



Narrowing educational inequality - Malaysia's perspective

Network of East Asian Think Tanks (NEAT) working group discussion on “Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Socio-Economic Recovery and Growth in the Midst of Pandemic”

Sofea Azahar
Economic, Trade and Regional Integration (ETRI)

Outline

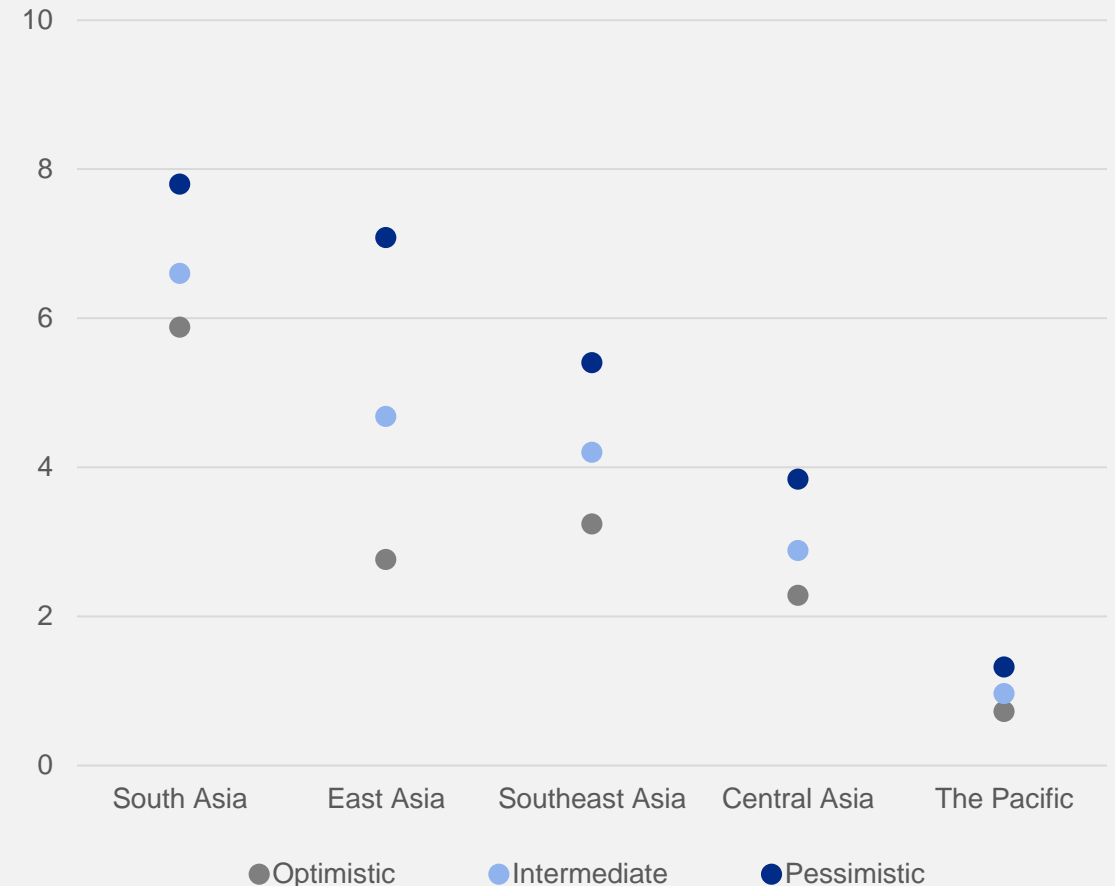
- **Global overview**
- **Malaysia overview**
- **Main challenges**
- **Long-term consequences**
- **Areas for policy actions**

Impacts of COVID-19 on education: Global overview

- Shutdown of schools has disrupted education worldwide, affecting more than 1.7 billion children, youth and their families.
- Exacerbated learning poverty and international studies revealed that losses are significantly evident for students who have the least resources.
- Increase in number of children experiencing learning poverty to 454 million. Pessimistic scenario shows a rise of learning poverty for primary school students from 53% to 63%.
- At least 463 million students around the world have dropped out of school and become completely uncontactable.

