

The Significant of History Curriculum in the Development of Active Citizen: A Critical Analysis of the ICSS History, Malaysia

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Abstract- This study discusses the aim and objectives of teaching and learning of history, Integrated Curriculum for Secondary School (ICSS), Malaysia. The introduction of this subject should help to develop skills in pupils in communication, understanding concepts, to extend vocabulary and use of language in different contexts, to encourage discussion, and, problem-solving. The important thing is that the pupil's acquisition of historical skills and to the development of personality and self-confident should each be systematically assessed in order to identify both progress and any need for further remedial or enrichment work. This is important in the production of motivated and active citizen who can learn effectively and be competent in their future jobs career. Consequently, the pupils are expected to appreciate and practise in daily life Malaysian multi-culture, appreciate the efforts and contributions of the national figures who had liberated and developed the nation, and, have historical and consciousness with regard to the existing community in the country. It is clear that history curriculum is the only subject at school to directly foster and develop active citizen towards the realisation of the Vision 2020 and 1-Malaysia.

I. INTRODUCTION

It is very exciting that history in the Integrated Curriculum for Secondary School (ICSS) has been included as one of the core subjects in the lower secondary and upper secondary levels of Malaysian schools. This subject is officially included in the time table of the ordinary, religious, science, vocational and technical schools in the country. Thus, it is necessary to study and analyse the ICSS history curriculum to see if it really could achieve the objectives of the syllabus, successfully producing the active Malaysian generations as stipulated in the Malaysian Education Philosophy, Malaysian development plans and meeting to a considerable extent the challenges of the Vision 2020 and 1-Malaysia vision.

The question is why history became considered as an important subject even after more than five decades of Independence of Malaysia on 31 August 1957?

II. WHY HISTORY BECAME CONSIDERED AS AN IMPORTANT SUBJECT IN THE ICSS MALAYSIA?

The Ministry of Education's Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) Malaysia stresses that the inclusion of history as a core subject was due to its intended role, first, to fulfil the noble

aim of the national education reformation as stipulated in the National Education Philosophy, that is:

To further develop the potential of the individual in a holistic, balanced and integrated manner encompassing the intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical aspects in order to create a balanced and harmonious human being with high moral standards.

(CDC, Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 1987, 2002)

The above statement has outlined clearly the type of pupil inspired by the Malaysian Education Philosophy.

Secondly, W.M Zahid (Ministry of Education, 1992) the ex-Director of Education, emphasises, since history directly deals with issues of nationality, politics and citizenship, it is very important for all pupils to learn this subject. Thus, history could be used as an effective instrument to create national identity, reinforce a sense of belonging and loyalty to the country and cultivate the spirit of patriotism. Consequently, through the acquisition of knowledge and appreciation of the country's history, it is hoped that pupils would be aware of the variety of social and national life and could this understanding foster national unity as stipulated in the Malaysian development plans.

Thirdly, the Ministry of Education (1987) stated that as a continuation from school level, beginning from 1991, the historical development of Malaysia should become one of the core subjects in the one-year In-service Teacher Training course. The aim is to raise consciousness among teachers concerning historical literacy and historical empathy, and sensitivity to the value of citizenship and patriotism.

Fourthly, most local universities offer the historical development of Malaysia as a subject in the first year, even in the non-arts courses such as Laws, Management, Medicine and Information Technology. In fact, the importance of history in the Malaysian schools curriculum, as well as at the university level, has been realised by Wang Gangwu who wrote History Teaching: Its Problem in Malaya 'We teach history because it is an essential part of the education of the young people of the most countries and all modern nations and will take for granted that is a subject which is taught in schools and universities and some educationists are agreed upon as a basic education for every body (Zainal Abidin Wahid 1965:1). Wang Gangwu (1968:1) admits that history is important as it will help to preserve the group identity and strengthen the group's capacity for service.

Fifthly, in order to assess the knowledge and understanding of the historical development of the country, all Government servants in Category B and above are required to sit an

examination, namely the 'Peperiksaan Am Kerajaan' (Government Examination) to qualify them to a permanent post. The examination is mainly about the process of nation building and the historical development of the country. This would be a great advantage for those who have learned history at school. In the ICSS however, everyone has the same opportunity to score.

