

Quality Education: Skills for Learning and Personal Empowerment for Native School Pupils in Malaysia

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Abstract

The Education Ministry is committed to implementing the indigenous Education Transformation programme via the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013 - 2025 to ensure they receive quality and relevant education in line with current needs. The aim is to raise the attendance rate and encourage 100 per cent of indigenous school pupils' enrolment with special programmes as well as an education transformation programme for the group. In line with the Government's aspiration, the main objective of this study is to examine the quality of education of indigenous school pupils in the district of Kuala Lipis, Pahang, Malaysia. This study used a semi-structured in-depth interview for data collection. Respondents were selected based on purposive sampling and comprised seven candidates: two officers from the Education District Office and Teacher's Training Institute and five schoolteachers around Kuala Lipis. The data for the quality of education of the indigenous school pupils were summarised thematically into two categories: skills for learning (*the way to know*) and skills for personal empowerment (*the way to be*). The skills for learning were divided into the pupils' creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. The pupils need encouraging teaching and learning activities to motivate them to participate in the teaching and learning process. One of the best ways is to include music and adventurous activities (e.g., chopsticks and tree climbing) to add more fun to the teaching and learning activities. School teachers must be creative and innovative in the classroom to ensure that learning would always relevant and suitable for their interests. The skills for personal empowerment were categorised into self-management, resilience, and communication. The findings indicated that indigenous school pupils possess the same potential as non-indigenous school pupils and are equally intelligent. However, they need continuous encouragement and motivation to move forward. In terms of resilience, indigenous school pupils could adapt to the changes in the environment, but the adaptation takes time. This study extends the existing literature by examining the factors that influence the quality of education of indigenous school pupils. This study only focused on examining the skills for learning and personal empowerment. Another limitation of this study is that the respondents were the administrators and schoolteachers

and not the indigenous school pupils due to the covid-19 pandemic. This research is expected to have a beneficial impact on society, the economy, and the nation primarily from the development of quality education among indigenous school pupils. In addition, this study contributes to the education quality literature and highlights the skills for learning (*the way to know*) and skills for personal empowerment (*the way to be*).

Keywords: Quality Education, Skills for Learning, Skills for Personal Empowerment, Indigenous School Pupils, Qualitative.

Introduction

Malaysia is a country that consists of multi-racial and multi-cultural ethnic groups. The three main groups are the Malays, Chinese, and Indians. Within a multi-racial society, there is a minority group known as the 'Orang Asli' or indigenous people. The indigenous people are divided into three main groups: Negrito, Senoi, and Proto-Malay. Each group is divided into 18 sub-ethnic groups, classified based on origin, language, and appearance. According to the Department of Indigenous People Development's (JAKOA) 2021 statistics, there are 178,187 indigenous people living in Peninsular Malaysia.

The JAKOA (2018) reported that 644 indigenous people pursued their studies in public universities, of which 264 were at the bachelor's degree level, 363 at the diploma level, 1 in the foundation or matriculation, and 16 were under the Technical and Vocational Training (TVET). This dispersion is because more attention was given to assisting the indigenous community concerning their education. The concern includes how to improve the school attendance record and infrastructure (The Sun Daily, 2019). Besides that, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has increased the number of trainees at the Teaching Training Institute (TTI). Currently, 80 graduates are serving indigenous schools throughout the country. An initiative by the government for the indigenous people to pursue their studies at public universities through the 'special lane' program has also shown a favourable outcome.

Education is a key factor in driving the development of a country. Through a good quality education system, a new generation could develop strong self-confidence to face future changes. The education system in Malaysia has undergone various evolutions in terms of planning, action, and implementation to meet today's challenges. In line with that, the process of quality teaching and learning must be emphasized by all parties to ensure that the goals of education for all can be realized. The Ministry of Education is committed to implementing the transformation of the national education system for the next 15 years. This educational transformation aims to equip every student in the country, including indigenous school pupils, with all the new skills they need to seize the opportunity and address the challenges of the 21st century (Malaysia Education Development Plan, 2013-2025).

