

# GARDENING SUBJECT IN MALAY VERNACULAR SCHOOLS ON THE BRITISH COLONIAL PERIOD IN MALAYA

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**ABSTRACT:** Gardening subjects were introduced in the education of the Malay vernacular school system in Malaya until independence in 1957. The subject of gardening is in line with the British colonial education policy and goals, which is a social responsibility to provide a little educational opportunity and social needs for the Malay children. This study was conducted using a qualitative method that emphasized the analysis of documents and manuscripts comprising colonial sources such as colonial office records, annual reports, education reports, files of the Federated Malay States, British colonial state government files. The results showed that the school education curriculum introduced by the British only emphasized basic education such as 3R's (reading, writing and arithmetic). Education provided by the British aims to maintain the status quo of the Malays. Gardening subjects are suitable to creating and make Malays continue to be farmers as either rice growers or become fishermen. Furthermore, the results of this study also found that the implementation of gardening subjects emphasized in Malay school education with British colonialism has adapted aspects of teaching aids, infrastructure and environment which is appropriate in the gardening subject. The syllabus provided by the British colonial clearly wanted to make the children of the Malays just clever in the science of agriculture and crops which would indirectly make the Malays the peasants who inherited the traditional occupation of their ancestors.

**Keywords:** Gardening, Infrastructure, Syllabus, Malay School, Colonial British.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The British colonial government established a vernacular school education system for Malay children to gain a little secular knowledge. Between 1920 and 1930, British colonial had better organized the Malay vernacular school education system to encourage the children of the Malays to go to school. Malay children aged 7 to 14 who live within a radius of two kilometres from the school area are required to attend school, or until they graduate at the IV grade level [1]. In 1821, the British set up a classroom as a prelude to the first formal teaching session of secular education, when the British began conducting classes in Bahasa Melayu at Penang Free School [2]. The school has been operating using Malay as an intermediary language and it is located in Gelugor, Penang. In the same year, the growth of Malay schools in the Straits states began.

There are also a number of Malay schools that have been created for the trial stage at Province Wellesly in 1871 [3]. In the second stage, the administration in the Straits states had moved to the Colonial Office in 1867, and the Straits Settlements have established schools that use the Malay language as the medium of instruction and provide Malay teachers to teach the boys reading in Malay regardless of Jawi or Roman scripts [4]. In conclusion, the education of the Malay school before the Second World War that the British had prepared was only concentrating 3R's simply reading, arithmetic and writing. Thus, the curriculum implemented in Malay schools is also very limited as it only fulfils the social needs of the local community [5]. The evidence that can be seen is in the examination certificate at the Malay vernacular school in Strait states in 1890 has shown that the examination of the Malay school curriculum emphasizes four subjects that are reading, writing, arithmetic and natural science or geography [6].

## 2. ISSUE AND PROBLEMS

The education of the Malays before the arrival of British colonialism was based on religious education which was divided into two forms of education namely formal education and formal education of religion. Informal religious education is an education that obtained from parents who teach their children to study the Qur'an and manners which is the rule of values and norms that shape family socialization. Formal religious education is that given to the Malay children studying in hut schools and madrasah involves Malay children living together as a boarding school.

But after the British colonial entry in Malaya, early in the mid-19th century, the British colonial introduced the Malay vernacular school education system to provide little education opportunities for the Malay children to make them illiterate and to make the Malay children understand the directives and regulations implemented by the British colonial administration. British colonialism introduced Malay school education only at primary level only for Malay children to study as much as the five-degree level for their graduation [7]. The aspects that have been carried out by the British colonialists in implementing their goals and agenda include implementing the teaching and learning of Gardening subjects in Malay school education.

This gardening subject clearly emphasizes the learning of the children of the Malays in connection with understanding the ways and methods in clear in an agricultural activity to inherit the work and agricultural activities practised by their respective parents. This gardening subject is a basic syllabus in Malay school education as well as other subjects such as reading, knowledge, health knowledge and so on. At the education level of the lower Malay school, the subject of gardening was taught by Malay teachers to provide guidance as well as teaching aids facilities and equipment in teaching was common equipment in agriculture activities which is generally Malay children knowing about how to use it. The

school environment is an important medium in the teaching of gardening subjects because the school environment is used as a gardening site and for the children of the Malays who attend school at the school.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

Data analysis is done using a qualitative method that emphasizes on the implementation of research through document analysis and manuscripts. This study focuses on the use of primary sources of documents which are colonial records (*colonial office record*), an annual report on education (*education annual report*), British colonial syllabus documents, and *State Secretary File*. The study will be conducted at the National Archives of Malaysia and to obtain educational histories in the British colonial period.

For secondary sources, studies will be conducted at libraries of public universities in Malaysia such as the University of Malaya and the National University of Malaysia. For the last step, data and revenue assessment will be made analytically and hermeneutically interpreted. This study also does research on previous studies as a source of historiography related to this study by earlier researchers of their published or unpublished findings as research material and analysis by researchers to see the coherence of this study such as books, journals, and thesis. As a result, researchers will be able to assess each data before making a conclusion.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Malay schools provide education to Malay children up to the level of five by just emphasizing the aspect of 3R's teaching only, namely reading, writing and arithmetic. The release of students from the Malay school education system will make it difficult for Malay school students to fulfilling jobs in the civil service of the British colonial government or a private company owned by the British. Academic qualifications for Malay children in colonial period can only produce the peasants as farmers and fishermen because of the curriculum pattern as well as the tendency of the Malays themselves to the traditional work [8].

