



## **‘More DLP teachers needed’**

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THE quality of teachers is determined by passion and the training they receive.

While self-motivation and dedication are intrinsic, training and upskilling in the subjects they are expected to teach and in the latest teaching and learning pedagogy are the responsibility of the Education Ministry.

The continued success of the Dual Language Programme (DLP) classes where students learn Science and Mathematics in English is in jeopardy, stakeholders say, as there are not enough good teachers who are able to teach the subjects in English (see factbox for DLP criteria).

The demand for DLP classes currently outweighs the supply for the programme and parents are calling for action. The Education Ministry, said its minister Datuk Dr Radzi Jidin, is engaged in ongoing discussions to solve an issue involving DLP students who are finding it difficult to secure spots in classes at secondary school.

“Hopefully, once discussions have been completed, we (the ministry) will inform the best solution for this issue,” he told reporters on April 28.

Malaysian English Language Teaching Association (Melta) president Dr Ramesh Nair said the growth of the DLP now depends largely on the number of trained teachers we have.

These teachers must be comfortable in delivering content in both languages, and this is determined by the quality of training they received. Despite a great deal of investment in training in-service and pre-service teachers during the Teaching and Learning of Science and Mathematics in English policy (PPSMI) from 2003 to 2012, many schools today are unable to offer the DLP because the subject teachers are still not proficient enough to teach in English. Teachers in the system are a mix of those who had learnt the subjects in Bahasa Malaysia (BM) since their primary school days, and those who studied Science and Mathematics in English in their secondary years.



# ABOUT THE DLP

■ First announced in **October 2015** by former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak when tabling Budget 2016.

■ Piloted in **300 schools** but demand from interested schools and parents was overwhelming.

■ Gives schools the option to teach Science, Mathematics, Information Technology and Communication, and Design and Technology in English or BM.

■ Part of the Government's ongoing efforts to uphold BM while strengthening the usage of English.

■ The guidelines (Education Ministry DLP Improvement Guidelines 2021) to conduct the programme were updated in 2020 and took effect last year.

■ Criteria to run the programme:

- > Schools have enough teachers that meet the criteria to teach Science and Mathematics in English. This includes being

certified by the school head that they can teach the subjects in English.

> School heads must discuss with teachers, with the guidance of the State Education Department, the short and long-term plans, encompassing teachers, students and classrooms.

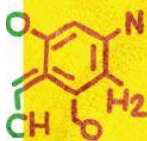
> Schools have gotten written permission from parents before classes commence.

> The minimum achievement level for BM in UPSR or SPM for the school the previous year is equivalent or higher than the level set by the ministry.

> There is a minimum of **15 students**.

- Schools need to open classes based on the number of students and other criteria set for the DLP classes.

- Primary schools need to take into consideration the availability of spaces in DLP classes in secondary schools to ensure continuity of the students' education in the programme.



## IN BRIEF:

### LANGUAGE INITIATIVES IN THE NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

■ **Teaching and Learning of Science and Maths in English** (better known by its Malay abbreviation, PPSMI)

> Introduced in 2003, beginning with Year One, Form One and Lower Six students.

> The reversal of the PPSMI policy was made in 2009.

> Abolished in stages starting 2012 and was no longer part of the education system from 2013.

> Some educationist groups, particularly those from vernacular schools, and BM language activists were against the policy claiming that it would compromise on mastery of their mother tongues, widen the learning gap between rural and urban students who were more proficient in English and threaten the status of BM as the national language.

■ **Upholding Bahasa Malaysia and Strengthening the English Language** (better known by its Malay abbreviation, MBMMBI)

> A replacement to PPSMI introduced in 2009.

> Entailed enhancing the teaching and learning of BM and English through diversified and improved teaching approaches.

> Carried out in phases from 2010.

■ In 2011, the **Standard-Based Curriculum for Primary Schools (KSSR)** was implemented starting with Year One pupils learning Science and Maths in BM (in national schools) and Mandarin and Tamil (in vernacular schools).

■ In 2016, the **Highly Immersive Programme (HIP)** and **Dual Language Programme (DLP)** were introduced.

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ENGLISH  
MATHS



"If we are still short of teachers who possess the competence to teach the subjects in English, then we must ask ourselves where we have failed," said Ramesh.

