

## Education reforms under way

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**A reformation of the education system is underway, with emphasis on improving local standards to match the best around the globe.**

Education Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein, in his 2006 message, said the ministry would study calls to reduce the number of subjects in public examinations and only test pupils on certain subjects. A re-look of the country's assessment and evaluation systems may be carried out with national school education being fewer exam-oriented.

But there would be no abolition of public or school examinations. "The way we assess our children's achievements in learning must be in response to developments and changes in the world. "The 9th Malaysia Plan period can be used to see if we can change the emphasis in public exams from being too content-based to a more skill-based one, or from achievement tests to tests on general ability," he told ministry staff.

Hishammuddin said the ministry had laid the foundation for a less exam-oriented education system last year by placing emphasis on co-curricular achievements. Besides content review, the ministry would be enhancing education infrastructure and programmes nationwide.

This includes:

- Building and upgrading more schools, as well as repairing those which need a facelift and are in dangerous condition due to termite attacks or floods;
- Major inventory-taking and consolidation of the ICT initiatives in schools;
- Remedial and intervention programmes to ensure students mastered Reading, Writing and Arithmetic skills;
- Expanding Special Education programmes; and,
- Strengthening the national language.

He said a pioneer programme starting next year involved the teaching of Mandarin and Tamil as elective subjects in schools. Jawi, Al-Quran, Arabic and Fardu Ain (j-QAF) will be expanded to another 1,235 schools.

"We will also have enhancement of schemes such as the Tuition Voucher Scheme and the School Milk Programme. We need to learn from all their (other countries') experiences and to use each one to our advantage. We need to develop a mechanism to gain exposure, exchange knowledge, as well as test and compare our education products with other countries.

"With this, we are actually marketing our education products to the world."

He said the ministry would also take part in education-linked activities organised by Unesco, the

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.

"We can also assess our students' achievements through examinations conducted by bodies such as TIMSS (The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study)."

TIMSS, formerly known as the Third International Mathematics and Science Study, provides reliable and timely data on the mathematics and science achievement of American students. Hishammuddin also said students' achievements could also be compared with co-curricular activities done internationally, such as debates, maths olympiads and competitions such as brass bands and robotics.

Schools should link up with renowned foreign schools, with outstanding ones turned into a showcase. For schools outside the ministry's jurisdiction such as private and international schools, efforts had to be taken to identify those with potential and market them to other countries.

"This is an extremely difficult task and I need a team that is truly committed, trustworthy, honest and willing to work hard to ensure all our plans are implemented efficiently and effectively, without repeating past mistakes."

Another goal was to make national schools the school of choice.

Source: New Straits Times | [www.nst.com.my](http://www.nst.com.my)