The MOE is also taking the approach via various engagement sessions with the cooperation of the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) and the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER) has greatly benefited the indigenous school pupils. Where, the programme is aimed at improving the academic achievement and attendance rate of indigenous school pupils, especially in the transition phase between Year Six and secondary school via supplementary teaching methods based on UPSI education expert modules such as the basics to read, write and count (3R), sustainability of interest, motivation, soft skills, and communication (The Sun, 2022). To compete with developed countries in the world, the education system needs to be able to produce a knowledgeable and capable young generation that thinks critically and

creatively and has strong and capable leadership skills to communicate effectively. Every student in the country needs to be inculcated with the values, ethics, and a sense of responsibility as citizens, for them to be able to make the right choices for themselves, their families, and the country, as well as strive to overcome challenges (Malaysia Education Development Plan, 2013-2025).

The Malaysia Education Development Plan (2013 - 2025) emphasizes the aspect of curriculum transformation, i.e., several new approaches need to be absorbed in the education sector (MOE, 2017). In this regard, teaching and learning for indigenous school pupils is no exception. The collaboration between MOE and the Department of Indigenous People Development has launched the Indigenous People Education Development Plan to address the problems of indigenous school pupils' education (JAKOA, 2011). However, there are still issues that contribute to the effectiveness of education among indigenous communities. Hence, this study sought to explore the quality of education of indigenous school pupils by focusing on the skills for learning (*the way to know*) and the skills for personal empowerment (*the way to be*). One of the factors that concern the MOE in the indigenous communities is the rate of absenteeism at the indigenous schools (Salleh & Ahmad, 2009). The problem of absenteeism is due to economic, social, and cultural factors in the community. According to Sharifah et al (2011), the lack of a conducive learning environment due to poverty, lack of skills in the Malay language, lack of educational support from family, lack of awareness among parents on the importance of education, and geographical limitations caused the dropout of indigenous school pupils in the mainstream education system. In addition, the indigenous communities also feel that the existing curriculum is not relevant to their lives and environment. Accordingly, different approaches need to be considered to address the problem of the dropout of indigenous school pupils in the national education system to face the challenges of education in the new millennium.

In line with the Malaysian government's education aspiration, the objectives of this study are to examine,

- the skills for learning (*learning to know*) of indigenous school pupils in the district of Kuala Lipis, Pahang, Malaysia.
- the skills for personal empowerment (*learning to be*) of indigenous school pupils in the district of Kuala Lipis, Pahang, Malaysia.

This study was conducted using a semi-structured in-depth interview for data collection. Two officers from the Education District Office and Teacher's Training Institute and five schoolteachers around the Kuala Lipis district were selected as respondents. Based on the findings, indigenous school pupils possess the same potential as non-indigenous school pupils and are equally intelligent. However, they need continuous encouragement and motivation to move forward. Therefore, it is incorrect to blame the high dropout rate among indigenous school pupils solely on factors arising from their culture and attitudes. Primary initiatives by the schoolteachers are essential for the indigenous school pupils to be well prepared for higher levels with the skills required for education.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The following section briefly explains the literature review. The third section describes the research method. The results of the study are reported in the fourth section, and the conclusions and implications of the study are presented in the final section.

Literature Review**Skills for Learning (The Way to Know)**

There was a sign of improvement in the number of indigenous school pupils enrolled in schools. The overall enrolment of indigenous school pupils in both primary and secondary schools was 15,894 in 1994. The number doubled to 36,472 in 2009 (JHEOA, 2009) and increased to 38,000 in 2017 (MOE, 2017). Research by Abdullah and Mat (2012) revealed that some indigenous school pupils have a good view of education and consider it necessary to have it. Indigenous school pupils are seeking to be at par with the achievement of non-indigenous school pupils. They recognize that education is the only way to plan and build a better future for themselves.

However, the problem of dropping out of school remains significant. The most serious occurrences of dropout occur in the transition from primary to secondary school (Nor, 1997). The number of dropouts from 2005 to 2010 in secondary schools was three times higher than in primary schools (JAKOA, 2011). Similarly, Hamid a/l Sepeh (Tok Batin) stated that almost 65% to 70% of indigenous school pupils are not enrolled in Form One (Salleh & Ahmad, 2009). Currently, the teaching practices and curriculum content for indigenous school pupils need to be revised and improved (Wahab & Mustapha, 2015). This result was supported by Abdullah et al (2013), which concluded that Malaysian teaching pedagogy is a stereotype and fails to stimulate students' enthusiasm for attending school. Additionally, literacy in language learning among indigenous school pupils is found to be well below the national average (Letchamanan et al., 2021). Supported by Sawalludin et al (2020) that the attitude of indifference to education had caused the failure to improve the quality of education among indigenous school pupils.

