issues. So each individual becomes the "mirror" to another person so as to reflect the same thinking. This concept is similar to the 'Hall of Mirrors', Schon (1988). The two of them 'interactor' and 'interactee' have to communicate at the same level of thinking or 'wave length' so that reflective thinking can be practicesed easily. Each individual that takes part has to respect and empathize even though the content of the reflection is at a minimum level. The communication should not be dominated by the thinking of one person.

Different nations might differ in their expression of commitment to dealing with issues of values and ethics in schools and in their efforts to promote high moral

standards in the population (Khadijah 1995: 172). Nevertheless the development of positive behaviour that arises from the internalisation of values and ethics has become a common concern in Malaysia and attention needs to be given to its growth and enhancement. Moral education too has always been an integral part of the school curriculum in Malaysia. When moral education was introduced as a compulsory component in the New Primary School Curriculum in 1989, it gained new perspectives and dimensions necessitating a parallel and corresponding change in the curriculum for teacher education. To make this a reality teacher education aims to produce the teacher:

> *...who is noble in character, progressive and scientific in outlook, committed to uphold the aspiration, cherishes the national cultural heritage and ensures the development of the individual and preservation of a united, democratic, progressive and disciplined society... (Sit Hawa : 1995:3)*

Figure 2.1 shows the conceptual model of teacher education in Malaysia. The model stresses the importance of God, the self as Man, and society and their inter-dependent relationships. Besides the areas of knowledge, skills and values that are given equal and balanced emphasis, the spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual development of the student teacher is also taken into consideration. The concept of God among philosophers and theologians is very old. Many and strange are the forms in which man has entertained the idea of a deity since the dawn of civilization.

The deity as conceived in Islam is not merely "god" *(ilah)* but " The God" (Allah). He is not merely an object for ritualistic worship, (Zafar Iqbal, 1996: 24) but he is the fountainhead of all values and ideals. He is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, infinite, absolute, one and indivisible who neither incarnates nor has any partner or son or compeer. He is transcendent in His being and immanent in 33the cosmos of the power. He is the creator, the sustainer, the nourisher and the evolver of everything that constitutes the cosmos, equally.

FIGURE 2.1: CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA

Source: Adapted from Siti Hawa (1995:5), Hanipah (1999:7)

