

# **In-Service Teacher Training in Malaysian Chinese High Schools: Current Situation, Characteristics, and Issues**

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## **Abstract**

If education is to equip students with the basic knowledge to teach, then in-service education is to enable teachers to raise their teaching competence and to cope with changing demands to keep abreast of the times. Hence, in-service training is both a difficult and challenging task. This study is based on the teacher training programmes that are currently managed by New Era College of Malaysia. Over time, Chinese secondary education in Malaysia has evolved a system for teacher education to meet local requirements and to develop a model of in-service training in collaboration with foreign universities. This study highlights the current scene in teacher training in Chinese education and to examine its major characteristics, constraints, issues and emerging trends. The cumulative experience acquired from these training programmes will provide useful reference and guidance on the practical aspects of implementation and management of teacher training in Malaysia and even in other countries of Southeast Asia.

**Key words:** Chinese Independent High Schools, in-service teacher training, characteristics, issues and trends

## **Introduction**

The training of teachers is an integral part of an educational system. The “quality” of education is determined by the “quality” of the teachers. How well teachers perform in a professional and competent manner is in turn dependent on the type of training that they receive. Hence teacher training is an indispensable service to impart the latest principles of pedagogy and concepts of education to trainees who will be entrusted with the arduous task of educating an entire generation of students.

Malaysia has a relatively long history of teacher training. The earliest centre to train teachers serving in Malay schools was established in Singapore in the late nineteenth century. Similar training centres were initiated in the states of Perak, Melaka, Kelantan, and Johor between 1898

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and 1919. These separate entities were subsequently closed down when the Sultan Idris Training College was established in 1922 in Tanjong Malim, Perak (see *Academiatorials*, 2010).

To cater to the needs for trained teachers in English schools, teacher training centres were set up in Kuala Lumpur in 1905 and in Penang in 1907. But it was not until after the Japanese Occupation of 1941-1945 that the teacher training programme was put on a firmer footing when trainee teachers were dispatched to England for training.

The Kirby and Brinsford Teachers' Colleges began to conduct two-year courses in 1951 and 1955 respectively (*Academiatorials*, 2020). The training programme lasted for about ten years, during which as many as 1,500 teachers and over 400 teacher-trainers graduated at Kirby (*Sunday Star*, 23 March 2014). These colleges succeeded in grooming a core cohort of teachers who were highly proficient in English. Today, the Malaysian Ministry of Education runs a network of 27 specialized teacher training institutions in Peninsular and East Malaysia. These cater to the needs of separate subjects covering various disciplines and languages. Most of these institutes are organized under departments such as Malay Studies; language units dealing with English, Chinese and Tamil; Islamic Religion and Moral Studies; Science and Environmental Studies; Social Studies; Information and Technology; and Physical Education (Almacen, 2015). Teacher education at the university level began in the University of Malaya in 1963 when the School of Education was upgraded into a Faculty in 1965 and headed by Ruth Wong (Wong, 2013: 33). The training of graduate teachers was later extended to Universiti Sains Malaysia in 1969 and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia in 1971.<sup>1</sup>

The situation of teacher training to serve the needs of Chinese education is a different story altogether. This is particularly so with Chinese secondary education. In Malaysia, education in the medium of Mandarin, more popularly known as “Chinese education”, occupies a unique position in the education system of the country. Outside Mainland China, Hong Kong/Macao and Taiwan, Malaysia is the only country with an “integrated” system of Chinese education from primary to tertiary levels. Although Chinese primary schools are part of the national education system, those at the higher levels are not. Sixty Chinese secondary schools distributed in some of the larger towns of Malaysia operate as “independent” entities. These are popularly known as Chinese Independent High Schools (CIHS). A nationwide Chinese community-sponsored education body known as the United Chinese School Committees' Association of Malaysia (or Dong Zong in short) administers a uniform examination for students in year 12, and some of these schools also participate in the government secondary school examination offered under the national education system. The special CIHS certificate, known as the Unified Examination Certificate (UEC) is hitherto not recognized by the government but is accepted as a qualification for direct admission to an increasing number of foreign universities in such countries as Australia, Britain, Canada, China/Hong Kong/Taiwan, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United States of America. Chinese high school graduates have been worthy of their credentials and have performed well in foreign universities.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the relatively long history of Chinese education in Malaysia, it is beset with numerous problems and constraints that pose serious challenges to the Chinese community. Operating in a multi-ethnic setting in which Malay is the official language and English is the second language, Chinese education occupies a marginal position that is kept alive by sustained financial and moral support of the Chinese community. Operating under testing circumstances, these schools are confronted by problems of funding, shortage of qualified teachers, and contention with official policies, among others.

