

The Issue

Offline learning to the rescue

Students without digital devices and Internet access will not fall through the cracks thanks to the Education Ministry's latest PdPR manual and guide

HOME-BASED teaching and learning (PdPR) has become entrenched in the lives of teachers, parents and students alike over the course of a year.

Although it encompasses more than the virtual classrooms which replaced face-to-face classes when schools were closed, many, especially in rural areas and in low-income communities, fell behind as online learning was the main PdPR method adopted.

Teachers persevered although they faced the same predicament as their students as a result of poor Internet access and the lack of digital devices.

Even before the Education Ministry's PdPR manual was released in October last year, these teachers were going out of their way to deliver lessons to their students who could not cope with online learning.

Teachers were determined and motivated from the get-go. They first made sure that students had access to pick up and drop off boxes of materials at the guardhouses in schools.

Then came the mailing of homework, and hand delivering of

learning materials. Teachers proved that dedication was not mere lip service as even poor road conditions did not deter them from reaching out to their pupils in rural Sabah.

Since Jan 18, Franky Collin Kulam and his colleagues have been hand delivering the modules they prepared to SK Buayan which is 30km away from Penampang town.

The road conditions connecting Kampung Buayan and Penampang aren't for the faint-hearted and one needs to be skillful and brave to drive through the jungle.

A six-minute video uploaded by Franky shows him deftly manoeuvring his four-wheel truck through deep mud terrains to reach the village.

On Feb 3, the Education Ministry

released an updated version of its manual, calling it the "Teaching and Learning At Home Manual Version 2".

Like its predecessor, the manual was created to serve as a guide for teachers on alternative methods of teaching that could be utilised in the new norm.

The updated manual, which includes suggested break schedules in between lessons, and light exercises, are to be used together with the new "Teaching and Learning at Home Timetable Implementation Guide", said Education deputy director-general (school operation sector) Adzman Talib in a circular.

Systematic, structured and balanced PdPR time allocation and tutorials were drawn up to ensure that students are not overburdened with too much homework.

Besides being a reference to allow continuous learning for students, the manual and guides are meant to help teachers create a parent-friendly PdPR environment so that parents can provide ongoing support in PdPR activities.

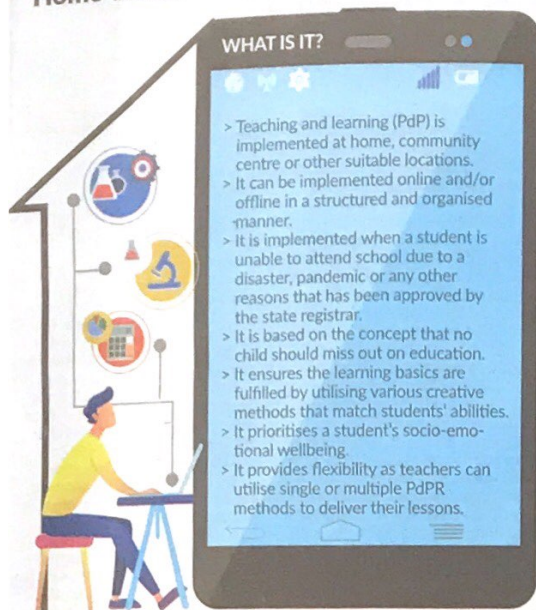
The various PdPR methods and implementation guidelines have been helpful in making sure that no student gets left behind, said educationist Datuk N. Siva Subramaniam.

"The manual and guide can ensure that every child is included in the learning process but without the support of parents and guardians who are with the children at home, all this effort would still come to naught." — By REBECCA RAJAENDRAM

> MORE STORIES ON PAGES 4 & 5



Home-based teaching and learning (PdPR)



TYPES OF PdPR

Online PdPR

Occurs when there is access to Internet facilities and devices that allow students to learn in real time.

Can be done via:

- > learning platforms such as the Digital Educational Learning Initiative Malaysia (Delima), Cikgootube, EduWebTV and social media applications.
- > applications such as Google Meet or Microsoft Teams live streaming.
- > gamification, videos, audio clips, e-books and online recordings or assignments.



Offline PdPR

Occurs without Internet access but students learn using devices such as computers, laptops, tablets or smartphones.

