

Incubation-Transforming Agenda under COVID-19 Pandemic Canopy: A Framework for Private School Teacher Professional Development (TPD)

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Abstract-

The persistence of life-threatening coronavirus pandemic worldwide paints an ominous outlook characterized by a haze of depression-extended uncertainties and pessimistic speculations. But it is not completely hopeless because the COVID-19 canopy provides an insidious respite for self-reflection beyond previous non-COVID 19 normal. Under new normal COVID-19 experiences is a window of life-relearning opportunity to review and plan-execute gestation ideas or development projects in anticipatory good times to come. And life-relearning under any circumstance is directly or indirectly live-education in transition. Defined as the delivery and application of knowledge, education as always requires the teaching community as a catalytic transformer for school-processing knowledge, and a major conduit of transmitting student-acquired knowledge often in the national language of the country, supported by the lingua franca – the English language – of international business and global communication. In this regard therefore the proposed 10-principle pathway TPD (Teacher Professional Development) Framework is share-reflected to engage discourse exchange-feedback on its viability and efficacy to transform private independent secondary school novice teachers into professional teachers in Malaysia, whose professionalism is benchmarked by 3-criteria vocation-relevant set of knowledge update, upskill competency and ethics accountability to further value-add and value-create in the public interest of private schooling contribution to building a formidable Malaysian nation.

Key Words: coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), canopy, incubation-transforming agenda, life-relearning, review, plan-execute gestation, education, teaching community, catalytic transformer, transmission conduit, Teacher Professional Development (TPD), knowledge update, upskill competency, ethics accountability

I. Introduction

There is a pressing need for quality teachers who can deliver quality learning in schools, both in the public and private sectors. But such teachers, without formal teaching training, cannot deliver what the schools need, want and expect to educate their students, to administer their functional roles to fulfil mandatory requirements and obligatory commitments to parents, communities and the nation. Additionally, trained teachers on-the-job and during their career-progression in the school systems, in whatever capacity and job titles, must update and upskill

their pedagogical knowledge to realign themselves with the changing demands of school-education delivery in concert with governmental policy revisions and adjustments in schooling curricula and syllabi requirements. In this way, quality trained teachers retain the credibility and currency of their profession.

After all, education is about the delivery and application of knowledge. In this process, the teaching community acts as the catalytic transformer for schools to transmit knowledge and for students to acquire the knowledge, often in the national language of the country, supported by the *lingua franca* – the English language – of international business and global communication. In this community, the teachers are not only the purveyors of knowledge and harbingers of new knowledge; they are also the blending agent of molding or shaping the ‘ABC’ (attitudinal behavioral characteristics) of moral and ethical conduct in schools and beyond, directly and indirectly respectively. Differences between teachers in public and private schools apart, the fact remains that teachers are indispensable because they are the imperative education conduit, like arteries to the heart, in the delivery and application of knowledge in any society, regardless of race, religion, creed, and ethnicity. But, like any intermediary agents, teachers need upskill, retooling or retraining, and motivational catalysts from time to time to rekindle embers of diminishing sparks of enthusiasm and commitment. Thus, in the reality of personal and professional interests, teacher professional development as a continuous process of teaching-profession renewal must be encouraged and reinvented as necessary.

II. Background of the Study

The reality in Malaysian schools and teaching support, however, is quite far from the present practice. Undoubtedly, quality trained teachers are already doing their jobs commendably in both public and private schools systems. And as student population increases disproportionately with the trained teacher population over the years, the number of novice teachers (also known as temporary, untrained teachers) invariably also increases disproportionately. The consolation in this situation, however, is that government teacher-training colleges under the authority of Ministry of Education (MOE) have been absorbing a fairly large number of novice teachers who are trained eventually to fill vacancies in the public schooling sector. But the plight of novice teachers, both recruitment and training, in the private schooling sector remains a sore thumb. This is particularly so in the case of the outstanding issue of novice teachers as part of the history-inherited Chinese-based education baggage in private independent secondary schools throughout the country. Specifically, the perennial issue of teacher shortage (and now headmaster/principal shortage too due to retirement) and the constraining numbers of temporary-untrained applicants are telling-tales of the crisis-management for Dong Zong to recruit and train (on its own or/and in collaboration with the MOE) novice teachers to redress quality-trained teachers in the vernacular secondary schools.