Numerous studies on Chinese education in Malaysia have been published in the recent past. These have generally emphasized the plight of Chinese education arising from the ethnic and linguistic complexities of Malaysia and the political contestations between the government and the Chinese community (see L.E. Tan, 1997; 郑良树/Tay Liang Soo, 1998-2003; Lee, 2011; Kua, 2008). However, the issue of teacher training has barely received any attention.

Despite official indifference, Chinese schools constitute an important community project that is dedicated to nurturing the talents of the young. Over time, the need for qualified teachers has become indispensable and the pressure for a constant supply of such teachers is mounting. Back in 1983, the academic qualifications of CIHS teachers were generally satisfactory, as 57 per cent among them possessed the bachelor degree and 2.6 per cent had higher degrees. It is not possible to ascertain the number who had been trained to teach. From the 3.1 per cent among non-graduates who had teacher training certificates (Lee, 2011: 179), the corresponding proportion among graduate teachers could not have been any higher. A real issue confronting the CIHS is therefore the shortfall of qualified teachers. In 2007, the student enrollment and teaching staff of CIHS were 55,818 and 3,215 respectively (Lee, 2011: 234).

In the absence of access to official teacher training, a way has to be found to meet the training needs of this army of teachers. In 2007, Dong Zong and the CIHS management, through its National Working Committee, launched a package of training programmes to meet the long-term needs of the CIHS. As a community-funded college founded by the Dong Jiao Zong Higher Learning Centre Bhd., New Era College (NEC) was charged with the duties to co-ordinate and supervise the programme.<sup>3</sup> NEC's Department of Education has since launched a teacher training programme in collaboration with selected foreign universities and the CIHS.<sup>4</sup> The earliest training programme was conducted in several regional centres to reach out to the teachers. Besides the College itself, four other centres were located in Zhong Hua High School in Kuala Lumpur, Han Jiang High School in Penang, Jian Guo High School in Sabah, and the Perak Council of Chinese School Committee (Lee, 2011: 233).

This study will examine the hitherto neglected subject of teacher training in CIHS. The first part examines the current situation of teacher training and its various constraints, followed by a study of the design and features of the training programme. The final section will deal with some broad issues and trends in teacher training.

## Current Situation and Constraints of In-Service Teacher Training

Perhaps the earliest instance in the training of Chinese school teachers took place in Kuala Lumpur in July 1924 in an attempt to supply locally-trained teachers to the Chinese schools in Malaya (*AR on Education in FMS for the Year 1924*, in *Supplement to FMS, 1925*: 18, quoted by A.B. Tan, 2015: 190). However, it was only after the Japanese Occupation that the Chinese community began to focus their attention on the development of Chinese education. Two nationwide organizations were inaugurated in the early 1950s, one mobilizing the teachers and the other the board of directors of Chinese schools. The former was the United Chinese Teachers' Association (Jiao Zong in short) established in 1951 and the other was Dong Zong established in 1954. The latter's daily administration is spread over eight bureaux, including one charged with the responsibility of managing the work of teacher training of CIHS.

The 60 CIHS in Malaysia boast a current enrollment of around 60,000 students (董总考试局/Dong Zong Examination Bureau, 2012: 411). This number represents a substantial increase over the total of just more than 41,000 in 1980 (Lee, 2011: 179). In the past four decades, more than half a million students have graduated from these schools. A recent trend is the admission of an increasing number of Malay and Indian students in CIHS. This is perhaps a reflection of the quality and resilience of the Chinese education system that has been able to stand the test of time.

