

## Education for Orang Asli Students: an Analysis of Goals, Implementation and Educational Outcomes

*<sup>1</sup>Norwaliza Abdul Wahab, <sup>1</sup>Ridzwan Jaafar and <sup>2</sup>Ramlee Mustapha*

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Education and Human Development, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Technical and Vocational, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malaysia

**Abstract:** This study aimed to explore the individuals' perspectives in the education of Orang Asli students. Thus, the case study was conducted to understand the educational process of Orang Asli students based on the following aspects: goals, pedagogy, institutional, leadership, spread and ownership based on GPILSEO Model. This study was designed as a case study. The data were collected through protocol interviews, observation and document analysis from four Orang Asli students, two mothers and father of Orang Asli students, four teachers, two school administrators and two community leaders from two Orang Asli school in Pahang. The study found that there are seven aspects in determining the effectiveness of Orang Asli education namely the importance of establishing clear objectives in academic and co-curriculum, integrating indigenous pedagogy and special curriculum, improving the quality of infrastructures and facilities of Orang Asli schools, establishing proactive and responsive leadership, increasing the support and involvement of all parties, conducting special assessments for students according to their capability and thinking level and increasing the sense of belonging towards Orang Asli schools. The study found that all the aspects should be the primary basis in enacting a special education in order to bridge the gap between Orang Asli students and other students from the mainstream so they become a more competitive society without losing their identity as an indigenous community in the country.

**Key words:** Orang Asli • Orang Asli schools • Orang Asli education • Indigenous • Indigenous pedagogy

### INTRODUCTION

Education is the foundation for improving human capital development to enhance a country's development. Human capital development should be done thoroughly, regardless of individual background associated with race, ethnicity and religion. The Government also emphasize the development of human capital as the main thrust of the country's mission [1]. This is not only important to improve the progress and development but also improve relations between different ethnic groups. The government has always sought to develop the Orang Asli community to keep pace with other ethnic groups in the progress and prosperity of this country and basic things that should be done is through education [2] and this educational aspect has been included as one of the National Key Result Areas (NKRA). This is the starting point towards improving the overall performance of students and enable them to have access to better quality

education. There are efforts by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to strengthen the country's education, there are some students like the Orang Asli who are still marginalized and left out in the mainstream education. Although the dropout rate of Orang Asli students have dropped 29 percent in 2011 to 26 percent in 2012 but the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development (MRRD) in collaboration with the Department of Orang Asli (JAKOA) still attempt to reduce dropout rates in primary and secondary schools to 15 percent in 2015 through the program “Mesra Didik” (friendly teaching) and “Jom ke Sekolah Menengah” (Let's Go to secondary school).

Education Development Master Plan (PIPP, 2005) accounted that 4.4 per cent of primary school students still have not mastered the skills of reading, writing and calculating numbers (3M) including Orang Asli students. Starting 2006, the MOE has introduced the Early Intervention Class Reading and Writing (KIA2M) to

ensure that students in Year One can master reading and writing after six months of schooling. The challenge is to reduce the number and the problem of students who do not master the 3M and ensure all children aged 5 years, especially those living in rural and remote areas, children with special needs, children, indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities in Sabah and Sarawak attend preschool in preparation for formal education in national schools under the 10th Malaysia Plan (10MP).

**Problem Statements:** Nowadays, the achievement of Orang Asli students in education is still too low compared with other Malaysians [3]. The findings by JAKOA found that the lack of involvement of Orang Asli students in both secondary and tertiary stems from factors that arise when schooling during primary level [4]. Doris *et al.* [5] explains that this minority group still lags and has a high dropout rate in all levels of education ranging from pre-school to higher education institutions. The existence of these problems are caused by the school environment, society, poverty, poor families and teachers that is lacking in encouraging students to excel in education which contributes to dropouts in primary and secondary schools [6, 7].

