

## **Towards 2035 generation: Understanding PISA**

In achieving Brunei Vision 2035's aspirations to be known for the accomplishments of its well-educated and highly-skilled people as measured by the highest national standard; quality of life that is among the top 10 nations in the world and; a dynamic and sustainable economy with income per capita within the top countries in the world, it is pertinent to ensure that the younger generations' capabilities are benchmarked against international standards like Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

**What is PISA?** PISA is an international assessment of the reading, science and mathematical literacy of 15-year-old students. It has been conducted since 2000 and takes place in 3-year cycles, allowing us to monitor changes in student achievement and other features of the education system over time. Three main areas, or 'domains', are examined in every cycle. However, the major domain changes with each cycle. In retrospect of the past decade, PISA 2006 had science as the major domain whilst reading literacy became the main domain in 2009 and Mathematics in PISA 2012.

**Why PISA?** Recognising PISA's standing as an international standard, the participation of our 15-year old students in PISA will help Brunei establish a benchmark for quality in our literacy and numeracy programmes; establish a standard way for us to measure the impact of programmes and project; measure capacity and improvements needs of our people and system; set specific target to achieve; and there is a very strong correlation between high PISA ranking and high economic performance of countries.

Brunei will be participating in PISA 2018 where reading literacy will be the major domain. Literacy is the ability to read, speak and listen in a way that it allows you to communicate effectively. The power of literacy lies not just in possessing these three abilities but rather their capacity to apply these skills to effectively connect, interpret and discern the intricacies of the world in which they live especially in the globalised world today where communication has become an important commodity.

**How ready are we?** In preparing for PISA, different strategies have been carefully planned and executed in both primary and secondary level. In our Primary Education Initiatives as well as Secondary Education Initiatives, we have identified the importance of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum especially at the primary level as they help increase students' chances in getting good results in their GCE 'O' levels examination. Both initiatives place a strong emphasis on mathematics and English, noting nevertheless that the development of literacy and numeracy skills is not just the responsibility of teachers of English, Bahasa Melayu and mathematics. Teachers of all subject areas play significant roles in developing and consolidating our students' ability to use literacy and numeracy.

Year 2016 marks phase 1 of the 2 phases of PISA implementation in Brunei Darussalam. The MOE PISA Task Force (MPTF) established in August 2014 has been tasked to oversee the implementation of the phases where there will be based test for schools using the yearly assessment data for improvement.

PISA Based Test for Schools (PBTS) will be carried out this year. PBTS is the assessment instrument to schools for the purpose of research, benchmarking and school improvement. This instrument will help provide information on descriptive and analytical skills of 15 year-old students such as their critical thinking, problem solving and communication skills (writing). In addition, it will also analyse students' knowledge application in mathematics, reading, English and science equivalent to the PISA assessment. A total of 35 secondary schools comprising 31 government and 4 private schools will participate in the PBTS.

To start off our preparation for PISA, the Ministry of Education PISA Task Force (MPTF) has organised a 2-day workshop for its members facilitated by Mr Tue Halgreen, Analyst from OECD Directorate for Education and Skills, held at MiSC from Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2016 until Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

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