Educating delinquent youths: A qualitative approach to understand the Malaysian story [version 1; peer review: awaiting peer review]

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Abstract

Background: This paper reports on the first stage of a larger research project on the education of delinquent youths in Malaysia. Specifically, this paper addresses the challenges of educating delinquent youths in the country. As a developing nation, Malaysia faces various issues pertaining social and youth development. The question explored in this study is whether delinquent youths in Malaysia are neglected in terms of systematic and adequate education. In Malaysia, delinquent youths are sent to correctional facilities all around the country, where they are separated from school systems, their families and communities; it can be argued that these youths are deprived of moral support from society. This paper aims to identify the challenges around educating delinquent youths in Malaysia and to recommend potential solutions to these challenges.

Methods: The research approaches adopted for this paper included content analysis of printed documents and preliminary informal interviews with the staff at one correctional facility. Content analysis data were gathered from departmental and government documents made public as well as past research on delinquent youths. Meanwhile, a courtesy visit was made to a correctional facility in Kuala Lumpur to obtain preliminary input into the education and training provided at the facility.

Results: The authors found that there are three main challenges to sufficiently educating delinquent youths in Malaysia. These include unclear policy on the education of youths at correctional facilities; the lack of frameworks facilitating the education of these youths; and the lack of awareness and understanding on the need for educating these youths, despite their behaviors.

Conclusions: The paper ends with two solutions to these challenges and future directions for the education of delinquent youths in Malaysia.

Keywords
correctional facilities, delinquent youths, disruptive behaviors, educating delinquent youths, juveniles, social development, youth development
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Introduction

As a developing nation, the education system in Malaysia plays a critical role in its economic and social development. The education system is not just about providing academic aptness; most importantly, the system assists in the development of self-efficacy and self-worth through value learning that promotes good-moral conduct (Budin, 2013). To date, the government has given tremendous support to gifted and talented students by nurturing and bringing forth their talents through various programs; one of those is PERMATA, a national program to mold and educate Malaysian children (see Adnan et al., 2016; Mohd. Sharif et al., 2020). PERMATA is an Early Childhood Guide and Education and has several categories such as PERMATA Pintar (for inculcating intellectual capacity) and PERMATA Seni (for inculcating cultural performance capacity). The government has designed and developed these programs in order to nurture these young talents because they are the assets of the country.

Despite these efforts and programs created for talented youths, does Malaysia have a systematic program for those not so talented and delinquent students? To date, the Malaysian government has been working hard to overcome the increasing national concern about youth violence, which is considered from a social perspective, a significant public health issue (Reffien et al., 2020). Hassan et al. (2016) indicated in their work that the Ministry of Education, Malaysia, and the Department of Education at the state level have been taking proactive measures to overcome such cases. These include the enforcement of numerous laws such as acts under Articles 19 and 37 of the Child Act 2001 and Child Protection Plan 2009; intervention programs; and the distribution of circulars that detailed out a clear preventive measure to abdicate bully cases in schools. In addition, Nasrul and Zarina (2017) listed six official guidebooks and over 40 periodic circulars from the Ministry of Education, Malaysia on the procedures to be adhered to by the school management in handling students’ disciplinary problems.

This paper uses the term delinquent youths and juveniles interchangeably throughout the discussion; thus, it is important to set the parameter of these terms. The authors adopt the definition of delinquent youths as that offered by Abdullah et al. (2015). They refer to delinquent youths as youths associated with juvenile delinquency, juvenile offending, or youth crime, and argue that these can be considered normative teen behaviors and that most young people commit non-violent crimes during adolescence. Further, Siegel and Welsh (2005) defined delinquent youths as those participating in illegal behavior, and that in most countries the age of these youths is no more than 19 years old. Therefore, the authors opine that, in this paper, the term delinquent youths suggest youths between the ages of 10 to 19 years old, who commit non-violent acts that are not considered normal behavior and are not acceptable in Malaysian society.

