

## **Trends and factors for dropout among secondary school students in Perak**

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The study sought to investigate the dropout trends and patterns among the secondary school students by district in Perak. The study employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods involving cohort flow analysis of student enrolment, interviews and document analysis. In the first part, student enrolment by grade level in 2000-2010 in all the nine districts in Perak from the database provided by the Ministry of Education was analyzed. In the second part, data were gathered through interviews from Batang Padang District that demonstrated highest dropout rate so as to further understand why secondary school students dropped out from schools, what are those students doing after leaving schools and explore their views on what could have been done to keep them in schools. Results showed that average of total loss between Form 1 and Form 5 in Perak State was 8.11 percent. The highest percentage of dropout was in Batang Padang (16.52%), followed by Manjung (11.9%), Hilir Perak (11.06%) and Kinta District (10.87%). Major factors of dropout were poor academic achievement, lack of interest in schooling, and influence from non-schooling siblings and home environmental factors. Majority of the students were still staying with their parents with a few of them doing part-time jobs or helping out their parents while many just stayed at home or hanged out with friends. Some policy implications and recommendations were also discussed in the paper.

**Keywords:** Dropout rates, secondary schools, Perak

### **Introduction**

Educational attainment is a critical measure of development of any countries, including Malaysia. It is correlated with economic growth and with achievements in poverty reduction, health, and broad quality of life indicators. Despite the tremendous development in the last five decades since independence and its commitment to the Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDG) that no child should be left behind and to achieve universal primary education by 2015, dropout still remains an issue in the country. In the MDG at 2010 (2010), it was reported that

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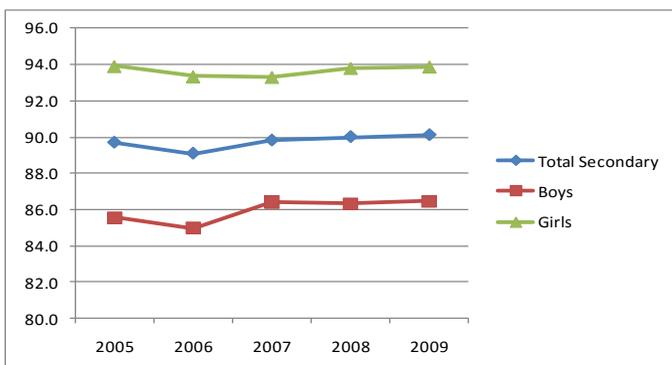
participation rates in Malaysia was above 96% for primary school and 92.7% for the secondary level.

Two factors that contribute to this phenomenon are the non-schooling children, and children who enrolled in school in the first few years but dropped out of school as they reach later ages. This is evident from the cohort flow analysis study shown in the report (MDG 10, UNESCO) and also reports from the Ministry of Education (EPRD, Dropout Trends in MOE Schools 2007). The report showed that dropout happened during transition between grades, and the largest was during transition from primary school to secondary school. It was reported that about 8-10 percent (about 45,000) of the cohort of about 450,000 Grade 6 students from MOE schools did not continue to MOE secondary schools each year. Considering that about 5% of these students continued their education in other types of schools such as religious schools, private schools and Chinese Independent schools, about 3-5% did not continue to secondary education. Dropout cases are more serious at the secondary level, particularly among the boys. This contributed to the lower participation rates at the secondary level compared to the primary level.

Differences in participation rates and dropout rates also exist between states in Malaysia. While such data for states are available, data for districts are not. Factors that contribute to dropout are generalized in aggregate form and this information is missing from the Educational Management Information System (EMIS) in EPRD or the Student Management Information System in the School Division. Thus, at the national level, we are not sure who these children are, why they dropped from school, where they are now and what they are doing. If we are serious about achieving universal primary education and achieving 100% participation rate, it is important to trace who these students are and why they dropped from school so that preventive measures can be done and appropriate policies can be developed subsequently to bring them back to school.

