

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

In Malaysia, the government believes that education is a means of enabling her citizens to achieve a better standard of living. Education as a means for upward social mobility, is being promoted by the government to all people, especially the youths of the underprivileged families from the rural areas, to upgrade themselves to become the middle and upper-class people who enjoy better status, income and quality of life.

The onset of the next millennium is vital for the nation to be equipped with technological developments and advancements to face challenges, such as the Multimedia Super Corridor at Cyberjaya, the usage of smart card, tele-medicine, teleconferencing and electronic commerce. Thus, the government views education as important for manpower development and for creation of skillful, innovative workforce necessary for economic and technological development.

Most important of all, the government believes that education is the main conduit for national integration. The inculcation of the spirit and values of democracy, liberal tolerance and national identity among children and youths of different races and cultural background may be viewed as the critical elements for the formation of a harmonious, united, productive, efficient and stable society. Sufean (1993) posits that

Democracy in education means the equal and fair right to participate, to obtain and to be given fair attention in education. All students have the right to obtain education and succeed in education without any discrimination and obstacles.

The Report of the Education Committee (1956), or The Razak Report, and the Report of the Education Review Committee (1960) proposed some major reformative policies which stressed the importance of education for national development. Education was made compulsory at the primary school level, and secondary education was accessible to an extensive portion of the youths of the country.

Since 1957, the Ministry of Education has been entrusted with the task of fulfilling the policy of democracy education with the establishments and expansion of national primary and secondary schools for children and youths of the country. A comprehensive and integrated curriculum was formulated to achieve national integration in the country. The Razak Report (1956) announces that the government is responsible for:

establishing a national system of education acceptable to the people of the Federation as a whole which will satisfy their needs and promote their cultural, social, economic and political development as a nation, having regard to the intention to make Malay the national language of the country whilst preserving and sustaining the growth of the language and culture of other communities living in the country.

The Education Act (1961) affirmed the policy of democracy in education, empowered the parents of children to choose the type of schools suitable for their children. This provision was generous and open to all the people irrespective of their race, beliefs and cultural background.

The national education policy, which upheld the principle of democracy, comprises many incremental policies as follows:

- i. the free universal primary education policy;
- ii. the continuation of vernacular stream policy;
- iii. the automatic promotion schooling policy;
- iv. the construction of boarding school policy;
- v. the food and milk assistance program policy;
- vi. the educational aid and scholarship policy;
- vii. the school textbook loan policy; (Sufean, 1997)

The Dropout Study Report in 1973 has prompted the government to structure and implement programs aimed at achieving success in the last three incremental policies as mentioned above. The aim of minimizing the dropout rate was given the priority to be carried out nation wide. Besides that, the Report has also prompted the introduction of the Government-Aided

Textbook Loan Scheme (GATS) in 1975 which enabled more than 80% of the poor students in the rural public schools to continue their schooling.

The rural areas of the country lacked proper or adequate water and electricity supply. Communication and transport system in these areas were unsatisfactory. The parents of these rural school students were mainly poor and depended on agriculture such as small holdings of oil palm and rubber, vegetables and fruits farming, fishing and cottage industries.

The parents of these rural children were unable to provide their children with textbooks and workbooks for learning in the classroom. Most of the time, these poor students had to quit school because they could not afford to buy textbooks or other necessary tools for learning. This was further compounded by the fact that parents had several school-going children. Thus, there was a need to provide aided textbooks to these poor children so that they could continue their studies. The Dropout Report findings:

..... the less wealthy the parents, the more likely the child to drop out of school. In short, enrollment is affected by the relative financial capacity of the parents.

The relationship between parental status and prosperity with rates of enrollment certainly dashed the hopes of further education for the poor, the rural poor to be exact who could not afford schooling for their children.

Textbook serve as a primary tool and references for poor student to learn and to excel in their studies. As indicated from the findings of the

Dropout Report 1973, textbook is an important tool of learning which is the determinant of academic achievement of the students. Isahak (1977), through his findings summed up that:

In sum, although the relationship between the availability of textbooks and the achievement varies slightly from group to group and from subject to subject, the general finding is that there is a positive effect of the availability of textbooks on overall academic achievement of pupils in primary schools in Peninsular Malaysia.

