

# Transforming education through a whole-institution approach

By [Dzulkifli Abdul Razak](#) - June 14, 2022 @ 12:05am



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Each time major changes are contemplated in the educational sector, it will invoke comments from various sources ranging from laymen to experts.

The latter, at times, are loosely understood as many seem to think that they are the "experts". This adds to the confusion over who to believe when it is based on emotions and conventions.

The latest development relates to the recent announcement to abolish the Form 3 Assessment test (PT3) and replace it with classroom assessments (PBD).

PT3, the second major exam to be scrapped following the decision to abolish the Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah in April last year, was introduced in 2014 to replace the Penilaian Menengah Rendah exam.

Reportedly, the Education Ministry previously said that PT3 would be abolished only in 2024 to make way for PBD.

This discrepancy has led to some questioning the "rush" and the evidence for cutting short the implementation of PT3.

While PBD may have its advantages in monitoring the progress of individual students, cautions were raised with regard to the preparedness for its successful implementation, especially in terms of rigorous training without compromising quality when the number of students per classroom is considered large.

This is to say that there will be a workload increase, perhaps compounded by technical difficulties involving the dependency on technological instruments or shortage of human resources needed to help.

Above all are the matters of trust, objectivity and transparency, which have been points of contention when related issues are not well communicated and convincing evidence not presented, which may be the case today.

This has led to allegations of the "unqualified" being "promoted" without meeting a minimum level of understanding for each subject.

It must be underscored that such "promotional" exercises are not examination-based, whereby students sit together for a standardised "test" to answer formal questions within a given time period and venue.

This becomes a means to compare students in a meritocratic way, covering a limited scope that is designated as "education."

It disregards the larger meaning of education and other forms of learning that measure students' potential creatively, some of which are not examinable in a formal fashion.

Such assessments are frequently neglected because "numerical results" are not assigned to them.

These are among the main challenges in doing away with mainstream exams that have long defined what a "successful" education is all about.

Interestingly, in the debates to reimagine education globally, it has been recommended that "potentiality instead of meritocracy be used to evaluate the success of learners," according to Unesco's Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP).

"Potentiality is measured by an individual's own rate of learning based on a personalised learning trajectory that uses dynamic and formative learner assessments," it further emphasises.

It highlighted that everyone learns differently and is influenced by a combination of internal factors (biological including neurobiological) and context (political, social, cultural, institutional, environmental, technological).

As context is crucial, receiving a personalised learning experience is a human right for every learner. Homogenising education can, in fact, cause more harm than good.

Unesco's MGIEP advocated "a whole-brain learner-centric approach" aimed at strengthening the interconnectedness of cognition and the social-emotional domains, which is essential for human flourishing. Or the humanising education in nurturing the complete person!

In short, the new proposed "shift" fast-tracked for implementation has a lot more items to be looked into before the maximum benefit for all in shaping the future of education could be assured.

More multidisciplinary dialogues and collaboration should be fostered in ensuring a "Whole-Institution Transformation" rather on a piecemeal basis as it is currently perceived.

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