Even if the teachers were not trained to teach the subjects in English, they would still have had to undergo continuing professional development (CPD) activities throughout their career, and been made to show evidence of this as part of their annual performance appraisal, he noted.

“With such mechanisms in place, all teachers should be equipping themselves with the skills necessary to ensure that they are capable of implementing national education policies.

“It would thus be fair to assume that every Science and Mathematics teacher in the last decade had received some sort of CPD to teach in both languages.

“So if schools are now saying that their Science and Mathematics teachers are incapable of teaching the subjects in English, there is a need to study why the CPD programmes have failed these teachers,” said Ramesh.

Besides addressing the needs of teachers who are already in our schools, there is a need to look at the training of Science and Mathematics teachers at our teacher training institutions and universities, he added.

Noting that there is no quick fix to this problem, he pointed to the hasty implementation of PPSMI as a reason for its failure.

We cannot assume that teachers can be quickly trained to teach the same BM content in English because proficiency is acquired through the actual use of the language in a variety of settings, he said.

For both teacher and student to gain better mastery of English, the usage of the language has to extend beyond English language classroom hours, he noted.

Besides PPSMI and DLP, the Education Ministry tried to increase the use of English for activities outside the classroom by implementing the Highly Immersive Programme (HIP) (see factbox for info on programmes).

But for any of these initiatives to succeed, the school leadership must present as many opportunities as possible for the languages to be used, Ramesh said.

It is not enough to tell Science and Mathematics teachers to be proficient in English, he said, adding that if the goal is to improve English proficiency, instead of conducting the entire subject in English, teachers can continue teaching it in BM.

Those teaching a subject in BM could also assign their students project-based learning activities which encourage them to read additional materials in English, he said, adding that students should be given the option to present their projects in English.

“Allow both languages to co-exist rather than pitting one against the other.

“Our goal is to help students master content while developing their critical thinking skills, and for this, our students should be leveraging their ability to use both languages,” he said.

Echoing Ramesh’s views, National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) secretary-general Wang Heng Suan said teachers need adequate training to teach DLP classes.

There is also interest among teachers to teach the subjects in English, he added.

Acknowledging that there are not enough DLP classes in secondary schools to meet demand, he said it is a manpower issue as there are currently not enough teachers.

“What we can see now is that there are at most two DLP classes in national secondary schools while there can be up to five classes in vernacular secondary schools (SMJK),” he said.

Parent Action Group for Education Malaysia (PAGE) chairman Datin Noor Azimah Abdul Rahim urged the ministry to review the criteria for schools to conduct DLP classes.

“PAGE has always been critical of the BM requirement which is solely to appease national linguist groups,” she said, adding that this requirement penalises half the schools that are interested in running the programme.

She said if the ministry intends to scale up the programme, it should either remove or at the very least relax this requirement.

With more learning aids available in English, DLP remains a catalyst for science, technology and innovation, she stressed.

If teachers are still not able to teach the subjects in English, the government should implement a form of blended teaching where both languages are used, she suggested.

A number of residential schools, Noor Azimah pointed out, have agreed to using DLP. This, she added, greatly benefits the schools' B40 students.

"The number of DLP schools in Sarawak exceeded the 1,095 DLP schools in Sabah and the peninsula in 2020 yet the state was able to implement the programme in all its 1,164 schools despite the challenges."

What parents say...

Both my children are in a primary school in Bukit Damansara, Kuala Lumpur, and they are doing well in the DLP. We have not considered what to do yet if they do not get into a DLP class in secondary school. We would rather focus on the bigger picture, as in what kind of education we want for our children. Academics are only a small part of their future. There are other skills that are vital for them to learn, for instance, financial education, character building, and emotional intelligence.

Irda Nurhidayah Mohamed Salleh, 39

We plan to educate our child overseas so fluency in English for Science and Mathematics is crucial. Proficiency is also an important factor in employability, especially in this era. I am worried whether my 12-year-old son will get into a DLP class next year. It is important that he continues his education in DLP to ensure his performance in these two subjects does not deteriorate. A sudden transition from English to BM will be stressful for the child. The language and terminology used will vary from what he is used to. Extra hours and coaching to catch up on the subject in BM will be required. All efforts and time spent learning the subjects in English will be wasted if my child is unable to secure a spot in a DLP class.

Malini, 40