The education system and curriculum-based assessments makes the effort to bridge the education gap Orang Asli students become more difficult. Implementation of the types of national curriculum for all students in the school received a lot of criticism [8,9] due to the mismatch of interests and needs of students of different races. At this time Orang Asli students still follow the national curriculum and teaching methodology using many Western countries and Islamic epistemology that is very foreign compared to the Orang Asli epistemology [1]. Lack of teachers from the Orang Asli descent has posed a problem in terms of the absence of role models and pedagogical indigenous cause cannot be carried out effectively in the classroom. Difficulty in interacting occurs because of weak command of Malay language caused the Orang Asli students to not understand the lessons delivered by teachers and it leads to boredom in the classroom [10].

Among the other factors that lead to dropout students is the Orang Asli education infrastructure and teacher training which is still limited [11]. Quality teaching is a very significant influence on student achievement [12, 13]. To attract Orang Asli students to pursue teaching and learning requires teachers who are creative in his lectures. However, the lack of innovation and knowledge of Indigenous pedagogy teachers about the culture of

indigenous people cause less interaction occurs and there is discomfort among teachers and students [14, 15, 8, 9, 16] Unfortunately, the teacher training program at the Institute of Teacher Education (IPG) and the university did not include indigenous pedagogical training content in their curriculum. So, almost all teachers are placed in schools of Orang Asli students are not formally trained on how to operate and teach the students more effectively [1].

Orang Asli students who are less competent in the cognitive (knowledge) aspect is caused by the low level of education of Orang Asli parents which leads them to not care about the education of their children. Students also find it difficult to understand what is being taught by the teacher, easily forgotten, less interested in going to school and are easily discouraged, especially when they fail and have lack of self-motivation [10, 17]. Orang Asli students have an interest in the outdoors and the environment (psychomotor) but has problems in 3M skills that leads to difficulty in mastering subjects that require troubleshooting, easily get bored and have no studying skills [10, 17, 18]. Meanwhile, in terms of affective (attitude), Orang Asli students who are less competent are due to their sensitive nature, low self-esteem, do not understand the importance and how to develop themselves through education, no foresight, no ambition and very shy [10].

Other factors also contributed to the occurrence of dropout and low academic achievement, namely the attitude of parents who do not care about the education of children. They do not understand the importance of education causes children to not feel the need to acquire a high education [19]. Indigenous peoples are mostly not educated because the geographical remoteness of their home has reinforced the idea that there is no benefit to send children to school [10]. It is not surprising that the setback of indigenous peoples is often associated with low academic background. The absence of basic infrastructure, such as roads and bridges makes it difficult for the Orang Asli community relations with the outside world [23].

**The Purpose of Study:** The aim of this study is to review the perspectives and experiences of individuals interested in the educational process especially in the Orang Asli school system and also explore how the study participants understand and interpret the process of education more in-depth and comprehensive in terms of goals, progress and results of education. Understanding of the education process is used to propose a new

framework for Orang Asli education. Specifically, the research is done to observe student education process that includes aspects of Orang Asli goals, pedagogical, institutional, leadership, spread, evidence and ownership based on the perspective of students, parents, teachers, school administrators and community leaders to improve student education.

**Conceptual Framework:** The conceptual framework of this study is built on the adaptation of the model of education for indigenous peoples model GPILSEO [21] and model Triarcic [22]. Next, the two models have been combined to be a conceptual framework that is specifically to explain how education can be enhanced Orang Asli students development. In this model of GPILSEO there are seven key aspects using the GPILSEO acronyms which is; *Goals, Pedagogy, Institution, Leadership, Spread, Evidence and Ownership*. Each aspect has its own strengths and complement each other. This conceptual framework can be seen in Figure 1.1.