ALLAH, **(GOD)**

SPIRITUAL

KNOWLEDGE   VALUES

INTELLECT   EMOTION

SKILL

PHYSICAL

SELF   SOCIETY
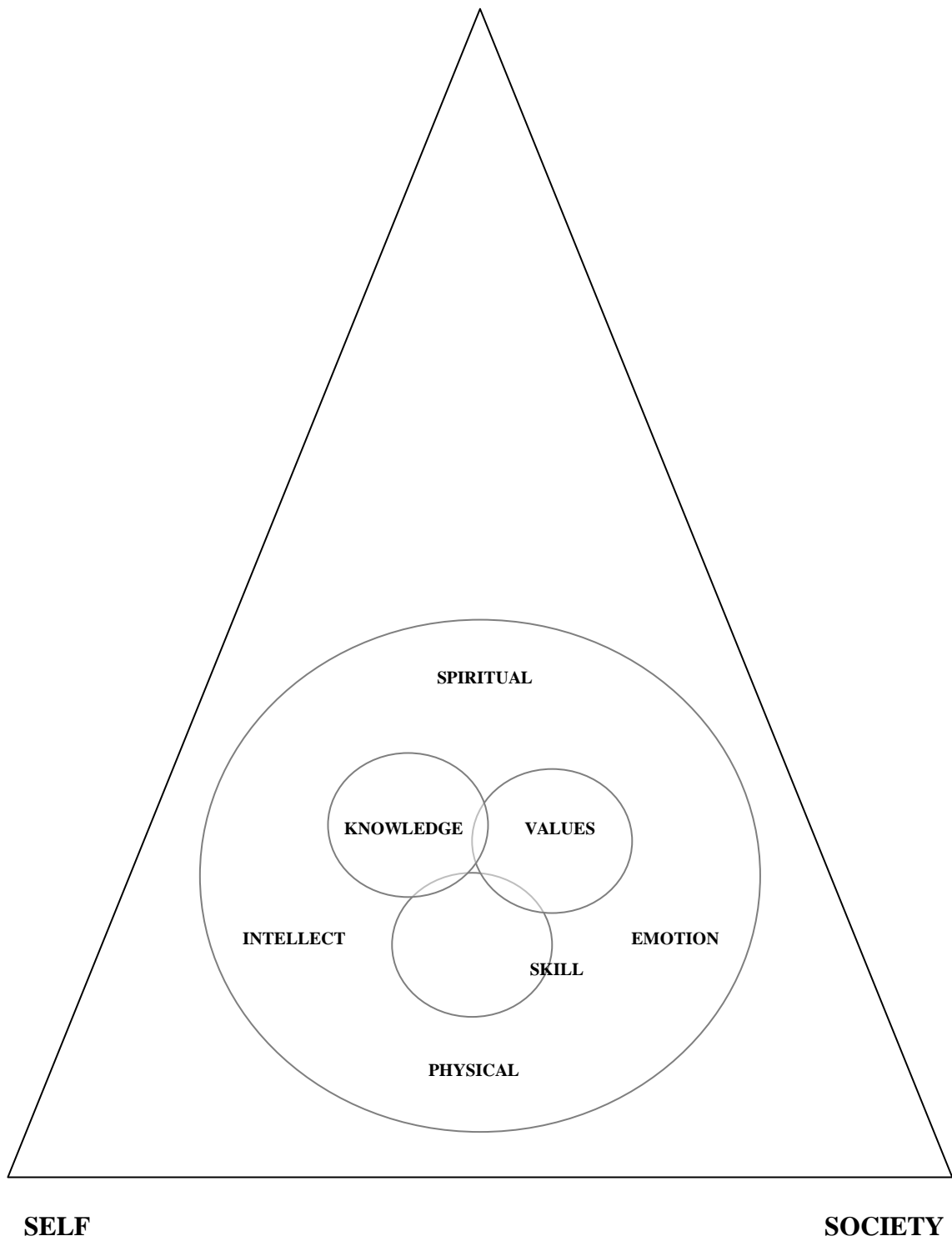
He is the righteous God who bestows no special favor on any individual or community on the basis of such distinctions as those of race or colour even in respect of mere formal labels of 'creed' (Zafar Iqbal, 1996: 11).

The model of teacher education in Malaysia in Figure 2.2 also stresses the importance of self as Man. The concept of Man is of prime importance in any society and all systems of the society revolve around this concept.

According to Zafar Iqbal (1996: 29) the concept of Man in Islam is totally different from the philosophies discussed in the previous arguments. The salient features of the Islamic concept of man are as given below:

- Man is the *vicegerent* of God on Earth. As God's *vicegerent* man is supreme among all the creatures on the earth. Man is born with a good and peaceful nature.

- Man is the very acme of creation. Man is not a mere animal: instead, he has a uniquely honored position in God's scheme of things for God created him in the best of moulds.

- Everything in the universe has been subjugated to Man. According to the Qur'an, everything in this universe has been subdued for man to explore and conquer (Zafar Iqbal, 1996:29).

- Man has been given dual nature of soul and matter. Elsewhere, in the Qur'an, the very purpose of the creation of the world has been stated to be the pursuit of moral struggle by Man. Man possesses freedom of will. God has given Man the will to choose, decide and resolve to do good or evil.

- Selflessness is the basic quality of a Muslim that implies total surrender to God. The motivating force for all actions should always be to seek the pleasure of God rather than that of one's own self. Adherence to selflessness establishes in the personality of its possessor humility, sweetness, gentleness, patience, sympathy for fellow beings, and many other virtues (Zafar Ansari 1992:82).

The conceptual framework in Figure 2.1. forms the basis for the training curriculum for all teacher education courses in Malaysia. Curriculum planners and

designers are given a firm grounding in the underlying principles of this framework for the purpose of designing syllabuses that will meet the requirements of the philosophy of teacher education. One of the issues that

syllabus developers must include is that, referring to the moral and ethical decay of the human race in the face of rapid technological and scientific advancement. This issue links this book to future changes in teacher education in Malaysia.

Developing A Model of Reflective Practice

Under the Malaysian Seventh Plan Period 1996-2000 in the area of Education and Training (Ministry of Education, 1996), the main objective of teacher education will be to increase the supply of qualified teachers at the primary and secondary levels, particularly teachers in Mathematics, Science and English. Much of following section is based upon the Malaysian Seventh Plan Period 1996-2000 Education and Training (Ministry of Education, 1996).