### Problem Statement

While completion rates at the primary level was high (99%), it was much lower at the secondary level (90.1%). As in the primary education, dropout occurred during transition to higher grades but in a slightly bigger percentage, particularly among boys. This is illustrated in Figure 1 below.



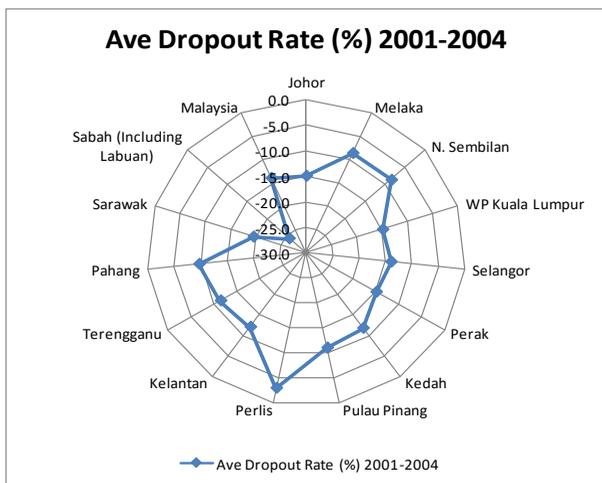
Source: MDG at 2010 National Report, the Economic Planning Unit, 2010

Figure 1. Completion rates at secondary level

Comparing dropout between states (Table 1), MOE secondary schools had relatively high dropout rates in some states; interestingly, they were higher in both more developed and less developed states (Figures 2a and 2b). The situation in the former can be explained by movement into private schools, which tend to be located in the richer states and in large cities. This is in accordance with enrolment data of private schools by state.

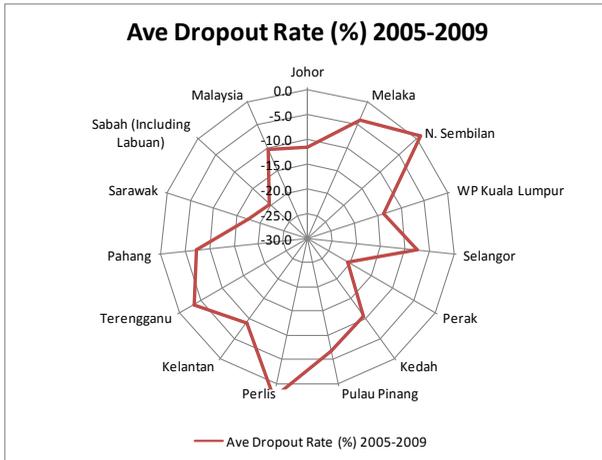
Table 1. Dropout trends in MOE secondary schools by state

| State                    | Ave Dropout Rate (%) 2001-2004 | Ave Dropout Rate (%) 2005-2009 |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Johor                    | -14.9                          | -11.5                          |
| Melaka                   | -8.6                           | -3.9                           |
| N. Sembilan              | -8.6                           | 0.9                            |
| WP Kuala Lumpur          | -15.0                          | -13.8                          |
| Selangor                 | -14.0                          | -7.6                           |
| Perak                    | -14.9                          | -20.6                          |
| Kedah                    | -11.9                          | -10.6                          |
| Pulau Pinang             | -11.1                          | -6.8                           |
| Perlis                   | -3.1                           | 2.8                            |
| Kelantan                 | -12.2                          | -9.0                           |
| Terengganu               | -11.5                          | -3.4                           |
| Pahang                   | -9.8                           | -7.4                           |
| Sarawak                  | -19.6                          | -17.3                          |
| Sabah (Including Labuan) | -25.7                          | -19.7                          |
| Malaysia                 | -13.9                          | -10.2                          |



Source: MDG at 2010 National Report, the Economic Planning Unit, 2010

Figure 2a. Dropout rates at secondary level, 2001-2009



Source: MDG at 2010 National Report, the Economic Planning Unit, 2010

Figure 2b. Dropout rates at secondary level, 2001-2009

In Perak, however, the increase in dropout rate could not be explained by the expansion of private schools. Dropout rate in Perak was 15% in 2001-2004, about the same Selangor and Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur. However, the figure increased to 20.6% in 2005-2009 (the highest among states) and not much information was known as what contributed to the increase. It was not known which district contributed the most to the figure and why so.