It is argued that there are two sets of arrangement for the education system in Malaysia: inclusion and exclusion (see Ozel et al., 2017). The first educational arrangement, according to OECD (2012), caters for the development of model-citizens, in which the mainstream schools are not for those students with disruptive behaviors. This then creates the second arrangement for those students who are labelled as possessing disruptive behaviors and cannot follow the normal educational programs. The separation from society and the regular education system unfortunately results in marginalization in adult life. Furthermore, these youths with so-called disruptive behaviors are often displaced by society and hence decentralized from the mainstream educational system (or even reality) which further reinforces their disruptive behavior and can lead to further social problems. Faruqee (2016) argued that youth prisons are an outdated approach plagued by physical and sexual abuse, neglect, and segregation. This is because the approach further keeps the youth from society, family, and friends, who could be the best source of support.

This paper addresses the challenges of educating delinquent youths in Malaysia, or to follow the previous argument, educating students in the second arrangement system. This paper explores whether delinquent youths in Malaysia are neglected in systematic and adequate education systems. In Malaysia, delinquent youths are sent to correctional facilities across the country, where they are separated from the mainstream school systems, their families and communities; it can be argued that these youths are deprived of moral support from society, and especially their loved ones. To fulfil the objective of this paper, two research questions will be answered. These are, firstly, to identify the challenges of educating delinquent youths in Malaysia and, secondly, to recommend possible solutions to these challenges.

There are several main sections in this paper. The first section frames the context for discussion of educating delinquent youths in Malaysia. The second section presents the main data. Challenges around educating delinquent youths are then synthesized and arranged according to their importance. This is then followed by the methodology section which explains the methodology adopted to complete this paper, including content analysis and informal interviews with staff at one correctional facility in Kuala Lumpur. The fourth section presents the data of this paper, triangulation of what is evident in the departmental and government documents and excerpts from the preliminary interviews at the correctional facility. Lastly, a concluding section offers solutions to the challenges of educating delinquent youths and summarizes the findings.
The need to educate delinquent youths systematically

This section presents selected literature on educating delinquent youths globally and in Malaysia. There are two sub sections that correspond to the nature of educating these youths, the current situation surrounding delinquent youths and the past, present, and future challenges.

The current situation

Based on reports on delinquent youths, disruptive behaviors have not only damaged these youths physically, emotionally, and mentally, but have also affected the well-being of the country. According to Holbrook et al. (2018), the well-being of a country is affected because more money is required to create suitable prevention and corrective programs. Further, Faruque (2016) also reported that, in Virginia, it costs USD142,000 per year to incarcerate just one young person, where 75 percent of them will relapse within a few years. Cases on delinquent behaviors in Malaysia are narrated by Sayuti et al. (2020), Mustafa et al. (2017) and Hassan et al. (2016). These researchers concluded that delinquent teenagers in Malaysia were involved in cases such as bullying, running away from home, cutting school, stealing, smoking, substance abuse, pre-marital sex, and child abandonment. As illustrated in Tables 1 and 2, the age group with the highest rates of drug addiction among youths in Malaysia is between 16 and 19 years old and most of the youths involved in substance abuse received education at the LCE/SRP/PMR/PT3 level.

Despite a gradual decline in the number of delinquency cases from 2010 to 2013 (see Tables 1 and 2), there is an alarming increase in the number of drug addicts below the legal age each passing year. Furthermore, the data also show an increase of 55 percent of unschooled children since 2010. Nonetheless, Figures 1 and 2 illustrate a different scenario of the delinquent cases in Malaysia after 2016, where it is observed that the number of youths involved in disruptive behaviors reflect the number of cases, and that from 2016 to 2020, the overall number of cases has decreased tremendously (Figure 1). In addition, there has been a slight decline from 2017 to 2018 in the number of first offenders and an increase of 184 cases of repeated offenders from 2017 to 2018 (Figure 2). The factors effecting the decrease in numbers for both cases and youths are aplenty, including effective measures taken by the authority and preventive programs adopted by society. However, these factors will not be examined in this paper.

### Table 1. Numbers of drug addicts according to age (2010-2016).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>&lt;13</th>
<th>13-15</th>
<th>16-19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>2,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1,173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1,375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>1,5995</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Malaysia Youth Data Bank System (2019).