### Current Situation of In-Service Teacher Training

The current teaching staff strength in CIHS exceeds 3,900 in number, comprising a multi-ethnic team of Chinese, Malay and Indian teachers who respectively account for 87.9, 5.1 and 5.9 per cent of the total (董总学务与师资局师资组/Dong Zong Schools and Teachers Bureau, 2013). The proportion of non-Chinese teachers is likely to increase in the teaching of the national and English languages.

The Education Affairs and Teaching Personnel divisions of Dong Zong are assigned to implement and manage the teacher training programme. The scope of work of these divisions covers the following aspects:

- (a) Training of novice teachers: to assist them to grasp basic professional teaching skills.
- (b) Subject training: to improve teaching skills through the competent use of teaching materials and methods.
- (c) Professional training for Form Teachers: to raise the professional quality and performance of Form/Class teachers through short-term and intensive training courses.
- (d) Management training for senior administrative staff: to provide short-term training programmes in co-operation with relevant organizations in China or Taiwan for the purpose of upgrading administrative skills and to nurture a core of future administrators.

Training that is aimed at upgrading teaching and administrative skills is accomplished through a variety of approaches and methods. These include the following components: special lectures or workshops conducted by invited specialists and academics and are meant to raise

awareness on educational trends, teaching methods and skills; discussion groups among teachers to exchange ideas and experiences on teaching, curriculum, instruction materials and methods for the professional improvement of teachers; mobilization of experienced teaching staff in different areas of specialization to mentor middle and junior level staff and to help them in their professional development; and special sessions to observe and to share their thoughts on instructions among teachers from different schools (王淑慧/Wong Shwu Huey, 2012).

In recent years, a depository of resources in teacher training has been built up in the form of services provided by several local institutions of higher learning. The liberalization of higher education in Malaysia has encouraged more educational exchanges and co-operation between local and foreign universities. Teacher education programmes in Chinese and English are available at Southern University College, HELP University, and Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman. These programmes are an important resource and reference for the training of teachers of CIHS.

Taiwan has for decades been a destination for higher education for graduates of Chinese high schools, and Mainland China has become an attractive alternative in recent years. These graduates as well as some from local universities form the backbone of the teaching staff in CIHS. Other than Dong Zong, the Taiwan and Mainland China graduates alumni have contributed positively to the promotion of teacher training in CIHS. They have spared no efforts to bring in experienced teachers from Taiwan and Mainland China, promote exchanges on teaching, and sponsor degree programmes in the teaching of Chinese and related courses. The final outcome has been to enhance the professional quality of CIHS teachers.<sup>5</sup>

### **Constraints and Problems in Teacher Training**

To undertake teacher training without official assistance is a gigantic task indeed. The constraints and problems that have to be faced and overcome are numerous. This issue may be examined from four perspectives pertaining to the desire for training, planning, available resources, and management of training programmes.

Unlike the days of limited job opportunities several decades ago when teaching was held in high social esteem and a profession of choice among fresh graduates, it is now often considered as an employment of last resort. The purpose of education today is increasingly examination-oriented and results-based; teachers are forced by the demands of the time to produce “results”. A key performance index by which a teacher’s prospects for advancement are assessed is the success rates of students and the brilliance of their examination scores. Teachers are required to spend large amounts of time and energy to help students to excel in examinations. They bear much of the blame when students perform poorly. Additionally, teaching in CIHS is not confined to imparting knowledge alone but also to act as class mentors as well as to plan, execute, and supervise numerous extra-curriculum activities. The heavy teaching and administrative workload has effectively kept many away from professional training. This in turn affects enrollment in many in-service training programmes or frustrated efforts to achieve the desired results.