## Research Questions

The study is aimed at answering the following questions:

- 1 Using 2001 to 2010 data as the base, what are the dropout trends by district at the secondary level in Perak as shown from the cohort flow analysis 2005-2010?
- 2 Why did secondary school students in Batang Padang District drop out from school as shown from the school records and interview with teachers?
- 3 Why did students drop out of schools according to parents and the students themselves?

## Methodology

This study used mixed methods with mainly quantitative method in the first part, examining school enrolment data by level from all the schools in the Batang Padang District. Data were obtained from the EPRD, MOE and the Perak State Education Department from EMIS database. The second part involved verification of dropout data from schools and interview with principals and school teachers, particularly class teachers in the 10 schools in Batang Padang District. The third part involved tracing 30 of these school leavers and interviewing the students and their parents.

Data processing and analysis involved preparation of data, cohort flow analysis and presentation of the results in the form of charts and tables. For the interview, data analysis involved coding and identification of themes, associations and patterns to make conclusions and recommendations.

## Findings

### *Dropout Rate by District*

Cohort flow analyses were performed on the enrolment data by grade level and district. Attrition between grade levels and dropout rates for boys and girls were computed. Examples of cohort flow analyses for Batang Padang District are shown in Table 2.

Analyses were done for all district in Perak. Summary of dropout by district in Perak is shown in Table 4. Average loss during transition between lower and upper secondary levels (Form 3 to Form 4) was about 3 percent, with the highest in Manjung (7.46%), followed by Batang Padang (6.36%) and Kerian (5.25%). Total loss in secondary schools highest in Batang Padang (16.52%), followed by Manjung (11.86%), Hilir Perak (11.06%), Kinta (10.87%), Kerian (9.87), and Larut Matang & Selama (8.45%). Analyses in all district also showed that dropout rates were higher for boys compared to girls. For the 2006 Form 1 cohort who was in Form 5 in 2010 for instance, dropout rate for boys in Batang Padang District was 16.05% while for girls was 11.40%.

Table 2. Dropout rates among Boys and girls in Batang Padang district

| Level of Education      | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Transition Class        | 334  | 363  | 274  | 278  | 293  | 239  | 233  | 231  | 233  | 202  | 184  |
| Form 1                  | 1934 | 1812 | 1776 | 1800 | 1810 | 1921 | 1801 | 1754 | 1757 | 1711 | 1664 |
| Form 2                  | 1993 | 1833 | 1779 | 1741 | 1755 | 1728 | 1843 | 1759 | 1785 | 1688 | 1674 |
| Form 3                  | 1881 | 1940 | 1781 | 1748 | 1713 | 1678 | 1659 | 1813 | 1684 | 1714 | 1592 |
| Form 4                  | 1704 | 1788 | 1763 | 1715 | 1693 | 1656 | 1678 | 1660 | 1794 | 1592 | 1649 |
| Form 5                  | 1540 | 1573 | 1712 | 1680 | 1656 | 1614 | 1550 | 1635 | 1587 | 1662 | 1512 |
| Form 6 Lower            | 62   | 95   | 150  | 145  | 158  | 196  | 152  | 132  | 156  | 103  | 132  |
| Form 6 Upper            | 53   | 60   | 74   | 90   | 114  | 134  | 129  | 124  | 85   | 111  | 85   |
| Special Education Class | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 13   | 15   | 22   | 31   | 47   | 48   | 71   |