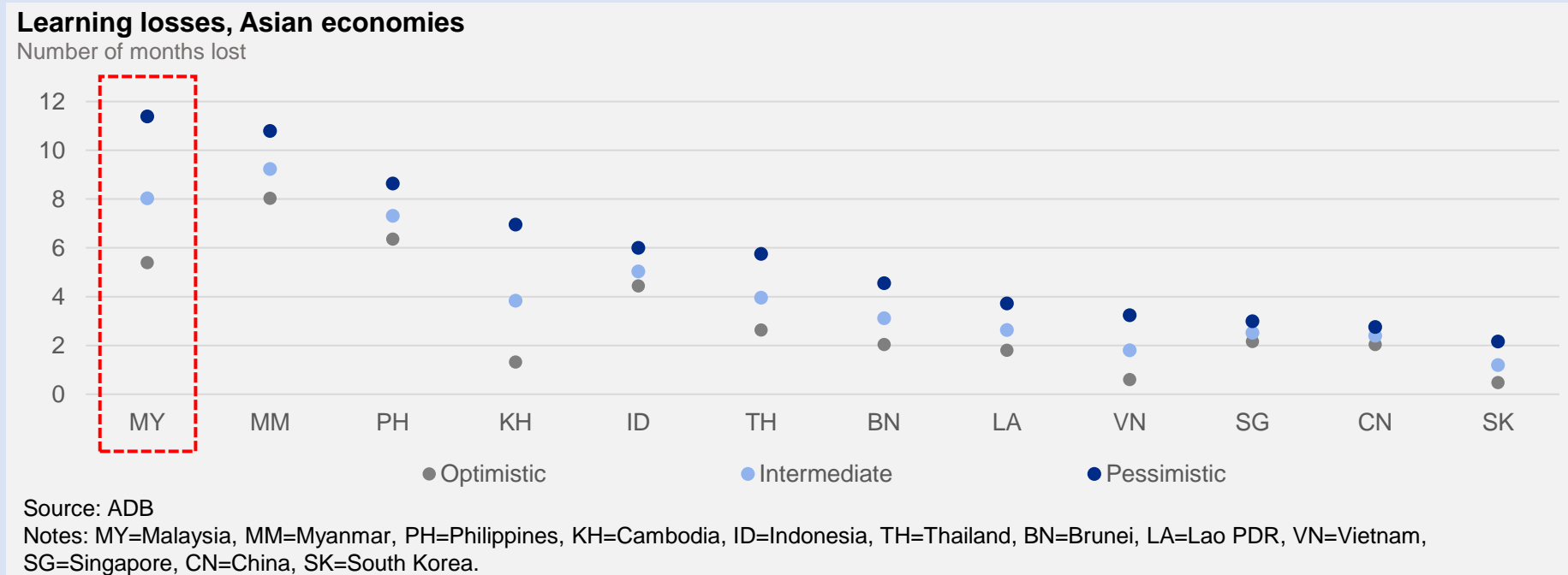
Learning losses by region

Number of months lost



Source: ADB

Impacts of COVID-19 on education: Malaysia overview



- Malaysian students lost between 5.4 and 11.4 months of schooling because of the crisis and in the pessimistic scenario, Malaysia faced the worst impact in the region.
- Between March 2020 to July 2021, over 20,000 students dropped out of school (0.22% of total students). In higher education institutions, a total of 17,613 students suspended their education. A sizable number of students stopped attending online classes during school closure.
- Engagements with stakeholders revealed that school closures caused young children not being able to grasp the basic 3Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic).



