

OPINION

Align education with Madani Economy – Noor Azimah Abdul Rahim

A call to bring back Dual Language Programme to strengthen English proficiency

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One of the success stories of the education system is the formulation of the Dual Language Programme which was introduced in 2016, opines the writer. – Bernama pic, July 29, 2023

THE Madani Economy framework aims to put Malaysia into the top 25 on the UN Human Development Index by making our education system more demand-driven especially in strengthening cooperation with industries and employers. The prime minister wants to provide lifelong learning pathways in whatever skills the rakyat want to learn.

Lifelong learning pathways begin at home and continue to be developed in school, at tertiary and into adulthood. The rakyat comprise parents and parents want real job skill sets for their children. We do not want our children to be raising their hands for hand-outs, breadcrumbs nor empty promises. Parents have aspirations for their children and will seek what is best for their future. The government will surely agree.

Guided by the National Education Philosophy which is designed “to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards”, the education system has been continually adapting to ensure that school leavers and graduates are thinkers, responsive, critical and able to take on any employer, job or task. It has not been a total failure as we have had luminaries and visionaries leading the Education Ministry in the past.

One of the success stories of the education system is the formulation of the Dual Language Programme (DLP) which was introduced in 2016. It is not a mere programme as some have been made to believe. It is instead a powerful tool that will boost the

interest of Gen Z to transition into careers in high-tech fields with high-paying jobs. All parents should want DLP for their children.

Why settle for a Skoda (non-DLP) when you can have a Tesla (DLP)?

Incidentally, Sarawak, led by ambitious and unstoppable leaders, has immersed itself, embraced the language of technology, English, and now adopted full-on DLP with conviction and commitment. The World Bank recently declared the state as a high-income one, with the intent to double up in eight years' time. Sarawak never budged and now is a runaway success story moving forward as it forges ahead on its own trajectory.

Unfortunately, there now appears to be an attempt to kill DLP by short-sighted little Napoleons. Midway through the first term of the academic year, top national full DLP schools, namely Convent Bukit Nanas (1) and SK Bukit Damansara, schools that have unique cultures of their own, have been coerced by their principals to give way to non-DLP classes.

Year 1 students who are a mere six years of age are subjected to discreet Bahasa Melayu (BM) (not English!) assessments to determine whether the child is suitable for DLP or not. Rather it is the role of the teacher to teach based on parental choice (Education Act 1996) and not on what is easy for the teacher. There is no shortcut in education. All parties have to persevere.

We also understand that the fully residential schools may share the same fate in the next academic year save for the 11 premier ones such as Malay College Kuala Kangsar and Tunku Kurshiah College.

The 70 Mara junior science colleges (MRSM) which fall under the Rural and Regional Development Ministry have abolished DLP for Form 1. There are ramblings among frantic parents that Form 2 (even though Form 1 was conducted in English), Form 3 (after completing two years in English) and worst Form 4, through a supposedly soft landing only because of the difficulty of obtaining science and mathematics books in BM, will gradually head towards non DLP status.

The prime minister, who requires a high value workforce, needs to confront the respective ministries, to ensure that their portfolios align to government aspirations. If it is true that such a nefarious exercise is being conducted behind closed doors, then we urge the respective ministries to come clean, and support the parents to support the success of the Madani Economy. – The Vibes, July 29, 2023

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