These are the main reasons for history was considered as an important subject especially in the ICSS. It is not only important at school level but also for beginning a career and beyond. This is in line with the aim of the national development plans implemented by the government. Moreover, since the 13 May 1969 incident there has always been a distinct conviction that history could be used as means to achieve national unity.

There is little wonder, therefore, that after more than fifty years of independence, the Ministry of Education insists on including history as one of the core subjects in the ICSS, even for those people busily propagating and actively involved in the development of sophisticated technology and Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) projects. In this respect, the Ministry clarifies that the country does not aim to produce people of high literacy but illiterate in the history of their own nation.

As Omar (1992) says that history is now used as an instrument for unification or 'centripetal' and not for diversification or 'centrifugal' means as practised during the British administration.

III. THE PRESSURE FOR THE CHANGE OF HISTORY CURRICULUM, MALAYSIA

The Ministry of Education (CDC 1980) admits that the May 1969 incident initiated more serious efforts to revise the new history curriculum. The Ministry realised that one of the reasons was the lack of historical knowledge which could raise consciousness about the reality of the multiethnic-based politics, economics, social and cultural practices of the country.

Vasil (1986) emphasised that the chauvinist sentiments of each ethnic groups for their ancestors' motherland were very strong. Their demands respecting development and policy making, especially concerning culture, education and language always referred to their ancestors' home countries. This situation raised dissatisfaction among the 'sons of the soil' and urged the government to review the development and education policies. The pressure was led by the Malay politicians, academicians, professionals and socio-cultural groups as discussed in the previous chapter.

At this stage, the concern for history as a centripetal instrument especially in providing the perspectives of the process of social evolution in the country in the previous centuries became prominent in the government's policy making agenda. Indeed, the Ministry of Education (CDC 1980) stated that the revision of the history syllabus for Malaysian schools in the 1970s illustrated the preponderance given to national aspirations as stipulated in the *Rukunegara* and the New Economic Policy, especially with regard to the making of the new society and the development of national unity. For example, in 1971, a Congress on Malaysian Culture was held with the aim of promoting the Malaysian identity and culture, as a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society.

Ministry of Education (1992) stated that the history syllabus was revised mainly as a sequence of the recommendations of this Congress and the subsequent Malaysia History Seminars organised by the Malaysian Historical Society and the Historical Society of the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (National University of Malaysia) in 1973 and 1974. It was recommended that the history syllabus: should emphasise more the endeavours of Malaysians and reflect the views of Malaysian historians rather than the perceptions of foreign historians. (Ministry of Education, CDC 1992).

The resultant revised history syllabus for Primary and Lower Secondary Schools undeniably echoed their view when it states, in organising the aims and content of the history syllabus of a nation, it is necessary to ensure that it is consistent with the policy and constitution and the educational objectives of the nation so that it helps to achieve the national aims. In selecting the content of History, it must be consistent with the national aspiration stated in *Rukunegara* and the aim of teaching History itself (Ministry of Education, CDC 1992).

In this respect, the Cabinet Committee Report 1979 emphasised that it was important for pupils to learn history, particularly the history of Malaysia, because it is intimately related to the development of nation building, citizenship and national integration and provides perspectives of the process of social evolution in the country for the previous centuries (Ministry of Education (1992). Consequently, the Cabinet Committee recommended that:

a. The history syllabus should place emphasis on the people of Malaysia and their contributions: the same format should also be followed when teaching about the Southeast Asian countries; and,

b. The time allocated for history lesson must be followed by all schools.

(The Cabinet Committee Report 1979, Item 40: para 137-139)

These recommendations are related to the earlier statement of the Cabinet Committee when the Government, through the Ministry of Education, decided to reform, improve and enhance the quality of education so that the requirements of present and future national development could be met. The Report's recommendations were geared towards the following objectives are to achieve national unity in a multi-ethnic society; produce skilled manpower for national development; further extend the policy of democratisation of education in order to strike a balance in all aspects of education between rural and urban areas; and, mould a disciplined and morally refined Malaysian society (Ministry of Education, EPRD 1994).

Consequently, in the early seventies the Ministry of Education launched a programme for the collection of data on Malaysian historiography. The programme was initiated particularly by the Department of History, University of Malaya and the University Kebangsaan Malaysia. The majority of the research was based on fieldwork undertaken by undergraduate students of the two universities in their own localities. The aim was to collect, collate and compile data as part of their history course requirements.