This study identified three (3) learning skills for indigenous school pupils: creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving. The indigenous school pupils find the teaching practices boring and less exciting, there are poor teaching aids and less experienced teachers, and teaching is very bound to the syllabus (Yusof et al., 2017). Abdullah et al (2008) highlighted that teaching in indigenous schools' classrooms should be more innovative and creative by using the elements of music and singing so that the pupils feel fun and active in class. Wahab and Mustapha (2015) found that using teaching aids, such as visual aids, music, and attractive images, could assist the teachers in delivering information and knowledge, as well as attract the pupils to participate actively in class. For example, indigenous school pupils like to learn English and Mathematics through music and singing or by the use of nature (e.g., rocks, trees, and animals) rather than sit in class reading textbooks. Schoolteachers could create a classroom outside of the traditional classroom that exposes them to nature and a fun learning process.

Critical thinking and problem-solving skills are inextricably linked (Rahman, 2019). Critical thinking skills are considered important in the learning process because they allow the pupils to learn through discovery. In terms problem-solving skills, it is the most important skill required in daily life and is a core component in enhancing the pupils' foundation of knowledge and preparing them to overcome future problems (Rahman, 2019). Indigenous school pupils desire to be placed in an atmosphere identical to their home culture and environment (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). For example, they have the environmental knowledge and know-how to weave, paint, and craft. It would be more enjoyable and effective to teach

them utilizing a holistic approach by relating the world of the indigenous communities' activities to the education system (Wahab & Mustapha, 2015). As a result, the existing curriculum and pedagogy may not be ideal for indigenous school pupils (Mustapha, 2013; Ahmad & Jelas, 2009). Furthermore, the teachers would need to attend training and be prepared to teach and live within the indigenous communities' environment.

Skills for Personal Empowerment (the way to be)

Indigenous school pupils need skills for personal empowerment, such as self-management, resilience, and communication. According to Wrahatnolo and Munoto (2018), school pupils need self-management skills to manage goals, targets, time, independent life, and themselves and plan the use of resources including time, people, finances, and materials. The majority of the indigenous communities living in rural areas continue to rely on natural water sources, sunlight, river, and dirt roads (Deli & Yasin, 2016). Indigenous school pupils have good self-management to survive in the forest and appreciate adventurous activities. However, not all pupils know personal hygiene and cleanliness due to a lack of infrastructure, such as electricity and clean water. This life skill should be included in the current curriculum and pedagogy practice through guidance. Moreover, indigenous parents' attitudes play a significant role in their children's educational development. The parents should evolve as in-house motivators that provide constant encouragement throughout their children's educational journey, from birth to adulthood (Yusof et al., 2017).

Secondly, resilience skills enable indigenous school pupils to adapt to various changes and be flexible in group activities and learning processes (Wrahatnolo & Munoto, 2018). Education could generate students with flexibility and adaptability in the real world to take opportunities for careers. Indigenous school pupils could find better job opportunities and change their family poverty status. Furthermore, they could adopt a new learning environment, but the adaptation would take time. Covid-19 has had a significant impact on students who are unable to attend classes in their traditional face-to-face format (Tan, 2021). Indigenous school pupils face difficulties in learning due to the constraints in infrastructure and other geographical factors. They could not follow home-based learning and teaching (ODL) which resulted in poor internet connection in rural areas. On the other hand, it is challenging to deliver educational resources, such as textbooks and learning materials, because of the limited access roads (Abdullah et al., 2013). Therefore, Mohd Zamri Mustajap, the Deputy Director-General (Development) of JAKOA, suggested to the MOE send teachers to indigenous villages (Malaysiakini, 2021). The teachers could directly communicate with the indigenous school pupils and deliver learning materials with a fun learning process.

The government of Malaysia has planned and implemented several programs for indigenous communities. Indigenous parents should be provided with guidance and guidelines to ensure the effectiveness of learning and teaching. Most of the indigenous communities, particularly parents, are unaware of the importance of education in improving their own and their children's lives (Abdullah et al., 2013). Thus, the MOE introduced the Indigenous Adult Classes (KEDAP) program in March 2008 to indigenous parents. The KEDAP program's objectives are reducing illiteracy among the indigenous people, mastering the 3M's basic skills, encouraging children to attend school, assisting children with home topics, and continuing the government's efforts to overcome poverty via education (Aini et al., 2019). Thus, this program

could help increase education awareness of the indigenous parents and, indirectly, motivate the children to attend school.