One of the subjects in Malay school education is gardening that only makes the Malays as a farmer as the British colonial hope is to maintain the *status quo* of the Malay community, making them continuously as paddy growers, settling in villages, and also making the Malays aware of rice cultivation [9]. The following is a syllabus for gardening subjects in Malay schools:

Table 1 above shows the syllabus of the gardening subject in the Malay school education in 1927. In standard I, pupils will be exposed to the names of trees and flowers found in the school or village area. Education for gardening knowledge provided to students in standard I is basically basic knowledge because it involves knowledge of the names of trees and flowers around or in their school area. For standard II, pupils will be taught on an easy explanation of different plant parts and their functions. Additionally, students need to bring different species or plant species to school to learn about it. Soil types are also studied around the neighborhood and the importance of plants as food sources should be studied. Next, standard III will learn about soil in terms of

composition and formation of clay and sand for cultivation and drainage.

**Table 1: Gardening Subject Syllabus in Malay School In 1927**

Standard	Syllabus
I	Learn the names of trees and flowers in the school and village areas.
II	Simple description of different plant parts and their function: plant species should be brought to school for study. Soil types need to be studied around neighborhoods and the importance of plants as food sources should be studied.
III	Soil- learn in more detail about the composition and formation of clay and sand for cultivation and drainage. Flowers - different parts and functions. The specimens will be studied in the classroom.
IV	i) Soil: impletasi-plot- compost fertilizer. ii) Plant propagation: seed (type, choice, sowing), nursery (seedling). iii) Plant care: watering, weeding.
V	i) Plant structure (more details) ii) Land improvement iii) Plants and crops (suitable for gardens, villages and areas - planting fruit trees, flowers) iv) Pests and diseases (step recovery)

**Source:** Regulation for The Malay Vernacular Schools in the Straits Settlement and Federated Malay State and for The Sultan Idris Training College, 1927 [10].

In addition, different parts and functions of flowers are also learned in the classroom. At standard IV, pupils still learn about soil from the point of implementation and plots as well as the use of compost fertilizers for soil fertility. Plant propagation techniques are also taught such as plant species that are planted with suitable nursery choices for seed cultivation. Pupils are also taught about crop care, such as watering plants and grazing, in other words, trimming the nursery. At standard V, pupils will expose the structure of the plant in more detail. They are also taught about plants and plants suitable for planting and crop recovery measures after being threatened by pests or diseases.

Pupils studying in Malay schools not only learn the subject of this kind of theoretically even taught in practice. Spaces for gardening in the school environment are also provided to students in Malay schools. Pupils have also been exposed the importance of nursing care and they will also represent schools in the competition as evidenced by the preparation of special nursery sites for pupils to participate in vegetable garden competitions between schools held in the state of Melaka [11]. A part of gardening space, pupils are also supplied with plantation equipment to smooth out learning activities in gardening subjects. Here are the types of tools and plantation equipment which was provided by the British colonial government in Malay schools:

Table 2 above shows the hardware provided in the gardening subject. The pupils of the Malay school will be provided with hoes and trowels to glean land for the purpose of soil fertility before planting. Diggers are provided for digging the ground to place the plant seed ore to be planted. In addition, buckets

are provided to learn the watering techniques provided in the syllabus. Flower shears, machete, swords or tanks are also used in the process of weeding the plants. The use of the appliance to prevent the plant from experiencing damage and the process of cutting the damaged part of the plant will be done to prevent continuing damage.

**Table 2: Gardening Tools**

NUM.	Tools
1	Hoe
2	Trowel
3	Rembas
4	Scraper
5	Watering Can
6	Digger
7	Bucket
8	Flower Scissors
9	Machete
10	Swords & Tanks
11	Sword grinding stone

**Source:** Gardening Tools in Malay Schools [12].

The cutting of the damaged part was also made for the recovery step and prevent infection from other plants. Construction of wells is also done for planting activities. The wells constructed in every Malay school are aimed to easier for the drainage system. Students only need to take water for watering activities in wells which have been built near nurseries alone without having to take water supplies in nearby rivers. In addition to the water supply for watering plants, it also serves as a drinking water supply for students in Malay schools. This can be proven by the construction of wells in several Malay schools in Kedah such as Changlun Malay schools, Kodiang Malay schools, Malay Sik schools, Padang Terap Malay schools and Penang Pinang Tunggal schools [13].

Implementation of Syllabus gardening subjects in Malay school education is clearly the goal of the British colonial administration to make Malay children clever and more clever than their parents and thus turning Malay children into peasants. Until independence, the subject of gardening was a very important subject in the Malay school education at primary level because the Malay school education was not created at the secondary school level which clearly shows the chances of Malay children to get better education opportunities were blocked just like that.

**5. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the British colonialist wanted the education system and curriculum that be introduced to the Malays make the Malay’s children are a "little more clever" than their parents. The British wanted to maintain the *status quo* of the Malays so they lived in a village and still practised traditional life. The retention of the status quo was one of the British's

hopes of producing Malays continuously as a paddy-grower, settling in villages and making the Malays aware of paddy farmers by possessing existing and retained skills and arts. In other words, according to Britain's interpretation and perspective, education was introduced to the Malays to make the Malay children a little clever and bring the very low educational connotations owned by the parents of the Malay children in the British colonial period.

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