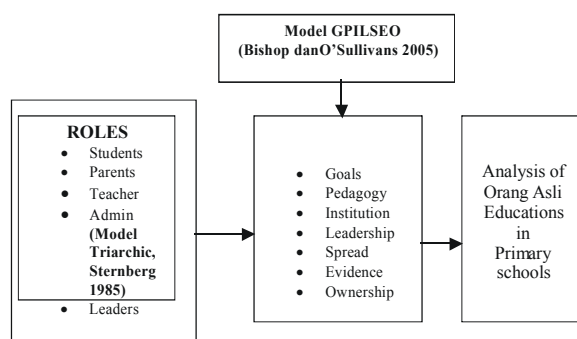


Fig. 1.1: Conceptual Framework. Adaptation of the Model and O'Sullivan's GPILSEO by Bishop [21]

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The method of this research was a qualitative research. The research was conducted using case study. The design of this study was selected based on the desire to understand in depth [23] and to get a clearer picture concerning the goals and dissemination based on the views of Orang Asli parents. Researchers are also trying to reach out or stay close to the surface of the data and viewpoint of all study participants. Thus, this study involved in-depth face to face interviews with sixteen participants whose included four Orang Asli students, two mothers and father of Orang Asli students, four teachers, two school administrators and two community leaders from a village of Orang Asli in Kuantan, Pahang. Respectively, they are from the ethnic

groups of Jah Hut and Semaq Beri. Since the process of understanding the perspective of the study participants is a complex process, the interview protocol [24] was used apart from observations and document analysis. The interview protocol contains semi-structured questions. Selection of participants using the purposive sampling which is based on the assumption that researchers want to explore, learn and understand, so that the most respondents can be seen from them and enhance the credibility of the findings.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

**Clear Objectives and Goals:** In the context of this study, the focus is on the importance of having clear goals for each individual involved in the education of Orang Asli students. These individuals are students, parents, teachers, school administrators and community leaders who have a vested interest in achieving these goals. The findings revealed that all individuals involved in the educational process of Orang Asli students have each set their goals and objectives. Goals and objectives of each individual are different. The goal difference is based on the individual aims of what they want to achieve in the end. Hence, the importance of having clear goals for all stakeholders in the education of Orang Asli students must be established. This statement is supported by Timperley *et al.* [25], which has identified the importance of building a clear goal and is shared by all parties involved in the educational process especially Orang Asli students at the school level.

**Pedagogy and Curriculum in the Classroom:** This discussion focuses on aspects of pedagogy in the classroom that can determine the effectiveness of the education of Orang Asli students. The study found that effective teaching and learning of the important aspects that should be emphasized are the diversity of teaching and learning methods and Orang Asli curriculum and pedagogy. Findings with study participants who teaches student teachers showed Orang Asli teachers know that in order to attract the students, teachers need to diversify the existing approaches. Among the approaches proposed by the teacher is teaching and learning can be fun and interesting. These findings showed that teaching in a relaxed manner like singing, acting, story, study and play, drawing and group activities can attract Orang Asli students. This approach can encourage students to participate in teaching and learning process. However, to realize the diversity of teaching methods is not easy,

especially when it is identified that the role of teachers is a major influence in the educational attainment [26, 14]. The curriculum is an aspect that is frequently discussed by scholars who conduct research on students' education. In the context of this study, the focus is on the curriculum appropriate for Orang Asli students and to encourage their interest and help improve students' achievement in Orang Asli education. The findings are also supported by Sharifah Alwiah [27] who expressed that interest is a driving force or the tendency for a person to pay attention to a person, thing or activity.

**Facilities and Infrastructure of Orang Asli School:**

Infrastructure is one of the critical factors that can hinder efforts to transform indigenous peoples [28]. Everybody knows that schools in remote areas, especially the Orang Asli schools is still lagging behind in many aspects. Among them is in terms of modernization (development), the ease of information communication technology (ICT) and so on. This is due to geographical factors, where the school is located in a secluded area deep in the interior which makes relations or communication to occur more complicated. These factors in turn makes it difficult for infrastructure facilities to be channeled. This study found that the authorities, especially the government has provided schools that are equipped with the necessary facilities so that all Orang Asli students in remote areas get the same or at least be able to learn in a comfortable environment with students in the city. Most Orang Asli school have facilities such as classrooms, a resource center, a computer, a canteen and there is a prayer room to help the Orang Asli students in their learning process. This facility has helped to facilitate teaching. The provision of student teaching is consistent with a study by Hedges [29] stating that the source of an organization such as financial resources, computer equipment and other facilities has close ties to determine the standards and achievements of the school in academic and co-curricular activities.