| Level of Education      | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Forms 1-2               |      | -101 | -33  | -35  | -45  | -82  | -78  | -42  | 31   | -69  | -37  |
| Forms 2-3               |      | -53  | -52  | -31  | -28  | -77  | -69  | -30  | -75  | -71  | -96  |
| Forms 3-4               |      | -93  | -177 | -66  | -55  | -57  | 0    | 1    | -19  | -92  | -65  |
| Forms 4-5               |      | -131 | -76  | -83  | -59  | -79  | -106 | -43  | -73  | -132 | -80  |
| Total Loss at Secondary |      |      |      |      | -278 | -198 | -226 | -165 | -223 | -259 | -289 |

| Level of Education          | 2000 | 2001  | 2002  | 2003  | 2004   | 2005   | 2006   | 2007  | 2008   | 2009   | 2010   |
|-----------------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| Forms 1-2                   |      | -5.22 | -1.82 | -1.97 | -2.50  | -4.53  | -4.06  | -2.33 | 1.77   | -3.93  | -2.16  |
| Forms 2-3                   |      | -2.66 | -2.84 | -1.74 | -1.61  | -4.39  | -3.99  | -1.63 | -4.26  | -3.98  | -5.69  |
| Forms 3-4                   |      | -4.94 | -9.12 | -3.71 | -3.15  | -3.33  | 0.00   | 0.06  | -1.05  | -5.46  | -3.79  |
| Forms 4-5                   |      | -7.69 | -4.25 | -4.71 | -3.44  | -4.67  | -6.40  | -2.56 | -4.40  | -7.36  | -5.03  |
| Total Loss at Secondary (%) |      |       |       |       | -14.37 | -10.93 | -12.73 | -9.17 | -12.32 | -13.48 | -16.05 |

| Level of Education      | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Transition Class        | 276  | 280  | 216  | 176  | 189  | 156  | 134  | 125  | 121  | 125  | 92   |
| Form 1                  | 1919 | 1699 | 1777 | 1778 | 1731 | 1709 | 1763 | 1657 | 1740 | 1703 | 1749 |
| Form 2                  | 1917 | 1853 | 1782 | 1778 | 1773 | 1710 | 1665 | 1749 | 1674 | 1699 | 1657 |
| Form 3                  | 2006 | 1898 | 1835 | 1788 | 1756 | 1697 | 1665 | 1646 | 1741 | 1648 | 1660 |
| Form 4                  | 1621 | 1860 | 1705 | 1748 | 1690 | 1587 | 1635 | 1554 | 1555 | 1615 | 1495 |
| Form 5                  | 1701 | 1563 | 1829 | 1679 | 1699 | 1658 | 1551 | 1566 | 1530 | 1500 | 1562 |
| Form 6 Lower            | 181  | 211  | 286  | 328  | 364  | 448  | 334  | 300  | 298  | 253  | 219  |
| Form 6 Upper            | 112  | 180  | 177  | 290  | 319  | 307  | 351  | 274  | 226  | 212  | 212  |
| Special Education Class | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 2    | 9    | 11   | 23   | 23   | 34   | 44   |

| Level of Education      | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Forms 1-2               |      | -66  | 83   | 1    | -5   | -21  | -44  | -14  | 17   | -41  | -46  |
| Forms 2-3               |      | -19  | -18  | 6    | -22  | -76  | -45  | -19  | -8   | -26  | -39  |
| Forms 3-4               |      | -146 | -193 | -87  | -98  | -169 | -62  | -111 | -91  | -126 | -153 |
| Forms 4-5               |      | -58  | -31  | -26  | -49  | -32  | -36  | -69  | -24  | -55  | -53  |
| Total Loss at Secondary |      |      |      |      | -220 | -41  | -226 | -212 | -201 | -209 | -201 |