III. Statement of the Problem

In the private independent (vernacular-Chinese) secondary (high) schools throughout the country, subject to the overall National Education Policy requirements and governance-compliance with the Ministry of Education Malaysia, the few history-inherited grey-area issues include private-authority Board of Governors, the original core-curriculum pockets of Chinese pedagogy-based knowledge and language including the regurgitated debates on full acceptance-acknowledgement of the 1975 Unified Examination Certificate (UEC) - a standardized test (pre-

college and college-university entry) for Chinese independent high school students organized by the United Chinese School Committees Association of Malaysia (UCSCAM). In essence, these private vernacular independent secondary schools are self-funded and supported by a Board of Directors each from the Chinese community, under the umbrella of Dong Zong, known as the UCSCAM in English, with a network of 63 independent schools nationwide, accounting for 81,500 students and 4,500 teachers. Hence, the perennial issue of teacher shortage (and now headmaster/principal shortage too due to retirement) and the constraining numbers of temporary-untrained applicants as novice teachers are telling-tales of the crisis-management for Dong Zong.

Under new normal COVID-19 experiences is a window of life-relearning opportunity to review and plan-execute gestation ideas or development projects in anticipatory good times to come. And life-relearning under any circumstance is directly or indirectly live-education in transition. Defined as the delivery and application of knowledge, education as always requires the teaching community as a catalytic transformer for school-processing knowledge, and a major conduit of transmitting student-acquired knowledge often in the national language of the country, supported by the *lingua franca* – the English language – of international business and global communication. In this regard therefore the proposed 10-principle pathway TPD (Teacher Professional Development) Framework is share-reflected to engage discourse exchange-feedback on its viability and efficacy to transform private independent secondary school novice teachers into professional teachers in Malaysia, whose professionalism is benchmarked by 3-criteria vocation-relevant set of knowledge update, upskill competency and ethics accountability to further value-add and value-create in the public interest of private schooling contribution to building a formidable Malaysian nation.

IV. Rationale of the Study

This study provides an opportunity for stakeholders to promote a viable TPD framework that will create a community of novice-cum-professional teachers to serve the often-inadequate teaching staff of a popular-sustaining phenomenon of independent Chinese schools in the historical development of independent and post-independent Malaysia. The outcome is promoting, nurturing and maturing the rich cultural plurality of “*One for All and All for One*” Malaysia through transforming a new young novice generation of teachers to teach and manage the challenging Malaysian schooling systems.

V. Assumption

The basic assumption in this study is the work-experience premised conviction that the proposed TPD Framework for novice teacher professionalization will further value-add and value-create to promoting, nurturing and maturing a young generation of novice teachers, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity and creed to refuel and sustain public interest in enhancing and enriching the teaching profession in Malaysian schooling systems, particularly in reforming teaching delivery in private independent secondary schools to redress teacher shortages more efficiently and effectively in the national interest.

VI. Research Questions

The research questions are as follows:

- a) What qualities of a teacher emerge from analysis and synthesis of local and international documents on teacher professional development?
- b) What are the similarities and differences in teacher professional development in public and private secondary schools in Malaysia in relation to professional knowledge, competency and accountability?
- c) What are the differences in principles and processes between Malaysia and international models or frameworks that determine local and international teacher professional development?
- d) What is an appropriate framework for teacher professional development of secondary school teachers in Malaysia to enable them to develop from novice teachers to competent teachers?

VII. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- a) To determine what qualities of a teacher emerge from analysis and synthesis of local and international documents on teacher professional development.
- b) To ascertain similarities and differences in teacher professional development in public and private secondary schools in Malaysia in relation to professional knowledge, competency and accountability.
- c) To analyze the differences in principles and processes between Malaysia and international models or frameworks that determine local and international teacher professional development.
- d) To propose a framework for teacher professional development of secondary school teachers in Malaysia to enable them to develop from novice teachers to competent teachers.

VIII. Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study is confined to the proposed 10-principle pathway TCPD Framework to further encourage discourse and exchange-feedback on its viability and efficacy to transform private independent (vernacular) secondary school novice teachers into professional teachers in Malaysia. The measurement criteria-set of professionalism is limited to only three (3) vocation-relevant values, that is, knowledge update, upskill competency and ethics accountability. Although the secondary data were filtered from published documentations of local and international writings on teacher professional development, the research study emphasizes the experimental application of the proposed TCPD is limited to opinions elicited from the focus on novice teachers in the selected sample vernacular secondary schools in in two states, that is, the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and the state of Negeri Sembilan. However, only an abridged version known as the Dong Zong TCP Framework is presented here.