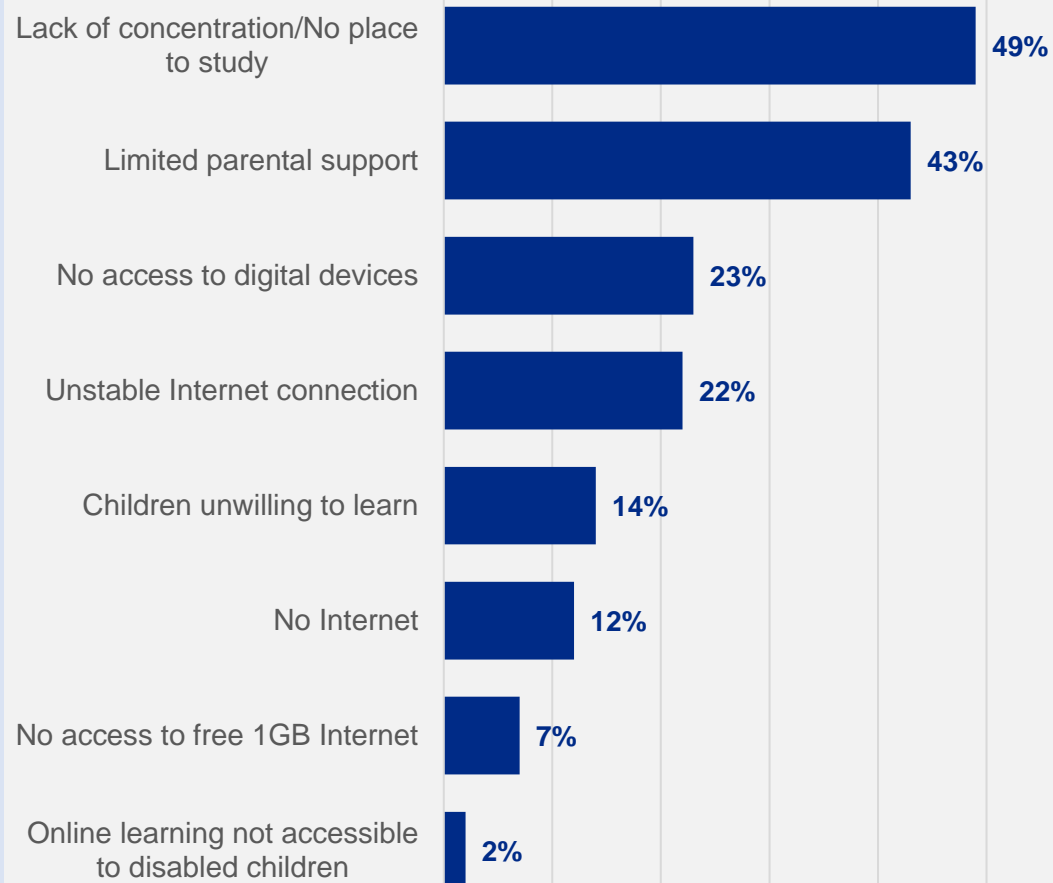
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Main challenges