The curriculum and co-curricular activities for teacher education will further emphasize the development of quality teachers who are not only knowledgeable and innovative but highly disciplined, strongly motivated and dedicated. Efforts will also be taken to introduce better incentives in order to attract more qualified candidates to join the teaching profession. The level of teacher training programme for primary school teachers will be upgraded from certificate to diploma level. In addition, about 30 per cent of the current primary school principals will have the opportunity to pursue a diploma level course while principals of secondary schools will have the opportunity of pursuing post-graduate courses.

Several programs will be implemented to increase the supply of trained teachers. These include, the construction of four new teacher training colleges; increasing the intake into existing colleges and institutions of higher learning; and, expanding the postgraduate teacher training program. Steps will also be taken to continuously upgrade the knowledge and improve teaching skills through the strengthening of in-service training programs for teachers and upgrading the capabilities of teacher trainers in teacher training colleges. In addition to teaching skills, more opportunities will also be given to teachers to improve their skills in

school management. School management courses have been expanded in the Aminuddin Baki Institute at Kuala Lumpur.

The Ministry of Education's Staff Development Programs (Sharifah Bee, 1997) are aimed at upgrading and updating professional skills in educational administration, school management, educational planning and research and other specialization. Several divisions in the Ministry carry out these tasks. They are the Educational Planning and Research Division, the Aminuddin Baki Institute, the Teacher Education Division, the Curriculum Development Centre, the Technical and Vocational Education Division, the Examination Syndicate and the Schools Division.

Realizing the importance of upgrading and updating professional skills in educational administration and school management among student teachers in Malaysia, the Teacher Training Division of the Ministry of Education has recognized the importance of bridging the gap between theory and practice in teacher training. For this purpose, reflective practice has been earmarked as one of the approaches that could help to improve the level of professional competence and the quality of a teacher.

In November 1994, six lecturers from various teacher training colleges in Malaysia and four key personnel from Teacher Education College were sent by the Teacher Education Division of the Ministry of Education to the United Kingdom to have a short term (4 weeks) course. They studied Reflective Teaching in the Teacher Education Course at Moray House, Edinburgh. A Reflective Model developed by Wallace (1991) and a reflective approach in teaching and supervision were presented to the participants as the first step in the introduction of reflective practice to Malaysian teacher education (Che Mat Zain 1994).

In March 1995, the Sultan Idris Teachers' Institute developed a module called 'Reflective Teaching in Teacher Education'. This module has been used in teacher training colleges in Malaysia since 1995. It is used as a guideline for a reflective practice approach. The objective of this module is to introduce the reflective teaching model to teacher training colleges in Malaysia. It is also to provide a framework for thinking about the relationship between theory and practice; to examine the mode of reflective teaching; to implement assessment in

teacher education; and, to give guidelines for clinical supervision with a reflective approach.

Malaysian primary and secondary school curricular reforms in the eighties involved massive retraining of all teachers in schools through in-service programs and the restructuring of teacher preparation programs. It is recognized that whenever there are educational changes and curricular reforms in schools, public attention is always drawn to the roles of teachers (Ministry of Education, 1995:43). To be good role models, teachers are expected to change their traditional role of transmitters of knowledge to agents of change. This is why teachers need to reform their beliefs and attitudes and they have to learn to direct their own growth and professional development. Reflective teaching is one strategy that can assist.

Noor Azmi (1988) argued that some of the school curricular reforms in Malaysia were not as successful in effecting the expected changes in pupils because of the inappropriate strategies of in-service courses to change teachers' thinking. It is also interesting to note that although there have been large programs to retrain school teachers and attempts to restructure pre-service teacher education programs in Malaysia, there is no fundamental rethinking about how teachers think and adapt to change; especially adaptation to change associated with beliefs about teaching and learning.

Many head of researchers, such as Kim (1994) have pointed out that most of the knowledge presented to student teachers in Malaysian teacher education was knowledge generated outside the sociocultural environment of Malaysian pupils. For example, the codified knowledge about learners and their learning is mostly derived from studies outside Malaysia because there are very few research studies in Malaysia that provide a knowledge base in this area. Because of increased efforts in research into teaching and learning in Malaysia, the volume of codified knowledge essential for teachers to know appears to be growing. Teacher educators have to use their own criteria to select the relevant codified knowledge for student teachers. Thus, issues regarding the meaningfulness and relevancy of this knowledge to student teachers are often the subjects of investigation.