Finally, poor communication between teachers and indigenous school pupils has been linked to the indigenous communities' educational backwardness. According to Abdullah et al. (2013), several indigenous school pupils were unable to comprehend the Malay language assignments given by the teachers. They only use their mother tongue to communicate and thus, feel comfortable communicating with their community. Wahab, Mustapha, and Ahmad (2016) suggested that education for indigenous school pupils should involve the native languages and cultures of indigenous communities in the teaching practice to achieve good academic results, increase school attendance, promote positive student behaviour, and reduce the number of student dropouts. Moreover, information and communication technology (ICT) has made it easier to reach many audiences and communicate at a distance faster and more ubiquitously (Wahab & Mustapha, 2015). Nowadays, most indigenous school pupils have mobile phones funded by parents and the government as a device to aid open-distance learning. ICT helps teachers to communicate with indigenous school pupils through mobile applications, such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and Google Meet. Indigenous school pupils require a lot of support and motivation from their teachers to take part in the teaching and learning process. Effective communication could attract the pupils to communicate with their teachers and actively participate in the classroom.

Research Method

This study adopted the constant comparative method of analysis that was originally developed for the grounded theory methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The method falls under an interpretive paradigm to build a theory rather than test the theory. It requires the researcher to take one piece of data and compare it to other pieces of data to identify similarities or differences. During this process, the researcher begins to look at what makes this piece of data different and/or similar to other pieces of data. The steps start with a problem statement of what the researcher wants to study and the tentative research questions. However, this methodology is new in accounting research compared to other fields of research (Parker & Roffey, 1997).

The constant comparative method is a more appropriate approach for this study because most prior studies on quality education had used the quantitative methodology with either a survey or an experimental study as the research design. Some of the variables examined using these methods have been studied for more than two decades. In addition, with the constant comparative approach, researchers could investigate the phenomenon more in-depth and uncover new variables relating to the phenomenon. Since there are changes in the global education environment due to the Covid-19 pandemic phenomena, there might be some changes in ensuring the quality of education among indigenous school pupils. Using in-depth interviews to collect data could reveal the actual variables that currently impact the quality of education among indigenous school pupils in the state of Pahang, Malaysia.

The interviewees were selected based on purposive sampling. It consisted of two administration officers of the Education District Office and Teachers Training Institute and five schoolteachers. The participants were chosen to represent the administrators and teachers around the state of Pahang. These administrators have more than five years of handling indigenous school pupils, and the teachers have more than three years of experience teaching indigenous school pupils. The appropriate sample size for qualitative research depends on

achieving theoretical saturation, which is when no new or relevant information regarding a category emerges from the new data collected. The main category or theme is considered well-developed in terms of its properties and dimension at the saturation point (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). A semi-structured interview was used in this study for data collection. The questions were mainly open-ended, allowing the researcher to probe more questions during the interview (Bryman, 2008). In addition, the interviewer usually has some latitude to ask further questions in response to what is seen as significant replies. To ensure all relevant information was captured during the interviews, the google meet sessions were recorded. Notes were also taken by the researcher doing the interviews as a backup if the google meet record was not functioning well. The recorded interviews were transcribed and summarized thematically into skills for learning (*the way to know*) and skills for personal empowerment (*the way to be*).

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study were extracted from the analysis of the transcriptions of the seven interviews as tabulated in Table 1. Three of them are females, and four of the respondents are males from their respective institutions. One of the respondents is from the District Education Office at Cameron Highlands. One officer is from the Teacher Education Institute, and the rest of the respondents are schoolteachers in the district of Kuala Lipis. Hence, they are suitable respondents for this study. The results are presented based on the two themes. The following sections discuss the perceptions of the respondents that centre on the issues in the related literature.

Table.1

The Respondents' Profile

Code	Gender	Institution
RDEO	Male	PPD – District Education Office
RTEI	Male	IPG – Head of Department, Teacher Education Institute
RTCH1	Male	School Teacher
RTCH2	Male	School Teacher
RTCH3	Female	School Teacher
RTCH4	Female	School Teacher
RTCH5	Female	School Teacher

The findings for the quality of education of the indigenous school pupils were summarised thematically into two categories: i) skills for learning (*the way to know*) and ii) skills for personal empowerment (*the way to be*).

