

**Form 3 students made 'guinea pigs' in confusing new assessment, says DAP lawmaker
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BY EILEEN NG**

Putrajaya is using nearly half-a-million Form 3 students currently taking the Pentaksiran Tingkatan 3 (PT3) assessment as "guinea pigs", charged a DAP lawmaker, saying that the lack of proper information had caused confusion.

Serdang MP Dr Ong Kian Ming (pic) said he had received numerous complaints from parents and the affected students who are currently being assessed under this new system for the History and Geography subjects, where they are required to do case studies and write essays based on a set topic.

The students, together with teachers, were unsure and confused over what was required of them, he said.

The PT3 was introduced in March this year to replace the exam driven Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR) examination, although the Education Ministry had announced in February 2011 that the PMR exams would be abolished.

The Examination Board will supervise the PT3 exams that are set by the schools, based on guidelines by the Board.

Ong said between March and now, there was very little time to brief students, parents and the 63,000 Form 3 teachers in 2,376 secondary schools about PT3 requirements.

"This has left teachers, parents and students utterly confused about PT3 - how it differs from PMR, how it will be used to stream students after Form 3, how it will avoid bias in terms of setting of questions and marking of papers at the school level.

"Both Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh have to stop making our Form 3 PT3 students guinea pigs and ensure proper implementation of PT3," he said, referring to the Education Minister and Education Minister II respectively at a press conference at the DAP headquarters.

The first-term MP also trained his guns on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who took to Twitter last Tuesday to wish the students well.

"It is disgraceful that Najib can have the gall to wish the students but at the same time, he was not aware of the problems related to PT3 implementation," he said.

Expressing disappointment over the confusion, Ong said it was doubtful the education ministry could go ahead to implement its "grand plans" outlined in the National Education Blueprint.

This, said Ong, will have a bearing on Malaysia's performance in international education assessments such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Programme for International Student Assessment (Pisa), which the country's students had consistently performed poorly.

"The failure of the education ministry to properly implement PT3 raises serious doubts as to whether it is able to raise our TIMSS and Pisa rankings from the bottom one-third to the top one-third," he said.

As such, Ong, a former academic, called on the ministry to set up an emergency task force with a dedicated hotline to answer PT3 related questions and complaints from teachers, students and parents.

He said a proper oversight mechanism is needed so that potential bias, such as different standards of exam papers and markings at the school level, can be minimised.

"The ministry should also set up a special committee to ensure proper implementation of PT3 next year to ensure this year's mistakes are not repeated," he added.

This is not the first time Ong raised concerns on the PT3. Last month, he had taken the ministry to task for not explaining properly how it will be implemented.

"How seriously can we take the 'achievements' outlined in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013 annual report when the ministry cannot even explain how PT3 will replace PMR starting this year?" he had asked.

The annual report, released on June 17, documented encouraging achievements in four initiatives under the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2014-2025.

"Unfortunately, it is hard to take these achievements seriously when the ministry cannot seem to get its act together on the much more fundamental issue of PT3," he had said. – July 7, 2014

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