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English move: Get it all in place, urge educationists

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Educationists today urged the Education Ministry to ensure all requirements were in place before proceeding with the implementation of teaching of Science and Mathematics in English.

This includes having sufficient teachers, resource materials and textbooks.

They agreed the move would succeed in checking the declining standards of the language among schoolchildren.

Former principal assistant director of the Education Ministry's Resource Centre (Education Technology), Rita Vias, said a proficiency evaluation must be carried out to ensure teachers were ready to teach in English.

Rita, a former headmistress, said this would help determine whether the teachers could express mathematical and scientific concepts in English.

Educationist Nik Ismail Ahmad said while he supported the move, it must be carried out with great care.

Nik Ismail, a former Yayasan Pelajaran Mara director, said the move should be carried out in phases.

He suggested two models which could be implemented next year.

The first model will see the move introduced in Standards Two and Three in remove class, and in Forms One and Four.

The second model proposes that it be introduced only in Standard One.

He said implementing the move in phases would give the Ministry time to prepare the curriculum, print books, train and retrain teachers.

It would also allow schools to conduct teacher, student and parent orientation, have library facilities, audio visual aids, and other support and teaching items.

Educationist and social activist F.R. Bhupalan said the most crucial thing is to have good and well trained teachers.

"Teachers must be selected and trained well so that they can cope," she said, adding they must also be dedicated and focused.

Although the idea was feasible, she said, programmes or schemes implemented for the first time would inevitably have teething problems.

"These difficulties are not insurmountable and can be overcome.

Pupils must be given more motivation, while extra emphasis should be paid to students who only speak their mother tongue."

SJK (T) Seafield headmistress M. Alagamah said the move could be introduced in Tamil schools but should be carried out only when students have a basic grasp of the language.

"Now, it would not be practical as most students can only speak in their mother tongues.

"If the students are required to learn these subjects in English, they will not be able to cope."

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had said that the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English would start simultaneously at all levels from next year.

His announcement confirmed a New Straits Times report earlier, which said the move would be introduced at all levels of primary and secondary education from next year, despite Deputy Education Minister Datuk Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin saying it would be implemented only from Standard One.

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