Challenges of COVID-19 Crisis on Malaysia's Education Sector

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Abstract

This paper aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the development of Malaysia's education policies over the years. In addition, this study seeks to further draw attention to the recent implications of COVID-19 on Malaysia's education sector. The education policies developed in the past decades have highlighted that Malaysia Government had continuously shown tremendous support and has put high emphasis on the education sector. However, the pandemic crisis has disrupted learning and posed new challenges to the education system and the policies developed in the past. Therefore, this paper will employ a narrative review to draw lessons based on the observations retrieved from existing literature and various secondary sources such as policy briefs, media, commentaries, and documentaries of related evidence on the challenges of the pandemic crisis to the education system and its policy. In addition, the review will also shed light on the policies' recommendations in adapting to the new normal and establishing this as a new research direction for future studies.

Keywords: COVID-19, Education Sector, Policies, Review, Challenges

INTRODUCTION

Education has been recognized by global economies for its significant role in the pursuit of economic growth and development in many countries. In other words, the success of any nation may well dependable on the knowledge, skills, and competencies of its people. A nation with higher educated and highly skilled people would likely enjoy better economic development. In line with such belief, the Malaysian government has been putting much emphasis on its education investment. In Malaysia, the education system was developed as an ongoing effort to holistically develop an intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, physically balanced, and harmonious community.

In the past, the Malaysian government has extensively developed policies to enhance the education sector. A review of the education policies developed over the past decades as illustrated in Section 2 of this paper will enlighten us on the actual behavior of Malaysia's government education policies. The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Preschool to Post-Secondary Education was launched back in the year 2013 to transform the national education system (EPU, 2020). The National Education Blueprint was formed as a move to further raise its education international standards and to equip the younger generations for 21st-century needs (Ministry of Education, 2013). The review on the development of Malaysia's education policies will add literature in illustrating the overall picture of education reform and policy-making in Malaysia.

The COVID-19 outbreak has resulted in major disruption to many economic activities and left severe implications for many sectors. The education sector is not spared either from the crisis implications. According to Schleicher (2020), the crisis has exposed many shortcomings and inequities in the education system stemming from online education accessibility, and the issue of supportive environments needed for learning, up to the misalignment between resources and needs. This has called out the crucial need for policymakers to re-examine the established education policy models. In an attempt to support this need, organizations such as OECD and United Nations have collected education statistics to review the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on the education sector through a series of reports issued.

This paper will be reviewing these reports to draw key insights that can be learned from this crisis and to adopt some of the policy recommendations provided to form a proper plan of action that can have transformation changes in the effort to build a greater resilient education sector. In the final part of this paper, the focus will be given to re-evaluating and reforming Malaysia's education policies in response to the pandemic crisis. It is hoped that the review of this paper will provide a new pathway that is built for further research on policy-making in the education sector.

Historical Timeline of Malaysia's Education Policies

Over time, the education system developed in terms of policy-making and government financing allocation. Table 1 summarized the Education Policies that have been implemented in Malaysia. The review on the development and reformation of Malaysian education policies reflected that the Malaysian government had continuously placed high emphasis on the education sector since early independence.

Table 1 *Progress of Education Policies Development*

Year	Education Policies
1951	The Barnes Report
1951	The Fenn-Wu Report
1956	The Razak Report
1957	Education Ordinance 1957
1960	The Rahman Talib Report
1961	Education Act 1961
1967	The Higher Education Committee Report
1973	Committee Report on a Study of Views on Education and Society (Dropout Report)
1979	Cabinet Committee Report on Review of Implementation of Education Policies (Mahathir Report) 1979
1991	Cabinet Committee Report on Training
1995	Education Bill
1996	Education Act 1996 (repealed the Education Act 1961) (parent legislation on education and covers all levels of education under the national education system (except international schools)
2001	The Education Development Plan 2001 – 2010
2006	The Education Development Master Plan 2006 – 2010
2007	National Higher Education Strategic Plan (NHESP)
2009	Strengthening Private Education in Malaysia by the Economic Planning Unit
2010	Economic Transformation Program (ETP)
2011	Education Blueprints
2013 till 2025	Review of Higher Education and Malaysia Education Blueprint (pre-school till secondary education)
2015 till 2025	Malaysia Education Development Plan (Higher Education) Blueprint

