

Too Far And Too Quickly With IP

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BEFORE we seek to expand the existing Integrated Programme (IP) framework across diverse secondary schools, it makes sense to slow down, take stock and implement studies to review the status quo ('More tracks for 'IP train'?' last Saturday).

We want to increase accessibility to a unique programme that affords flexibility and promotes innovative teaching-learning methods, but are we moving too far, too quickly? On-the-ground interactions can heighten the bureaucracy's understanding of realities, and should take two forms: quantitative data, including scholastic and non-academic accomplishments, projects, research papers; and qualitative interviews, with opinions from stakeholders on the IP's strengths and weaknesses.

Potential IP students and their parents also struggle with the challenges of information asymmetry, and often do not have a good comprehension of the different pedagogies or curriculum adopted by the various IP institutions.

Experiences and instances are largely anecdotal, which renders it impossible for them to make holistic evaluations and corresponding decisions, especially when schools are not entirely honest about demands and expectations.

Besides the traditional employment of school open houses, the Ministry of Education can publish observations from the aforementioned studies, and also realistically highlight the immense concentration upon independent, self-initiated learning.

Most crucially, administrators should install stronger safety nets to help those who struggle or find it impossible to manage at any point of time during the programme. Schools must be prepared to help those who choose to opt out and devise viable alternatives for these children.

Options can include lateral movement to vocational courses or polytechnics, or proper preparations for the O levels.

Plans for N-level students to seamlessly move to polytechnics are in the pipeline; similarly, they can be expanded - after comprehensive analyses - to specialisations across the education spectrum.

These through-train programmes can be designed for focuses on the arts, music, hospitality, as well as research and technology.

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