**School Leadership:** Leadership occurs when someone push, persuade and influence others to work towards the achievement of an organization's objectives. Successful organizations are distinguished by an organization that did not work depending on the style of a dynamic and effective leadership. The success of the organization depends on a credible leadership. But this study aims to determine the effectiveness of leadership in Orang Asli school administrators. The results of this study found that the school administrator study participants in school

study undertook the responsibility to monitor and supervise teachers perfectly even though they are bound by a variety of other tasks. For the monitoring of teachers, school administrators have set up a monitoring schedule monitoring were conducted on a specified date. This aspect of the monitoring and supervisory supports a study by Noran Fauziah [30] which states that supervision can improve the quality of teaching and teaching quality.

**The Support and Involvement of Every Party:** In the context of this study, the focus is on the involvement and support of family, including the community, in improving the educational attainment of Orang Asli students in school. The study regarding the success of students achievement in education was carried out by Coburn and Nelson [31] and Silverman and Demmert [32], especially in the prevention of drop-out students. Both studies showed that the solid support and encouragement from the community, family and teachers can motivate students in education. Solid support and encouragement from each of the parties involved can be done to keep aboriginal students in school, thus avoiding attrition and enable them to finish school. They can get support from various party from the NGOs like SUHAKAM and also from private sectors like from the banks. Meanwhile this schools also getting main support from the Education Ministry and JAKOA.

**Assessment in Education:** The findings of interviews with study participants (teachers) also showed through the assessment carried out, that Orang Asli students are less competent in terms of 3M skills. While there are students who can read but not all can understand the meaning of the verses. These findings are also supported by a study conducted by Shaari *et al.* [17] who conducted a study on English literacy among indigenous peoples. This is also shared by Amir Hassan [18] who found that the failure of students, especially rural students during the UPSR is due to the weaknesses of their 3M skills in the early stages of schooling. In addition, weak 3M skills will also lead to Orang Asli students having difficulty in mastering subjects that require troubleshooting. This reasoning power is weak because they do not seek to understand the subject taught [17]. To improve Orang Asli students' achievement, the researchers who conducted research on the Orang Asli as Barnhardt *et al.* [33] has proposed to change the existing curriculum by incorporating elements of indigenous knowledge in subjects such as science. However, a study conducted by Rosli *et al.* [34] does not

support the use of assessment for Orang Asli students. In his study on KAP curriculum that has been implemented in some schools, it showed that Orang Asli students who are not saddled with the idea of examinations are able to learn in a happy mood. Through this curriculum, students Orang Asli are not required to sit for examinations. Only once in a while, the teacher will hold a formative assessment to see the potential development of pupils in addition to try to understand the factors that enable Orang Asli students to be more advanced and competitive.

**Ownership and Sense of Belonging:** Ownership is the last aspect that is contained in GPILSEO model. This study found, the concept of ownership or a sense of love or affection to a school for Orang Asli students still have not reached a satisfactory level. Documented analysis through the attendance records of students in both schools showed that the average percentage of Orang Asli student attendance is 60 percent to 70 percent per month. These findings are also supported by a study conducted by Ramle and Faridah which states generally, it is rare for a primary school in the village of aboriginal students to have an attendance that surpassed 70 percent. This study found, the concept of feeling dear for school of aboriginal students still have not reached a satisfactory level. Interviews with some of the study participants said that the reason Orang Asli students go to school is to meet with friends and play. However, there are also Orang Asli students said they go to school to get knowledge and further their studies up to university level. Hence, to increase the interest of Orang Asli students for education and reduce the dropout rate, study participants consisting of school administrators said the school changed from the concept of 3M to 6M which is to include extra lessons outside the classroom (main), the Supplementary Food Program (food) and dance and cultural activities (music). This way, aboriginal students will increase their love for school, be familiar with lessons and nurture them to realize and understand the importance of education.