### Table 2. Level of education of drug users (2010-2016).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unschooled</td>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>LCE/SRP/PMR/PT3</td>
<td>MCE/SPM/SPMV</td>
<td>HSC/STP/STPM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>3,388</td>
<td>9,036</td>
<td>8,570</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1,680</td>
<td>2,901</td>
<td>7,270</td>
<td>6,747</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1,092</td>
<td>2,307</td>
<td>5,751</td>
<td>5,222</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1,970</td>
<td>2,654</td>
<td>8,530</td>
<td>6,868</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1,909</td>
<td>2,694</td>
<td>8,662</td>
<td>7,502</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>2,681</td>
<td>2,862</td>
<td>10,326</td>
<td>9,445</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>3,351</td>
<td>2,898</td>
<td>11,730</td>
<td>11,314</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Malaysia Youth Data Bank System (2019).
Despite the reduction in the number of cases of delinquent youths, the authors argue that there is an urgent need for Malaysians to provide suitable education and/or training for those students labelled as delinquent youths. The Malaysia Education Blueprint does not fully cater for these students; there is a small portion covering schools to house delinquent youths, but no elaboration is given on this matter. Instead of nurturing responsible citizens, there is a concern that the current system systemically traumatizes youths and leaves them less able to find employment, have healthy relationships, receive adequate education, and lead productive lives. Furthermore, these delinquents will have a permanent criminal record that may hinder them from applying for jobs in the future. This situation suggests that the nation is neglecting some of its talents who may require more support in order to be molded into model citizens that can contribute productively to develop the nation.

**Past, present, and future challenges**

Ismail and Rahman (2012) in their analysis suggested that currently, measures taken by schools are too dependent on the behavioral, biological, social, familial, and cognitive and do not give much attention to the aspect of human spirituality. Furthermore, Nasir et al. (2010) suggested that to nurture self-esteem and facilitate better intervention programs, there should be more involvement from the families of youths as family relationships are a viable variable in Eastern societies. In this case Eastern societies such as Malaysia, Indonesia, or Thailand have a stronger sense of belonging in the community, more respect towards the elderly, and value family relations more as they are high context culture groups. Andreou et al. (2013) promoted the use of the Evidence-Based Psycho-social Treatments (EBTS) that target bullying behavior among students who have special educational needs in Greek schools. In the program, participants were required to self-reflect in groups as these students were associated with loneliness and social dissatisfaction that led to their delinquency. Further, the findings of this study suggest that it is important to promote social inclusion among children with special educational needs and disabilities.
According to Kassim (2006), in Malaysia, the Prison Department is among the organizations responsible for caring for the delinquent youths. The department has developed and implemented a rehabilitation module that is specially targeted at young prisoners known as the Putra Module and a rehabilitation plan targeted at juveniles in Henry Gurney schools for attitude building, knowledge, and skills development as the main objectives. Kassim (2006) further stated that these two rehabilitation initiatives are targeted at reshaping these juveniles to become functional individuals again. The Putra Module is structured into four phases: Discipline Building Program (three months); Character Reinforcement Program (six to 12 months); Skills Program (the duration depends on the skills taken); and Community Program. Meanwhile, the Rehabilitation Plan is divided into three modules: Rehabilitation Module for Juveniles Aged 18 years and below; Rehabilitation Module for Juveniles Aged 18 years and above; and Rehabilitation Module for Juveniles with no basic education (Taib, 2012).

Moreover, educational programs for the delinquents can also be directed into two pathways – prevention and correction. Prevention programs are carried out by schools through different programs, campaigns, and enforcement of certain rules and regulations as permitted by certain acts and regulations under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, Malaysia. Meanwhile, to habilitate and rehabilitate youths’ disruptive behavior, the efforts are led by the Department of Social Welfare through different rehabilitation institutions such as Asrama Akhlak, Tunas Bakti Schools, and Taman Seri Puteri. Known as community-based rehabilitation, the delinquents, and their families, together with the local community, work collectively during the rehabilitation process. At these facilities, delinquents will only be separated from their families and enrolled in rehabilitation hostels if their family cannot support these teenagers.

