

2024 Budget: Specific allocations needed to digitalise national education

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(FILE PHOTO) Education digitisation effort. Secretary of the Education and Human Capital Development Cluster of the National Council of Professors, Dr Anuar Ahmad said, the government needs to provide special allocations in the 2024 Budget to drive the digitalisation of education. -NSTP FILE PIC

KUALA LUMPUR: The government needs to focus specifically on improving teaching and learning facilities and infrastructure in schools to ensure that the education digitisation agenda in the national education system can be fully achieved next year.

Secretary of the Education and Human Capital Development Cluster of the National Council of Professors, Dr Anuar Ahmad said for that purpose, the government needs to provide special allocations in the 2024 Budget to be presented this month to drive the digitalisation of education.

"In an effort to drive the education digitalisation agenda, every school needs to have good internet access not only in urban areas but also in rural areas to ensure that the teaching and learning process can be carried out more effectively.

"In addition, in order to launch teaching and learning sessions, the provision of suitable devices should also be given priority, in addition to the expansion of the device assistance scheme to ensure that more students from poor families benefit from this," he told Bernama recently.

Anuar, who is also a Senior Lecturer at the Centre for the Study of Diversity in Education, Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), said teachers also need to be equipped with pedagogical skills based on information technology.

For that purpose, the government also needs to provide special allocations for training programmes to improve teachers' pedagogical skills. In addition, provision for providing more digital content also needs to be allocated," he said.

"Apart from that, Anuar said the field of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) should be elevated as a mainstream in the national education system and no longer as a second choice considering that the field today involves high technology aspects such as Artificial Intelligence technology including robotics.

"The TVET programme also needs to be diversified as to the forms of courses offered in accordance with current needs such as introducing technical technology skills in the field of TVET studies for agriculture and animal husbandry.

"The government needs to provide more TVET and technical study opportunities for Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia graduates while building more new TVET and technical institutions. Not only that, the government must provide incentives to attract and involve more private parties in providing career opportunities in the TVET and technical fields," he said.

Similarly, Counselling and Psychology Lecturer at the Faculty of Education (UKM) Professor Dr Salleh Amat expressed hope that the infrastructure towards digitisation of education, notably in rural areas, will be given prime attention to prevent students from these areas from dropping out due to current technological developments.

"Infrastructure needs to be improved, updated as it should be, that's most important especially in rural areas because when you talk about digitalisation related to technology, it often moves fast.

"If the government truly wants to implement digitalisation in the country's education system, it is a very noble effort, but rural areas should not be marginalised," he said.

Professor Dr Salleh, who is also director of UKM; 's Career Development Centre, said allocations must not only provide technological facilities but basic facilities such as electricity supply also need to be improved.

"The issue of electricity supply being cut off in schools is still being reported and it can disrupt the smooth learning process of the students. Sometimes, there are teachers, like in Sabah and Sarawak, informing that although it is only in the evening, the electricity supply is cut off and this causes the children to study in an uncomfortable and hot atmosphere," he said.

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According to him, there are also schools that are not equipped with learning tools such as projectors, whereas such basic teaching equipment should be available in every school, not only in urban schools but also in rural areas.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Academic Association Congress (MAAC) president Professor Dr Ahmad Ismail said the higher education sector can play its role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda by 2030.

In that matter, the government needs to make special provisions to enable lecturers to carry out related studies and then refer the results of the studies back to the government for reference or as guidelines to formulate related policies.

"In addition, allocations are also needed to support assistant facilities such as post-doctoral and research assistants. More emeritus professors among retired professors who are still active also need to be appointed with financial allocations provided for them to continue high-impact research.

"In an effort to popularise obtaining, learning knowledge, funding for organising seminars at least once a year according to whatever field is also necessary to amass current information from researchers, especially related to current issues," he said. --
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