

# Letters

Send your letters to Letters Editor, New Straits Times, 31, Jalan Riong, 59100 Kuala Lumpur or email [letters@nst.com.my](mailto:letters@nst.com.my) (Tel: 03-20569411). A letter must have the writer's name, signature, home address, phone and MyKad numbers. It should ideally not be more than 500 words. The editor reserves the right to edit a letter for clarity and length.



## UPSR CHANGES

# Ideas on weighting, timeline

**T**HE Education Ministry recently announced several changes to the Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR) format. It has proposed to implement a 40 per cent school-based (ongoing assessment) and a 60 per cent central assessment (final exam) pending public feedback.

Education Minister Datuk Mahdzir Khalid, in a recent announcement, stated that the ministry would make an informed decision only after considering the views of stakeholders nationwide.

We, therefore, would like to air our concerns in relation to this new assessment system, which is being implemented at the UPSR level.

There are two aspects of this new assessment system that we would like to bring to the attention of the ministry:

**THE** weighting of assessment components; and,

**MAKING** a gradual timeline for the implementation of the new evaluation system.

It should be noted that the essence of the school-based assessment system, both at the UPSR and Pentaksiran Tingkatan 3 (PT3) levels, is to assess students' learning outcomes holistically. Thus, there are two components being assessed: academic (central assessment and school assessment), and non-academic (psychometrics, and assessment of physical activ-

ities, sports and co-curriculum). Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) or Kemahiran Berfikir Aras Tinggi (KBAT) is also intensively promoted at these levels.

However, it should be noted that there is a slight difference between the weighting of the two components at these two levels. At the PT3 level, it is a balanced (50:50) approach, which is considered good as both teachers and students have to pay equal attention to these components.

In the recently introduced UPSR format, the ratio is, however, reportedly lopsided — 40:60. Empirical research findings in the educational assessment have shown that both teachers and students alike have the disposition to focus more on the component that carries more weighting. Therefore, when the weighting of the central assessment (final exam) is 60 per cent and the school assessment is only 40 per cent, both teachers and students may focus more on the former than the latter, and this, in turn, may defeat the spirit and purpose of school-based assessment, which is promoting assessment for learning.

We do not want a rehash of the former UPSR format, which was deemed more examination-oriented. We, therefore, suggest that the ministry either consider the school assessment carrying more weighting than the central assessment, or,



Let us not rehash the former Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah format, which was deemed examination-oriented.

better still, similar to that of PT3, an equal weighting to both components.

In relation to the second issue, we therefore would like to suggest to the ministry that it implements a gradual timeline for the implementation of the new assessment system as practised in Hong Kong.

Education officials in Hong Kong have recently made a timeline of three years, within which relatively fair options were provided to the schools to help them adapt to their newly introduced assessment system.

Similarly, the Education Ministry in Malaysia may consider adapting such a system (please refer to table). The timeline may help schools collaborate with each other. There must be at least one school in each district that goes for Option 1. Other schools within the vicinity may learn from these schools in their respective districts. State education departments, along with district education offices, could also facilitate the process.

For the schools that are not ready in Year 1 and schools that have not met the requirements in

Year 2, the ministry may temporarily consider their central assessment (our society trusts this more than the school assessment) results for students' admission into secondary schools as that involves more involvement from the Malaysian Examinations Syndicate (MES) compared with the school assessment.

Regardless of what the schools opt for in Year 1 and 2, they will eventually have to come to Year 3, which leaves them with only Option 1. The gradual implementation of the new assessment system will help the school and the teachers understand the system better.

The following table may better illustrate our suggestion:

### YEAR 1:

**OPTION 1:** Submit both the school (60 per cent / 50 per cent) and central assessment (40 per cent / 50 per cent) results to the Malaysian Examinations Syndicate (MES) for feedback and the results are official (for admission into secondary schools)

**OPTION 2:** Submit both the school and central assessment results to the MES for feedback but the results are

not official (schools have not met the requirements)

**OPTION 3:** Not submitting the results to the MES at all (schools are not ready)

### YEAR 2:

**OPTION 1:** Submit both the school and central assessment results to the MES and the results are official (for admission into secondary schools)

**OPTION 2:** Submit both the school and central assessment results to the MES for feedback but the results are not official (schools have not met the requirements)

### YEAR 3:

**OPTION 1:** Submit both the school and central assessment results to the MES for feedback and the results are official (for admission into secondary schools).

We hope the ministry would view positively the suggestions that we have proposed.

**■ ASSOC PROF DR MOHD SALLEHHUDIN ABD AZIZ AND ALLA BAKSH MOHD AYUB KHAN,** PhD candidate, [Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia](http://Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia), Bangi, Selangor