If the community treatment fails, the juveniles will then be institutionalized and sent to two types of institutional rehabilitation: Henry Gurney Schools (educational programs for juveniles) and Integrity Schools (educational programs for younger detainees). Currently, there are five Henry Gurney Schools in Malaysia: Henry Gurney School, Telok Mas, Malacca (for boys and girls); Henry Gurney School, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah (for all-girls); Henry Gurney School, Keningau, Sabah (for all-boys); Henry Gurney School, Puncak Borneo, Sarawak (for all-boys); and Henry Gurney School, Batu Gajah, Perak (for all-girls) (Taib, 2012). In addition, there are currently eight Integrity Schools located all over Malaysia: Integrity School, Sungai Petani, Kedah; Integrity School, Kajang, Selangor; Integrity School, Marang, Terengganu; Integrity School, Kluang, Johor; Integrity School, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah; Integrity School, Kuching, Sarawak; Integrity School, Muar, Johor; and Integrity School, Bentong, Pahang. All these Integrity Schools are for boys only except for the one in Bentong, Pahang.

Under the supervision of the Prison Department, Malaysia, entrants to these facilities are young adolescents under the age of 21, who have been convicted by the judiciary (Wan Mohamed and Yunus, 2009). According to Budin (2013), not much is known about the existence of such programs as the institutions are all well-guarded and secluded from the general population. However, Wan Mohamed and Yunus (2009) did describe in their paper that the department utilizes two treatment models – treatment within the community and institutional treatment. At the institution, delinquent students or these juveniles will be assigned either to follow the Academic Track or Skills Track after following a stringent process of selection to these tracks. All students are interviewed and then they sit for a diagnostic test that inevitably decides whether they qualify to follow the corrective class, skills class, or academic class. Budin (2013) further argued that the objective of this education system is for these students to correct and restore, reinforce their morale, combat illiteracy, provide educational opportunity, inculcate the culture of lifelong learning, and convince the juveniles that education can change their lives.

Up until now, the existing literature suggest that all efforts in educating delinquents are well concerted by different departments of the government. However, there are some fundamental issues that are in dire need of attention. Farrell et al. (2003), for example, argued that the implementation of school-based intervention programs may provide one important focus for such efforts, but its implementation may be limited and may produce little success. Furthermore, the usual intervention practices – harsh disciplinary procedures, temporary suspension, transferal to another school, or expulsion – invigorate the situation more as these students will experience social marginalization caused by the stigma attached to the label of delinquent and this may increase the likelihood of subsequent involvement in deviant activities (Bernburg and Krohn, 2003). It is interesting to consider Mustafa et al.’s (2017) report which found that these delinquents usually have low self-acceptance, low self-emotional awareness, are not able to control their emotions, and have low levels of motivation. These youths have even posited that factors such as their inability to manage stress, their loose understanding of religion, and influence from friends, influence their delinquency. Kassim (2006) added that among the
main factors that lead to delinquent behaviors in Malaysia are loose family ties, overcrowded residences, and lack of or no religious education.

There are various approaches to examine the above-mentioned debates and discussions. According to Sharpe et al. (1995), the authorities may view such programs as an effort to habilitate and rehabilitate youths’ disruptive behavior. Meanwhile, the courts view them as a final opportunity for these youth to avoid imprisonment. In contrast, students view it as a form of punishment and banishment from society. Local schools view it as a dumping ground for the most problematic adolescents. Politicians view it as a relatively inexpensive way to maintain an environment of care, custody, and control. Families of these students remain ambivalent depending on whether they prefer to have their children remain at home or be sent away. Local merchants view the programs with suspicion and fear because they know who, among the youngsters, are involved in the neighborhood gangs. Furthermore, the situation worsens due to the decline in influence of traditional socializing agents such as religion and family. In other words, instead of providing an education program that provides an opportunity to change their lives, the available system unintentionally produces angrier individuals who are more demotivated to learn. As suggested by Nasir et al. (2010), some juveniles are suffering from cognitive distortion that may lead them to rationalize their delinquent behaviors as acceptable and rational. As a result, the system that is expected to modify the delinquents’ behavior, has been fueling the young offenders’ motivation for aggressive behavior.