Another constraint in the running of teacher training is the lack of planning. A primary disincentive to potential trainees is the timing and duration of the training programme. A common feature is the holding of a “one-off” 2-3 hour or a half-day session of lectures and discussions on a selected theme. Many trainees struggle to engage themselves totally on the subject in a productive manner. The contents of training tend to focus largely on teaching skills with little attention on the administrative set-up of schools and the personal development of the trainees. The training often takes the form of special lectures by foreign or local specialists, or sessions on the sharing of teaching experience with senior teachers. As the exercise tends to focus largely on tips on teaching, it is unlikely to stimulate meaningful interactions or lively exchanges of ideas between instructors and trainees.

The training of CIHS teachers operates on the limited resources of several stakeholders. These are non-profit educational organizations headed by Dong Zong and complemented by NEC, the CIHS themselves, several private universities, and the Taiwan and Mainland China graduates alumni. While united in their good intention to help the CIHS, they have yet to pool their considerable resources effectively and to act in unison. Instead, each acts on its own agenda and the final outcome is the replication of efforts at the expense of a uniform approach to teacher training.

The different stakeholders generally appoint a unit with one to three executive staff to handle matters pertaining to teacher training. From the current organizational set-up, it is obvious that there is a lack of suitable personnel to run an efficient nationwide teacher training programme. The availability of personnel who is sufficiently knowledgeable or competent to conceptualize and plan an effective teacher training programme will have a direct impact on the success of the entire exercise.

The current situation among the teaching staff in CIHS is that almost one-sixth have not received any formal training in education. Despite their academic credentials, their basic knowledge of education and its structure can only be strengthened through in-service training in the art of teaching to raise the level of their performance.

### **The Design and Characteristics of Training Programmes**

In co-operation with selected foreign universities, the Department of Education of NEC administers under- and post-graduate programmes on teacher training and education in general. The programmes are offered in Mandarin to adapt to the needs of CIHS teachers in the areas of education, teaching, and administration. Two major aspects that deserve attention are those dealing with the design of systematic training programmes and a three-step training model.

#### **Design of Systematic Training Programmes**

The last two decades have witnessed a deepening commitment among the CIHS in teacher training in line with the trend of educational reform in many parts of the world. NEC too has responded accordingly by putting in place collaborative schemes with foreign universities to

offer various training programmes to meet the needs of CIHS teachers. Training programmes have been introduced in three broad areas aimed at raising the professional level of teachers, promoting their personal development, and opening access to research-based post-graduate studies.

### ***Training for Professional Advancement***

In 2013, available statistics compiled by Dong Zong show that 1,553 out of 3,936 CIHS teachers in possessed professional qualifications in education. That this number represents only 39.5 per cent of the total teaching staff indicates that six out of every ten teachers have yet to be properly trained to teach professionally (Table 1).

Table 1. Qualification in Education among CIHS Teachers, 2013

Qualification in Education	Number of Persons	Percentage
Education	1,553	39.5
Without education	2,383	60.5
Total	3,936	100.0

Source: Dong Zong Schools and Teachers Bureau, 2013

A professional diploma in education, launched in 1998, focuses on education *per se* and to impart teaching skills. The primary aim is to upgrade basic knowledge concerning the teaching profession and, through the integration of theory and practice, to enhance the teaching skills of trainee teachers. The curriculum is centred on teaching, with courses on education psychology, principles of education, class management and related subjects, and supplemented by observations on classroom teaching in the parent or other schools (Table 2).

Upon completion of the programme, trainees are subjected to teaching inspection by NEC-appointed observers. These observers are experienced lecturers from local colleges and universities as well as senior teachers from the CIHS. Trainee teachers are assessed on their competence in combining theoretical principles and real-life teaching practices.

Table 2. Professional Diploma in Education, 2013

Course Title	Credits
Education Psychology	4
Principles of Education	4
Class Management	4
Multimedia-assisted Teaching and Action Research	4
Malaysian Education Studies	4
School Counselling Work	4
Observation on Teaching I	3
Observation on Teaching II	3

Source: Department of Education, New Era College, 2013

### ***Development-Oriented Training***

Emphasis on professional training has generated a demand for “development-oriented” programmes in recent years. Easy access to knowledge and information on the teaching profession will enable teachers to raise and broaden their expertise in teaching and in various forms of “school-oriented” training. The latter is based on the development needs of the school and teachers receive on-the-job training to raise their professional performance.