Challenges for online learning

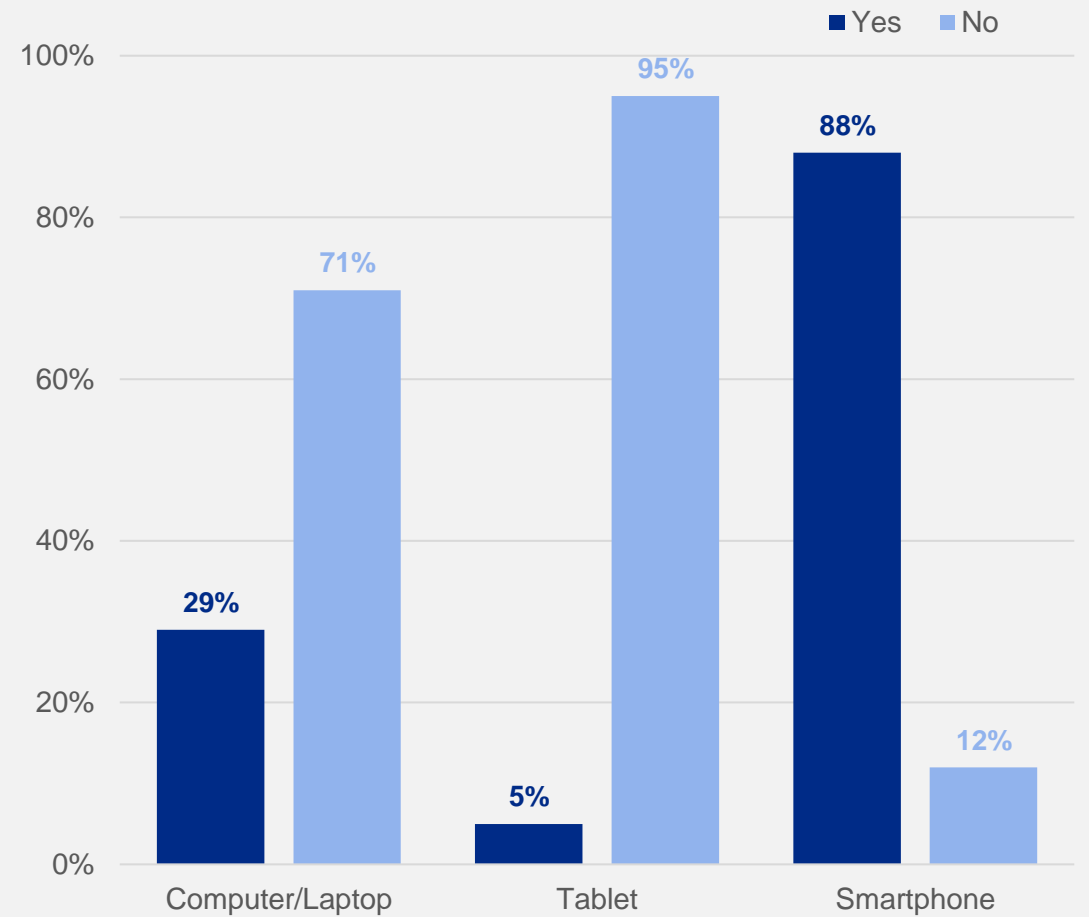
(%)



Source: UNICEF

Type of gadgets used for online learning

(%)