| Level of Education          | 2000 | 2001  | 2002   | 2003  | 2004   | 2005  | 2006   | 2007   | 2008   | 2009   | 2010   |
|-----------------------------|------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Forms 1-2                   |      | -3.44 | 4.89   | 0.06  | -0.28  | -1.21 | -2.57  | -0.79  | 1.03   | -2.36  | -2.70  |
| Forms 2-3                   |      | -0.99 | -0.97  | 0.34  | -1.24  | -4.29 | -2.63  | -1.14  | -0.46  | -1.55  | -2.30  |
| Forms 3-4                   |      | -7.28 | -10.17 | -4.74 | -5.48  | -9.62 | -3.65  | -6.67  | -5.53  | -7.24  | -9.28  |
| Forms 4-5                   |      | -3.58 | -1.67  | -1.52 | -2.80  | -1.89 | -2.27  | -4.22  | -1.54  | -3.54  | -3.28  |
| Total Loss at Secondary (%) |      |       |        |       | -11.46 | -2.41 | -12.72 | -11.92 | -11.61 | -12.23 | -11.40 |

| Level of Education      | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Transition Class        | 610  | 643  | 490  | 454  | 482  | 395  | 367  | 356  | 354  | 327  | 276  |
| Form 1                  | 3853 | 3511 | 3553 | 3578 | 3541 | 3630 | 3564 | 3411 | 3497 | 3414 | 3413 |
| Form 2                  | 3910 | 3686 | 3561 | 3519 | 3528 | 3438 | 3508 | 3508 | 3459 | 3387 | 3331 |
| Form 3                  | 3887 | 3838 | 3616 | 3536 | 3469 | 3375 | 3324 | 3459 | 3425 | 3362 | 3252 |
| Form 4                  | 3325 | 3648 | 3468 | 3463 | 3383 | 3243 | 3313 | 3214 | 3349 | 3207 | 3144 |
| Form 5                  | 3241 | 3136 | 3541 | 3359 | 3355 | 3272 | 3101 | 3201 | 3117 | 3162 | 3074 |
| Form 6 Lower            | 243  | 306  | 436  | 473  | 522  | 644  | 486  | 432  | 454  | 356  | 351  |
| Form 6 Upper            | 165  | 240  | 251  | 380  | 433  | 441  | 480  | 398  | 311  | 323  | 297  |
| Special Education Class | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 15   | 24   | 33   | 54   | 70   | 82   | 115  |

| Level of Education      | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Forms 1-2               |      | -167 | 50   | -34  | -50  | -103 | -122 | -56  | 48   | -110 | -83  |
| Forms 2-3               |      | -72  | -70  | -25  | -50  | -153 | -114 | -49  | -83  | -97  | -135 |
| Forms 3-4               |      | -239 | -370 | -153 | -153 | -226 | -62  | -110 | -110 | -218 | -218 |
| Forms 4-5               |      | -189 | -107 | -109 | -108 | -111 | -142 | -112 | -97  | -187 | -133 |
| Total Loss at Secondary |      |      |      |      | -498 | -239 | -452 | -377 | -424 | -468 | -490 |

| Level of Education          | 2000 | 2001  | 2002  | 2003  | 2004   | 2005  | 2006   | 2007   | 2008   | 2009   | 2010   |
|-----------------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Forms 1-2                   |      | -4.33 | 1.42  | -0.96 | -1.40  | -2.91 | -3.36  | -1.57  | 1.41   | -3.15  | -2.43  |
| Forms 2-3                   |      | -1.84 | -1.90 | -0.70 | -1.42  | -4.34 | -3.32  | -1.40  | -2.37  | -2.80  | -3.99  |
| Forms 3-4                   |      | -6.15 | -9.64 | -4.23 | -4.33  | -6.51 | -1.84  | -3.31  | -3.18  | -6.36  | -6.48  |
| Forms 4-5                   |      | -5.68 | -2.93 | -3.14 | -3.12  | -3.28 | -4.38  | -3.38  | -3.02  | -5.58  | -4.15  |
| Total Loss at Secondary (%) |      |       |       |       | -12.92 | -6.81 | -12.72 | -10.54 | -11.97 | -12.89 | -13.75 |

However, an increase in enrolment was observed in Perak Tengah District and Kuala Kangsar District. Thus, dropout rate could not be captured in these two districts. Possible explanation could be in-migration from other districts or from private education systems.

