

Muhyiddin's 'dodgy source' on education quality
MalaysiaKini.com
April 02, 2012

Education Minister Muhyiddin Yassin cited a dodgy study in claiming that Malaysia's quality of education outranks that of developed countries such as Germany, Britain and the US, according to the DAP.

Its publicity chief Tony Pua said Muhyiddin had relied on the World Competitiveness Report by the World Economic Forum (WEF) which, in turn, was based on data from the government-linked Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) and the government-owned Malaysia Productivity Corporation (MPC).

NONEPua (right) said the study involved just 87 local businessmen who were asked to rate, on a scale of one to seven, the education system based on this question: 'How well does the educational system in your country meet the needs of a competitive economy?'

"Surely such a tiny survey with such 'surprising' outcomes must be benchmarked against other credible international studies before it is accepted at face value," Pua commented in a statement today.

"And surely, as the education minister, he would have seen many objective studies on the quality of our education and students."

As examples, Pua cited the Programme for International Students Assessment (Pisa) study in 2009 which assessed 15-year-old Malaysians to be far behind their counterparts in the rest of the developed world.

Pisa is a programme by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), a 34-member forum that promotes trade and democracy.

Pua pointed out that the methodology employed by Pisa is far more credible because it involves reviewing the literacy, mathematics and scientific understanding of 522,000 students across 74 countries, with nearly 4,999 respondents from Malaysia alone.

He said the data showed that Malaysia was ranked well below OECD countries and specifically against the US, Britain and Germany in all three tested areas.

"In terms of reading literacy, we were ranked a poor 55 out of 74 countries. In mathematics literacy, it was 57 and (we fared) only marginally better in science, at 52.

"The conclusion of the report on Malaysia was even more damaging when it reported that 56 percent of students are estimated to have a proficiency in reading literacy that is at or above the baseline level needed to participate effectively and productively in life."

'Jaguh kampung' syndrome

Pua said Muhyiddin should have cited the Pisa study, about which he should be fully aware, because it was conducted with the cooperation of the Education Ministry.

azlan"Instead, Muhyiddin decided to endorse and boast of a survey of 87 local businessman on a single subjective question," he said.

This was akin to the jaguh kampung (village hero) syndrome, with Muhyiddin selectively choosing data to make himself look good, without any objectivity.

Last Saturday, Muhyiddin had told the National Higher Education Carnival 2012 that Malaysians should

be proud of the education system in relation to the findings of the WEF study.

Selectively quoting WEF report

Meanwhile, DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng also weighed in on the topic, pointing out that Muhyiddin had misled the public by selectively quoting from the WEF report.

Lim said that while the WEF report ranked Malaysia 14 in terms of quality of education, there were other areas in the same study that showed Malaysia lagging behind in other areas. Eight examples quoted by Lim are:

- * Quality of primary education: Rank 21
- * Primary education enrolment: Rank 61
- * Secondary education enrolment: Rank 101
- * Tertiary education enrolment: Rank 66
- * Quality of Mathematics and Science education: Rank 23
- * Quality of management schools: Rank 27
- * Internet access in schools: Rank 36
- * Availability of research and training services: Rank 18

Lim said Malaysia's relatively low performance on objective or non-subjective measures such as the enrolment rates should be highlighted above that of the executive survey opinion indicators such as in quality of education.