Skills for Learning

The skills for learning are divided into the indigenous school pupils' creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving. The interview analysis showed that there are improvements in terms of the indigenous school pupils' enrolment in primary and secondary schools. It showed that the pupils have an interest in learning. It is supported by respondent RDEO in his statement that "*the latest overall data of 2021 of indigenous school pupils in the state of Pahang, who have registered in primary and secondary schools are 11,572 pupils as compared to 10,800 pupils in 2020.*" RDEO viewed that indigenous school pupils need an encouraging form of teaching and learning activities to encourage them to participate in class. He stated that

The PPD (District Education Office) and PPN (State Education Office) of Pahang are using a few entertainment techniques in teaching and learning. We will instruct our teachers to use these entertainment techniques in class. The entertainment teaching technique will be included in the lesson.

The other respondent (RTCH3) mentioned that teaching and learning need to be transformed more than the usual classroom practices to attract indigenous school pupils to learn. This need is because they are creative, and these skills can be used to gain knowledge through education. Another respondent (RTCH5) stated the following,

Related to creativity skills, I have been involved with several programs involving indigenous schools, where the school pupils tend to engage themselves with natural materials. For example, if we want to teach the alphabet, we can't use cards, but we have to collect leaves and stones to design an A-shaped letter then only they will be more interested to learn.

Another respondent (RTEI) highlights that *"they are inclined towards fun learning, which means activities that have movements, such as singing and dancing, as compared to only books and chalk, to keep them active and participate in class"*. In addition, respondent RTCH4 highlighted that *"it is also important to animate the language and culture of the indigenous communities"*. For problem-solving and critical thinking, the indigenous school pupils like to do adventurous activities (such as chopsticks and climbing trees) and they have their ways of solving problems. RTCH2 stated that *"for some student's guidance is needed for the first time, then subsequently they are able to handle it themselves."* He added by saying that *"I am bonded with my indigenous school pupils and embraced their culture, leading me to see their potential"*.

However, according to respondent RDEO, the number of indigenous school pupils would be reduced slightly by the middle of the year and would be reduced further to 50% by year-end. He mentioned that

Usually, in the student database application system (APDM), the number of students will decrease by the middle of the year. This is mainly because of different approaches and not an encouraging form of teaching and learning that was practised in certain schools.

Indigenous school pupils need motivation and encouragement from their teachers to participate in the teaching and learning process. One of the best ways is to include music to add more fun to teach because they tend to get bored easily. It indicates that teachers must be creative and innovative in the classroom to always be relevant and suitable for their interests. Therefore, it is inappropriate to blame the high dropout rate among indigenous school pupils solely on factors arising from their culture and attitudes.

Skills for Personal Empowerment

The skills for personal empowerment could be categorized into indigenous school pupils' self-management, resilience, and communication. In discussing the second theme, respondent RTCH5 highlighted that

The student's self-management at the school is very good and they can handle themselves very well. To the best of my knowledge, some manage well and some do not. From the point of view of time management, they can be on time for activities that interest them. However, with self-management in terms of personal hygiene and cleanliness, certain students might have problems.

This problem is because they stay in the forest with little or no electricity and water facilities. Further, they lack exposure and guidance from family, but they are comfortable with their condition. However, these values could be instilled in the indigenous school pupils by their respective teachers. As emphasized by respondent RTEI,

I will ask my trained teachers who serve in the schools of indigenous pupils to ensure that they bathe in the morning before going to school. After several times reminding, the students bathe in the morning and wear clean school uniforms to school.

With regards to parents' support, respondents RTCH4 claimed that *"if the students want to go to school, they have to get up early because of the distance and remote location, but some parents are willing to get up early to send their children to school."* Hence, it can be said that indigenous school pupils possess the same potential as non-indigenous school pupils and are equally intelligent. However, they need continuous encouragement and motivation to move forward.

In terms of resilience, indigenous school pupils could adapt to the changes in the environment, but the adaptation takes time. They need to feel a sense of belonging to the school and teachers. Due to the pandemic, indigenous school pupils are aware of open and distance learning (ODL). However, there is little or no internet coverage, as most of them live in rural areas or near or in the forest. Thus, the teachers must distribute the teaching materials to the indigenous school pupils in their villages. According to respondent RTEI,

During the pandemic, the school teachers will go to the villages every week to distribute the teaching materials handouts to the students. Some of the teachers meet up with their students on weekly basis to conduct a non-formal class with their students.