Based on the special needs of different schools, NEC provides advice and assistance in devising training programmes and in mobilizing suitable specialists to serve as trainers. The thematic focus of these training programmes falls under four broad categories, namely, education, teaching, management, and counseling (Table 3).

Table 3. Thematic Focus of In-Service Training Programmes

Focus	Area of Emphasis	Number of Programmes 2010-2013
Education	Education Management and Leadership	9
Teaching	Principles of Teaching	9
	Medium of Instruction	1
	Teaching Evaluation	3
	Teaching Observation	5
Management	School Operation and Management	1
	School Crisis and Conflict Management	2
	Classroom Operation	6
Counselling	Principles and Practice of Counseling	5
	Psychology and Emotions of Teachers	10
	Group Dynamics	2
Others		2

Source: Department of Education, New Era College, 2013

As a base for the practice of teaching, the school is the cradle for the professional development of teachers. As such training on the job is a way to increase the teachers’ self-worth and to overcome the lack of competence. At the same time, training programmes may allow the school management and teachers to work together to seek solutions to problems. Equally important, training provides a mechanism by which the potentials of teachers and the resources of each school may be fully exploited. In short, training is targeted to meet specific and practical needs. It is an inevitable trend of development in the training of teachers in CIHS. Between 2010 and 2013, the demand for in-service training has increased considerably from less than a handful of classes in each of the first two years to 21 and 17 respectively in the last two.



### ***Towards Post-Graduate Training***

An important component of in-service training takes the form of post-graduate courses. The objective is to raise the awareness of teachers on new pedagogic and theoretical insights and trends and to increase their ability to explore and reflect on these developments. A scheme was launched by Dong Zong in 2003 in collaboration with Central China Normal University in Wuhan to facilitate the pursuit of higher degrees in education by CIHS teachers during school vacations. Management of this scheme was transferred to the Department of Education of NEC in 2008. To date, a total of six doctoral and ten masters candidates have completed their studies, while another eight are about to graduate, of whom six are for the Ph.Ds.

It was also in 2008 that NEC initiated its collaboration with Taiwan's Zhanghua/彰化 University to initiate a masters programme on school management to nurture teachers in management skills. The inaugural class in 2011 attracted 21 persons, followed by 16 candidates in 2012 and 25 in 2013. The course of study consists of 16 subjects conducted at NEC by academic staff from Zhanghua University and a *viva voce* on the thesis in Taiwan (Table 4). This programme is to serve as the foundation by which to build up an administrative corps of professional personnel in the Chinese schools.

Table 4. Master's Programme in School Administration

Course Title	Credits
School Administration	2
Education Psychology	2
Development Psychology	2
Topics in Psychological Health	2
Methods in Education Studies	2
Multi-Cultural Education	2
Education Statistics	2
Social Psychology	2
Youth Psychology	2
Problems of Practical Education	2
Education Aesthetics	2
Action Studies	2
Moral Principles	2
Topics in Curricular Studies	2
Class Management	2
Organizational Psychology	2

Source: Department of Education, New Era College, 2013

### **Formation of a Three-Step Training Model**

Past training programmes had contained components incorporating the principles of theory and teaching practice. These were often assembled and presented as teaching materials that were not always easy to understand. To be effective, the in-service training programme should be one in which theory and practice are well integrated. It is clearly not advisable and unrealistic to over-emphasize theories at the expense of practice, while an overdose of practice will marginalize the importance of theory. Hence, in order to place in-service training of CIHS teachers on solid ground, due attention must be given to the proper integration of the principles of teaching both in theory and practice.

