

# Remove classes 'doing more harm than good'

By Rozanna Latiff  
news@nst.com.my

**KUALA LUMPUR:** An educational non-governmental organisation is studying the possibility of abolishing or revamping the remove classes to help students from vernacular primary schools transition to Form One.

Educational Welfare and Research Foundation (EWRf) head of research unit Shanthi Periasamy believes that the one-year remove classes, aimed at helping students from Tamil or Chinese vernacular schools overcome the Bahasa Malaysia language barrier before they enter national secondary schools, have begun to do more harm than good.

"Remove class students are getting left behind by their peers, with many failing to master the language and eventually dropping out," she said at a forum held to debate the issue yesterday.

Organised by EWRf, a group that helps disadvantaged and underachieving students in the Indian community, the forum was held to gather views and information on whether to retain, abolish or revamp the remove class system.

The data collected, Shanthi said, would be compiled as part of a preliminary study into the issue which the organisation hoped to expand into a comprehensive report to be presented to the government.

"This is a long-term project that is part of an overall effort to reduce the number of early school dropouts and which we hope will lead to improvements in the system."

The forum was attended by some 30 academics, teachers, former remove class

students and representatives of NGOs, and included a roundtable session where participants could share their views.

EWRf president Datuk A. Yogesvaran said there was also a growing need to differentiate between students who had not mastered Bahasa Malaysia and those who simply could not read or write.

"We are seeing more students who have not even mastered reading and writing in their own vernacular tongue, and cannot be expected to learn a second or third language.

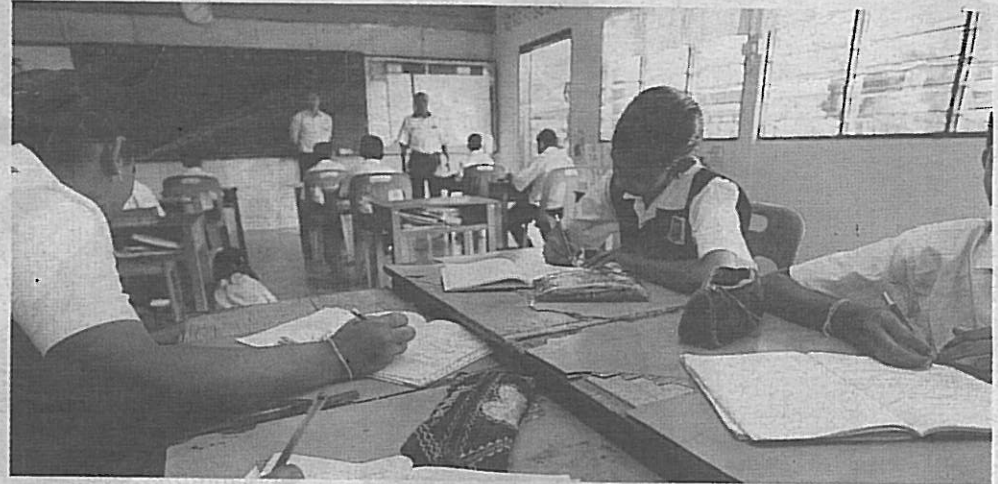
"This, in turn, raises the broader issue of literacy and learning in primary school."

Other issues raised at the forum included the inability of remove class teachers to communicate effectively with students, the lack of highly trained teachers, language teaching methods and syllabuses, and the negative public perception of remove class students.

"Those in remove classes are often seen as slow learners and underachievers, rather than students who simply have not mastered a language. Some may even excel in subjects such as Mathematics or Science," said Yogesvaran.

"This perception attaches a stigma to remove students and hampers not only their motivation to learn, but also some teachers' motivation to teach effectively."

LLG Cultural Development Centre senior executive Ng Yap Hwa said a study conducted between 2002 and 2006 had found that up to 25 per cent of secondary students from Chinese-medium primary schools eventually dropped out, with one-third citing language barriers as the main reason.



Pupils from vernacular primary schools, according to the Educational Welfare and Research Foundation, are getting left behind by their peers when they enter remove classes and many drop out as a result of this.

What do you think? Send your views to [nsunt@nst.com.my](mailto:nsunt@nst.com.my)

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