### CONCLUSION

A study on education of Orang Asli students was carried out because education plays an important role in improving the quality of Orang Asli student achievement in school. To produce an education system that is effective, aspects related to educational goals, progress and results of education should be given ample consideration so that

any weaknesses can be overcome. This study not only see the importance of the educational aspects of teaching and learning in the classroom alone, but all aspects related to Orang Asli students, including at the level of the classroom, school and system. Failure to progress in the younger generation's education will cause them to have difficulty in changes and competitiveness [11]. This will cause them to be separated from the mainstream society and will fail to enjoy the country's economic development and progress. One thing to note here is the problem of Orang Asli education student comes from a package. Teachers with pedagogical skills, curriculum, leadership qualities, school administrators, school climate, environment, schooling facilities and equipment, infrastructure, involvement of parents and communities, socio-culture is included in this package. Overall achievement of Orang Asli students in education can be enhanced if the relevant authorities will take into account the strengths and weaknesses of the educational aspects that were discussed and to identify factors that lead to Orang Asli students dropping out of school as noted in the study. In fact, a new framework of education for Orang Asli students was also proposed for Orang Asli education reform to be more effective. The findings also have implications for the basic education of its own, the body of science education and teacher professionalism. Therefore, some proposals have been submitted to stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education in Primary Schools Management Division (PSR), Institut Aminuddin Baki (IAB) and the Institute of Teacher Education (IPG). In addition, some suggestions for future research are presented as a continuation of the study in order to study on the effectiveness of the educational direction of the school and Orang Asli students continue to be explored, improved and strengthened in the future.

### REFERENCES

1. Ramlee, M., O. Mustaffa, M.Y. Ruhizan, M.S. Norani and S.H. Syed Najmuddin, 2009. Pembangunan kerjayabelia Orang Asli. Dlm Abdul Razaq Ahmad & Zalizan Mohd Jelas (pnyt.). Masyarakat Orang Asli: Perspektif pendidikan dan sosiobudaya, hlm. 133-146. Bangi: Fakulti Pendidikan, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
2. Ramle, A. and Dan S. Hood, 2007. Memahami Sosio Budaya Orang Asli. Kertas kerjadibentang dalam Seminar Pembangunan Dakwah Masyarakat Orang Asli. Anjuran Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM), pada 4-5 September 2007.

