CHAPTER 2
What We Learned from Science Education Reform:
The Malaysian Experience

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Introduction

The importance of science education in Malaysia has been recognized since the colonial era. As reported in the Commission on Higher Education in Malaya (Malaya, 1939), science education was introduced to elevate the socioeconomic status and standard of living of citizens. Science was only introduced as a general course. Since then, the Malaysian Science Curriculum has gone through various changes and transformations. These curriculum changes were influenced from various aspects. Among others are demands from the society, national needs, learners’ needs, and the nature of science as a body of knowledge that is ever changing.

In the Malaysian context, the influence of society can be seen from a wider perspective, which includes the nation’s needs. In the context of national and societal influence, there is a greater focus on the improvement of a society (Bybee & DeBoer, 1994). According to Bybee and DeBoer, society’s influence basically has two main purposes: (i) to improve people’s quality of life and (ii) to develop a nation that is capable of competing with others in the age of globalization. These goals can only be achieved through national policies. One example of such a policy is the New Development Policy (NDP). This policy was launched after the deliberation