According to Ministry of Education (1992) the main themes in the study were education, immigration, racial conflicts, the Japanese Occupation, Malay historiography, biographies of

Malaysian personalities and politics at the grass-root level. The findings have made a significant contribution to the formulation of themes and content of history in the school curriculum.

In 1977, the Ministry of Education formulated a history syllabus for secondary schools. The objectives of the history curriculum 1977 were as follows to increase awareness of national identity through the learning of history; foster a sense of belonging within the community and country as a whole; develop an equal awareness of its historical heritage of all the major ethnic groups among Malaysians; foster international understanding; raise interest in history; and, create and develop critical thinking (CDC, Ministry of Education, Malaysia 1979). The above objectives were synchronised with the contemporary aims and development of the country. First, the formulation of 'National Culture', second, development of national identity, third, the restructuring of society and fourth, the role of Malaysia in the region and internationally, especially ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) with the ZOPFAN (Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality) Policy and Third World organisation respectively. It is obvious that history was used by politicians and by government as an instrument to propagate national and international issues.

In 1983, the Malaysian Ministry of Education (CDC 1989) implemented the New Primary School Curriculum (NPSC) throughout the country beginning with Year One (pupils aged seven years). In the NPSC history was taught beginning with Year Four under the newly introduced subject 'Man and His Environment'.

In 1989, the Malaysian Ministry of Education (CDC 1989) implemented a new curriculum for secondary schools, known as the Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools (ICSS), throughout the country, beginning with Form One. In this curriculum history was included as one of the core subjects in the lower and upper secondary levels. The inclusion of history in the lower secondary level (Forms One, Two and Three) was merely a continuation of the 'Man and His Environment' subject of the NPSC and replaced the existing history syllabus. However, the inclusion of history in the upper secondary level (Forms Four and Five) in all type of schools was a new requirement. On one hand, it is a privilege but on the other, it is a great responsibility for history to achieve the aims and the aspirations envisioned in the National Education Philosophy and National Development Plans.

It can be seen that the decision to include history as one of the core subjects in the ICSS was not an overnight process. It involved the work and contributions of various individuals, professionals, academicians and historical associations. Consequently, the changes in the education policy and systems to suit the aspiration of building a Malaysian nation with a unified, multi-ethnic population able to produce the required quantity and quality of human resources, in accordance with the blue print of national development projects, have had a significant impact in the designation of the history curriculum of Malaysian schools, particularly in the ICSS.

IV. THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF HISTORY CURRICULUM IN THE ICSS, MALAYSIA

The Ministry of Education (CDC 1989) outlined thirteen objectives of school education in the ICSS. One of the objectives,

in line with the learning of history, was to enable pupils to understand, be aware of and appreciate the history as well as the socio-cultural milieu of the country.

In this respect, the Philosophy of History Education, Lower Secondary Schools, Malaysia, was formulated towards achieving these aims, to cultivate high standard moral values, the spirit of loyalty and pride in being a Malaysian. Through knowledge and appreciation of the country's history, it is hoped that the pupils would become aware of the variety of social and national order that is to be used as a main reference of fostering national unity and to reinforce the sense of belonging and the spirit of citizenship/patriotism (Curriculum Development Centre, Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 1987).

It is clear that there is a very close relation between the Malaysian Education Philosophy and the Philosophy of History in the ICSS. Consequently, the Ministry of Education (CDC 1987) decided to reformulate the aims and objectives of the old 1977 history curriculum in order to meet the aspiration of the Malaysian Education Philosophy.

The objectives, which were built into the History Syllabus ICSS (1988), were to enable pupils to:

- i. understand the political, economic and social development of the community and nation;
- ii. understand, appreciate and practise in daily life the Malaysian community values and culture;
- iii. appreciate the efforts and contributions of the national figures who have liberated and developed the nation;
- iv. have historical consciousness with regard to the existing community in the country;
- v. analyse, synthesise and evaluate the existing historical facts and evidence rationally;
- vi. upgrade thinking skills and develop maturity based on students' learning experiences in history;
- vii. be conscious of, sensitivity to and deeply responsible for law and order and the development of the nation.