3. Toh Kit Siang *et al.*, 2008. Pendidikan Orang Asli. Projek Sarjana Muda: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi.
4. Nicholas, C., 2006. The State of Orang Asli Education and its problems. Consultancy report presented at Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM). 21 July 2006. Kuala Lumpur.
5. Doris Padmini Selvaratnam, Abdul Hamid Jaafar, Norlida Hanim Mohd Salleh, Redzuan Othman and Siti Hajar Idris, 2012. Transformasi modal insan melalui peningkatan pendidikan: Kajian kes komuniti Orang Asli di Cameron Highlands, Pahang. Prosiding Perkem VII, JILID, 2: 1215-1224 ISSN: 2231- 962X.
6. Hasan M.N., 1997. Kajian Keciciran Kalangan Pelajar Orang Asli Peingkat Sekolah Rendah. Jabatan Antropologi dan Sosial. Bangi. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
7. Joshi, K.M., 2010. Indigenous children of India: enrolment, gender parity and drop-out in school education. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 30(9/10): 545-558. doi:10.1108/01443331011072299.
8. Kamaruddin, K. and O. Jusoh, 2008. Educational policy and opportunities of Orang Asli: A study of indigenous people in Malaysia. *The Journal of Human Resource and Adult Learning*, 4(1): 86-97.
9. Wong, B.W.K. and C. Perumal, 2012. The issues of teaching and learning in primary school of Orang Asli: A case study of PosSendurut, Kuala Lipis, Pahang. Proceedings of the BIMP-EAGA Conference.
10. Abdul Razaq, A. and Dan M.J. Zalizan, 2009. Masyarakat orang asli: Perspektif pendidikan dan sosiobudaya. Selangor: Penerbit UKM.
11. Hasan M.N., 1998. Warga Pribumi Menghadapi Cabaran Pembangunan. Bangi, Selangor. UniversitiKebangsaan Malaysia.
12. Bosker, R. and B. Witziers, 1995. School effects, problems, solutions and meta-analysis. Paper presented at the international congress for School Effectiveness and School Improvement, Leeuwarden, The Netherlands.
13. Cuttance, P., 1998. Quality assurance reviews as a catalyst for school improvement in Australia. In A. Hargreaves, A. Lieberman, M. Fullan, & D. Hopkins (Eds.), *International handbook of educational change (Part Two)* (pp: 1135-1162). Dordrecht: Kluwer.
14. Bishop, R.A., M. Berryman and C. Richardson, 2003. TeKotahitanga: The experiences of year 9 and 10 Māori students in mainstream classes. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.
15. Bishop, R.A. and S. Tiakiwai, 2003. Improving educational achievement of Māori students in mainstream classrooms. Paper presented at the HuiTaumataMātauranga, Turangi/Taupo.
16. Macfarlane, A.H., T. Glynn, T. Cavanagh and S. Bateman, 2007. Creating culturally-safe schools for Māori students. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 36: 65-76.
17. Shaari, Abdul Sukor, Yusoff, Nuraini, Ghazali, Mohd Izam and Dali, Mohd Hasani, 2011. Kanak-kanakminoriti Orang Asli di Malaysia: Menggapailiterasi Bahasa Melayu. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Melayu*. Kedah: Universiti Utara Malaysia.
18. Amir, H.D., 2006. Penteorian Sosiologi dan Pendidikan. Edisi Ketiga. Tanjung Malim: Quantum Books.
19. Juli, E., 1991. Orang Asli Educational Development in the context of Vision 2020. Kuala Lumpur: POASM Committee.
20. Khairul Hisyam, K. Dan N. Ibrahim, 2007. Pembangunan Mapan Orang Asli. Kuala Lumpur: UniversitiTeknologi Malaysia.
21. Bishop, R. and D. O'Sullivan, 2005. 'Taking a reform project to scale: Considering the conditions that promote sustainability and spread of reform'. A monograph prepared with the support of NgaPae o teMaramatanga, The National Institute for Research Excellence in Maori Development and Advancement. Unpublished manuscript.
22. Sternberg, R.J., 2004. North American Approaches to Intelligence. In *International Handbook of Intelligence*; Sternberg, R.J., Ed.; Cambridge University Press: New York, NY, USA.
23. Patton, M.Q., 1990. Qualitative evaluation and research methods. New bury Park: SAGE Publication.
24. Rubin, H.J. and I.S. Rubin, 2012. Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
25. Timperley, H., A. Wilson, H. Barrar and Fung, 2007. Teacher professional learning and development. Best evidence synthesis iteration. Wellington: Ministry of Education. [www.minedu.gov.nz/goto/bestevidencesynthesis](http://www.minedu.gov.nz/goto/bestevidencesynthesis).
26. Bishop, R.A. and T. Glynn, 1999. Culture counts: Changing power relations in education. Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.
27. Sharifah Alwiah Al Sagoff, 1985. Ilmu Pendidikan Pedagogi. Kuala Lumpur: Heinmann Asia

28. Ramlee, M., 2013. Attributes that affect self-efficacy and career development of Orang Asli youth in peninsular Malaysia. *Journal of Southeast Asian Education*, 6(1): 1-24.
29. Hedges, J., 2002. The importance of posting and interaction with the education bureaucracy in becoming a teacher in Ghana. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 22(3/4): 353-366.
30. Noran Fauziah, Y., 1992. *Guru dan Perguruan*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
31. Coburn, J. and S. Nelson, 1987. Characteristics of successful Indian students: Research and development program for Indian education. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.
32. Silverman, R.J. and W.G. Demmert, 1986. Characteristics of successful native leaders.(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED269208
33. Barnhardt, R., A.O. Kawagley and F. Hill, 2000. Cultural standards and test scores. *Sharing Our Pathways*, 5 (4): 1-4.
34. Ramle, A. and M. Faridah, 2012. Educational potency of the Orang Asli students in the State of Kelantan.Perspectives of the Department of Orang Asli Development (JAKOA). In Abdullah (Ed.). *Education and Orang Asli in the mainstream*, hlm. 53-64. Kuala Terengganu: University of Sultan Zainal Abidin.