The availability of textbooks is perceived to be important in the students' learning process. Zulkifli, Shahril and Shahrir (1995) in their findings revealed that textbooks contributed to students' academic achievement. Vespoor and Wu (1990) reaffirmed in their research that the academic achievement of the students depends very much on the availability of textbooks. The same findings are also shared by Isahak Haron (1977) and Shieffelbein and Farrel (1977). Hence, the importance of textbooks in education as an input which is often associated with enhance learning.

Since the implementation of the GATS in 1975, the total expenditure of the textbook loan scheme has exceeded RM 1 billion, therefore the accountability of the provision of high quality textbooks has to be emphasize. Logically, educators and parents perceive that quality learning depend on quality books.

Educators such as Stein, Osborn and Jones (1985) contended that:

Good textbooks are more than transmitters of information; they relate to student's lives, help students summarize and

ask pertinent questions, use graphics judiciously to augment content, present concepts in a logical manner and use appropriate vocabulary.

In order to ensure quality learning in school, quality-control on textbooks is essential in book production. In the years between 1975 and 1990, the Ministry of Education through its Textbook Bureau was given the task to evaluate and to exercise control to the whole scheme that has various stages of production, and subsequently in supervising the distribution of books to all the public schools in the country. Quality textbooks need Total Quality Management (TQM) which is essential for maintaining and improving the quality of the textbooks in terms of content, presentation, illustration, language and terminology, exercises and activities and elimination of negative and sensitive issue. With these objectives, the Textbook Bureau invited interested publishers to submit-for-contest copies of textbooks and workbooks for primary and secondary schools. The Bureau then selected the most suitable and best quality contested copies to be printed and distributed to all public schools. The selected publishers were requested to supply books throughout the country.

The annual expenditure of the Ministry of Education on aided textbooks amounted to approximately RM140 million. Most of the money went to established publishers such as Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, Far Eastern, Longman, Fajar Bakti, Pustaka Yakin Dan Pelajar and Utusan Publications & Distributors.

Zulkifli and others (1995) in their findings viewed GATS as an educational social program which has attained positive impact to the students who received the loaned textbooks. Many of the findings in their research indicated that the GATS has helped in the students' academic achievement and further recommended the scheme to be continued.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Since the implementation of the Government-Aided Textbook Scheme (GATS), there have been a number of researches regarding the impact and effectiveness of the scheme. The primary aim of the scheme is to reduce dropout rate and improve the quality of education in the country. Therefore, a research needs to be conducted to examine whether or not the scheme yields positive and beneficial returns especially socially, or is it a wastage in terms of the amount of money spent since its implementation. The research stems from the following issues;

- i. At the school level, the element of wastage due to over-supply of textbooks.
- ii. At the district level, misallocation or improper distribution of textbooks which resulted in situation of certain schools been with shortage of books and on the other hand, some schools with abundance.

- iii. At the national level, under utilization of the textbooks due to the poor quality of the books which leads teachers using revision books and study materials.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the implementation of GATS at the school level particularly focusing on the following objectives:

1. To evaluate the effective utilization of the government-aided textbooks by the students in learning.
2. To evaluate the effective utilization of the government-aided textbooks by the teachers in teaching.
3. To examine the implementation process of the scheme which covers the management and system of distribution at the school level.
4. To assess the cost-benefit of the GATS at the school level.

### **1.4 Rationale of the Study**

Since the inception of the textbook loan scheme, there have been a few studies that provided substantial feedback to the policy. Research conducted by Abu Shukor Abdullah and Yunus Mohamad (1990) and Zulkifli



A. Manaf, Shahril Marzuki and Shahrir Jamaluddin (1995) were confined to a restricted scope or areas of interest. So far, there are limited number of research in this area which are comprehensive. Nonetheless, there are not many studies which have extended their boundaries to East Malaysia. Zulkifli's report on the impact of GATS (1995) had the general perception of the students, teachers, parents, headmasters and education officers but there was no detailed observation of the scheme at the school level.

As stated earlier, the entire GATS require huge funding and will continue to do so in the future. Annual cost for the scheme is high and inevitably it will escalate in years to come. Therefore the findings will help us to determine whether or not, we should continue or to reduce our commitment in this policy.

The benefit in terms of social return to the lower income group in particular and the country in general shall be considered before making any attempt to discontinue the policy. Any decision to stop the policy will affect the poor students in terms of depriving them of better standard of living, the increase rate of dropout as well as opportunity cost for each and every poor students from the lower income group to move up to the middle and upper-class to enjoy better quality of life.