The history curriculum in the ICSS 1988 was changed in accordance with the above objectives. The themes for lower secondary level are:

1. The Golden Era of the Malay Melaka Sultanate;
2. The kingdoms after the downfall of the Melaka Sultanate to the inauguration of the present Kingdoms;
3. The natural environment and wealth of the country which led western powers to colonise it;
4. The uprisings and movement to liberate the sovereignty of the nation;
5. The people's movements towards Independence;
6. The Formation of Malaysia;
7. The achievement of Independence.

The pupils of the Lower Secondary level should acquire knowledge and understanding of the above themes concerning the historical development of the country. At the same time, they are asked to identify the causes and effect of events which might affect their present situation. The pupils are also encouraged to use their own minds when examining the contents of textbooks in order to develop critical thinking.

It is clear that history within the ICSS was given a demanding task, namely to educate pupils to be 'good Malaysian

citizens' inspired by the national development plans and the National Education Philosophy (CDC 1987). The central feature in the process of education is the focus on pupils, whereby teachers actively involve pupils in the entire range of teaching-learning activities. The effectiveness of history in achieving the aims stipulated in the National Education Philosophy and National Development plans need further examination and discussion. The discussion on Malaysian ICSS history and local history in this study refers much to the learning and teaching approaches of this subject in English schools. The intimate political, economic, social and educational connections between Britain and Malaysia as mentioned above would lead one to expect some similarities in educational practice suitable and applicable to the Malaysian context.

This would not be to duplicate exactly the whole British schools system or copy the subject matter. The main point is to refer to the pedagogical aspects, particularly in the formulation of the curriculum, the implementation and the educational significance of both history and fieldwork history.

V. A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ICSS HISTORY, MALAYSIA

It has been emphasised that the overriding concern of Malaysia is to achieve national integration and unity, and that history is seen as an important apparatus towards achieving that end.

In this respect, the Ministry of Education (CDC 1987) designed the ICSS history with the intention to achieve the aim stipulated in the education philosophy and national development, that is to produce the criteria of individual who is 'balanced and harmonious; spiritually, cognitively and physically skilful; and practising high moral values'.

In fact, these values of history curriculum are in line with the observation of Sir Keith Joseph as quoted by Grosvenor and Watts (1995:19-20) that:

The knowledge, understanding and skills which the study of history can confer are of great value themselves. To acquire an interest in the past is itself a cultural acquisition which can enrich the whole of one's adult life...In addition history can...encourage young people to use their reason as well as their memories. It can develop skills of analysis and criticism...by encouraging pupils to evaluate primary source material...the skills acquired through the study of history can also enhance young people's use of language, numeracy, observation and communication with other people. History is indispensable to understanding the society we live...In short, properly taught, justifies its place in the curriculum by what it does to prepare all pupils for the responsibilities of citizenship (Keith Joseph 1984).

From this statement, it is clear that, Joseph believed that, basically history has a considerable capacity to prepare pupils with the knowledge, understanding, skills and responsibilities necessary for the 'good citizen'. Thus, the reformulation and designation of the ICSS history would seem to be inspired by a similar philosophy.

In the ICSS, the elements of history were restructured through a variety of perspectives including political, economic,

social, cultural and aesthetic (researcher's acronym- PESCA). For the lower secondary level (Forms One, Two and Three), the themes were confined to Malaysia, from the period of the Stone Age pre-history until the formation of Malaysian State of the Malay Melaka Sultanate. The themes were presented in chronological order and a continuation of the NPSC 'Mans and His Environment' subject.

In the Form One (CDC 1987) textbook it is shown that Malaysia was developed in various stages and influenced by many internal and external factors. For example, the Malay Melaka Sultanate founded by Parameswara, initially was a small fishing village but later developed as a kingdom and international trader in the region. It is stated in the textbooks that the country faced a lot of challenges such as the attacks by the Siamese, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British. In this respect, the contributions of local figures such as Sultan Mansor Shah, Sultan Alauddin Riayat Shah and Tun Perak were more clearly emphasised. The developments of the economic, social and cultural activities of the local people were also clearly highlighted (CDC 1987, 1988, 1989). There are a lot of differences here from the history curriculum during the British administration and before the implementation of the ICSS.

The content and presentation in the textbooks are in accordance with the aims of the ICSS history, that is to provide knowledge to the pupils and understand the process of nation building of the country over centuries (CDC 1987, 1989). The important thing in this aspect is that the history curriculum must be based on the Malaysian experience.

