

## **“What Is Happening to Our Children’s Education?”**

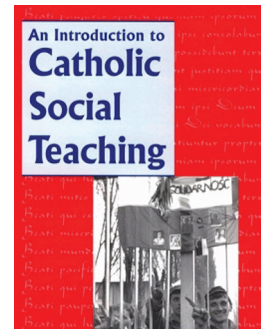
### **IMPLEMENT A BETTER EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR ALL MALAYSIANS**

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. – Romans 12:2*

#### **LENTEN CAMPAIGN 2012**

This Lent, in response to the theme **“Listen to that Voice”** we need to remind ourselves that right is right, even when nobody is doing it, and wrong is wrong, even if everybody is doing it. One person on the side of God’s moral order is a majority. Therefore, participation in the transformation of our nation’s education system constitutes a dimension of the preaching of the Gospel. (cf. Pope John Paul II in America - Talks given on the Papal Tour 1987)

In a global culture driven by excessive individualism and the desire for possession and power, our faith traditions proclaim that the person is not only a social being but also sacred ‘made in the image and likeness of God’. Therefore, how we organize our societies - in economics and politics, in law and policy - directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. The Catholic Church teaches that the role of the government and other institutions is to protect human life and human dignity and promote the common good. (cf. Catholic Social Teachings)



Only men, women and children motivated by faith can invigorate human institutions, encourage what is good in them, and use their God-given talents and ingenuity to help make our society what it is capable of being for all.

*You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. – Deuteronomy 11:19*

Education is a means of moulding minds, educating consciences, transmitting our knowledge, culture and values to the next generation. It is a powerful tool to empower individuals and nations. Proper education policies must be in place to ensure that our children are provided with the right information and nurtured in the right atmosphere of values, so as to prepare them to be responsible, caring and honest citizens.

We are in danger, when political interests, capitalism and racism get mixed up into the education policies. We have seen this happen repeatedly in Malaysia. This begs the question as to whether we are aware of WHAT is being taught in our schools or HOW it is packaged.

Active participation is the only way to bring about public awareness on our stand as concerned parents, citizens and Christians. It is not enough to speak of our children’s future, when we are not willing to speak up or act.

## DO YOU KNOW?

### 1. Inconsistent Policy & Practice

- a. Recently, the Vice Chancellor of University Malaya spoke-up on the poor quality of education in our universities. He attributes this weakness to politics, quota systems & appointments to the faculties within the universities (*Source: Malay Mail – 30 Jan. '12*).
- b. We recognise that there are racial and religious polarisations in our schools. But how do we build national unity when history is re-written and there are disputable facts in the textbooks? (*See the discussion in our local newspapers and websites*).
- c. Although Bible Knowledge has been approved by the Education Ministry as a subject for SPM, some schools, including mission schools do not encourage the teaching of the subject. In some instances, counselling teachers discourage the students from taking the subject. (*Source: Bible Knowledge Congress at OLF Church, 07 Feb '12*).
- d. The recent debacle over the teaching and learning of mathematics and science in English is a classic example of inconsistent policies. Shouldn't our students/parents be given the option to choose the language of learning as stated in the Education Act 1996 – “to the general principle that pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents”?
- e. How than do we prepare our children for a globalised world?



### 2. Loss of Mission Schools

- a. In the past two centuries, mission and private vernacular schools have contributed to the education of the young and teachers training in Malaysia.
- b. Mission schools were built by Christians but today Church authorities have to seek approval to use the facilities of these schools to conduct catechism, Bible Knowledge or other religious classes.
- c. As the government continues to give out licenses for private businesses to set up schools and colleges, how is it that religious groups are not given similar licenses or even allowed to have a say in the running of their own schools?
- d. Have we surrendered our rights too easily?



### 3. Assertion of Rights

- a. The Royal Commission on the Teaching Services, West Malaysia 1971, provides expressly that there must be consultation before the assignment or deployment of teachers, especially the school head in mission schools.
- b. This policy of maximum consultation was repeated by the then Education Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohammad and reaffirmed again in 1998 when he was Prime Minister. Such was not the case in the recent appointment of the headmistress of Convent Bukit Nanas, Kuala Lumpur. (Soon it will be impossible to find qualified Catholic teachers to head our mission schools as they have not moved up in the civil service).
- c. After the Kuala Lumpur Archbishop expressed disappointment and appealed to the Director-General of Education, those in authority relented and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak reiterated the promise of maximum consultation on the issue on 4 January 2012 at a meeting with our national Christian leaders.
- d. Do we have to continually assert our rights?