Methods
Study design
As this paper reports a small part of a larger research work, the methodology adopted was simpler. There were two research approaches. Firstly, content analysis was done on printed departmental, government and research works relating to the issues surrounding delinquent students. Data from this approach provide important insights into the existing situations regarding Malaysian delinquent youths. Secondly, preliminary informal interviews were conducted with a teacher (hence referred to as RT) and an administrator (hence referred to as RA) at a correctional facility in Kuala Lumpur. This correctional facility houses youngsters, who are considered to demonstrate disruptive behaviors, and whose families consented to their admission to this correctional facility. The facility was established under the Department of Social Welfare, the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, Malaysia. It was established under Section 55 of the Child Act 2001 for the care and rehabilitation of children. The duration of rehabilitation is for the period of three years from the date of order, but the period may be shortened by the approval of the Minister or Board of Visitors or by amending, varying, or revoking the order of the Court of Children.

Sampling
Two respondents were involved in the preliminary informal interviews, one was the teacher, RT and the other was the administrator, who is also the Headmistress of the facility, RA. Convenience sampling was used since both respondents were the ones who met the authors during the curtesy visit. For the documents that were analyzed, the authors use several important keywords to search for journal articles on Google, including delinquent youths, education for delinquents, and delinquency theory. Further, the departmental and government documents include policies and guides regarding the Child Act 2001 (Juhary, 2022).

Data collection
Content analysis
For the first section of the data collection, issues that emerge from the printed documents were categorized according to themes. These themes then form the challenges of educating delinquent youths in Malaysia and will be further examined in the next section. There were two stages used during content analysis. First the authors searched for articles on Google using several key words: delinquent youths, education for delinquent youths, crime and teenagers, and teenagers’ disruptive behaviors. 27 articles were found, and 20 were used in writing this paper as they provided discussions and arguments relevant for the objectives of this paper; all were documented in the references at the end of this paper. Second, the authors searched for relevant national policies to support findings in the first stage. Three departmental and government papers were analyzed, and it was found that firstly, there are vague policies on educating delinquent youths in Malaysia; secondly, there is no single authority to take charge of these youths; and finally, there is no framework that provides direction for the education of delinquent youths. These strengthen the findings from the first phase of content analysis.

Informal interviews
The second research approach collected preliminary data from a curtesy and introductory visit to a correctional facility (Juhary, 2022). The visit took place on 5th August 2020, and lasted for about two hours. The objective of the visit was to
introduce the research purposes and the team members that would be coming for data collection for the larger research project. In so doing, this courtesy visit sought preliminary consent from the Headmistress or RA of the correctional facility for the members to collect data through observations as well as interviews in the coming months. This correctional facility is located in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and houses female teenagers only. During the visit, there were approximately 60 students residing in the facility between the ages of 12 to 18 years old. Two staff (RA and RT) received the authors for the visit and these were the ones whom the authors had informal conversations, or interviews with. During the conversations, they were asked five questions each, with some variations of other sub questions depending on their answers (Juhary, 2022). The conversations or interviews were not recorded as this was done during the courtesy visit; these serve as the background information on the learning situations at the correctional facility. Their responses were then triangulated with the themes found in the content analysis phase; these will be further explored in the next section.

Analysis

Content analysis

Content analysis in this paper adopted a qualitative approach, where the focus is on understanding and interpreting the selected written documents. The analysis was done manually based on the steps below.

a. selection of the articles or documents using Google

b. defining the units of analysis: the units of meaning that were counted based on frequency they appeared in the selected articles and documents

c. developing the codes: based on the frequency, key terms were identified

d. coding the articles and documents according to themes: for the identified key terms from the articles and documents, the authors then organized them into the identified themes

e. analyzing the results and drawing conclusions: three themes emerged that were the challenges of educating delinquent youths in Malaysia

Informal interviews

Questions were based on the literature review conducted for the main research and from the content analysis performed earlier. Seven questions were prepared, but only five were asked due to the responses provided. Further, both RA and RT were also probed on matters about educating delinquent youths at the correctional facility; nonetheless, nothing of significance was documented on these responses for the sub questions. The responses were analyzed manually and key terms that were found similar to the ones in the content analysis phase were added to the triangulation process done later.