### *Why did secondary school students in Batang Padang District drop out from school as shown from the school records and interview with teachers?*

Interviews with the school principals, senior assistants for administration and student affairs, school counsellors and discipline teachers showed that secondary school students dropped out of school for several reasons. Main reasons were lack of academic interest (12 respondents), home background factors (9 respondents), doing part-time work (7), and parents attitudes (6). This is reflected in the interview excerpt below:

#### Lack of Interest in Schooling (12):

“Parents reported that their children are not interested to come to school, they are doing part-time work outside.”

(SA-Student Affairs, SM3)

“I find that the students are no longer interested in schooling. They cannot stay focus in class. The only alternative is learning vocational skills.”

(Principal, SM3)

“One of the main reasons they don’t want to learn. Their parents said that when we called them.”

(SA-Student Affairs, SM6)

“.. for example that Form 4 student I mentioned.. He failed all subjects in the PMR exam, but he moved to Form 4. He is not interested to study.”

(SA-Administration, SM6)

“He [student] said there is no purpose for coming to school, it is better for him stay home helping his father.”

(Principal, SM8)

“Student said they didn’t want to come to school, but their parents forced them. Some just wanted the school certificate to work in Singapore.”

(SA- Administration, SM10)

#### Family Problem (9):

“Family problem...they are poor, students have to work. Most of them are abandoned children... staying with their grandparents. Parents divorced. Most of them [dropout of school] because of this reason. I asked some of them where are their fathers were, they said they didn’t know...”

(Senior Assistant - Student Affairs, SM1)

“Most of their parents are Felda second generation... their parents work outside, some in KL.. the students are not staying with their parents. Some have divorced parents and they stay with their grandparents. Some students are provided with motorcycles by their families but they did not go to schools, and their parents had no clue... they leave the house with school uniforms but they go elsewhere...”

(Senior Assistant - Administration, SM2)

“Broken families... some stay with their grandparents, mothers not working. Some stay alone in the house while their mothers are out at work. Nobody cares whether or not they go to school. The government provides financial aids for poor students, and no tuition fees incurred to students...”

(Principal, SM5)

“Family problems...divorced parents, instable income... father or mother remarried but child abandoned. Some were poor. Their development was not well looked into – education, spiritual and physical aspects. One parent appealed that their children will be allowed to continue after receiving expelled letter after being absent for 4-5 months... We only expel students from school because of discipline cases – police cases.”

(School Counsellor, SM7)

## Doing Part-time Work (7)

“Second reason is poverty...parents divorced, mothers not working and the kids have to help support the family.”

(SA-Student Affairs, SM6)

“These students ... they started with mingling with non-schooling friends, later they started doing part-time work... Once they have their own money, they find school no longer interesting.”

(Principal, SM3)

“Parents reported children not interested in schooling. They work outside ... for their own use.”

(SA-Student Affairs, SM3)

## Parents' Attitudes (6)

“Parents' attitudes that did not take education seriously...”

(Senior Assistant - Administration, SM2)

“The family couldn't be bothered.. the child didn't want to go to school and did part-time work. Once they have the money they are no longer interested to go to school.”

(Kaunselor, SM8)

“Parents are not concerned...”

(SA-Student Affairs, SM10)

## *Why did students drop out of schools according to parents and the students themselves?*

Analyses of the interview with 30 parents and their children showed that the main reason for dropout was lack of interest in schooling (27 or 90%). Additional reasons such as broken family (9 with some students staying with their close extended families, away from their parents; influence of non-schooling siblings (9); poor academic achievement (7); involvement with non-schooling friends and social problems (5) and parents attitude that couldn't care less are pulling factors of dropout. Several cases below reflect the scenario (Table 3 is the transcript in the Malaysian language):

Student3, SM1:

(M) Aged 16. First of 3 sibling. Been absent for 3 months. “I do not know why exactly. Academic achievement is poor, PMR results were bad..” said mother. Favourite grandson, two of three siblings not schooling. The second left school in Form 2, unable to read.

