

Moving online as part of new norm

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STANDARD operating procedures (SOPs) during this Covid-19 pandemic are necessary to keep us safe while at the same time ensuring that life goes on with as little disruption as possible.

In the area of education, schools have adapted a variety of SOPs for students as well as come up with new avenues to ensure that teaching and learning continues, with no student left behind.

English Language Teaching Centre deputy director Dr Kalminderjit Kaur said the centre, which leads the charge in the reform of the subject's pedagogy in Malaysia was also evolving with teachers riding the e-classroom revolution that has gripped the globe.

Nine out of the 10 courses offered by ELTC are now available online.

"Currently we have realigned our courses to ensure we continuously support teachers despite the raging Covid-19 pandemic."

"We have in fact moved 90 per cent of our courses online," she told the New Straits Times in a special interview on the agency's digital intensification.

Kalminderjit however said it was no mean task in the beginning but it was crucial that teachers were able to use the virtual tools for instruction so that no child was left behind.

"We were able to leverage on a number of things but the first problem we tackled was making sure that teachers had all skills they needed to conduct English language activities and lessons online.

"While the Education Ministry had come up with lots of references for English Language teachers, we have also produced some online courses to upskill the teachers with tech tools and applications."

She said that teachers were trained in terms of micro-courses via online modes. The modules are among others centred on flipping the classroom into a virtual space, how to use tablets optimally for e-learning and even the use of web puzzles.

"We also provide courses in digital citizenship where we expose teachers on how to use Google Suite as an extension to Google Classroom which is the Education Ministry's online platform for teaching and learning."

Kalminderjit said that while the centre was building the skills of teachers

in using the online platform as a mode of instruction, all other training courses were either already available on its web-site or being prepared for loading.

"This is so we can continue training English Language teachers and continuously provide them with competency skills so they can effectively teach in virtual settings."

She also said the efforts had also been facilitated by the centre's investment into IMPROVE (Integrated Micro-learning Programme With Robust Virtual Experience), a stable digital platform where all their courses were loaded into.

Kalminderjit said the platform, which is open for access, allows teachers to view courses being offered and sign up for it.

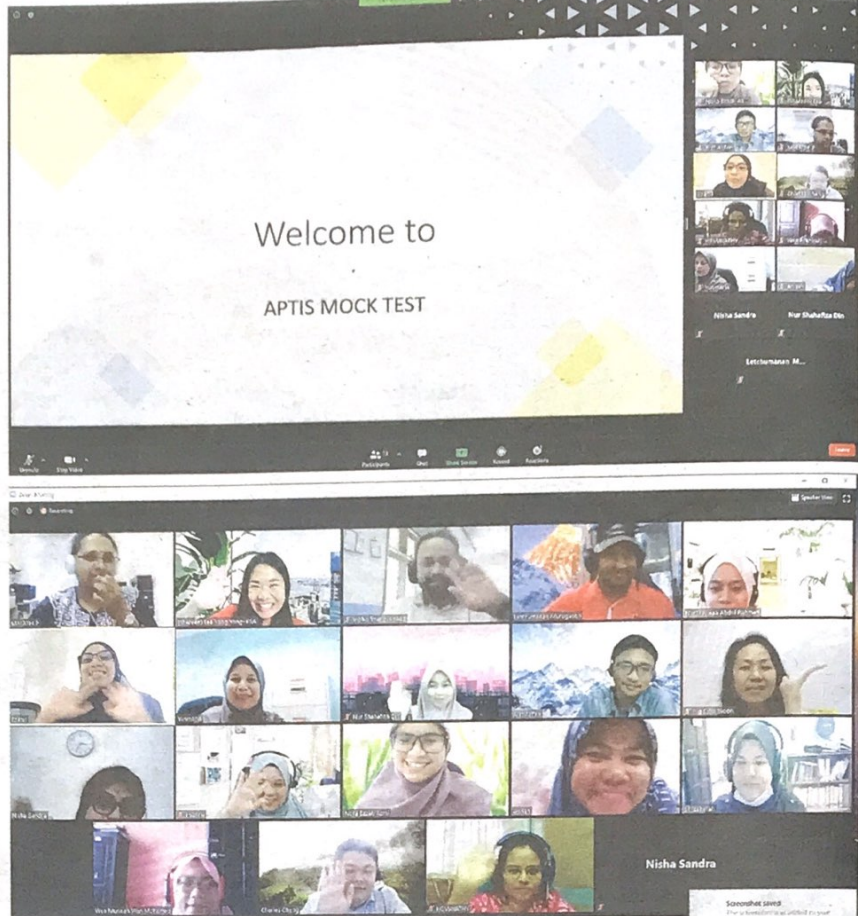
She further said that it supports MOE's credit points systems as IMPROVE is linked to another platform where teachers gaining credit points after undergoing their courses would have their points also listed in the ministry's mainframe under the Teacher's Development division.

Kalminderjit said that the centre



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DR KALMINDERJIT KAUR
English Language Teaching Centre deputy director



ELTC is offering nine out of its 10 courses online to continue training English language teachers during this time.

was in the midst of linking IMPROVE to the newly launched Digital Educational Learning Initiative Malaysia (DELIMA), MOE's official virtual learning platform.

She said it had recorded 1.7 million active users and IMPROVE's link to the one-stop platform would ensure it had wider reach.

"DELIMA has been designed to offer a lot of applications and services on a single platform in order to meet the needs of teachers and students. It comes with courses, apps and tools including Google Classroom, Apple Learning Centre, Microsoft 365. All these facilitate virtual lessons as even though schools are shut, lessons still have to take place."

Meanwhile Kalminderjit said that the online courses on IMPROVE also cater for the six Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) Readiness courses. She said targeted courses for reading and writing that have been identified as key skills have also been made available on the platform.

CEFR is a test given to teachers to assess their competency in reading, writing, speaking, listening, grammar

and vocabulary. This is so teachers can identify their proficiency levels and raise it to the standard of the ministry's requirements and aspirations for continuous development of their teaching staff.

The test is also offered a few times a year, including November and February. The tests can also be retaken by teachers who seek to enhance their skills, as the government seeks to have all teachers in schools having an overall C1 requirement in their assessments.

C1 is the second highest level in the grading for CEFR. Teachers have to achieve a level of C2, which is the highest performance level.

"The exam for now remains a physical exam and we have identified around 15,000 teachers in service who have yet to take it. But the ensuing physical exams will follow the strictest SOPs in light of Covid-19."

Kalminderjit said that more than 50 per cent of the 47,954 teachers in service as of July this year had achieved a C1 or higher grade in CEFR.

ELTC was founded 18 years ago and plays a key role in assisting the Education Ministry in implementing all inter-

vention and reform programmes for the teaching and learning of the English Language as encapsulated in the Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013-2025.

MEB's main role is to set the way forward in terms of strategies to raise the proficiency of English in teachers while also providing them with continuous professional development.

There is also an English Language roadmap which is a 10 year plan that lays out how this reform for English Language education will be carried out over the period from 2015-2025.

As an extension ELTC takes charge of the training, upskilling and raising competency levels of in-service English language teachers under the blueprint's four key initiatives.

The initiatives are the highly immersive programme, the professional upskilling of English Language teachers, the school enhancement programme and the dual language programme where the English language proficiency of teachers is strengthened in order to support them in delivering lessons in Mathematics and Science.