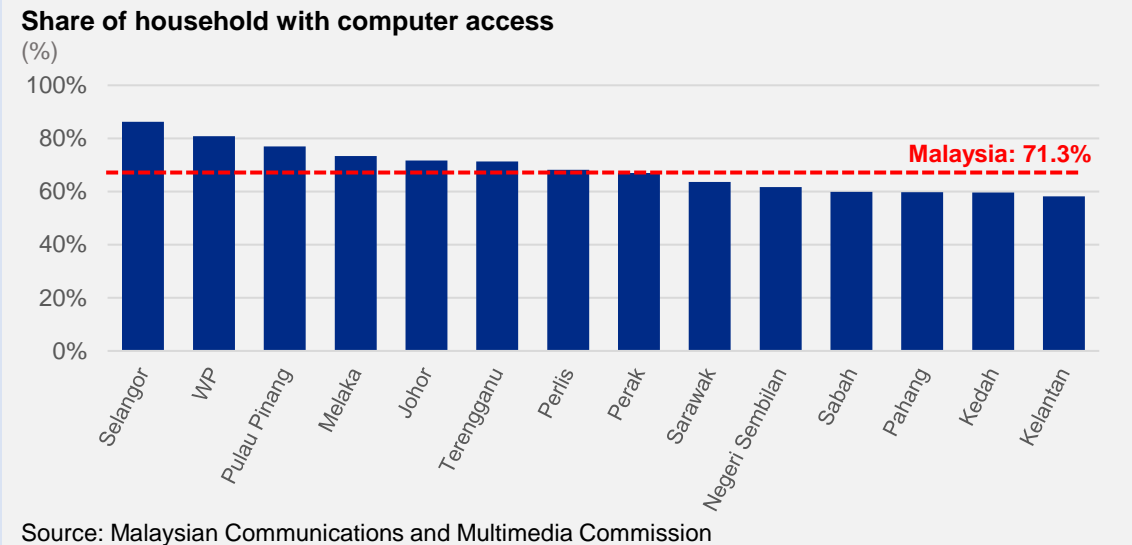
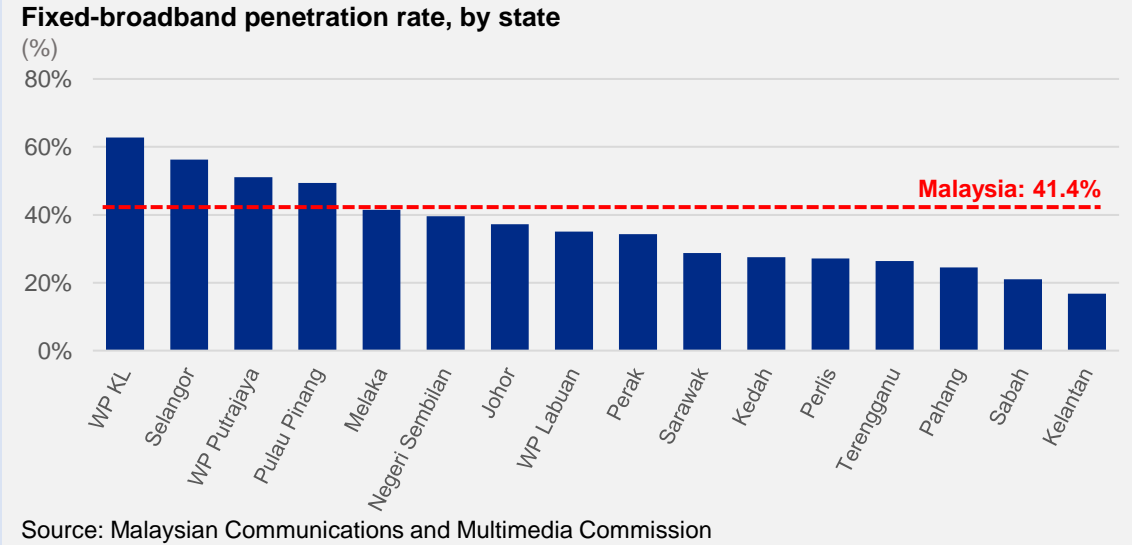


Source: UNICEF

Main challenges

1 Lack of access to stable Internet and digital devices

- Unequal impacts across students of different socioeconomic backgrounds and geographical locations in Malaysia.
- 36.9% of students do not possess digital devices to support them in online learning.
- In Malaysia, online learning was particularly challenging for students living in the less-developed states.
- Can be attributed to stark difference in broadband penetration rates between regions in Malaysia.
- Access to reliable Internet devices is also a concern.