Student4, SM2:

(F) Aged 16. Sixth of 10 sibling. Will be getting married in one month. Left school while in Form 1 because of being bullied by friends, but continued in Form 3 to sit for PMR exam. "Why should girls pursue their education, really

no necessity.. at the end they will have to spend time in the kitchen..” said the mother. Students rarely went to school at the end.

Student5, SM2:

(M) Aged 16. Been absent for 9 months, on and off, and complete absence since 1-2 months ago. First of 2 sibling. Parents divorced when he was 2, stayed with grandmother. Mom working in KL. Grandma could not control his activities with friends outside, sold *air ketum* once. "He goes to school twice in a week, academic very poor, this year he was absent for 72 days.. received 3 warning letters. He said he is lazy to go to school..." said grandma.

Student11, SM4:

(M) Aged 15. Stopped schooling a month ago, after *raya* celebration. 10<sup>th</sup> of 10 sibling. Staying with mom and step-father. Two elder brothers also left school after PMR exam. Started with truancy from school, 2-3 days a week. "Not interested, lazy to study" said child.

Student15, SM5:

(F) Age 15. First quit schooling in Form 2. First of 3 sibling. Poor family, father died 8 years ago, mother has to work. Been raped by boyfriend at 11, later was sent to shelter home until 13. Attempted suicide three times (drink clorox, hurt her wrist). "I don't know what else to do.... some teachers don't understand, they were angry at her. Beginning Form 3 school called to give her the RM100 financial aid.. She went to school for couple of days before disappearing again. I did everything to make her continue her schooling, spending RM200++ to buy school materials.. but still she refused to go to school. After quitting school she stayed with the family, but too socialized, fighting with friends over a boyfriend, and attempted suicide.. " said the mother.

Student29, SM10:

(F) Aged 16. Dropped out of school since 8 months ago. Second of five sibling, poor family. Felt shy to attend school after a long absence. "Always find excuses. First she said she lost her book, then she said she was lazy, rarely attended school, difficult to wake up from sleep in the morning. She befriended a non-schooling friend, also staying with me.." said the mother.

## **Summary of findings**

Dropout trends among secondary school students in Perak showed that dropout was highest in Batang Padang district. As in the national trend, dropout was higher among boys compared to girls. Reasons for reported by school administrators were somewhat consistent with parents and students' claims. School administrators concluded that the main reasons were lack of academic interest, home background factors, doing part-time work, and parents' attitudes. Students and parents' accounts showed that the main reason for dropout was lack of interest in schooling, coupled with additional reasons such as broken family; influence of non-schooling siblings; poor academic achievement; involvement with non-schooling friends and social problems and parents' attitude about the importance of schooling.

## Recommendation

The fact that 90 percent of the students dropped out of schools due to lack of interest in schooling posts a new challenge to the school system in Malaysia. Some of them failed to see the purpose of schooling, and even their parents were not concerned about the importance of schooling. These were worsened by other factors such as the influence of non-schooling siblings and friends they mingled with. None of the students interviewed were academically successful students. Thus, no single easy measure can be used to overcome the dropout issues. The attitudes of parents and society have to change, the system has to change, and schools have to changed too – from a formal place for learning to an attractive ‘playground’ for learning. Further research and experiments need to be done to make this happen. In addition, differential curriculum for those students who are not academically inclined might help reduce this problem. In this regard, the Basic Vocational Education [*Pendidikan Asas Vokasional (PAV)*] for lower secondary school students (Grades 7-9) introduced in 2012 is timely and hopefully will be able to reduce dropout rate among secondary school students.

## Conclusion

The study shed light to detailed analysis of dropout by district and some important reasons why students drop out from schools according to the perspective of school administrators, counsellors, parents, and the students themselves. The findings are important for schools and the policy makers in the Ministry of Education and State Education Department to come out with more intensive initiatives to combat dropout in secondary schools. It provides information for a beginning of a journey to seriously tackle the problem.