The management of GATS at school and district levels should be evaluated critically in order to improve efficiency. The task of proper planning to match supply with demand in terms of distribution is one way or other to

eradicate wastage in education. In many cases, some schools are filled with excess textbooks for a small number of applicants whereas others do not have enough for distribution.

Wastage can be limited or overcome through various measures. Proper planning to match supply with demand in terms of distribution with respect to locations of schools, enrollment, different subjects or titles of textbooks offered, could cut cost and act as an inventory control to reduce cost and wastage. Proper storage and disposal is another pre-requisite which will improve efficiency.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

This research sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the extent of effective usage of government aided textbooks by students in learning?
2. What is the extent of effective usage of government-aided textbooks by teachers in instruction?
3. How is the management of the GATS at the school level?
4. What is the cost-benefit of the textbook loan scheme for the entire school in an affluent area?

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The textbook loan scheme has been a public education policy which has shown success in achieving both social and economic returns in the country. It is noted that previous findings of research recommended the continuity of the policy as it is worthwhile in the long term prospect.

So far, the scheme has helped many of the students from poor families. The extent of the effectiveness of the scheme at school and district level need to be ascertained and evaluation will assist in application of more effective management of the scheme to achieve further success and efficiency. In fact, GATS is significant enough to carry on as the findings of Abu Shukor Abdullah and Yunus Mohamad 1990 which affirm that the textbooks are still regarded as the main tool of learning as well as providing references and knowledge to the students. They further state that the function of textbooks plays an important role in the learning process and that textbooks help many poor students to stay competitive in the classroom, school and home. If the government discontinue GATS, it will affect many poor students and their families. The hopes and desires to obtain better status and quality of life will be diminished. Therefore the denial of opportunities of education is thereby felt and affecting those poor students. The chances of improving or upgrading the standard of living of the lower income group is thus jeopardize.

The quality of the textbooks provided by GATS is another aspect which needs further examination. As we know, the quality of the textbooks is important as it provides learning knowledge and experiences for the students. If we have sub-standard quality textbooks, it will not enhance learning of the students. This is especially true if content, language, illustration and presentation of the textbooks are not up to the standard as set by the national curriculum which incorporates the national philosophy of education such as democracy and moral values.

It is important for this study be conducted because it will give an insight to the level of effectiveness and efficiency of the system: its economic and social returns, effective usage of textbooks, targeted recipients of the scheme, distribution and management through identification of the existing weaknesses in the system of management of the textbook loan scheme in order to provide recommendations and suggestions to overcome these weaknesses.

Nonetheless, the need to review alternative methods and providing assistance to the GATS shall be studied to facilitate smooth and effective administration of the whole system of management.

Besides that, it is hoped that the findings of this study will help to enhance, to improve and to produce a better quality sets of textbooks to extend the students' usage of loaned textbooks of the scheme.

## **1.7 Definition of Terms**

### **1) Government-Aided Textbook Scheme (GATS)**

A textbook loan scheme which was implemented in 1975 and funded by the government to lend free textbooks to poor students in primary and secondary schools. Students with household income of less than RM1,000.00 per month are eligible to apply for the aid of textbooks in this scheme. (See Appendix A)

### **2) Secondary school**

This type of school cater for students in the age group of 13 to 18 years old, that is, from Form 1 until Form 5.

### **3) Instruction**

The manner a teacher teaches her students in class which includes many aspects such as :

#### **a. the usage of GATS textbooks as**

- i) the main textbooks**
- ii) the main reference**
- iii) for revision**
- iv) to give exercises to the students**
- v) to prepare lesson plans**

- b. to copy notes on the blackboard
- c. to save teaching time
- d. the total time save to activate learning
- e. presentation of the lesson
- f. preparation of notes

#### 4) Learning

The instruction received by students to learn which include reading, writing and counting skills, revision, studying a certain topic, studying alone, doing exercises alone.

#### 5) Cost

The amount of money spend by the government for education of students in the country in terms of the average cost per student and also the total cost spend annually towards the textbook-loan scheme.

#### 6) Benefit

The return of education in both equity and equity. The emphasis is on academic achievement, savings per student and social benefit based on the educational policies implemented which help the lower income group of Malaysians.

**7) Reference**

Learning-teaching materials use for extra reference besides the primary reference.

**8) Main textbook**

Basic textbooks which are use by the teachers and students in a subject.