

MP SPEAKS | DLP guidelines: A step in the right direction

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Fadhlina Sidek

MP SPEAKS | The Dual Language Programme (DLP) saga is not new. There have been many obstacles since its introduction in 2016.

Recently, the newly introduced guidelines which aim to improve the programme received divided reactions. Some called it a backward move, while others believed that this was a “corrective measure”, a leap forward for a more sustained implementation.

First things first, let’s be clear that DLP is not a policy. Instead, it is a programme under the Upholding the Malay Language and Strengthening Command of English (MBMMBI) policy.

The policy clearly indicates the need to uphold the Malay language’s position as the national language as stipulated in the Federal Constitution and to strengthen the command of the English language among students.

One of the concerns during my early days in office was the lack of Malay language

mastery among students, including in schools implementing DLP.

Even though the Malay language results in Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) examination 2023 showed slight improvement, still, 2.5 percent of the students failed the subject.

This has huge repercussions because the Malay language is an SPM must-pass subject. Another important consideration is the right of students to choose the non-DLP option.

Unlike the less pragmatic Teaching of Science and Mathematics in English (PPSMI), the DLP implementation should not be patronising.

We should not compromise students' right to learn Mathematics and Science in Malay and for those in vernacular schools, to learn in their mother tongue.

On another note, Malay groups consisting of nationalists, national laureates, language activists, writers, academics, and advocates have long expressed their disagreement towards DLP implementation, which, according to them, mirrors PPSMI and is unconstitutional.

Their concerns are understandable, considering that the Malay language command among some Malaysians remains low.

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim himself commented that efforts to raise English language proficiency among Malaysians should not come at the expense of the Malay language.

Stay objective

So where do we go from here? There is a Malay proverb, “bagai menghela rambut dalam tepung; rambut jangan putus, tepung jangan terserak”, which emphasises caution when dealing with difficult situations.

With the DLP issue, it is important to remain objective.

Its implementation must adhere to the MBMMBI policy and work towards achieving the direction of the nation. There is no way the Education Ministry will succumb to pressure from any group or individuals who only want things their way.

When a policy is crafted, it must be inclusive for the greater good of people. It should not be exclusive to the interest of certain groups or individuals.

It should be noted that the ministry’s efforts to strengthen English language proficiency among students are not limited to the DLP programme. Various initiatives are being carried out to enhance the mastery of the English language

in schools.

These include programmes such as the Professional Upskilling for English Language Teachers and the Highly Immersive Programme that involve teachers and students in all schools.

Such programmes provide increased exposure to the English language among teachers and students within the school environment.

The ministry has also included the initiative to uphold the position of the Malay language and strengthen English as one of the six key initiatives to strategically reform Malaysian education.

This should be regarded as a serious intent to improve the standard of English among teachers and students in schools.

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