

IDEAS calls for enhancement of Education Policies for Orang Asli Children

Written by admin

Monday, 26 October 2020 11:09 - Last Updated Tuesday, 02 February 2021 16:05

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The Orang Asli community continue to face barriers to education, resulting in persistently higher school dropout rates than the national average.

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Existing government policies and programmes are currently not sufficient to address the underlying challenges.

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IDEAS calls for greater efforts including systematic evaluation of existing programmes and greater incorporation of Orang Asli values and culture into the curriculum.

Kuala Lumpur, 22 October 2020 –The Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS) today published a policy paper titled “Education Policies in Overcoming Barriers Faced by Orang Asli Children: Education for all”. The paper was authored by IDEAS’ Research Manager of Social Policy, Wan Ya Shin.

The paper reviews several policies and programmes and finds that the outcomes of government programmes have not been commensurate with the effort and resources poured into developing and implementing them.

While there appears to be some reduction in the gap between Orang Asli students and the

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national average according to the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025), key challenges such as lack of opportunities to attend preschool and contextualized curriculum and pedagogy have not been adequately addressed. These significant challenges have resulted in persistently higher school dropout rates from the national average. For example, from 2016 to 2018, the national dropout rates were consistently below 4%, while the Orang Asli students' dropout rates were above 17% and it increased significantly to 26% in 2017.

Faced with socio-economic, geographic, language and cultural barriers, many Orang Asli children perform poorly and drop out of school. Since 1995, the Ministry of Education has introduced various policies and programmes to improve the educational outcomes of Orang Asli children. These programmes and policies have evolved from integration into mainstream education to a more indigenous-focused education. However, the paper concludes that further action is needed to ensure these policies match the nature and scale of the challenge that Orang Asli face.

The following are the recommendations based on the findings of the research:

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Policies should identify and tackle underlying challenges instead of addressing 'symptoms'

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Periodic evaluation and impact analysis of policies and programmes are needed to ensure effectivity and address new issues and gaps that arise during implementation

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Look into needs of Orang Asli children who have never been to school and identify and address their challenges

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Respect the voice of Orang Asli communities and their right to self-determination when formulating policies and programmes

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Contextualise the curriculum and incorporate indigenous values and culture so that it is relevant to the students' lives

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Provide adequate training to teachers and support them with professional development programmes

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Re-examine the focus of the Malaysian education system and move towards a holistic education

Commenting on the release, Wan said that “It is hoped that the observations and recommendations made in this paper will contribute to the continuous improvement in the policies and programmes for the benefit of Orang Asli children. This is not just an issue faced by Orang Asli communities but a national education issue, and we need to ensure that all Malaysian children have access to quality education.”

IDEAS CEO Tricia Yeoh commented, “Orang Asli children continue to face tremendous barriers in accessing the quality education they require to escape the poverty cycle. The education system must better serve our indigenous communities to enable them to flourish and participate meaningfully in our Malaysian society.”

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A copy of the Policy IDEAS No.66 can be downloaded [here](#).

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