



Pahang school a finalist for World's Best School Award [NSTTV]

By [T.N. Alagesh](#) - September 30, 2022 @ 8:00am

KUANTAN: The saying "where there is a will, there is a way" rings true for retired school headmaster Baharom Bujang, whose innovative digital system has brought fame to a relatively unknown SK Kempadang near here.

When Covid-19 struck in March 2020, forcing physical classes to be cancelled, teachers at the school, located in a quaint fishing village near here, were finding it tough to monitor their pupils' academic performance through online sessions.

Baharom, who retired in March this year, decided to put his information technology skills to good use by designing and developing a shared tracking system for the school's community using Google Sheets, known as Smartzoom.

"There were no face-to-face lessons and teachers were unsure about the students' progress or how they were going to plan their lessons to suit the pupils' academic progress.

"I led a team of teachers to innovate and develop the Smartzoom application, which helps to monitor the pupils' academic progress.

"We created a database for all 1,647 pupils in the school and tracked their progress using a 'traffic-light' system with red, yellow and green indicators.

"During classroom assessments, teachers collect real-time data by entering their pupils' marks... red for below 40, yellow for between 41 and 79, and green for 80 and above.

"When a pupil's score is marked in red or yellow, then we know that the individual requires help in their studies, and the teacher will organise special classes for them.

"The system tracks the pupils' progress in real-time, and helps identify their preferred learning style... vision, auditory or kinesthetic," said the 60-year-old outside the school yesterday.



Retired SK Kempadang headmaster Baharom Bujang showing the Smartzoom application containing the records of pupils' progress. - NSTP/FARIZUL HAFIZ AWANG

He said since the Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah was abolished (last year), the school had focused on the school-based assessment model, and teachers could easily adapt to the system that ensured an effective classroom-based assessment.

Baharom and his team have put SK Kempadang, where 70 per cent of pupils are from B40 families, on the world map after it was nominated as one of three finalists for the World's Best School Award, which offers a prize of US\$50,000.

The other two schools are Escuela Emilia Lascar from Chile and N High School, a private school in Japan.

SK Kempadang is listed in the innovation category, in the competition organised by T4 Education in collaboration with Yayasan Hasanah, Accenture and American Express.

Through the Smartzoom application, Baharom said, teachers would be able to analyse data and help them offer targeted academic assistance for the pupils in red and yellow zones.

"The system will inform the teachers on the types of suitable lesson plans. Pupils with different academic levels might require different learning methods and the system is developed to ensure that no one is left out.

"Smartzoom allows in-depth screening of each pupil, whereby we can even identify if they are overweight or, in the case of Muslim pupils, if they have completed their Quran recital.

"Their pictures will be included in their profiles," said Baharom, who has 37 years of teaching experience and now leads a five-member team from the school to pursue the World's Best School Award.

He said SK Kempadang would hold a live forum during an open day next month, where his team would speak about Smartzoom.

SK Kempadang parent teacher association chairman Mohd Amran Abd Hamid lauded the school's efforts to introduce Smartzoom, which had given parents and their children new hope despite the learning setback resulting from the pandemic.

"As parents, we are able to monitor our children's progress. Since Smartzoom has been a success here, we hope the system will be expanded and adopted in other schools... if we win, the prize will be used to expand the capability of Smartzoom to other schools.

"We live in a closely connected community and this achievement has made SK Kempadang popular... everyone is eagerly waiting for the results of the competition to be announced on Oct 19," he said.

The Smartzoom digital innovation is a milestone under the Trust Schools Programme at SK Kempadang, sponsored by Yayasan Pahang as an effort to provide quality education in the state.

The programme saw impressive improvements in teaching and learning, holistic pupil outcomes and parental engagement.

It has made the school popular, with enrolment increasing between six and seven per cent every year since it first became a Trust School in 2015.



SK Kempadang, a school in a fishing village near Kuantan, Pahang, is one of three finalists for the World's Best School Award. -NSTP/FARIZUL HAFIZ AWANG