Main challenges

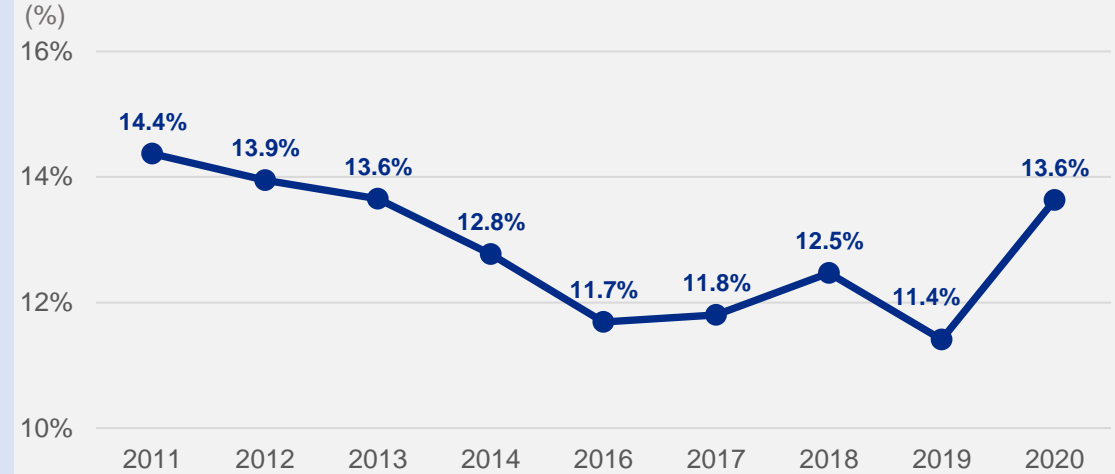
2 Ineffective teaching and training

- The quality of education has been affected by the pandemic, widening educational inequality. In certain cases, online learning is difficult to be implemented.
- TVET students focus on hands-on training and practical skills would require laboratory equipment to perform their tasks. This is in contrast with academic-based programmes which are relatively easier to be taught online.
- Globally, disruptions in TVET education have been due to several issues, such as shortfalls in remote-learning platforms and internet infrastructure, a lack of skilled teaching staff, resistance to change, interruptions in apprenticeship programmes and limited finances.
- In Malaysia, proficiency of TVET instructors and educators in ICT has been one of the key issues affecting learning continuity during lockdown.
- Lack of time to prepare and inadequate proper training are some of the significant factors affecting quality of teaching.
- Limited parental support also adds responsibilities to the educators.

Long-term consequences

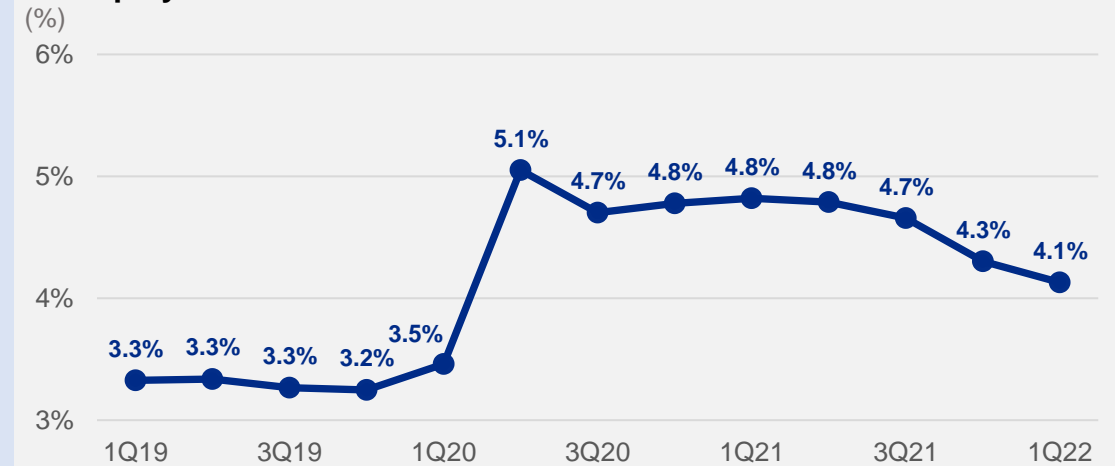
- Human capital is an important driver of economic growth, capital accumulation and technological progress.
- Findings have shown that greater investment in education and a highly educated labour force would strongly benefit Malaysia's economic growth.
- Hence, disruption in education would cause substantial loss in human capital and lead to worsening of income inequality.
- In Malaysia, estimates show that shutdown of schools could cost the nation about RM80 billion (~US\$18 billion) annually. It will also lead to income losses between US\$106-US\$256.

Share of youth not in education, employment or training



Source: ILOSTAT database, World Bank

Unemployment rate



Source: Department of Statistics Malaysia

Areas for policy actions

1. Enhance the quality of online educational platforms

2. Empower the educators

3. Provide tailored assistance for the vulnerable

4. Strengthen digital literacy amongst students

5. Encourage public-private partnerships



Institute of Strategic & International
Studies (ISIS) Malaysia

THANK YOU

Sofea Azahar

sofea.azahar@isis.org.my