The schoolteachers are willing to work and sacrifice their time for the success of their student's education.

Interestingly, the interview findings also revealed that indigenous parents are also offered to attend adult classes to create awareness of education. It is to encourage and motivate parents on the importance of education. Respondent RTEI stated that *"the adult class is under the initiative of the Ministry of Education, Malaysia. It has been launched in March 2008 until today. It involves the parents of the indigenous school pupils with the intention to promote teaching and learning."* This special program was designed to meet the needs of the indigenous people. It includes the 3M concepts (reading, writing, counting) as well as building awareness and confidence in communicating and interacting with others. There are no age or gender restrictions to participate in this program.

The majority of the respondents agreed that indigenous school pupils have communication issues. Respondent RTCH1 mentioned that *"even among different tribes they are still feeling shy while they know they are both indigenous but they do not know the other tribes and refuse to interact."* However, according to respondent RDEO, *"for primary school indigenous school pupils, they do not mix with other races. They only communicate with their community. However, secondary school indigenous school pupils are able to mingle with other school pupils' diverse backgrounds"*. In addition, one of the respondents (RTCH5) said that *"there are improvements in communication between the indigenous school pupils in secondary school because they can communicate in the Malay language."* RDEO viewed that the indigenous school pupils are also exposed to communication through mobile phones,

If we look at communication using mobile phones, they are like us too. Gadget's skills are on par with all of us. They all have WhatsApp groups, the only thing that is a bit little difficult because they have to go to the suburbs with internet coverage.

It shows that they can adapt themselves to the change in the environment and technological advances. In short, the teachers need to understand the indigenous school pupils and their practices to know what are the challenges and barriers they face. Other than that, this understanding would create an opportunity to make a change and difference by building a good relationship with the pupils and boosting their self-confidence.

Conclusion, Limitations, and Future Research

The findings for the quality of education of the indigenous school pupils could be divided into skills for learning (*the way to know*) and skills for personal empowerment (*the way to be*). The analysis showed that indigenous school pupils have an interest in learning. Indeed, there has been a significant improvement in the education achieved for indigenous school pupils. However, they still need continuous motivation and encouragement from their teachers to participate in teaching and learning activities. It was also found that the indigenous school pupils have good skills for personal empowerment, which are self-management, resilience, and communication. The findings indicated that indigenous school pupils possess the same potential as non-indigenous pupils and are equally intelligent in their academic performance, as long as the right teaching and learning techniques are used to capture their interest in learning. However, they need continuous encouragement and motivation to move forward. It can also be seen that the teachers have put much effort into and can unleash the potential of the indigenous school pupils without neglecting their own culture and custom. This research is expected to have a valuable impact on society, the economy, and the nation, primarily based on the development of the quality of education of the indigenous communities. Through its findings, this research could assist indigenous households in improving their life skills level that providing an escalation in personal and social income.

Consequently, quality education may promote their social mobility. From the economic standpoint, this study has implications for developing relevant 'value-added' features from the perspective of indigenous community life skills. Besides, this study extends the theoretical and contextual contribution of how successful indigenous school pupils are in their learning journey and captures aspects that they have not been. A formal education system will facilitate their learning exploration, generating and developing ideas, experimenting, and

practising problem-solving using knowledge and skills which will lead to positive changes in attitudes and behaviours. It is important to establish short- and long-term strategies for effective pedagogical which require appropriate learning materials to support the pedagogies and environment for equitable and quality learning opportunities. Therefore, efforts from both educational and institutional perspectives are required. A caveat, this short paper only unveils how indigenous school pupils lead their learning process, making explicit their significance within their context of the quality of education. Although this study has significant contributions, it is not free of limitations. This study focused on examining the skills for learning and skills for personal empowerment only. Another limitation of this study is that the respondents were the administrators and schoolteachers and not the indigenous school pupils due to the covid-19 pandemic. Future research could consider other variables, such as skills for active citizenship and humanity. The respondents could be the pupils of the indigenous people to gauge a better understanding of the quality of education provided to the indigenous community.

The grounded theory of leading learning reveals how the orang asli students survived the deficit theorizing that surrounded them.

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