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CLASSROOM-BASED ASSESSMENT IN MALAYSIA: FAIR OR BURDENSOME?

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Classroom-Based Assessment (PBD) was introduced by the Malaysian Ministry of Education in 2010. It has since become an essential element in Malaysia's assessment system, replacing exam-based evaluations such as UPSR and PT3. However, the issue of whether PBD is truly fair or merely adds more burden to teachers and students remains a topic of debate.

What is PBD? PBD is a continuous assessment method conducted by teachers in the classroom to evaluate students' understanding, skills, and overall development. PBD involves various assessment forms, including quizzes, projects, presentations, and observations of students' attitudes and participation in learning (Figure 1).

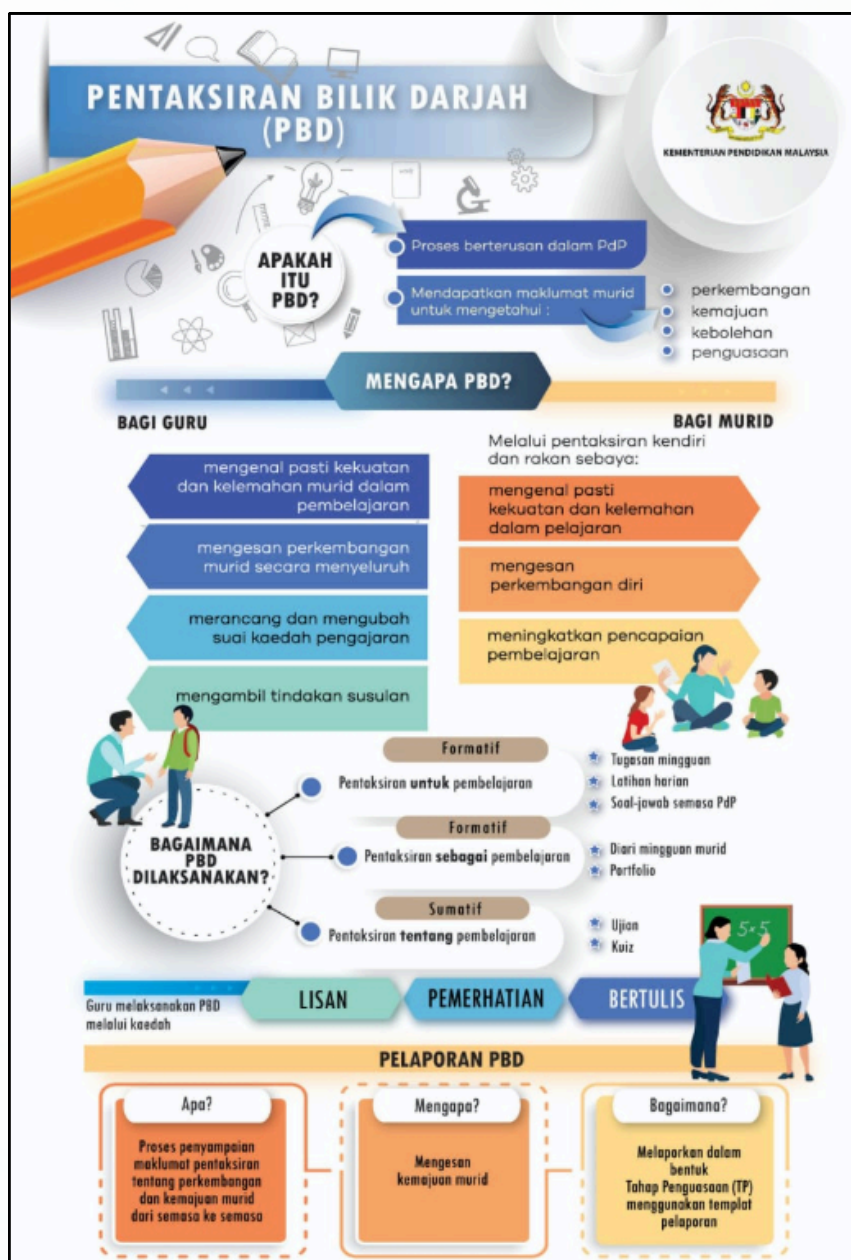
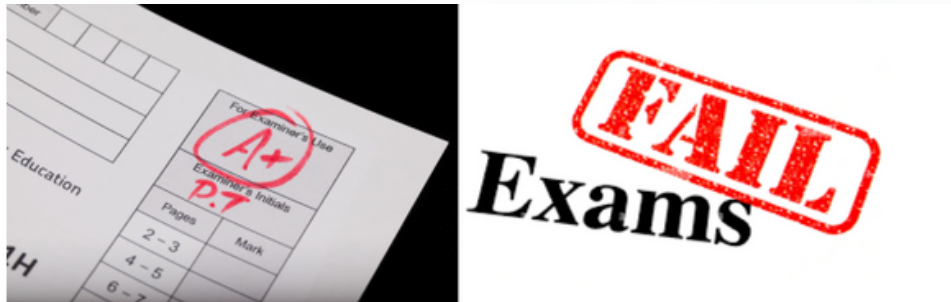


