Rationale of the strategy
Promoting the culture of lifelong learning is one of the seven strategic areas outlined in the National Higher Education Strategic Plan. Despite high participation rates in lifelong learning programmes, there is a clear lack of coordination and management at the national level. The blueprint seeks to provide lifelong learning stakeholders with a road map to promote lifelong learning in Malaysia. To ensure that the strategies are successfully implemented, a set of performance objectives, performance and accountability metrics, strategic targets and sponsoring organizations for each of the initiatives is identified.

Concept of lifelong learning
The strategy recognizes lifelong learning as the third pillar in human capital development after the school and higher education systems. Lifelong learning is defined as the development of human potential through a continuously supportive process that stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understanding they will require throughout their lifetimes and to apply these with confidence, creativity and enjoyment in all roles, circumstances and environments. Lifelong learning is about acquiring and updating all skills, interests, knowledge and qualifications from preschool years to post-retirement and about providing a ‘second chance’.

Main challenges
- Absence of a fully fledged lifelong learning policy: lifelong learning has not been integrated into the national education agenda
- Lack of monitoring: there is no central body that coordinates and evaluates lifelong learning activities
- Lack of awareness and participation in order to develop self-potential and improve productivity
- Inadequate financial support: funding schemes are only made available for formal education; tax incentives are minimal
- Inadequate mechanisms and infrastructure hinder equal access to lifelong learning for all
- Overlapping lifelong learning activities and programmes lead to inefficiencies in the utilization of public funds
- Recognition issues: the Malaysian qualifications framework does not fully recognize non-formal education

Main targets and measures
Malaysia’s lifelong learning strategy covers all sectors of the education system with explicit reference to formal, non-formal and informal learning. The blueprint is based on the following four strategies:
- Upgrade mechanism and infrastructure: enhance coordination and monitoring of lifelong learning policies and programmes; increase small- and medium-sized enterprises’ involvement in lifelong learning
- Enhance public awareness and involvement: launch a national promotional campaign; promote the image of lifelong learning
- **Ensure continuity and appreciation**: increase acceptance of open entry; assess prior experiential learning and online lifelong learning; increase mobility of learners
- **Provide financial support**: provide funding mechanisms; engage private funding; make loans available from private financial institutions; consider tax incentives

**Particular feature of the strategy**
The present status of lifelong learning in Malaysia is explained according to the three types of learning: formal, non-formal and informal:

- **Formal learning** is organized and structured with clear objectives and outcomes and takes place in formal learning institutions such as polytechnics, community colleges, public and private universities and open distance learning institutions.
- **Non-formal learning** opportunities in Malaysia generally take the form of workplace and on-the-job training programmes. There are several organizations and departments involved in encouraging non-formal learning, such as the Human Resource Development Council and the Department of Skills Development.
- **Informal learning** is not well documented in Malaysia and the main focus of activities has been confined to programmes that teach basic information and communication technologies and numeracy skills to out-of-school youth, functionally illiterate adults and marginalized groups in rural areas.

**Relevant documents that the strategy refers to:**

**Stakeholders involved in the development of the strategy (excerpt, 42 stakeholders are listed in the blueprint):**
- Ministry of Higher Education
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Ministry of Women, Family and Community
- Ministry of Youth and Sports
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Tourism
- Malaysian Qualifications Agency

**Stakeholders responsible for implementation of the strategy (excerpt):**
- Ministry of Higher Education
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Department of Skills Development of Ministry of Human Resources
- Congress of Unions of Employees in the Public and Civil Services
- Malaysian Trades Union Congress
- Malaysian Qualifications Agency

**Further readings and web links:**
- Malaysia Qualifications Framework