In 1949, Central Advisory Committee on Education was established to assist the government in planning the implementation of a better education system in Malaya. The Committee earlier suggested the Holgate Report proposing English to be used as the medium of instruction for all schools. Unfortunately, the proposition held by Holgate Report was rejected by the Federal Legislative Council. Subsequently, Barnes Report was proposed in 1951. A single inter-racial national school was established under Barnes Report 1951. Under the national school system, six years of free bilingual education were provided to all children between 6 to 12 years old. All vernacular schools were then transformed into national schools. Meanwhile, national schools will be using the English language as the medium of instruction and the Malay language as the national language. However, Chinese and Tamil languages can still be taught as the Pupils Own Language (POL) subject. The main aim of using a single language as a medium of instruction was to foster social integration among the different races.

In 1951, Fenn-Wu Report was introduced by the British government in dealing with the arising objection by Chinese communities to the Barnes Report. Fenn-Wu Report took a converse approach proposing a continuation with vernacular schools which taught their language with Malay and English language taught as well (Brown, 2005). A committee report on education proposed that vernacular schools were allowed to be continued under a common curriculum for all schools in 1956. In addition, the Razak Report has mandated Malay as a compulsory subject in primary schools (Liu *et al.*, 2013). Razak Report 1956 supported a unified education system that uses a national curriculum to promote national unity (Puteh, 2010). In 1957, the Education Ordinance was implemented. According to Abu Bakar (2014), the Education Ordinance 1957 allows each ethnic community to use their native language as their medium of instruction. However, Malay as the national language must be taught as a compulsory subject in Chinese and Tamil schools. The approach in history, geography, syllabus, and materials endorsed for all schools must be centered in Malaysia and not of import from other countries.

Three years after achieving Independence, an evaluative review by another committee on the existing education system and a review of the Razak Report resulted in the Rahman Talib Report by 1960. Several recommendations from Rahman Talib Report were later incorporated into the Education Act 1961. Some of the recommendations made include the abolishment of school fees at primary level education, the use of the Malay language as the main medium of instruction, and an automatic progression to Form 3 as an effort to increase the length of years of education. In addition, the report also emphasized on school curriculum which focuses on acquiring 3Rs (reading, writing, and arithmetic) through primary education (Liu *et al.*, 2013).

Under the review of the Rahman-Talib Report, the Education Act 1961 was enacted. Education Act 1961 introduced some new changes to secondary-level education by extending the principle of using a unified Malay language. Full implementation of the National Education System was also developed under the Education Act 1961 to foster unity between the different ethnic groups in Malaysia. Other than emphasizing basic education of the 3Rs, the national education system also emphasizes a Malaysian-oriented curriculum, incorporating moral education as well.

Consolidation of Razak Report 1956 and Education Ordinance 1957 formulated a Malaysian environment-oriented curriculum that uses Malay as the key medium of instruction and establishes a common system of examination for all (Ministry of Education, 2016). Under the First Malaysia Plan, the Education Committee Report of 1956 laid the foundation for an education system that provides education for every child in the country. The Education Committee Report of 1956 also suggested the expansion of secondary trade and technical education to meet the needs of human resource shortage. Under the Education Review Committee Report of 1960, the primary school fees were abolished in 1961 and the school-leaving age was extended to age 14.

A Review of the Rahman Talib Report and the enactment of the Education Act 1961, highlighted emphasis on promoting 3Rs basic skills (Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic). These policies stressed the importance of a strong spiritual education, disciplinary elements, and emphasis on a Malaysian-oriented curriculum. Under these policies, upper secondary education is streamlined to academic and vocational. The education management was streamlined to improve the education quality (MOE, 2016). In 1962, the Higher Education Planning Committee was established to develop education facilities that meet human capital demand in the next twenty years. By 1965, a comprehensive education system with a school leaving age of 15 was introduced as a move in developing the education system in the country.

Subsequently, Cabinet Report 1979 emphasized the same 3Rs in education and the Malaysian -oriented curriculum. In 1995, Education Bill was used to re-design the national education system in becoming a world-class education hub to achieve national aspirations. A re-design of the national education system witnessed the introduction of preschool education. Meanwhile, primary education was provided for children aged 5 to 7 years old. Additionally, technical and polytechnic education was also enhanced during this period. Provisions were later provided to regulate private education.