Ethical approval and consent

The main research has been granted a Certificate of Ethical Research Approval (Control Number 02/2019) by the National Defence University of Malaysia (NDUM) Research Ethics Committee on 21st March 2019.

Participants gave informed verbal consent to take part in the interview and their data to be shared for research purposes.

Results and discussion

Based on the content analysis and the informal interviews at the correctional facility, three challenges emerge. They are unclear policies on the education of youths at correctional facilities; the lack of frameworks in facilitating the education of these youths; and the lack of awareness and understanding on the need for educating these youths.

The first challenge

The authors find that there are unclear policies on the education of youths at the facilities. The educational programs and existing modules are based on the National Education Policy, aimed at Malaysian students in general (see Budin, 2013). The basis of the education provided at the correctional facilities is that all children between the ages of 12 to 17 years old must be given appropriate education; it is compulsory for all children and teenagers to attend school or to be given the opportunities to learn regardless of the logistics, socio-cultural or socio-economic backgrounds. The fourth edition of the National Education Policy, published in 2017, states that there exist two types of schools (Henry Gurney and Integrity Schools) for delinquent youths, which are supported by the government (see Dasar Pendidikan Kebangsaan, 2017).
Alas, information about these educational programs is limited to the public. Since 2017 up until the writing of this paper, the policy, *Dasar Pendidikan Kebangsan*, that binds education of these delinquent youths is arguably just a policy that is still implemented, and the results have yet to be seen or have not been publicized. Notwithstanding this, the policy on educating delinquent youths is not reflected in the *Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025* (Pre-School and Post-Secondary Education).

Nonetheless, RA at the correctional facility argued that Henry Gurney offers an effective education system to the youth that it houses. According to RA, these youngsters follow the national curriculum, and they are also allowed to take the national examination for pursuing higher education after they leave Henry Gurney. The information about the education and training activities at these correctional facilities is not made public and it is not common knowledge; perhaps, if this changes, these delinquent youths can return to society successfully as the public would be more aware of the positive system in the facilities and may provide relevant assistance to these youths.

**The second challenge**

Despite some modules and initiatives by various governing bodies in Malaysia, the fact that too many bodies are taking charge of delinquent youths is baffling. On the one hand, there is this system of education by the Prison Department, and on the other hand, the Department of Social Welfare too has its own system. At the Ministry of Education level, officers in charge are monitoring the education provided to these youths, without taking an active role in ensuring that the guidelines are followed. What can be discerned from this is that because the rules and regulations apply to different groups or categories of delinquent youths, different authorities are given the responsibilities to oversee cases depending on the seriousness of the disruptive behaviors. The authors argue that this scenario reflects the need to have a clearer overall framework for educating delinquent youths; a framework that can house all youths under the care of one authority, which can prepare, plan, implement, monitor, and improve education and/or training programs for these youths. Further deliberation on this will be in the last section of this paper.

RA and RT at the correctional facility agreed that what the teenagers undergo at the facility follows the module given. This is illustrated in the summaries of the conversations below.

“*Despite following all the modules given by the ministry, we could see that they are not enough and may not be effective to these residents.*” (RA)

“*But this facility follows the standard module for teaching and learning. The module is provided by the Ministry of Education, and it is in accordance with the level of studies for the youngsters.*” (RT)

The main concern is to ensure that these youngsters are given sufficient skills before their release. The main activities and lessons at this facility include cooking, sewing and religious education. RA put forth that as much as the teachers at the correctional facility want to follow up on the youngsters after they leave, they simply could not afford the time and that some of these youths are not willing to have a prolonged relation with the teachers. As summarized based on the informal interview, RA put forth that,

“*Further, we are not able to trace and track the progress of the residents who leave the facility; this is rather crucial because we do not want them to revert to their old self.*”

One may wonder on the reasons for this; the authors opine that perhaps the youngsters do not want to be reminded of their time at the facility for unknown reasons to others.