### 4. The Poor are Marginalised from Education

- a. Article 26 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights speaks of free and compulsory education. Similar sentiments are expressed in the Malaysian Education Act 1996 that makes primary education compulsory. Yet, children without birth certificates and children of undocumented migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers have no legal status and cannot attend school.
- b. The Malaysian Human Rights Commission (Suhakam) in May 2007 report shows the majority of those surveyed among indigenous peoples, urban poor, plantation workers and migrant workers have no access to education.
- c. The Rural & Regional Development Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal said in May 2011 that 2,254 Orang Asli children dropped out of secondary schools while only 1,270 attended school until Standard 6. The UNICEF Report 2007 said that 34% of Orang Asli children fail to make it to secondary school and 46% of them fail to reach Form 5. This is disproportionately higher than the national average.
- d. Where will the children of the poor go for their education?



## OUR RESPONSIBILITY

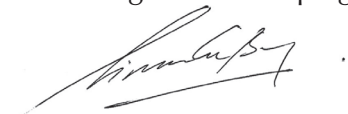
Think of the future, think of your children's future. Let us reflect and discern what we can each do to uphold quality and holistic education from primary to tertiary levels. Make some sacrifices. Speak up. We owe this to our children and their children. We owe it to Malaysia!

*"You must be the change you wish to see in the world"* – Gandhi

This Lent, let us embark on a signature campaign to ask the Prime Minister to address our concerns.

God Bless.

For the Archdiocese  
Lenten Signature Campaign 2012



Rev. Fr. Simon Labrooy  
*Ecclesiastical Assistant*  
Catholic Teachers' Association, Malaysia  
15 February 2012

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The Archdiocese Lenten Signature Campaign *"What Is Happening to Our Children's Education?"* begins on 22 February 2012 (Ash Wednesday). All documents related to the campaign will be handed over to the Prime Minister's Department by the representative of the Archdiocese Office for Human Development on or before 9 July 2012.

### Endorsed by:

- Catholic Lay Associations of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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SIGN THE ONLINE LENTEN SIGNATURE CAMPAIGN 2012 & SPREAD THE WORD:

- <http://www.change.org/petitions/implement-a-better-education-system-for-all-malaysians>

PETITION LINKS:

- Facebook: [www.facebook.com/LENT.my](http://www.facebook.com/LENT.my)
- Blog: [lentmy.wordpress.com](http://lentmy.wordpress.com)
- Twitter: [twitter.com/LENT\\_my](http://twitter.com/LENT_my)

## PETITION TO THE PRIME MINISTER

PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI MOHD NAJIB ABD RAZAK  
PEJABAT PERDANA MENTERI  
PUSAT PENTADBIRAN KERAJAAN PERSEKUTUAN  
BANGUNAN PERDANA PUTRI  
62502 PUTRAJAYA  
MALAYSIA

22 February 2012

Dear Datuk Seri,

### APPEAL FOR A BETTER EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR ALL MALAYSIANS

In line with your call and aspiration of “PEOPLE FIRST, PERFORMANCE NOW” and “A HIGH-INCOME NATION”, we seek your kind attention to improve the current education system to enable our society to achieve the aims together.

We appeal to our major concerns and seek your prompt action to our requests below:

1. **Respect the Identity and Management of Mission Schools** (and that of all denominations and religions) - that the authorities dialogue with the Churches, Temples and trustees of these schools to map out the future of these schools jointly.
2. **Work Towards National Unity** – That a National Commission represented by all concerned parties to discuss methods to build integration among children in all schools (vernacular, national, private); and to refrain all means to influence the minds of the young through one religion and/or culture without the consent of their parents.
3. **Respect the Rights of All Children to Education** – To provide access to education for the poor, the Orang Asli, and the children of migrant workers and refugees. They too are God’s children.
4. **Be Consistent in Policy and Practice** – To promote the transparent appointment of teachers & school heads that is based on merits; allow access for all children to study their respective religions at school; teach history objectively; and acknowledge the contributions of all people and races.
5. **Allow the Option of Teaching Science and Mathematics in English (PPSMI)** – To equip our children for the globalised future. In line with the 10th Malaysian Plan to create a first world talent base that the Prime Minister and all Malaysians envision.

*“If you plan for a year, plant a seed. If for ten years, plant a tree. If for a hundred years, teach the people. When you sow a seed once, you will reap a single harvest. When you teach the people, you will reap a hundred harvests” – Kuan Chung, 645BC*

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

(Your Name/Signature)