The Education Act 1996 was introduced in 1996. Under the Education Act 1996, all Malaysian citizens were ensured to have fair access to education regardless of their race, religion, descent, location, and social-economic status. Additional amendments such as the University Colleges Amendments Act 1996, Private Higher Education Institution Acts 1996, National Council of Higher Education Acts 1996, and National Accreditation Board Bill 1996 were enforced to govern and regulate the higher education sector in Malaysia. By 2010, the Economic Transformation Program (ETP) was launched to transform Malaysia into a high-income nation. The objective of Education as one of the National Key Economic Areas (NKEA) is to strengthen the private education sector and to expand education exports. In 2011, National Education Blueprint was developed to increase public expectations of educational policy.

By 2013, a review of Higher Education was embarked and the Higher Education Blueprint was published in the following year of 2015. 10 shifts of development were proposed to improve the world's ranking of Malaysia's higher education system and to enable Malaysia to compete globally (Education Service Provider, 2015). The review of the development of education policy-making from the past to the present reflected that the Malaysian government had continuously supported the education sector.

METHODOLOGY

This paper will review based on the observations retrieved from existing literature and various secondary sources such as policy briefs, media, commentaries, and documentaries of related evidence. The presentation of the findings will be in the form of chronological order over time and a narrative review will be employed. A narrative review will provide a much broader overview of the general topic studied.

Challenges to Malaysia's Education During Pandemic

The COVID-19 crisis has brought about massive disruption to the education sector as unprecedented safety measures such as social distancing are being taken that cause the closure of all educational institutions and a rapid shift to online learning instead. These abrupt changes have created a devastating impact on the education field. According to research done by the United Nations (2020), the pandemic crisis has affected nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries. The closure of educational institutions has affected close to about 94 percent of the world's student population and with up to 99 percent of which constituted those from low-income countries.

One of the main challenges faced by all education institutions is their digital readiness in adopting an online learning approach. The limited access to online distance learning practice in the past has posed a major obstacle to many educational institutions from countries that has very low levels of online learning engagement. The OECD report has pointed out that the limited digital readiness within education institutions and academicians has restricted the use of digital tools for remote learning. Similarly, Malaysia also faces constraints to the adoption of distance learning and digital readiness (Sazuki et al., 2021). Despite that the education sector in Malaysia has started adopting digital technologies for quite some time, however, there are still many areas lacking and require necessary review to improve the education system digitally.

Secondly, students from marginalized groups may have poor access to online learning. As such, these vulnerable learners would risk lagging and this could extend to learning losses. An estimation of data by the United Nations (2020) indicated that roughly 40 percent of the poorest countries had failed to provide support to learners at risk during the pandemic crisis. Past experiences had also proven that education inequalities tend to be largely neglected in any government's response to the health crisis. Besides having poor digital skills and limited access to online content, many learners in developing

countries may have poor living conditions, suffer economic stress, getting less parental and learning support to adapt to the new learning mode of instruction. Therefore, it is anticipated that there would be great learning loss both in the short and long run. Besides that, it is likely that the education inequalities would further exacerbate among the marginalized communities. For instance, the stateless Bajau Laut communities in Semporna having no access to education causing them to be easily exploited economically and having poor social life (Mohd Hed et al., 2022).

According to Hanushek and Woessman (2020), the learning loss will subsequently lead to skill loss. The loss of skills would in turn lead to a decline in productivity. The drop in productivity could cause an estimation of 1.5% lower on average to the GDP. The World Bank (2020) identifies three possible scenarios of learning loss which consist of a reduction in the students' average learning levels, a widening of the learning achievement distribution due to unequal effects of the crisis on various populations, and massive dropouts. A slow resumption of physical learning with students returning to school may even fail to revert the damage to students' learning during the lockdowns.

In addition to that, the economic impact on households will likely widen the inequities in education achievement. UNESCO (2020) estimated that there could be dropout by 23.8 million additional children and youth following the inaccessibility to school in the upcoming year. The school closure reduced the likelihood of the vulnerable group returning to school post-pandemic. Besides that, the pandemic crisis has presented challenges to international students as well. In the past, Malaysia has had an aggressive internationalization pursuit under its National Higher Education Strategic Plan. The plan was to attract foreign students and employ international academicians to promote global research collaboration. This plan was in line with the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015 – 2025 targeted to increase the enrolment of international students in promoting Malaysia as an international talent hub. However, the lockdowns and movement restrictions have disrupted the mobility of the students and academicians during this time of crisis.

