

# PT3 needs to reflect learning, not grading

**I**N line with the global development of education, the Education Ministry has implemented a new system of assessment as part of its educational reforms.

The new assessment is known as School-Based Assessment (SBA) or *Pentaksiran Berasaskan Sekolah*. In the shape of PT3 (*Penilaian Tingkatan 3*), to replace the *Penilaian Menengah Rendah* at the lower secondary level.

The new assessment system has been implemented since 2011 and aims to improve the way we assess students' academic progress and personal development.

Aside from academic assessment, the new system also assesses students on their sports and co-curricular activities, as well as psychometric assessment (SBA comprises four major components — central assessment, school assessment, assessment of physical, sports and co-curricular activities and psychometric assessment).

According to the ministry, the

new assessment will produce students with better thinking skills as the assessment is more comprehensive, holistic, low stake and integrated.

Another aim of implementing the new system is to lessen the focus on examinations as practised in the traditional assessment.

The school-based assessment has been implemented with varying degrees of success in Finland, South Africa, Hong Kong and Australia.

According to ministry officials,

the new assessment system would combine both the centralised and school assessments.

However, since the introduction of PT3, it has resulted in a mixed bag of reactions from students, parents and teachers.

Despite the ministry's good intention to decentralise the assessment and focus on assessment for learning rather than of learning, the measures that it has implemented have not shown the intended results.

The new assessment system remains centralised because of the perceived importance by students, teachers as well as parents, of the centralised assessment system that is controlled by the Examinations Syndicate.

It is disheartening to note that preliminary results published by my doctoral candidate, Alla Bakash (2015), showed the school-based assessment is not working as intended.

Teachers, parents, students and school administrators still place much emphasis to the central assessment, in which the questions and marking schemes are provided by the Examinations Syndicate.

Sadly, most of these stakeholders play down the importance of school assessments.

The attempt by the ministry to decentralise the assessment and make it truly a school-based assessment with focus on learning has not worked according to the intended plan.

Despite the adoption of school-based assessment in our schools, the new assessment system remains traditional in perspective and practice.



*Despite the Education Ministry's intention to decentralise assessment and focus on assessment for learning rather than of learning, the measures that it has implemented have not shown intended results.*

It raises a number of questions about the effectiveness of the school-based assessment as defined by the ministry, which combines both the centralised and school-based assessments.

Do teachers and administrators

exercise with care their newly-acquired authority according to the new roles and functions?

Do parents truly understand the ultimate aim and goal of school-based assessment?

Contrary to the intended of

come, the new assessment system initiatives have not relaxed the ministry's tight grip over the provision and delivery of education and assessment at all levels in the country.

I believe the ministry should learn to let go and allow the schools and teachers to have the major say in the assessment as PT3

is not a certification exam.

What is most important is the learning, rather than grading, at this level of education.

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