

Changing the way English is taught

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KUALA LUMPUR: Revamping the way English is taught in school may be the best way for young Malaysians to master the language.

A group of senior English teachers is drawing up a plan to break the cycle of simply spelling out what students have to memorise for exams. Children will be allowed to explore the language and whatever knowledge it carries on their own terms.

The National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) believes a new educational format which allows students more freedom to learn at their own pace would go a long way in moulding more confident and well-rounded youth.

NUTP hosted a two-day seminar and workshop to brainstorm for the details of the proposal, which they expect to hand over to the Education Ministry in the next three weeks.

NUTP president Lt Cmdr (R) Hashim Adnan said their plan was to eventually provide a learning environment where students were encouraged to seek out knowledge on their own, in addition to the usual lessons and guidance from their teachers.

"The system is so exam-oriented that children rely too much on being spoon fed by their teachers.

"What we want is a student-centred system, to build up their initiative and finally develop more mature, independent people."

Hashim said the proposed new system could also allow English teachers to specialise, for example in grammar or comprehension, to give both students and teachers more room to develop.

Hashim said nearly 30,000 teachers were assigned to teach English even though they did not take the English option in teachers college.

He said those who took the English option should be given the chance to teach English.

"We will also suggest a more stringent selection of English teachers. They must score at the very minimum a credit C3 in English.

"We need to settle these issues first. If that is done, it should not be a problem if the government decides to make English a compulsory pass."