Teachers need to be told what and how to teach the new knowledge introduced. A book by Kim (1994) demonstrated that teacher educators often

introduce new knowledge about the effectiveness of teaching to teachers in order to facilitate change in teachers. Studies that reviewed and evaluated school reforms often gave very negative findings regarding the ability of teachers to carry out school reforms. Issues of how teachers think and how they construct new knowledge are rarely examined (Rajendran, 1998). Rosalena (1995:22) suggested that teacher educators in colleges and student teachers in schools should use a reflective model in order to improve their teaching and learning.

Preparing teachers adequately to meet new demands associated with teaching is a further issue. Teachers in Malaysia as in most countries are increasingly expected to carry out multiple roles of, managers and facilitators of learning; psychologists; counsellors and consultants; curriculum planners,; professional and lifelong learners; innovators; head of researchers and evaluators; and leaders in the professional and social contexts of learning (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 1995:43). Each of these roles demands its own knowledge base. So this present book is also an attempt to develop an understanding of the growth of teaching knowledge among student teachers during practicum.

Teachers' Professional Development in Malaysia

There are various factors that influence and shape teachers' professional development in Malaysia. These factors can be divided into two broad groups. The first group is based on national policies and ideologies and the second is based on school factors.

The philosophy and objectives of teacher education in Malaysia are not explicitly stated, neither are they documented as one single source of reference. They have to be deduced from many documents that deal with national policies and ideologies such as the National Principles, the Sixth Malaysian Plan, the National Education Policy, the Professional Code of Ethics and the 'Vision 2020'. Taking into account some of the aims for the development of education stated in these documents as well as the current political, cultural and socio-economic development in the country, some pertinent views about teachers' professional development can be suggested.

The book incorporates a number of these views of professional development. It stresses the need for teachers to take a lead in society to achieve national unity and integration, to mould individuals to become better Malaysian citizens with the right attitude towards life and work, and to equip them with knowledge and skills necessary to make Malaysia a developed nation by the year 2020. The teacher's role with professional competence, therefore, is to provide a conducive environment not only for the acquisition of basic knowledge but also character building.

The 'Professional Code and Ethics' for teachers in the teaching profession in Malaysia mentions specific responsibilities towards students and parents and clear guidelines have been drawn for teachers. The challenge is to familiarize teachers with these guidelines especially if they are new to the job.

An example of a scholar's thoughts and preferences about a teacher's role is shown in the seminar paper delivered specifically on the ethical work of teachers in the Malaysian society today. Arfah and Mohd.Rusli, (1990) state that the former vice-chancellor of the University Technology of Malaysia, listed five attributes which a teacher needs to be aware of and to strive towards. They are:

1. a teacher should realize that he/she is God's creation on this earth. He/she is therefore required to look upon his/her role as a duty entrusted to him/her.

2. a teacher is to work with sincerity and honesty.

3. a teacher is to work hard and efficiently.

4. a teacher is to uphold the spirit of co-operation and single mindedness.

5. a teacher is to always strive towards the universal happiness of mankind.

Again such a list highlights the important role of the teacher in the development of the modern Malaysian society. The local print media is replete with articles written about the roles of teachers (Siti Hawa, 1995) and Hanipah (1999). As these articles are often written to discuss actual situations in the classroom, the views in the articles reflect the realities of the teaching profession. They come in the form of views or statements by students, teachers, parents and the

public, and can be either positive or negative in nature. They offer insights into, the status of teachers today; the preferred roles of a teacher; and, some of the problems faced by teachers.

Factors relating to the school environment also relate to the teachers' and learners' expectations about the nature of learning tasks and the ways in which teachers deal with these tasks. They are commonly known as task-related roles or professional roles (Siti Hawa, 1995). These describe the teacher's professional skills and competence in the subject area, sensitivity to students' needs, ability to motivate students, and the employment of a variety of teaching techniques.

