

# An Overview of Methodist Schools in Malaysia

THE EARLY MISSIONARIES were actually the pioneers in establishing schools in Malaysia. They were the church pastors and the school principals and teachers. Land was bought for church and school, or donated by some generous, well-meaning person.

Methodist mission schools had their beginnings in the 1880s when Rev. William F. Oldham started the Anglo-Chinese School in Singapore on 1st March 1886. Five years later, the Anglo-Chinese School was started in Penang. Our annals are replete with the names of founder-principals like Rev. G.F. Pykett, Rev. James Hoover, Rev. Preston Peach and Rev. Dr. Ho Seng Ong. These schools were established in the former Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States in Peninsular Malaysia. Some of them were established by the British colonial government and then handed to the Methodist Mission to manage - Treacher Methodist Girls' School, Taiping (founded in 1889, handed to the Methodist Mission in 1899); Methodist Girls' School, Kuala Lumpur (founded in 1896 and handed to the Methodist Mission in 1900); Horley Methodist School, Teluk Intan (founded in 1899 and handed to the Methodist Mission in 1903) and the Anglo-Chinese School, Klang (founded in 1893 and handed to the Methodist Mission in 1915).

In 1963, there were 70,000 pupils in 95 institutions (English-medium) in Malaya and Singapore, and some 4,000 in 25 schools in Sarawak, besides 1,779 in 11 Chinese-medium schools and 657 in 6 Tamil-medium schools, making a total of 72,697 pupils distributed from Singapore to Sibu and from kindergarten to pre-university grades. (Ho Seng Ong, *Methodist Schools in Malaysia*, 1964)

Since the early days, changes in government policies and education policies have affected Christian Mission Schools.

In his paper '*Christian Schools in Malaysia*' released in 1986, David Boler outlined three distinct phases through which the mission schools have passed. The first phase, which Boler called the 'Pre-Merdeka Era', was when the Christian missionaries who established the schools also administered them. Next, came the 'Unified Teaching Service' which was implemented following the Razak Report (KPM, 1956). Here, each school was responsible for selecting its own teachers through its Board of Governors. The third phase came with the recommendations made by the Aziz Commission (1971) where teachers would now become government servants and their appointment and deployment determined by the Teachers' Service Commission.

Boler's analysis helps us understand better how the Christian ethos and traditions in mission schools have gradually eroded over the years. The loss of this original sense of identity of the mission schools has been so keenly felt that many of the mission authorities have begun rethinking the future of mission schools (Malaysian Lasallian Education Council, 2007).

Our Methodist Mission schools from their inception to 1971 (Aziz Commission proposals) have always had a very strong Methodist ethos with strong Boards of Governors/Managers with the right to hire and fire teachers. Since 1971 with most of mission school teachers opting for Government servant status with attendant benefits, the strongest link between the Methodist Church Authority and the school is the Board of Governors / Managers. Some Methodist chaplains too have been appointed. Our Methodist ethos centre round the school mottoes, school songs, school houses, plaques of dedication and blessing and the dedicated Methodist principals and teachers who selflessly showed the face and heart of the Divine Master in their compassion and love for the students.

Throughout Malaysia today (2011) there are 49 Methodist primary schools and 26 secondary schools, as well as 6 Methodist private schools and 2 Methodist private colleges of higher

education. All our educational institutions promote holistic education with emphasis on character development.

State	Primary Schools	Secondary Schools	Private Schools	Colleges
Melaka	3	2	1	
Negri Sembilan	1	1	1	
Pahang	2	2		
Perak	18	10	2 (1 Primary)	
Pulau Pinang	3	3		
Sarawak	11	2		1
Selangor	7	3	1	
W.P. Kuala Lumpur	4	3	1	1
TOTAL	49	26	6	2

Changes over the years have obviously affected our schools, both the private and government-aided schools. But we believe good practices and traditions carried out during the early decades of mission schools can be revived, as well as new ideas tried out. If mission schools have the responsibility of administering and selecting their own principals and teachers, and are able to inculcate a high standard of character traits amongst the staff and pupils through good Moral Education and Religious Knowledge classes, and even weekly chapel services as done in the past, with well-run co-curricular activities, like the Christian Fellowship, the Girls' Brigade and the Boys' Brigade, they may be able to once again produce men and women with high moral standard and calibre for the betterment of Malaysians.

For the private Wesley Methodist Schools, the strategy is to produce **ACE** students; A for being strong in Academics, C for Character building, E for Extra-curricular activities as this is our ethos for holistic education; going *Above and Beyond* ourselves, looking to Almighty God and looking out for others.

It has always been, and will continue to be, the desire of the church to engage in the education of the young of our nation, modelling our Lord Jesus Christ who was Healer and Teacher.

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