In fact, 'knowledge and understanding' of the development of the country is one of the fundamental element in the learning and teaching of history in England too. With regard to this, Sebba (1994) mentions that the requirements of historical thinking in the history curriculum should include three areas namely; first, knowledge and understanding of history; second, interpretations of history; and third the use of historical sources.

Within the 'knowledge and understanding' of history there were three strands namely; 'change and continuity', 'causes and consequences' and 'knowing about and understanding' key features of past situations. Change and continuity is concerned with the development of understanding of chronology (Sebba 1994). Bourdillon (1994) stresses that chronology provides a mental framework or map which gives significance and coherence to the study of history. We believe that a school history course should respect chronology and be broadly chronological in structure.

Sebba (1994) states that 'cause and consequence' is about identifying why things in the past happened, why particular individuals acted the way they did and what the consequences or results were of these events and actions. Knowing and understanding key features of past situations requires pupils to identify differences and similarities between a period in the past and the present or between two or more periods in the past.

'Interpretation of history' includes understanding the differences between fantasy and reality, looking at the different ways in which the past has been represented and investigating the differences between versions of the past. Sebba (1994:4) says that 'starting with the crudest of distinctions between facts and fiction this can develop into consideration of whether they are fictitious or not'. Bourdillon (1994:31) admits that the study of

history necessarily includes interpretations of history and its nature that has three distinct but related aspects:

- i. an acquaintance with the writings of historians and a knowledge of typical historical controversies, relating to the content of the course;
- ii. an understanding that history has been written, sung, spoken about, painted, and dramatised by all kinds of people for all kinds of reasons; and
- iii. an understanding that some histories have a high profile, others are hardly known, yet others (like the history of the differing roles of men and women) are now finding a place in the main arena of history.

Within 'the use of historical sources', pupils will be working on the skills of research in history such as developing powers of observation, listening, communicating, hypothesising, problem solving, library skills and interpretation. These skills may be enhanced by the use of various sources including portraits, photographs, objects, buildings, audio tapes, music and eyewitness accounts.

One of the principles of the ICSS history is the use of an integrated approach which entailed the integration of knowledge, skills and values; the integration of theory and practice; and the integration of curriculum, the co-curriculum and the school culture (CDC 1989). The intention is to promote to pupils the concept of 'history a-cross curriculum' meaning that the elements of history are acquired in other ICSS subjects.

This is in line with Black and M.MacRailld (1997) in Britain who stated that the links between history and the 'cross-curricular themes' of the history curriculum are extensive and include environmental education, citizenship, family life-cycles, economic and occupations of people in the locality. These were explained by Peter Burke in the *New Perspective on Historical Writing*, 1991. Sebba (1994:7) says that 'the importance of history as a vehicle for delivering this entitlement comes from a number of aspects of teaching of history which are intrinsic to the subject'. First, history deals with human motivation; and second, history has a very important part to play in pupils' cultural development. In fact, the fostering of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils has been given special attention in the ICSS history.

The value of motivation is included as one of the aims of the teaching and learning of ICSS history. It should help to develop skills in pupils in communication, understanding concepts, to extend vocabulary and use of language, especially Bahasa Malaysia in different contexts and to encourage discussion and problem-solving (CDC 1987). The important thing is that the pupil's acquisition of historical skills and to the development of personality and self-confidence should each be systematically assessed in order to identify both progress and any need for further remedial or enrichment work (CDC 1987). This is important in the production of motivated people who can learn effectively and be competent in their future jobs. The pupils are expected to appreciate and practise in daily life Malaysian culture, appreciate the efforts and contributions of the national figures who have liberated and developed the nation and have historical consciousness with regard to the existing community in the country (CDC 1989).

As an addition to the sixteen selected moral values of the ICSS, the Ministry (CDC 1992) reinforced the credibility of history subject in creating good citizens by introducing a specific value concerning citizenship and patriotism namely 'pride in being a Malaysian', 'patriotism', 'self belonging', 'discipline' and 'initiative and productiveness'. It might seem redundant as it duplicate other stated values, but it is specially designed for the history subject area. The more important thing is that it has to be clearly and truly implemented in the teaching, learning and examination of history and in textbooks. By this way pupils should realise the importance of the moral values inculcated in the subject whereas in the long term it is accordance with the aims of the national development plans especially the Vision 2020 as discussed in chapter one.