Learning can also occur using textbooks or other learning materials. Can be done using downloaded PdPR materials in the form of videos, audio, slides, notes and exercises. The materials are downloaded when an Internet connection is available and delivered through suitable communication medium such as email or Whatsapp.



Off-site PdPR

Takes place at a location such as a community centre, or a premise declared as a temporary evacuation centre due to a disaster or pandemic.

Is implemented in accordance with the Education Ministry's Circular No. 8 of 2016: Guidelines for Teaching and Learning Management During A Disaster.

Learning can take place independently or with the guidance of an academic support team consisting of district education officers or appointed school teachers.

Can also be implemented in other locations that are suitable with the consent of the school and parents or guardians as well as the community.

The off-site PdPR team consists of teachers identified by the school.



Source: Teaching and Learning at Home Manual, Version 2.0, Education Ministry

TheStargraphics

The Discourse

By REBECCA RAJAENDRAM
rebeccagr@thestar.com.my

JUST as teachers were getting used to home-based teaching and learning (PdPR), timetables have to be redrawn as the Education Ministry has issued new guidelines.

The "Teaching and Learning at Home Timetable Implementation Guide", a manual released in Oct 2020 by the Education Ministry, was revamped on Feb 2 this year. Known as the "Teaching and Learning at Home Manual Version 2" (PdPR 2.0), the manual aims to standardise the duration of PdPR due to inconsistent patterns of implementation among schools.

Based on the ministry's observations, schools were having anything between one and four hours of sessions daily, said Education deputy director-general (policy and curriculum) Datin Seri Nor Zamani Abdul Hamid.

Hence a standardised timetable was necessary to ensure curriculum completion so that students are ready for the next level.

"The timetable is very important in our school system so that teaching and learning can be implemented in an orderly and systematic manner," she said in a YouTube video on Feb 8.

The guidelines, she added, includes the teaching and tutorial times allocated for each subject.

Tutorials, she explained, are for students to complete activities or exercises, either online or offline.

Though not set in stone, Nor Zamani said, teaching should be followed by tutorial times to minimise the amount of time a student spends staring at the screen.

"Allocate short breaks of two to five minutes for every 30 minutes of a PdPR session and five to 10 minutes before the next session."

"Have the students do activities such as stretching or light exercises to keep the students active. These can also be bathroom breaks," she said.

In addition to that, said Nor Zamani, the PdPR timetable needed careful planning based on the specific subject goals and requirements so that students get the knowledge, skills and values they need to advance in their learning.

She also said that the school timetables drawn up must take into consideration the situation, facilities available and electronic devices on hand for teachers and students.

Standardisation is not the only objective of the new guidelines, she said, adding that the ministry also wants to prevent students from being overburdened with homework.

She said the ministry had received a lot of feedback from frustrated parents complaining that teachers were only loading their children with exercises and homework without any interaction.

This seemed to have happened when teachers were giving learning modules, either online or offline, and expecting the students to just complete their assignments on their own, she added.

The requirements for a proper learning module have also been outlined in the guidelines, said Nor Zamani.

"A comprehensive module has instructions, the objective of the content, activities and some questions."

"So teachers have to give clear instructions and outline the goals and skills that need to be mastered

Home-based teaching to be

The Education Ministry has the students' latest manual and guidelines 'burdensome'



We're on the way: Teachers from SMK Pulau Gaya, Kota Kinabalu, board boats to send materials to their students - Photo: Education Ministry

at the beginning of the module.

"They should not just assign activities without helping the students understand the content and how to perform the tasks given," she added.

Out of the blue

While lauding the guidelines which has to be read together with PdPR 2.0, National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) secretary-general Harry Tan said the union, despite representing some 220,000 members, was not engaged in the formulation of both documents.

"Now, we are gathering feedback from parents and teachers," he said, adding that the "PdPR: Helpful or Burdensome" survey was launched on Feb 6.

It garnered over 10,000 respondents in the first 12 hours alone.

The implementation of PdPR 2.0, he said, should be postponed as it adds to the burden of teachers, parents and students.

It comes across as though the ministry has not taken the learning situations at home into consideration, he said in a statement.

"Students have the right to an education, even if they can't attend school."

"The ministry has to think of the best approach (in this situation) to enable students to continue learning from home without adding to their burden," he said.

