



# **A PROPOSAL FOR DEVELOPING A LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN MANAGING STUDENTS' DROPOUT POST-COVID IN MALAYSIA**

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## ABSTRACT

Dropping out of education has been a talk about since the pandemic hit us in 2020, and it has severe consequences. Steps and directions have been taken by the Ministry of Education in Malaysia to stop students from falling in the first place. Since hybrid learning was declared in November 2021, there are not many changes thus far in the education system and life as more students drop out of their studies. This issue is indeed a tragedy why and has raised the question of whether the direction taken and done by the Education Ministry has failed. Therefore it is a pressing issue for educators and policymakers to resolve as the country cannot afford to have a generation who have missed out on their education.

**Keywords:** *Dropouts; Hybrid Education; Legal Policy*

## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

1. Malaysia faced a down turned in education when reports on student dropouts been increasing at an alarming rate as a result of post covid in late 2021. Among the factors that contributed to the dropouts were that some of the children had become demotivated or lost interest in continuing school physically, while some families had difficulties paying tuition fees and transportation fees or giving pocket money due to loss of jobs, retrenchment, and bankruptcy. Others would be lacking digital devices, data, and internet connectivity, especially those who live in rural areas.
2. Other factors are due to the closure of private learning centres that contribute to the access to education in poor and rural communities i.e. reliant on learning centres that were supported by civil society, faith-based organizations, private donors, and local communities.
3. Guidelines for Managing Risk of Students' Dropout in School (GPMBC) and Manual for Managing Student Dropout Prevention and Intervention for Highlighting Self-Excellence (SUDI 2.0) were two initiatives introduced in 2018 and 2021 respectively aimed at helping schools to identify and manage students at risk of dropping out effectively and systematically. Basically, both initiatives required the school management and counseling to assist and conduct intervention programs to identify students in prevent them from dropping out of school. The researchers are of the view that the initiatives were not wholly successful. This is evident when the number of dropouts are still escalating.

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## Research Objectives

The aim of this research is to propose and develop a legal policy framework that incorporates the law and education institutions and systems with a strategy for resolving student dropouts and integrating society intervention.

## Methodology

This research adopted legal doctrinal and non doctrinal methods by analyzing the existing initiatives and strategy of the Ministry of Education, as well as analysis methods by collecting data via library research techniques and interviews.

## Results

1. Both initiatives and guidelines carried out by the ministry were good as they are able to assist in reducing dropout rates through a concerted effort of school management and intervention programs that cater to and fulfill its goals with student dropping out issues. The detail processes are in fact becoming more efficient and can improve student outcomes. But in order to reach a maximum result, the researchers felt that a continuous effort is a must in taking care of their welfare and academic development, where this commitment requires a long-term effort with strong societal support. Furthermore, parents and teachers must be encouraged to take an interest in the children's studies.
2. It is suggested to legalize the existing initiatives and guidelines by incorporating them in the Education Act 1966 (Act 550). The detailed guidelines are developed and improvised by the Ministry of Education and academics to standardize the procedure as well as its implementation across all schools in Malaysia. Further, a suggestion for the ministry to regulate and recognize private learning centres initiated by individuals or organizations may help to improve academic development and manage the dropouts. This can be done by having dual academic programmes i.e. formal education and technical and vocational learnings. In order to ensure continuous effort and assistance from individuals or private organizations, the government should take support this idea financially. The government and society must pull out all the stops in making sure that no child is left behind if we really want to live up to our aspirations as a caring nation.

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