Table 3. Factors for dropout from the perspective of students and parents

| Student | School | Factors for Dropout   | Status Now   |
|---------|--------|---|--|
| Stu1    | SM1    | (L) Umur 14 tahun. Anak 5/11 beradik. Mula cicir sejak bulan 6 Ting 1 (bulan Jun 2011)- menjaga keluarga kemalangan (2 kakaknya meninggal;ayah luka di kepala;mak patah leher; 1 adik patah tangan). Kesan daripada trauma yang terjadi kepada ibu bapa terpaksa menjaga kedua ibu bapa. Cuti lama hingga malas ke sekolah. Ibu kata "mungkin tak boleh ikut [ <i>akademik lemah</i> ] ke jadi malas nak pergi sekolah tak tau la.. Dia kata tahun depan nak sekolah balik, tapi sekolah lain.. sekolah slim.... Guru bagi peluang lagi, minta pujuk.. tapi dia tak mau nak buat macamana. Tahun lepas lepas ayah accident tu dalam seminggu adalah dtg sekolah 2 hari, lepas raya bulan 9 terus tak nak sekolah. Sekolah bagi kaunseling dia anguk anguk. Tapi lepas kaunseling terus tak nak sekolah pulak. | Sekarang kerja sikit-sikit, kalau tak ada duit nak belanja, kerja la..pecah batu cari batu magnet ke.. Nanti nak masuk giat mara. Kita org pujuk dia, gaya mcm nak, tapi tak pergi juga.. tak tau la. Kawan-kawan dia pergi sekolah...." |
| Stu2    | SM1    | (L) Umur 14 thn. Anak 1/5 beradik. Selalu ponteng, jarang dtg sekolah. Jumlah tak datang sekolah 2012 = 126 hari (Januari-Oktober). Amaran pertama keluar - 72 hari (Januari-Jun) - Membantu keluarga di kedai 2.00pm-1.00am. Sukar bangun pagi. Ayah pernah naik tangan. Ibu nasihat suruh bangun pergi sekolah. Beri duit belanja lebih. Tapi anak tetap malas bangun pagi. "Sekolah mmg best tapi susah nak pergi sekolah. Suka kawan-kawan, main dgn kawan-kawan." Suka ikut sepupu keluar.   | Sekarang masih terus membantu keluarga di kedai dan dtg ke sekolah sekali-sekala. Amaran ke-2 belum keluar. Amaran pertama pun selepas 72 hari tak datang sekolah.   |
| Stu3    | SM1    | (L) Umur now 16 tahun. Anak 1/3 beradik. Dah 3 bulan malas dtg sekolah. "tak tau la sbb apa" kata ibu. "Pencapaian sekolah mmg lemah, keputusan PMR pun teruk..." Anak tiada di rumah pergi memancing ketika seisi temubual. Faktor keluarga yang berada - malas nak ke sekolah. Cucu kesayangan nenek. 2/3 beradik tidak bersekolah. Hanya yang bongsu bersekolah. Yang ke-2 berhenti Tingkatan 2, tidak boleh membaca.  | Sekarang dah masuk Giatmara 6 bulan. Pada masa yang sama kerja timbang getah. Habis giatmara nak sambung lagi.   |
| Stu4    | SM2    | (P) Umur 16 tahun. 6/10 beradik. Akan berkahwin sebulan lagi. Ibu kerja kedai makan. Pernah berhenti sekolah ketika ting1 sebab kena buli, tetapi ting 3 masuk sekolah kejap. Desakan pihak lelaki nak kahwin. Ibu bersetuju kahwin awal. "Perempuan belajar tinggi-tinggi buat apa, duduk di dapur juga akhirnya..." kata ibu. Pihak lelaki akan putuskan pertunangan jika teruskan persekolahan. Pelajar akhirnya malas nak sekolah, nak kahwin saja.   | Sekarang duduk di rumah menunggu hari perkahwinan.   |

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