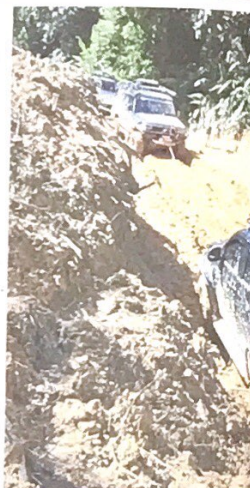
Among the reasons the NUTP wants PdPR 2.0 and the timetable guidelines to be put on hold is because students are not used to studying in front of their screens from 7.30am until 1pm. The hours are just too taxing.

And parents, especially those who are not highly educated, struggle to guide their children at home. PdPR is also seen as burdensome as it adds to the students' workload, he said.

"Many teachers also have to adapt to the new methods of teaching."

"For us teachers, the show must go on. Students must be educated no matter what," he said.

Former education minister Dr Maszlee Malik said it is unreasonable



Dedication knows no boundaries: S Collin Kulam braves the rough road from Penampang to send learning materials to students - Photo: Franky Collin Kulam

able to expect teachers to conduct PdPR non-stop just like they do in schools.

He claimed that state education departments had issued instructions to teachers to teach five subjects per day.

"Teachers are also human. Humane considerations and discretion should be the pillars of the Education Ministry when experimenting with the new PdPR norms," he said in a statement on Feb 5.

Mazlee urged the ministry to consider the teachers' autonomy and capabilities to teach PdPR, as well as whether students have the means for this teaching method based on their location and access to gadgets and Internet connection. The Simpang Renggam MP, said the latest manual and guidelines should be scrapped.

Meanwhile, educationist Datuk N. Siva Subramaniam said teachers nationwide are trying their best to deliver PdPR but not all of them know how to do it well.

learning, e better

'best interest in mind but teachers find the
ie'



laries: Sabah-based teacher Franky
gh road conditions to SK Buayan, 30 km
arning modules to his students in a rural
in Kulam

conduct
y do in
ication
struc-
ive sub-
in.
d dis-
ers of the
experi-
R
ent on
ry to
nomy
dPR, as
ave the
ethod
d access
nec-
m MP,
l guide-
t Datuk
l teach-
their
ot all of
rell.

"Those who can pick up the methods fast can help their students but those who are slow face difficulties in delivering lessons in the new norm," he said, adding that teachers should help each other so that no student gets left behind.

Subramaniam said he believes the ministry has done its best to implement the PdPR in the last 11 months.

"When we complain about the ministry, we must realise that it needs the support of parent-teacher association (PTAs) to implement policies successfully," he said.

Subramaniam pointed out that there are many parents who are not only tech-savvy but creative as well in PTAs who could help the teachers make lessons more interesting.

"They can also help deliver learning modules and homework to students who have no means of digital communication.

"I think it is only fair that the ministry listens to what parents and teachers are saying about the PdPR setbacks they are faced with daily."



How teachers are coping with PdPR...

SANJAY, a secondary school teacher from Subang Jaya, said both the "Teaching and Learning at Home Timetable Implementation Guide" and "Teaching and Learning at Home Manual Version 2" (PdPR 2.0) should have been released before schools reopened on Jan 20.

"The documents should have been given to schools before we prepare our teaching plan. It's not right to throw teachers and students into uncertainty again when school is in its third week."

As for his own classes, he does not see the need for specific tutorial times as per the timetable guidelines.

He, however, said the PdPR 2.0 manual is good.

"Put yourself in the shoes of a teacher and a student. At least talk to the people who are experiencing PdPR to find out if the methods recommended are practical and workable."

Norhailmi Abdul Motalib said the new documents provide more details on managing issues teachers and parents face.

Students, he said, stand to benefit from the standardised class timings.

"Everyone realises that we are entering our second year of PdPR. It has been tough for everyone as more people are demanding quality online experience," said the science teacher from SMK Jerlun, Kedah.

Teachers and schools should adopt and adapt the solutions which work best for their students. There should always be room for flexibility, he said.

"I prefer using digital forms of PdPR as it is better to train my students now to embrace digital learning."

"This is where the world is heading," he added.

An English teacher, who wanted to be known as Amanda, said teachers have no choice but to adopt the new manual and guidelines.

"This is the new norm. These new guidelines are more student-friendly."

"Our time in front of the screen is reduced. It's very tiring when there is a long stretch of classes. Teachers also need a break from the screen," said the KL-based teacher.

