



Press Release

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Give teachers the tools to make full use of technology

The recent debates on the 12th Malaysia Plan included discussions on education as parliamentarians weighed in on how we should chart the way forward.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad called for greater use of technology in the teaching and learning process. Among others, he recommended the recording of good lessons to support English language learners.

There is no denying that technology can enhance the delivery of lessons when used appropriately. Publications on technology-enabled classrooms can be traced back several decades, and I doubt that there are any English-language teachers who would dispute the claim that drawing on technology can benefit language learners.

All teachers are trained to take advantage of online resources when they design lessons for their students, and the internet has certainly created even greater opportunities for teachers to draw on a variety of resources to keep learners engaged.

Therefore, technology in education is not uncharted territory for language teachers.

I would agree that technology does not feature as prominently in most of our English-language classrooms, and the primary reason for this is the failure to equip our schools with the necessary infrastructure.

The struggles our teachers have faced to ensure that learning continues during school closures this past year is evidence of how ill-equipped we are to take advantage of technology in education. This is despite the fact that the education sector has always received the largest budget allocation every year.

Teachers who have been in the education system long enough have witnessed the failure of past initiatives which were launched to support the use of technology in teaching and learning. Take for example the Smart School project, which was announced in the 1990s with the promise that all schools in Malaysia would be technology-enabled by 2010, or the more recent 1BestariNet project which was introduced in 2011 to provide schools with an integrated solution for classroom management, teaching and learning through the internet.

I would encourage parliamentarians to walk into any five schools in their constituencies and speak to teachers. See if you are able to find evidence of how these past projects have transformed schools and enabled teachers to embrace technology.

Every trained English-language teacher possesses the skills to draw on technology and enhance the delivery of their lessons. However, the right conditions must first be in place to allow teachers to put theory into practice.

Budget allocations for the education sector must first translate into tangible outcomes at our schools.

Ramesh Nair is president of the Malaysian English Language Teaching Association.

MELTA is a not-for-profit organisation which is committed to the promotion of English language education in Malaysia. The association was founded in 1958 and is the oldest English language teaching association in Malaysia.

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