IX. Methodology

The theory of professionalization in the context of novice teacher recruitment and training in relation to the philosophy, practice, models, ethics and morality of teacher education highlighted only 3-key value components of professional knowledge, competency and accountability in the research framework named as the TPD. The conduct of the research survey on administrators and teachers covers only the following schools: (a) Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur- Chung Hwa High School (private), Chung Hua High Seremban (private), and Chung Hwa High School Port Dickson (private): and (b) Negeri Sembilan- (i) public schools: SMK. Bukit Mewah Seremban, SMK Tinggi Port Dickson, and SMK Raja Jumaat Lukut. A qualitative method adopted involved a semi-structured Interview Guide that seek responses on the research-focus topic by MoE Officers, Dong Zong Officers and Educationist from Different Divisions and Departments.

(NB. A more comprehensive version of all related documentations here will be reproduced as an integral part of 2 more academic papers in year end 2020 and beginning year 2021).

X. Terminology

- **Teacher Professional Development (TPD)**

“Teacher Professional Development consists of all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school and which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which teachers by themselves or collaboratively with others review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically develop their knowledge, skills and values essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives (Day, 1999)”.

- **Teaching Professionalism**

Professionalism is the process in which “professionals use their knowledge to frame professional problems and this problem framing shapes the action taken” (Schon, 1982). And teacher professionalism is the product of teacher professional development. It is the combination of all the qualities that are connected with the continuous professional development of trained teachers in relation to their professional knowledge, professional competence and professional accountability. This relates to the process by which the beginning (temporary) teachers grow from being novices to becoming competent teachers.

- **Professional Knowledge**

This is the knowledge possessed by professionals that enables them to perform professional tasks, roles and duties with quality (Eraut, 1996).

- **Professional Competence**

This refers to the ability to perform whatever assigned or contractual tasks and roles by the professional in compliance with the expected standard operating procedures (SOP) and organizational standards of quality and excellence (Eraut, 1998, cited in Day, 1999).

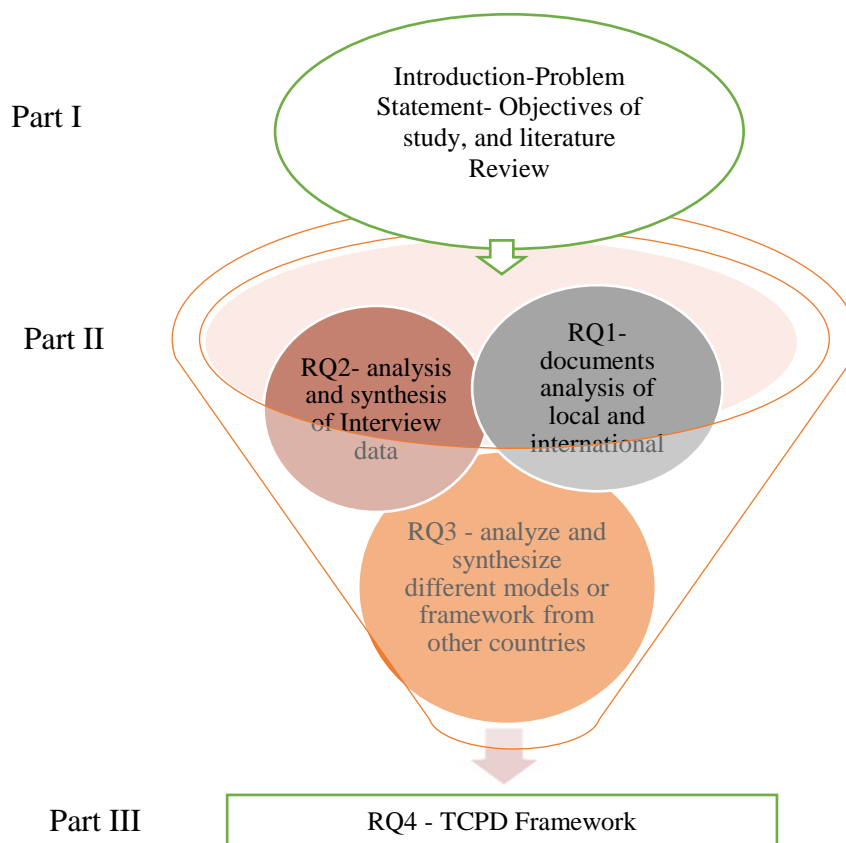
- **Professional Accountability**

Accountability, in general, refers to a situation when an individual or department is held responsible for the performance of a specific function. In the context of professional accountability, it refers to the professionals who promote a holistic view of teachers including their moral responsibility, values and code of ethics, and also those who see professionalism growth as being rooted within a framework of moral and ethics (Day, 1999).