Training under this model of equal emphasis on theory and practice involves three aspects of work. The first is to provide the teachers with basic theoretical courses. These will emphasize education psychology, principles of pedagogy, teaching, counselling, issues and trends of education in Malaysia and related subjects. These courses are to strengthen the teachers' grasp of the structure of theoretical knowledge in the broad discipline of education. The next is to provide training on teaching that is relevant to real-life situations and modern needs. This includes teaching practice and observation on performance. Exposing teachers to practical performance in the class will enable them to experience how the best practices in teaching may be acquired for their professional development. Lastly, teachers may pursue post-graduate studies and research on specific aspects of teaching and education. They will then begin to appreciate the rules and principles of education and thereby to deepen their understanding of education issues and related problems. Equipped with these abilities and aided by their experience in teaching, the teachers are then better prepared to face the challenges of Chinese education and to formulate appropriate strategies to safeguard its future.

### **Issues and Trends in Teacher Training**

One of the demands of contemporary reform and development in education is the need for professionalism among teachers. In-service training is an essential approach to elevate the teacher's overall character and professionalism. Efforts towards this end have to take into account specific issues and trends in in-service training.

#### **Issues Concerning In-service Training**

The collaboration between Dong Zong and the CIHS in the provision of in-service teacher training has been going on for 17 years since 1998. This joint programme has produced several positive outcomes. From the perspective of implementation, the following items demand special attention.

### ***Roles of Training Providers and School Management***

It is necessary for training providers and the management of individual schools to have a common understanding of their respective roles. In-service training adds value to the worth of each trained teacher especially in the enrichment of experience and enhancement of skills. However, from the perspective of the school, what does in-service training bring? What are the things that teachers ought to know and need to learn? On the objectives of in-service training, the training providers should seek to match the needs of both the school and those of the teachers. It is essential that the training provider and school management have a common understanding as to the maximum benefits that trainees may derive from their training. In the long-run, the role of in-service and other forms of training is to promote the professional development of teachers and the overall interests of the school.

### ***Commitment and Acceptance of In-service Training***

In-service teacher training is adapted to meet the actual needs and situations of CIHS. Its emphasis is therefore placed on defined objectives, focus, and practical considerations. In this connection, it is important to ascertain teachers' attitudes towards training. In view of the heavy workload of teachers, some may tend to disregard the relevance of training and lose interest or waver in their commitment. Excessive or inappropriate training contents may arouse a subconscious reaction against training. Care is therefore needed to devise a programme that is sufficiently stimulating to engage the commitment of the trainees rather than to turn them into indifferent passengers. The lack of commitment of the target group of teachers will only serve to nullify attempts to provide in-service training.

### ***Professional Approach to In-service Training***

As the CIHS do not have the expertise to train their own teachers, it is inevitable that they work with academic institutions. An effective training programme is determined by the level of professionalism shown by the training providers and the school management. Teacher training is more than imparting skills in teaching but has to take into account the trainees' desire for self-advancement, the need to stimulate their passion and commitment to training, and the specific requirements of the education of teachers in general. Fulfilling these objectives would call for a professional approach to teacher training by the trainers and school management.

### ***Trends in the Development of In-service Training***

In-service training is an essential step in helping employees to keep abreast of changes and developments in their professions. In the case of secondary Chinese education, the discussion of teacher training has to take note of the bigger picture of development trends in education in general.

### ***The Diverse Features of In-service Training***

In-service teacher training in CIHS shares certain similarities with developments and practices in the country and elsewhere. Diversity is one of the main features of the training infrastructure that has been built up to meet the many requirements of the CIHS. There is a diversity of training providers comprising local and foreign institutions of higher learning as well as administrative divisions dealing with teaching in Dong Zong and the individual schools. Training programmes are presented under different models on an open-access or in-house basis, or they may combine the functions of teacher training and research. Training may also take the form of basic degrees in education, special certificate classes in education, short-term training, vacation courses, seminars and lectures, and conferences.

The diversity of training providers, models and methods have enabled the CIHS to satisfy their specific needs and circumstances. It is this diversity that encourages the schools and teachers to upgrade their skills and to chart their future, and to raise the overall qualifications of teachers and their performance.

### ***Performance and Terms of Service***

The “value-added” worth of teachers through in-service training is reflected in their performance. Improved performance deserves corresponding improvement in the terms of employment. The integration of performance and benefits has a motivational impact on the work and morale of the teachers. Promoting the well-being of staff produces spill-over effects on the student body and the all-round performance of the school and its reputation.