Apart from teaching in a classroom, a teacher has to undertake many other responsibilities or duties. It is routine for a teacher to be appointed as a class teacher and at the same time a member of a task committee for projects or a member of the team in charge of the school subject. He/she is also expected to co-ordinate co-curricular activities and become a housemaster, to be in charge of the school library, school club, and games. This teacher is therefore expected to be familiar with these duties and the roles associated with them.

The social role of the teacher involves responsibilities towards parents and the community. When appointed as a teacher he/she pledges to:

1.   work towards establishing warm and co-operative relationships with parents.

2.   regard all information about the child given by his/her parents as confidential.

3.   provide information about the child to his/her parents and to use the information received from the parents judiciously.

4.   avoid being biased or prejudiced by the socio-economic status of parents.

5.   avoid actions which would influence the child's faith in his/her parents or guardians (Ministry of Education, 1995).

In conclusion, the interpretation of the social role of a teacher in Malaysia revolves around how the public values a teacher. This interpretation can be gleaned from various sources including the Statement of the Philosophy and Objectives of Teacher Education, Professional Code of Ethics, authoritative views about teaching

(Ministry of Education, 1995), journal articles and commentaries on learning and teaching. While these sources are useful, however, they should not be considered final. Roles are dynamic; they change with time, with new demands and new theories or insights that arise. The above factors that influence and shape teachers' professional development link us to another issue that concerns the need for reflective teachers in Malaysia.

2   DOES MALAYSIA NEED REFLECTIVE TEACHER?

Recent studies in USA, Britain and Australia, have suggested that developing reflective practitioners in a school setting is an essential agenda even though difficult goal to achieve (Field and Terry, 1994). A number of barriers exist, for example, the 'apprenticeship of observation' that all students must 'serve' as learners in the classroom (Russell and Munby, 1992; Zeichner and Liston, 1987); the conservative influence of teacher preparation programs (Russell and Munby, 1992; Feiman-Nemser, 1991; Zeichner, 1986) and the utilitarian emphasis that seems to pervade the setting for practice (Wildman and Niles, 1987). Unless student teachers are encouraged to examine the taken for granted assumptions associated with these barriers, the development of a reflective disposition is likely to be severely constrained.

One of the sites in which these reflective dispositions can be developed is the practicum. This site is especially significant given that many aspiring and experienced teachers regard the practicum as the most important component of their teacher preparation (Clarke, 1994)

Professional development is a basic goal of pre-service in Malaysia (Hanipah, 1999), induction, and in-service teacher education programs (Zeichner, 1986:565), as is the impact of professional competence upon classroom practice. It has been argued that reflection should be fostered at the pre-service level and subsequently encouraged as a career-long pursuit (Cole, 1989). Gaining insights into the reflective practices of student teachers is, therefore, an important step in

understanding and fostering the development of reflective practice in the field of teaching.

The Needs for Reflective Teachers in Malaysia

In the light of the rapid expansion and growth of student teacher education in Malaysia, several pertinent questions could be asked if improvement in teacher education is to be brought about. These include:

1. What positive measures have been taken by the Teacher Training Division in Malaysia to help teacher trainees to develop professional skills and teacher thinking in order to cope with the challenges of the national school system?

2. What other supplementary techniques and approaches could be devised to involve teacher trainees directly in teaching in a manageable and realistic way before they are sent out to schools for their first teaching experience?

3. How can Malaysian Teachers' Training Colleges produce teachers of an acceptable quality who can think about their classrooms and can effectively implement the new educational policy at ground level?

It is argued that producing student teachers who are reflective can help to answer these questions.

The effective development of reflective student teachers is largely dependent on the behaviour of teacher educators. Thus the professional development of teacher's educators is also very important. Thus, it was encouraging to note that in Sharifah Bee's (1997) observations of the Staff Development Programs in two teacher education colleges, teamwork was very much appreciated. Therefore, other than team teaching that is presently in practice, there should be more provision to enable teacher educators to work together in pairs or in small teams. This arrangement is not only to facilitate peer observations and to allow the teacher educator to practise new skills but also to accord them opportunities to discuss and share their observations reflectively.