Lastly, there would likely be a ripple effect that will continue from the education disruption. These include economic instability, food insecurity, and psychological distress. The closure of schools deprived the poor students of their free meals which were provided under the food supplementary program. The loss of free meals during the pandemic crisis affected poor children, causing hunger and nutritional deficiencies. Besides that, the closure of the school and the disruption of learning has left negative impacts on the mental health of students. Early literature had proven the negative implications of the pandemic crisis on students' psychological well-being which had caused acute depression and anxiety disorder.

The empirical analysis by Sundarasen et al. (2020) highlighted the COVID-19 impacts on the socio-psychological well-being of Malaysian students. Their study further pointed out that the main stressors identified consist of financial constraints, remote online learning, and uncertainty about the future concerning academics and careers. Besides that, the closure of educational institutions had burdened the working parents that rely on child care and schools. This could lead to loss of income as parents especially mothers may need to quit their job to take care of their children. The school closures will, therefore, result in economic consequences to households as it hampers the ability of parents to work. In addition, it could also contribute to higher earning gaps by widening gender inequality as women are more likely to bear the responsibility of taking care of the children (United Nations, 2020).

Given the National Education Blueprint's strong emphasis on raising education standards, effective policy implementation and dissemination are deemed essential for the aspirations to be achieved. It is crucial, therefore, to identify the existing challenges that hinder the achievement of the current education policies. In the past, several Malaysian researchers identify the hierarchy of education management as the main obstacle that hinders the effective implementation of the policy (The Head Foundation, 2019). Educators face difficulties as a result of centralized policy-making as they believe the top management's policies on education are unrealistic (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2015). Besides that, it was reported that the attitudes of educators and leaders towards the policy change can also become one of the barriers to the effective adoption of the policy. In addition, the perception of limited resources, lack of device equipment, infrastructure problem, and cascaded teacher training could further hinder the effective implementation of the policy.

The pandemic crisis further aggravates the challenges to the current education policy. The lack of ICT infrastructure and education resources for some of the students in rural areas has led to unequal access to learning. Besides that, the use of suitable and relevant pedagogy for online teaching depends

on expertise and exposure to ICT platforms. However, the lack of exposure to the use of ICT platforms for some educators further challenges policy implementation. Besides that, the closures of schools during the pandemic crisis have negatively affected the mental well-being of students and educators. The rapidly increasing number of COVID cases has created a sense of anxiety and uncertainty (Tiruneh, 2020). The change of attitude of the students and educators would no doubt hampers the achievement of the existing education policy implementation during this time of crisis.

Review on Policies During and Post-Pandemic

According to the Asian Development Bank in April 2021, Malaysia has one of the greatest rates of learning loss among the developing Asian countries which far surpasses that of all ASEAN members, except Myanmar. The closure of the school for more than 40 weeks during the pandemic crisis has resulted in a major loss in education progress. About 40% of the students have been reported unable to participate in online classes due to the lack of digital devices or internet connection (HSS, 2022). According to the Malaysian School Principals Council, the gap caused by the Covid-19 pandemic in the education sector will take some time to be fixed. The flexible home-based teaching and learning method (PdPR) lessons conducted during the pandemic have lengthened the time required to master the syllabus. This had left a significant impact on students' learning process with students being easily distracted by other activities as they utilize the digital device in their daily learning (Dalily, 2022).

In response to the pandemic crisis, the government in Malaysia has devised new alternatives to cope. Some of these new alternatives introduced include propagating mass promotion of e-learning to society (Ating, 2020). In support of students' online learning, the government has introduced initiatives such as the PerantiSiswa Keluarga Malaysia program that offered free mobile devices and internet access to students under B40. A total of RM450 million has been allocated in Budget 2021 under the PerantiSiswa program which has been expected to benefit over 400,000 students from B40 families (Ibrahim, 2022). Apart from that, the government also introduced the Malaysian Family Youth Package that allows students to pay a minimum payment of RM10 only for 20GB of data used in three months. In addition, 1GB of data was provided free for daily productivity activities (Malek, 2021).