### ***Emphasis on Theoretical Foundation of In-service Training***

Under the concept of “lifelong education” that is being advocated in many countries, the theoretical development of in-service training is receiving increased attention. Research has demonstrated that in-service training is meant to promote and drive the professional development of teachers. Hence “lifelong education” may be viewed as the theoretical basis of in-service training and the guiding principle by which teachers educate themselves throughout their career. This is radically different from the “one-off” training in a normal or teachers’ college or university. In-service training allows teachers to build upon what was learned previously and at the same time motivate them to keep abreast of the expanding and changing pool of knowledge.

### ***Emphasis on the Practicality and Comprehensiveness of Training***

Modern-day teacher training has gone beyond imparting basic knowledge and the principles of teaching, but has broadened its scope to include strengthening teachers’ social and economic awareness. Their training too is designed to improve their social skills, personal character, independent thinking, rapport with and understanding of students, responsibility to school and society, and professional conduct. The contents of training have also expanded beyond transferring

skills but also emphasize what is practical and what are possible future trends. This is the coupling of self-realization with the ability to overcome practical issues of education and those of education reform. The training of CIHS teachers in recent years is making an attempt to keep up with the footsteps of education reform in other countries. This is to veer away from the past framework of skills training and to follow a path that is adapted to the requirements of the CIHS in Malaysia.

### Conclusion

Training the teacher on the job is a trend that is increasingly important and driven by the wheel of change of the information age. Arising from the “independence” of secondary education in the Chinese medium in Malaysia, teacher training has consumed the efforts of different generations of dedicated groups to bring it to fruition. The evolution and improvements in teacher training will benefit immensely the development of Chinese education in Malaysia. With this additional function of training, the system of Chinese education is now more complete and comprehensive than ever.

Teacher training at the service of the CIHS is still in its infancy. Further development is required to evolve a training programme that is more comprehensive to satisfy long-term needs. Accumulated experiences and insights would enable fine-tuning and upgrading so that the system becomes more effective in helping teachers to cope with the ever-changing scenario of modern education. Viewed from this perspective, the training programme of CIHS teachers in Malaysia is a development in the right direction as the schools will reduce their dependence on foreign-trained teachers. Equally significant, the programme has put in place a workable system of training that has the potential to meet the regional needs of Chinese education in Southeast Asia.

### Notes

- 1 For a discussion on teacher training administered by the government and selected public universities, see Lee, N.N., 2002.
- 2 Dong Zong tracked the distribution of students by countries for 2012. The 56 out of 60 CIHS that responded to a questionnaire survey showed a total graduating cohort of 7,017 students. Of these, 5,326 students (76%) opted to further their studies, 1,051 (15%) chose to work, and 640 (9%) did not respond. Of the 5,326 who continued with tertiary education, half were enrolled in local private universities and four out of ten in foreign universities. The most popular foreign destinations were Taiwan (1,316 students), Singapore (407), Mainland China (129), and smaller numbers to Australia, England, Ireland and Hong Kong (董总/Dong Zong, 2012). In 2015 the state government of Sarawak extends formal recognition of the UEC.
- 3 The Dong Jiao Zong Higher Learning Centre is the legal entity that establishes New Era College. This Centre is jointly instituted by Dong Jiao Zong and Merdeka University Limited with representatives to its board of directors. This board in turn nominates selected members to serve as members of the New Era College Council that is responsible for formulating policies on development and related matters.

- 4 Besides being tasked with the mission of administering teacher training, the Department of Education of NEC currently offers degree programmes on early childhood education and the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language.
- 5 Academic linkages between NEC and Taiwan began soon after NEC was established in 1997. The founding organizations of New Era College, namely, Dong Zong and Jiao Zong, had sought the co-operation of Taiwan's Ministry of Education on twinning academic programmes in the late 1990s (教育部侨民教育委员会/Ministry of Education Overseas Chinese Education Committee, 1999: 46).

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