In connection to the above, is Sharifah Bee's finding, that Malaysian Teachers' College Staff Development Programs have attempted to provide teacher

educators with opportunities to develop trusting collegial relationships in which they could help one another. This has been achieved by fostering reflection about practice, in the production of teaching learning materials, and addressing common problems more effectively. The effectiveness of teacher educators who are involved in these Staff Development Programs can be assessed through the student teachers' progress and development during practicum supervision in schools. The aim of improving schooling in Malaysia drove the Teacher Education Division and the Teacher Education Colleges to embark on reflective practice in the early 1995. According to Kamalia, (1999:8). teachers in Malaysia should be given a greater opportunity to take part in decision making, especially when the issue is about teachers and their responsibility for a decision to be implemented. Such opportunities for professional growth would improve the competence of teachers. Thus a future strategy to develop teamwork and coaching in reflective practice in teacher education is the use of collaborative second order action research in schools and colleges.

This book search for a procedure to provide a role model for teacher educators in teachers' colleges in Malaysia. It is hoped that other teacher educators may be able to see the value of reflective practice and second order action research in their own supervisory practice. Reflective practice and second order action research are useful for dealing with classroom problems. According to Foshay (1998:110) during the process of reflective practice and second order action research, the educator and student teachers learn together to establish a systematic, orderly procedure for exploring problems and finding possible actions to eliminate problems or at least to make them more manageable. The second order second order action research approach used in the present book is outlined in Chapter Five

Under the Malaysian Seventh Plan Period (1996-2000) in Education and Training (Ministry of Education, 1996:30), and Malaysian Eight Plan Period (2004 Budget), it is stated clearly that one of 'its priorities' in Education and Training is to improve the quality of education. As already indicated, the Teacher Training Division of the Ministry of Education has recognized the importance of bridging the gap between theory and practice in teacher training, and the use of reflection in achieving this.

Significance of Being a Reflective Practitioner

Several assumptions about teaching and the role of teachers in classrooms lead to the conclusion that reflection is an essential part of teaching (Ross, 1993: 5). First, teaching requires an ethical commitment to learner empowerment. Student teachers need to learn how to gain understandings and have the responsibility to help children grow up to be empowered citizens who are able and willing to participate fully and intelligently in a democracy. For example, in addition to learning basic information about the Malaysian government, it is expected that student teachers will develop democratic values, to grow, to be dedicated to the worth and dignity of each individual, to recognize the need to balance the rights of individuals against the rights of the rest of the society, to value and work towards the democratic ideal of equity. Similarly Ross (1993:7) and Siti Hawa (1995:6) stated that democratic societies must help children learn to value openness and reason. She argued that schools in a democratic society must empower learners by helping them learn:

- openness to new ideas and an ability to listen to the ideas of others, even ideas they may not like;
- the ability to use reasoning and draw upon evidence;
- the ability to accept conflicts;
- the ability to compromise so that the diverse needs of the population can be met; and,
- the ability to treat others with dignity and respect.

In the light of the above discussion of factors currently influencing Malaysian education, the present book is significant for at least two reasons. First, the present book gave an opportunity to the student teachers during their second field experience to help them use ethical criteria to select and evaluate the content to be taught and the teaching methods used, and to reflect on decisions made. If every Malaysian teacher educator and beginning teacher had an opportunity to write critically and voice their thoughts reflectively then desired change in education may be more likely. The political and social situation happening in Malaysia today

demands that, educators reform their practice in classrooms and schools so that they can gain knowledge and values in learning from experience.

Second, teaching requires understanding of students' points of view, because knowledge is constructed rather than transmitted (Zeichner and Tabachnick, 1991). What student teachers think influences what they learn and how they act (Francis, 1995). Learning to be a reflective teacher is not a simple process because learners do not simply absorb information transmitted by lecturers. Instead learners construct knowledge within their own minds (Piaget, 1978). Learners constantly interpret new information, trying to understand how new knowledge is related to what they have already known. Previous knowledge, developed over time and in many contexts inside and outside of school, may be accurate or inaccurate and will influence how the learners interpret new information. What happens in classrooms is influenced by what the teachers think and believe and as a result teachers' beliefs and attributes can facilitate or hamper their effectiveness in the classroom. Thus helping student teachers become reflective of their practice in Malaysia may assist student learning to be more effective.

Why Student Teachers Need About Their Practice?