Teaching and Learning At Home Timetable Implementation Guide

> Provides details on planning and implementation of the PdPR timetable for the National Preschool Standard Curriculum (KSPK) Revised 2017, Primary School Standard Curriculum (KSSR) Revised 2017, Remove Class Standard Curriculum and Secondary School Standard Curriculum (KSSM) including for Special Education.

> Subject time allocations are set according to the current circular letter regarding the curriculum.

> Times for lessons and tutorials are allotted for each subject.

> Lessons and tutorials can be implemented online or offline depending on resources, facilities and school's locality.

> During lessons:

- For timetables with continuous device usage, lessons should be interspersed with tutorials so that students are not online continuously.

- Offline PdPR is implemented by providing comprehensive learning modules that are distributed either digitally or passed to the students physically

- Activity planning and preparation of

appropriate learning materials should be based on the student's learning style — visual, audio or kinesthetic — in order to improve a student's mastery of the lesson.

- Teachers need to give early notice and clearly state the whole lesson plan to avoid confusion among parents, guardians or students.

> During tutorials:

- Can be conducted online or offline.

- If offline, the teacher needs to be on-call throughout the tutorial to attend to student's queries.

- The activities or exercises during the tutorial should be appropriate to the student's level, focused and can be completed within the allotted time so that there is no dumping of homework.

Example of weekly PdPR time allocation for national primary schools (Level One)

| Subject | Time allocation (minutes) | Weekly PdPR time allocation (minutes) | |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------|
| | | Lesson | Tutorial |
| Bahasa Melayu | 360 | 240 | 120 |
| English Language | 300 | 150 | 150 |
| Mathematics | 180 | 120 | 60 |
| Islamic Education/ Moral Education | 180 | 120 | 60 |
| Science | 90 | 60 | 30 |
| Physical and Health Education | 90 | 60 | 30 |
| Visual Arts Education | 60 | 30 | 30 |
| Music Education | 30 | 30 | - |
| Other languages: Arabic / Chinese for national schools / Tamil for national schools / Iban / Kadazandusun / Semai | 90 | 60 | 30 |

Source: Teaching and Learning At Home Timetable Implementation Guide

TheStargraphics

The Views

Students find ways to study amid limited online access

My home Internet connection is unstable. Luckily, my school takes special requests from students to have online classes recorded and videos sent to us. I prefer joining online classes because I can interact with my teachers and raise questions anytime I don't understand a lesson. Watching recorded videos can be quite boring but it helps to be able to rewatch them to gain a better understanding of the lessons. I definitely look forward to going back to school.
— Chloe Tai, 16, Stellar Academy, Kuala Lumpur

Over the past year, I had been collecting modules from my school, completing my assignments at home, and returning them for my teachers to pick up and correct my work. This year, I have been using my father's smartphone to access homework via WhatsApp. I'll refer to my textbooks and complete the exercises, before snapping a photo of my work and sending it to my subject teachers. I can only use my father's smartphone after he comes home from work, so it's really hard to receive and submit my assignments on time. I hope school will reopen soon.
— Ain Fitri, 16, SMA Ittfaqiah, Jerreh, Terengganu

My mum is the only one at home who has a smartphone. My six siblings and I have to take turns to use it, not to mention we have problems with the Internet connection. I always have difficulty receiving and submitting assignments. Most of my teachers use WhatsApp to deliver the lessons as it is easier to reach out to us that way. They give us exercises and ask us to hand them in via the same application. I prefer the other method where we bring home physical copies of exercises and submit them back to school for the teachers to collect.
— Puteri Iman Natasya Abdullah, 12, SK Teriang, Jelebu, Negri Sembilan

I don't have access to online learning. I use my textbooks to study at home. I also use a module I collected from school early this year. My mum coaches me using these books. We spend one to two hours every day on my studies. Once a week, we drop off my homework at my school.
— Nur Putri Rania Daliesya, 7, SK Gong Bayor, Besut, Terengganu

The quotes above were obtained by BRATs coordinator Rowena Chua, and BRATs participants Alicia Joy Prakasa Rau and Nur Alia Irdina Rosdi. BRATs is a young journalist programme run by The Star's Newspaper-in-Education (NIE) team. Throughout the year-long programme, participants aged between 14 and 22 contribute articles to the NIE pullout. To be part of our online community, head on to facebook.com/niebrats.