XI. Structure of the Thesis

The organized presentation of the thesis is capsulated in the following diagram:

Figure 1: Development of the Proposed TCPD Framework

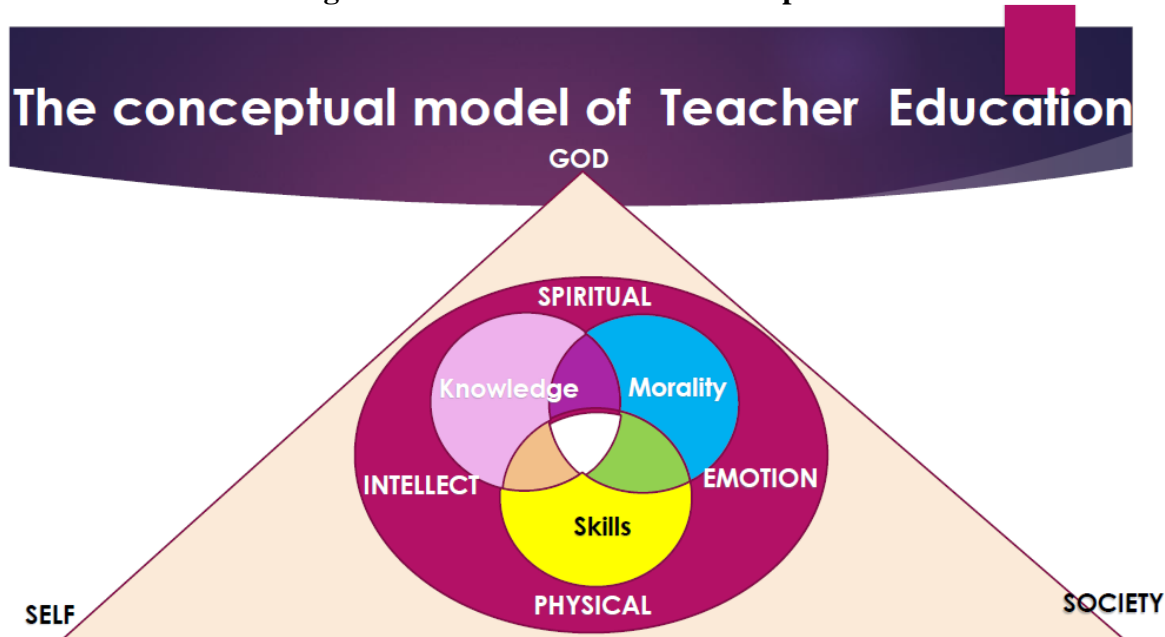


XII. Findings, Analysis and Interpretation

Only a portion of the original data source and survey-interview findings are summarized, analyzed and interpreted for this synthesis paper presentation only as follows:

According to Figure 2 below, the Teacher Education Conceptual Model was built upon the National Education Philosophy (NEP, 1996) and Philosophy of Teacher Education (PTE, 1982) which emphasize the importance of three basic aspects of knowledge, skills and values integrated across all subject disciplines and programs planned founded on: (1) **God**: Encourages the enhancement of knowledge, appreciation and individual practice as a believer who believes in and adheres to religious teachings; (2) **Society**: Emphasize the role of teachers as educators, leaders and as agents of change; and (3) **Self**: To lead to the building of endurance, patriotism, the cultivation of the culture of knowledge, the creation of character and noble character.

Figure 2: Teacher Education Conceptual Model



Adopted from Kan., F.K (2015), Philosophy of Teacher Education in Malaysia by Jabatan Ilmu Pendidikan, Malaysia.