'Reflection' is one of the key words in teacher education today. It is usually used with the student teachers reflecting on what has happened in the classroom during lessons. Why do student teachers need to think reflectively about their practice? It is generally recognized that many practices in classroom teaching are hard to change. According to Nias (1996) professional practice often requires individuals to alter deeply-rooted, self-defining attitudes, and beliefs. In this context, the general aim of this book is to investigate the content and the nature of primary student teachers' thinking and knowledge as it develops during field experience.

One way teachers can change is to act as 'reflective practitioners' (Schon, 1983). Reflective practitioners examine their own practices in an effort to improve their teaching. They also know that teaching necessarily involves individual values, beliefs and assumptions. Any call for educational reform should therefore be carried out with the practical knowledge of reflective teachers about their profession along with a clear understanding of the potential ethical, moral, and sociopolitical

implications of that reform (Schon, 1991). Through a process of reflection and thoughtful decision making, teachers then can contribute to a change that will result in a more informed practice for the whole profession.

One of the key strategies to facilitate reflection is that of journal writing (Hatton and Smith, 1995). Thus the book also attempts to help student teachers to write descriptive reflection, dialogical reflection and critical reflection (Hatton and Smith, 1995) in weekly journals during practicum. As noted by Zeichner and Liston (1990):

> *...As students write journals, participate in seminars, and interact with their teacher educators in supervisory conferences, they also raise the kinds of questions about their work and its context that are elicited through second order action research. It is through all of these strategies that we hope to maintain our goal of reflective practice...(p.249).*

As Zeichner and Liston stated, student teachers' writing will lead them to think and find themselves questioning their original beliefs and assumptions about teaching, children, and common school practices. Heichel and Miller's (1993:174) research also focused on how journal writing helped student teachers become more informed about their practices.

Practicum programs have now implemented curricula that encourage student teachers to engage in reflection in a school setting. The analysis of student teachers' journal entries was the main data source in the present book. These data were analyzed using three main questions. First, how has journal writing helped us learn about teaching? Second, how do journals indicate growth in student teachers' ability to reflect? Third, what role do supervisors' comments in the journals play in helping student teachers learn about teaching?

Hatton and Smith (1995: 36), however, found that it was necessary to move beyond self-reports to the identification of ways in which reflective processes can be evidenced. It is not sufficient to assert that reflection is encouraged by a procedure or a technique, rather means must be specified to demonstrate that particular kinds of reflecting are taking place.

At present there is a lack of a substantive knowledge base for student teachers' professional learning. Calderhead (1989) argued that there is a need to encourage more efforts in investigating the nature of teachers' professional learning.

He asserted that learning to teach and learning to be reflective involve complex cognitive, affective and behavioral changes. One way to emphasize innovativeness and critical thinking in teacher education is to ask student teachers to reflect on, and articulate their experience during the practicum, and then listen carefully to the voices of these students in their reflective journals.

Experienced teachers must also learn to be reflective. One of the skills that experienced teachers must gain is that of being able to articulate areas of educational knowledge in their philosophy of education. This can also be achieved through the process of reflection. Experienced teachers such as cooperating teachers and principals and subject matter lecturers must work with student teachers in schools. Teacher educators must help their student teachers to develop the skill of reflection. This is because reflection requires the ability to think. It requires meta-cognition. A knowing about knowing. Reflection allows a student teacher to learn and grow and change performance from one teaching episode to the next (Samaras and Gismondi, 1998).

Thus student teachers need guidance and coaching from an experienced teacher to learn to be reflective. However, in addition, reflection is an equally important process for an experienced teacher to learn. This book is constructed to enable cooperating teachers working with student teachers to be engaged in reflection as well. Thus this book as a whole seeks to provide a role model for both teacher educators in colleges and the community schoolteachers to change and challenge their practice of student teachers' supervision through reflective practice and second order action research.

Therefore the primary aims of learning to be reflective are to examine the content and the nature of the reflective writing of a group of Malaysian primary student teachers and how this developed during field experience. Specifically the project attempted:

(i)   to explore the experiences of a teacher educator implementing reflective practice through second order action research in school settings;

(ii) to examine the manner in which the student teachers wrote about the content of their teaching knowledge through their reflection in journals;

(iii) to examine the student teachers' personal values and beliefs about how their peers, cooperating teachers in the school, and lecturers in colleges influenced their ability to think reflectively; and,

(iv) to examine the perceptions of the student teachers of the usefulness for reflective practice of a structured framework for reflective thinking in journal writing.