Figure 1: The Overview of PBD
(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/BPKurikulum>)

PBD: Fair for Everyone?

From one perspective, PBD is considered fairer as it provides students with continuous evaluation rather than relying solely on a single major examination. Students are required to be actively involved in learning activities. PBD also lessens the focus on memorizing facts and supports more flexible learning. Teachers can identify students' weaknesses earlier and provide appropriate guidance based on their current level. Generally, students who engage in the learning process can be assessed beyond just examination day.

For instance, there was a viral incident in which a student was unable to sit for an exam because her father was in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) [1]. Should the students' skills and abilities demonstrated throughout their schooling be disregarded? Similarly, should students be labelled as having failed if they fall ill on exam day? Here, we can see that PBD plays a role in holistic evaluation.



This continuous PBD assessment provides a more flexible approach to evaluating students. Indirectly, it ensures that students' true abilities are recognized within the school setting. This aligns with the aspiration of the Malaysian Ministry of Education (KPM), which defines PBD as a continuous process within Teaching and Learning (PdP) sessions to gather insight into students' development, progress, abilities, and curriculum mastery intended by [2]. However, concerns remain regarding the fairness of PBD and the transparency of its assessment. In Malaysia, some view PBD as a positive change in the national education system, while others express dissatisfaction with it [3].

One of the key concerns surrounding PBD implementation is that quieter or less outspoken students may not receive the same level of assessment as more active students. Assessment standards may vary between teachers, schools, or states due to the lack of a standardized scoring system and benchmark for all teachers, unlike formal examinations. According to [4], some teachers also noted that they still adopt individualistic approaches when implementing classroom assessments.

Students from different backgrounds may not have equal access to learning resources, especially for project-based assignments [5-6]. The transparency and authenticity of project work are also questionable, whether they are genuinely the students' work or influenced by external assistance.

Additionally, parents also question the specific criteria needed for their children to achieve high scores in school assessments. Parents receive a performance report that displays Mastery Levels (TP) ranging from TP1 to TP6, but there is no clear explanation for the determination of these assessments [7]. This issue has sparked considerable debate among parents, particularly on social media.

A Burden on Teachers and Students?

Although PBD is designed to ease exam pressure, it actually increases the workload for both teachers and students. Teachers need to prepare various forms of assessment and provide continuous reports, which can increase job stress. Moreover, teachers consider careful planning, as it helps them understand students' learning needs, making classroom assessment more effective and enhancing student performance [8]. However, implementing this effectively can be challenging, especially in large classrooms.

Students may find themselves handling more assignments and projects, which can feel overwhelming if not managed properly. Moreover, with parental support, students may rush through their assignments carelessly or even find excuses to avoid them. Some parents worry that without major examinations, it becomes harder to measure their children's academic progress.

Conclusion

PBD represents a significant change in Malaysia's education system, offering both advantages and challenges. While it aims to create a more comprehensive and fair assessment, its implementation still needs improvements to prevent unnecessary burdens on teachers and students. A well-structured and clear assessment rubric should be established to provide a transparent justification, allowing society to better understand PBD's role in continuous student assessment. For PBD to be truly effective and beneficial, collaboration among the government, educators, parents, and students is essential.

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