Meanwhile, the local media New Strait Times reported several other measures of policies taken by the Ministry of Education in coping with the pandemic crisis. By 16 February 2021, the government announced the reopening of schools in stages after careful deliberation and analysis of case statistics. Besides that, the government has empowered the TV Pendidikan to resolve the learning gaps and to assist students that are struggling with PdPR, especially the examination candidates. In addition to that, the Ministry also announced a new single entry point application system for Secondary Form 1 and Form 4 students that are seeking entry to specialized schools. A detailed and comprehensive SOP involving 400,000 SPM candidates was being drafted in view that the examination could not be called off. The next strategy also included the rehabilitation of long-abandoned school projects and schools were equipped with facilities catering to students of special needs (MBK) (Arumugam, 2021).

In a culmination of efforts with Google, Microsoft, and Apple, the Ministry of Education introduced the "Digital Educational Learning Initiative Malaysia" (DELIMa), a refreshed digital learning platform for both educators and students. This platform allows applications, services, and resources such as Google Classroom, Microsoft 365, and Apple Teacher Learning Centre to be made available to teachers and students within the school system (New Strait Times, 2020). It is also noteworthy to point out the establishment of a critical platform known as the Komuniti Guru Digital Learning (Teacher Digital Learning Community) with UNICEF's support. The primary aim of the newly created platform was to equip educators with the essential skills and knowledge needed for an effective and efficient lesson delivery through a five-module online teacher training course (UNICEF, 2020). In addition, the use of e-learning should be lauded since study in the past such as Che Noh et al. (2022) has revealed that e-learning is a platform that can improve communication competencies of the students. Besides that, the government also called for the curriculum and blended learning to be re-aligned. Meanwhile, in terms of infrastructure, dilapidated schools were being improved and schools were constructed in critical areas.

Recommendation on Future Policies Post-Pandemic

The unprecedented challenges of the outbreak in the education sector have caused massive socioeconomic disruptions and learning loss that requires swift actions with strategies of recovery. The pandemic crisis that is turning into an endemic disease will necessitate some crucial changes to the education system in navigating it toward a long-term resilience education that will be able to safeguard future learning during a health crisis. The multifaceted challenges encountered by the education sector call for policy recommendations and innovative actions that can mitigate the learning crisis and prevent it from turning into a major catastrophe.

One of the widely raised issues is the disparity of digital accessibility among students. To overcome this issue, free laptops have been distributed freely by the Malaysian government to the B40 students. Under the Jaringan Prihatin program, the government provided a subsidy for the purchase of a digital device or the monthly data plan as part of the initiatives to help the affected B40 students in their online learning. However, students living in the rural area may still be facing limited connectivity issues. Hence, the government has used education television through the launching of an all-day education television channel, DidikTV KPM as an effort to increase the access to education for students that faced the internet connectivity problem.

Although these efforts are applauded to ease the burden of students that are having limited access to online home-based teaching and learning (PdPR) due to the lack of adequate digital devices and the constraint of no connectivity, however, it may be insufficient to resolve the psychological impact of COVID-19 to the students. According to Sazuki *et al.* (2020), learning from the home system is detrimental to students' mental health. A study by Sundrasen *et al.* (2020) has provided empirical evidence that students experienced anxiety disorder and insurmountable stress problems while attending online classes. Hence, there has been a suggestion that new guidelines be established for counseling. Besides that, institutions will need to keep in touch with students and provide systematic psychological screening and services for the students to reduce anxiety.

Another issue that is raised is the negative impact on the marginalized group of students due to the non-inclusive teaching and learning strategy being adopted during the pandemic crisis. Hence, effort will be required to promote inclusive teaching and learning. Due to the school closures, the marginalized group experienced not just learning loss but loss of essential services such as free school meals. According to United Nations (2020), nearly 50 countries are providing take-home rations to children and their families. Meanwhile, some other countries have opted to replace free school meals with vouchers and cash instead. Therefore, it is recommended that the Malaysian government should attempt to emulate these countries in adapting the school feeding program to provide continued support to marginalized students.

The outbreak crisis forced teachers and lecturers to be immediately tasked with implementing home-based online learning. Teachers and lecturers across the globe found themselves caught unprepared to support the continuity of learning. Many educators were found to be lacking training on ICT skills and most instructors are using the same curricula that are meant for face-to-face teaching. Hence, support for teachers' needs and readiness is crucial to train teachers in digital skills and to equip them with the necessary skills to carry out the new methods of education delivery. Besides that, a reformation and review of the current curricula, assessment methods, and learning strategies should be done to differentiate these for online teaching and learning.

