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New education plan sparks enthusiasm amongst experts and public

By Nuradzimmah Daim - June 28, 2024 @ 6:33pm



The Education Ministry's decision to "open its doors" for the public to give their input on the next education development plan has sparked much enthusiasm, including those in the fraternity. General pic by STR / FAIZ ANUAR

KUALA LUMPUR: The Education Ministry's decision to "open its doors" for the public to give their input on the next education development plan has sparked much enthusiasm, including those in the fraternity.

Experts believed such a move should be an ongoing opportunity for everyone to be involved in voicing ideas pertaining to the education system in the country and not a one-off activity.

National STEM Association president and founder Professor Emeritus Datuk Dr Noraini Idris said the ministry must conduct a study and analyse previous education blueprints and present the "success stories and even failures" to the masses as it seeks public input on the next plan.

"As a case in point, the worrying students' performance in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) warrants a clear action plan included in the proposed blueprint

"The examination system also needed to be reviewed, including the impact of the abolition of Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR) and Form Three Assessment (PT3)," she said.

"Firstly, the curriculum for kindergarten, primary, and secondary education levels needs to be strengthened so that children can improve their thinking and problem-solving skills that they can apply in their daily lives.

"Secondly, the teachers need to be exposed to the latest affairs, as many of them only received training as undergraduates and are 'confined' to the school they are attached to," said Noraini.

She said red tape made it difficult for teachers to mingle with industry players and academicians from universities.

Noraini said the appointment of schools' principals and headmasters should be made based on merit among those with leadership quality, while district and state education directors should be open to ideas in drawing up plans for their respective areas and are willing to go on the ground.

"At the ministry level, officials must forward-thinking and grab the opportunities to prepare the students for the future.

"Here we are talking about Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Fourth Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR 4.0), but one officer I've been liaising with is more concerned with the type of flowers and food to be served at an event I'm organising," she said.

Physical infrastructures, including basic classroom fixtures, as well as science and computer laboratories, should also be given attention to ensure a more conducive learning environment for children.

Meanwhile, Dr Mohammad Tazli Azizan said while it is important for the syllabus to be comprehensive and challenging, it should not be too densed or overwhelming for students.

"The primary goal of our education system should be to equip learners with the essential skills needed to navigate the 21st century, aligning with the Falsafah Pendidikan Kebangsaan (National Education Philosophy).

"By focusing on developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and lifelong learning skills, we empower students to become self-directed learners who can adapt and learn new information as needed in the future.

"We shouldn't focus on offering too many subjects, especially for the young ones," he told the New Straits Times.

Mohammad Tazli said the new curriculum should cater to diverse learning needs and styles, with differentiated instruction and inclusive practices should be embedded to support all students, including those with special educational needs.

He said there should be a mechanism for a regular review of the school curriculum to keep it relevant and aligned with global educational standards and the evolving needs of the society and economy.

"Meanwhile, teachers must be equipped with modern pedagogical methods and educational technologies, including AI tools.

Continuous professional development and upskilling would enable the teachers to effectively facilitate student learning and adapt to changing educational demands, he said.

He said the ministry should also address the issue of administrative workload for teachers, as it distracts from their primary role of teaching and engaging with students.

"Streamlining administrative processes and utilising technology such as AI can free up more time for teachers to focus on instructional activities and more engagement with the students," he added.

"Holistic education that nurtures not only academic skills but also social, emotional, and ethical development should also be emphasised.

This can be achieved through integrating character education, co-curricular activities, and community involvement into the curriculum.

"For example, let the students learn something new through solving the community problem," he said.