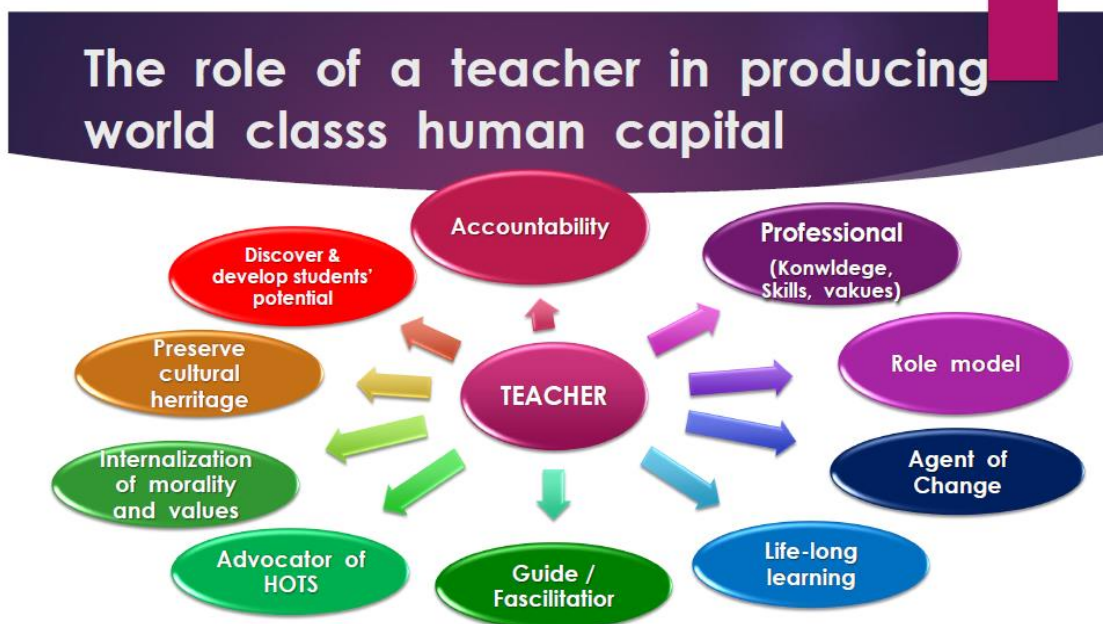
In line with the National Education Philosophy and Teacher Education Philosophy, this model illustrates an effort to build the strength and self-reliance of teachers based on obedience to God and the well-being of the community. This intention is achieved through the implementation of teacher education curriculum that integrates aspects of knowledge, professional skills and practices of teaching values. The curriculum was formulated with the intention of translating the three aspects of knowledge, skills and values integrated as follows:

- Knowledge: Includes general knowledge and knowledge in KBSM subjects as well as professional knowledge.
- Skills and Competences: Includes professional skills that lead to communication skills, learning skills, thinking skills, computer literacy and pedagogy. It is to build and strengthen the "how-to" by focusing on integrating information technology in curriculum implementation.
- Values: Refers to the application, appreciation and practice of pure values of teaching that characterizes and treats as loving, glorious, resilient, patriotic teachers,

innovative, creative, competent and adhere to the teaching profession.

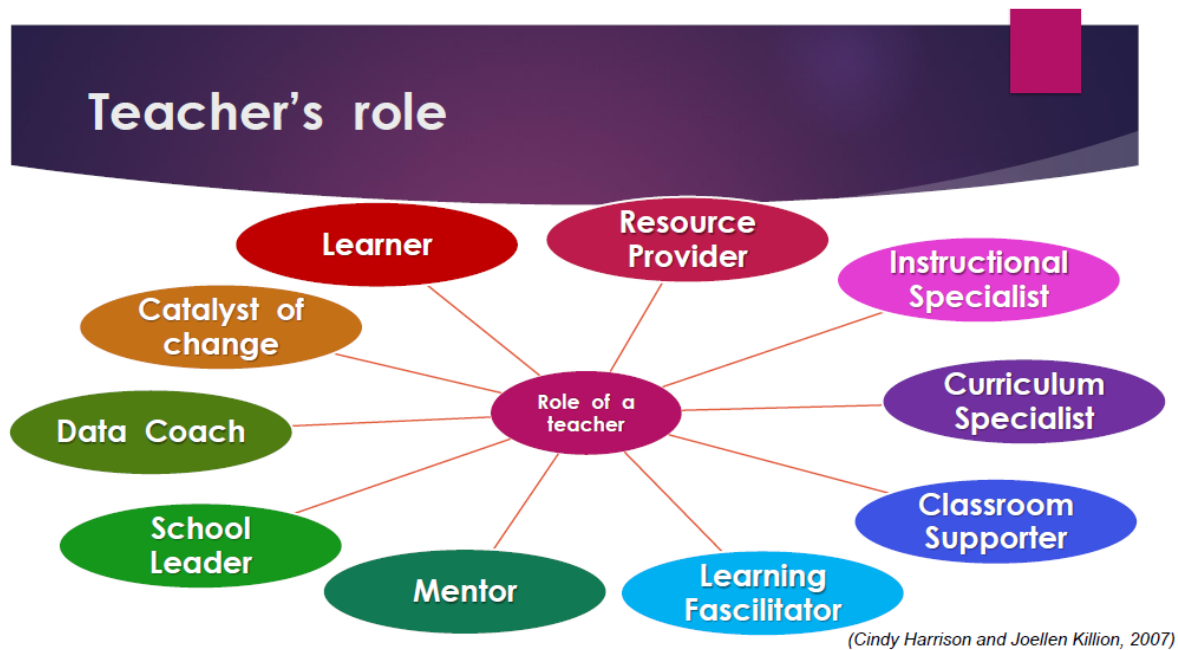
In the quest to professionalize the teaching vocation, it is imperative to review the roles of the teacher in producing 'world class human capital' (Figure 3) and 'role-diversity responsibilities of teachers' (Figure 4) below, because the role diversity-responsibilities of teachers are accountable for their efficient and effective delivery in classrooms and in the schools.