From the above, it is clear that history in the ICSS is viewed as an endeavour to enable the development of a balanced, integrated and well-rounded individual. The history curriculum at secondary school level was formulated to realise this aspiration, through a complete education which encompasses the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and the effective use of historical experience.

In this respect, Grosvenor and Watts (1995) suggest that pupils are entitled to learning experiences, which allow them to demonstrate their progress in knowledge and understanding of history; ability to give historical explanation; ability to investigate and work with historical sources of different kinds; ability to provide interpretation of the past are consistent with the evidence; ability to locate, select and organise historical information; ability to present findings appropriately and effectively give historical explanations; sense of the past; awareness of how the past helped to fashion the present; enthusiasm for exploring the past; respect for evidence; toleration of a range of opinions; and. construction approach to collaborative working.

Furthermore, Grosvenor and Watts (1995:40) suggest that pupil should be given various opportunities to show that they can do; increase their understanding of historical terminology and concept especially by revising these within and across the Key Stages; study the different perspectives of history and the diversity of human experience within an increasingly deeper and wider framework knowledge; use more complex sources, both primary and secondary; recognise how and why people interpret history in different ways; have space and time to investigate at their own level with increase independence; ask questions, return to these in different contexts and learn gradually to formulate hypotheses; try different ways of communicating their findings and in an increasingly sophisticated way; be engaged in an active and challenging learning process which stimulates interest and enquiry and therefore naturally leads into the understanding and skills which are part of history; experience teaching which has clear objectives, a variety of both methods and classroom organisation and is well and imaginatively planned; and, have regular positive and informative feedback on how they are progressing and how to progress further.

Therefore, it is important to revise the history curriculum of ICSS Malaysia from merely focusing on the pupils' understanding the history of the nation and memorisation of historical facts for examination purposes. The pupils develop their understanding of people and events in history and learning

how 'historical facts' develop in accordance with the nature of history should itself involve understanding of 'objectivity', 'empathy' and 'causation'. It is good to remember the recipe of a cake, but it would be much better to know how to bake it.

The pupils should be given opportunity to use a range of historical sources including written evidence, artefacts, pictures, photographs, music, buildings, sites and computer-based materials. They should also be introduced to a range of perspectives such as political, economic, technological and scientific, social, religious, cultural and aesthetic. They should be actively involved in historical investigations which stem from their own interests, through asking questions, selecting and recording their own sources, organising the information they collect and presenting their findings in a variety of ways such as orally, in writing or through model-making, pictures, drama or information technology.