Meanwhile, the OECD (2021) has suggested policy action of adjustments to the academic calendar. The closures of institutes disrupted the teaching and learning time and forced some jurisdictions to make necessary adjustments to the academic calendar. Three forms of adjustment were recommended: changes to the term dates, adjustments to the class meeting times and to conduct virtual examinations. In a recent move to make adjustments to the academic calendar, the Malaysian government extended the academic calendar of the year 2021 to February 2022. The extension was done to allow assessments on students' competency levels to take place after a prolonged session of home-based teaching and learning conducted in ensuring that they are ready to progress to the next level of their education. Besides that, adjustments had been done to assessment methods during the pandemic crisis with higher education institutions conducting virtual examinations and thesis defenses remotely.

Another issue is the increase of financial pressures faced by education institutions with the assistance that comes under strain and deferred enrolments of both local and international students. Besides that, students are also facing financial distress due to precarious family finance exacerbated by the COVID-19 outbreak. To alleviate the financial burden of the students, the Malaysia Education Ministry has instructed a fee reduction of 20 percent for all public university students under the KPT Prihatin initiative. In a move to increase the funding for the education sector, the Malaysian government has agreed to allocate the Education Ministry the largest allocation of RM14.5 billion ($3.43 billion) in the recently tabled Budget 2022. The drop in revenues from international students due to the closing of borders would in particular affect institutions that have high dependence on international fees. Besides that, this would also disrupt the government's plan in pursuit to become a global education hub. Hence, some immediate response should be taken concerning the admission of international students. For example, immigration policies should be adjusted to be more flexible to accommodate these international students.

The discussion by OECD, the UN, and the education community reported some additional policy measures taken in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. A report by United Nations (2020) has suggested the following policy actions: to have a fully developed guide of the processes in planning for school reopening that is inclusive to all, to protect education financing, to strengthen the resilience of the education system by focusing on equity, inclusion, reinforcing the risk management, and to the reform education system to be more flexible by accelerating positive changes in addressing the learning crisis. Meanwhile, OECD (2021) offered additional policy measures to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. These additional measures suggested include changes to core operating funding or capital funding mechanism, revising academic staff policies, revision of quality guidelines, regulatory changes to expand reskilling and upskilling offerings, and to have targeted funding that supports online or blended learning. In line with these reports, Sazuki et al. (2021) have advocated that the Malaysian government should form a National Recovery Plan that encompasses strategies moving forward in the new normal for the education sector. Transformational changes are crucial to build a resilient education system that can navigate through this pandemic. Both public and private education institutes will need to be equipped with technology infrastructure to provide an effective online learning environment.

These recommendations given should be in line with the current education policy and could assist the achievement of the objectives as layout by the existing policy. For example, the recommendation that the government should strengthen the virtual learning environment in schools through the utilization of digital learning resources will assist the present digital content development roadmap developed earlier in ensuring that the education curriculum can be digitalized to enable virtual interactive learning. This move is clearly in line with the aspirations of the National Education Blueprint. Besides that, the call for more professional development programs for educators is also in line with the efforts in the past with niche professional development programs that have been conducted in selected Institutes of Teacher Education (ITEs). In the wake of the pandemic, schools and universities should design curricula, develop post-COVID-19 learning strategies and transform the education system as a whole. The new strategies created should assist in recovering the lost learning time during the pandemic in ensuring that students can learn effectively when classes resume.

CONCLUSION

The development of education policy in the past confirmed that the Malaysian government had placed high emphasis on education development in the past. The reformation of the education system had been followed by constant expansion and improvement of education over time. Recognizing that it is crucial to ensure that the education allocation policy developed is in response to socio-economic environment changes, hence, a review is conducted to analyze the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the education field. Besides that, the review is crucial to evaluate the changes and transformations that are necessary to the current education policy to strengthen the education system amid a health crisis.

The results of this review contributed to revealing the issues and challenges faced by the education sector amid the COVID-19 outbreak. The knowledge from this review will be instructive for policymakers to develop and strengthen education policy strategies. Apart from that, this study has

highlighted some interesting lessons of policy adjustments that have been proposed by international organizations such as OECD, the United Nations, and global education communities. The outcomes from this review will provide a pathway for future research that focuses more on the empirical evidence that determines the extent of how badly are the students being affected by the COVID-19 crisis and to explore the strategies to improve students' e-learning experience in the future.

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