**The third challenge**

Lastly, because of the lack of framework in educating these youths, society at large has an inaccurate perception of these youths and how they are educated and trained in the correctional facilities. According to RT, trainees face difficulties when they exit the facility because the community does not understand the functions and responsibilities of these facilities. The youths are kept separated for a duration that may or may not ensure that they are independent after rehabilitation. Despite being guilty of disruptive behaviors, these youths are young, and they arguably should be given the chance to redeem and improve themselves. The lack of awareness and understanding on the need for educating these delinquents may also be contributed to the laws that protect their cases. The authors agree that the youths and their cases should be protected but the activities and training modules must be broadcasted to the public more often. By doing so, society can process the information and education provided to these delinquents and society at large may be also able to offer suggestions on how to integrate these youths into the community.
Recommendations and conclusions

Given the discussions in the previous section, the authors propose two recommendations to face the challenges. The authors consider these recommendations long term solutions to educating delinquent youths in Malaysia. First, various responsible agencies and authorities must come together and decide on only one sole agency that will oversee the education and training of the delinquent youths. The main reason why this should be the case is that all planning, implementation, and monitoring will be done more systematically and effectively because there is only one caretaker. Second, when there is only one caretaker for these students, it is easier to properly work and perhaps improve on the implementation of the existing policy. The policy outlines what should be provided to delinquent youths, but not on how to work on or around it. Preparing a more workable framework based on the policy allows for clearer actions to be taken in ensuring that students can receive proper education and training that they deserve. The findings from this paper suggest that educating delinquent youths in Malaysia requires improvement in order to support these youths during and after their stay at correctional facilities. The authors opine that the best way to rectify this is to conduct an extended study on educating these youths. As a preliminary work, this paper has provided directions for the bigger research project in ensuring that delinquent youths are educated appropriately. This paper is not without its limitations. In explaining the current issue of educating delinquent youths, this paper serves as a groundwork for the bigger research project. The methodology itself was limited to content analysis of selected journal articles, documental and government policies, as well as conversations with only two staff at one correctional facility.

To conclude, this paper has identified three challenges and presented two possible solutions to solve these. To work on the challenges, all stakeholders must accept that these challenges do exist and be prepared to face these challenges. Then only these two solutions could be applied accordingly, and as mentioned earlier, these two are long term solutions that eventually will strengthen the process of educating and training delinquent youths, who are housed in correctional facilities in Malaysia. There is much to be done by relevant stakeholders, including choosing the sole caretaker for these youths and working out the acts and regulations related to the disruptive behaviors and educating these students. The authors opine that there is no better time than now to work on the framework of educating delinquent youths in Malaysia because the foundation has been laid; it is the matter of properly planning, implementing, monitoring, and improving what is missing in the education of delinquent youths.

Data availability

Underlying data

DANS: COMPLETE DATASET FOR EDUCATING DELINQUENT YOUTHS: A QUALITATIVE APPROACH TO UNDERSTAND THE MALAYSIAN STORY. https://doi.org/10.17026/dans-xc7-4uq3 (Juhary, 2022).

This project contains the following underlying data:

- Repository Data Availability F1000_24 May 2022.DOI.csv
- Repository Data Availability F1000_24 May 2022.URL.csv (contains all references cited in the content analysis)
- Repository Data Availability_Notes_RA_24 May 2022.pdf
- Repository Data Availability_Notes_RT_24 May 2022.pdf (responses from informal interviews)

Extended data

This project contains the following extended data:

- Repository Data Availability_Blank_Items_24 May 2022.pdf (Questionnaire/interview guide)

Data are available under the terms of the Creative Commons Zero “No rights reserved” data waiver (CC0 1.0 Public domain dedication).

Author contributions

Both JJ and ATFSM contribute 40 percent each for the write up of this paper, and EWB contributes 20 percent. JJ is involved in data curation, writing the original draft preparation and writing for review and editing. ATFSM prepares the conceptualization and methodology of this paper, and he secures the funding of this research. Lastly, EWB oversees the planning and execution of this research grant, including supervises the writing of this paper.
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References


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