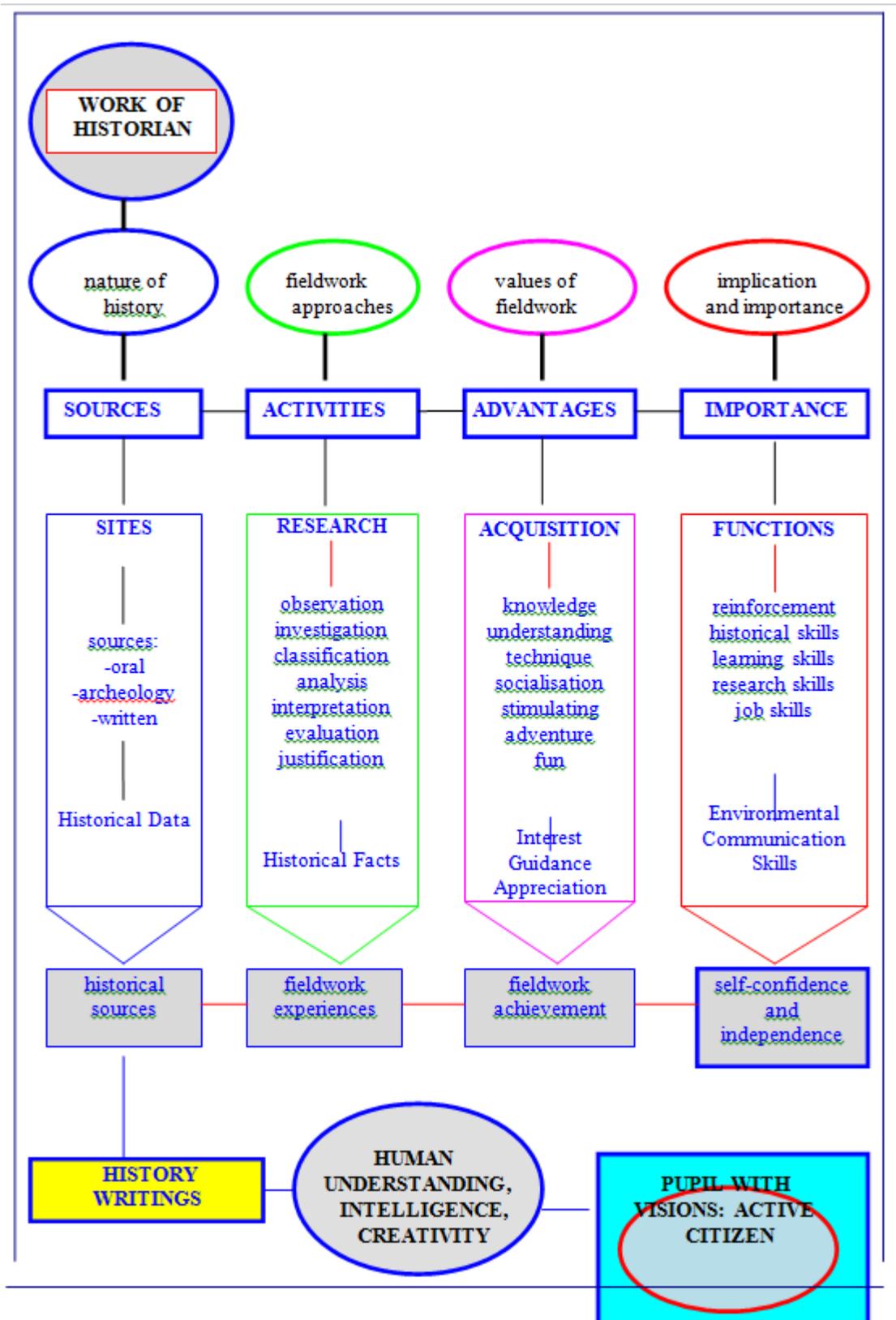
The Malaysian schools' history curriculum should recognise the essential interaction between content and process, the need for a balance of breadth and depth, and the importance of investigations stemming from pupils' own interests. The

pupils should be initiated, guided and shown how to investigate primary sources in order to find out about the relationship between past and present, or what it might be like to have lived at another time. Investigations should be recorded in a variety of artistic, creative and mathematical forms.

The planning might involve a sequence of stages such as an overview of resources, selection of focuses for investigations, selection of key concepts, consideration of possible activities related to each focus, long-term plans showing how activities relate to objectives and how they can be assessed. For the teaching and learning implementation more detailed, short-term plans required for each activity or activities in every lesson. The pupil should be exposed to the work of historian who works from scratch and patches of evidence, analyse and synthesise the facts until the writing of a historical book.

With regard to the work of historians it can be illustrated as shown in figure 1 below:

Figure 1:
Work of Historian: The Advantages and Functions of Fieldwork Approaches in History



VI. CONCLUSION

It is clear that the learning of history can enable pupils to develop potential abilities such as a better understanding of human beings and critical judgement, and can prepare the individual to face the problems of the contemporary world. In fact, since independence, the history curriculum has been changed in accordance with the availability of authentic and sufficient national history sources and to bring it into line with national aspirations which were closely related to the Malaysian development plans, the *Rukunegara* (Pillar of the Nation) and the New Economic Policy.

Hence, if lessons and activities are planned based on statement of attainment of 'comprehensive' global history objectives, it is possible to assess pupils' historical thinking as part of their on-going work in a variety of ways. Consequently, history in the ICSS would not only be seen as a core subject to be learned but furthermore it is relevant and central to the schools curriculum and to pupils' cognitive, emotional, spiritual, physical and social development in order to produce a 'balance and harmonious' generation as stated in the Malaysian Philosophy of Education and to considerably meet the challenges of the Vision 2020 in the development of the twenty-first millennium Malaysian nation.

This mean, the Ministry of Education has taken very appropriate steps to include history as one of the core subjects in the ICSS even though some people underestimate this subject, especially when Malaysia is busy in the development of sophisticated technology and Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) projects in facing the challenges of the Vision 2020 and achieving the 1-Malaysia vision.

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