Figure 3: Roles of Teacher in Producing Human Capital



Adopted from Kan., F.K (2015), Philosophy of Teacher Education in Malaysia by Jabatan Ilmu Pendidikan, Malaysia

Figure 4: Role-Diversity Responsibilities of Teachers



Adopted from Kan., F.K (2015), Philosophy of Teacher Education in Malaysia by Department of Educational Sciences (Jabatan Ilmu Pendidikan), Malaysia.

Conceived and placed in the context of the research-focus to advocate, promote and advance the proposed TPD (not the original TCPD full diagram will only be reproduced in the coming December 2020 and 2021 year publications), the major result-analysis of this research findings is capsulated in the summary of Teacher Professional Development (TPD) Dong Zong) as follows:

To ensure the success of schooling children in the future, it all depends on the quality of education which must keep pace and faith with changing times. But, invariably, it depends the delivery of teaching (and also teacher administration) that depend on the development and continuing professional growth of teachers. In this contextual understanding, novice teachers should be positioned as “a professional” and the performance of professional practices should include (a) correct understanding of the educational object “student,” (b) paying attention to the development of student physical and mental health, and (c) attaching importance to the cultivation and ability of student personality. This development, as shown in Figure 5 below, requires a positive outlook,

Figure 5: Professionalization of Teachers in Dong Zong Blueprint (2018-2027)



individual pursuit of new knowledge, education research and innovation, imbibed with an enthusiasm for balancing teaching commitments and development of personal-physical health stamina, into concrete programs. And under the prevailing influence of life-threatening COVID-19 pandemic and the government MCO (movement control order) compliant-enforcement, a new normal for advancing TPD or TCPD is timely to kick-start.

The professionalization of teachers emphasizes a process of progressive development and innovative updated growth in which the professionalization of novice teachers is nurtured to maturity. This suggests that a team of highly qualified teachers should also be a team of professionally reinforced quality teachers. Only through continuous professional learning and reflection, teachers will continue to grow their knowledge, expand their horizons, and enhance their professionalism, thus promoting the sustainable development of schools and the independent learning of students. In combination with international development trends and domestic social values, future teachers should be given the status and image of “professionals” and strive to cultivate national social values. This should culminate in resolving an outstanding host of teacher-shortage problem and related challenges of tainted ethnic-biases in general schooling education and race-

driven teacher distribution to schools in the public and private sectors, at the expense of public and national interests and the schooling students-cum-adult citizens of their plural society birth-land.

XIII. Conclusion

In the pursuit of education or/and training over time and at any time, any individual undergoes a tri-process experience of *learning, unlearning and relearning* – the outcome of which makes him or her a more educated person with new knowledge acquired, improved competency or skill(s) learned, and more accountable or ethically responsible for shared-valued systems. The proposed framework of the Teacher Continuing Professional Development (TCPD) model for novice teacher professional development and improved teacher professionalism enables a novice teacher like the trained or professional teacher to also undergo the tri-process experience of learning, unlearning and relearning as he or she internalizes professional knowledge, competence and accountability transmitted during the teacher-training duration and teaching-delivery employment. Hopefully, the proposed TCPD framework as a *catalytic transformer and transmission conduit*, when collaboratively discussed among all stakeholders – the Ministry of Education (MoE), school principals and senior teachers, representative of Board of Management of private schools or Parent-Teacher Association – can become a workable solution to redressing the lack of trained teachers in schools, the reliance on novice or temporary teachers with uncertain employment guarantee, and upskilling and branding teacher professionalism.

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