

PERPUSTAKAAN SULTAN ABDUL SAMAD



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Fewer dropouts but figures still worrying

Expert: Many stop schooling after Year Six

KOTA KINABALU: Though the number of school dropouts has declined, an educationist finds the situation still worrying.

Universiti Putra Malaysia educational psychologist Assoc Prof Dr Samsilah Roslan (*pic*) said more than 15,000 pupils quit primary school in 2000 and the number fell to just over 3,000 in 2013.

For secondary school students, some 45,000 quit in 2000 and just over 14,000 in 2013.

"Many of the primary school pupils dropped out after Year Six," she said at a seminar on gender and literacy development here yesterday.

She said many of them dropped out after key exams such as the UPSR (Primary School Achievement Test) and PT3 (Form Three Assessment).

Dr Samsilah said the students chose to stop school due to various reasons, including poor academic results, poverty, feeling unsafe, mental health problems, bullying and teenage pregnancies.

Another key factor is the inability of students to cope with the syllabus being taught, she said.



"It's essential for children to be given a good grasp of writing and maths skills.

"They will then be less likely to drop out," Dr Samsilah said.

She also noted that polytechnics and other skills training centres are encouraging youth who are not academically inclined to continue with their studies there.

Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman told the seminar that the challenges in literacy development

include reaching out to the remaining percentage of children who, for different reasons, never enrolled or dropped out before completing their basic education.

"We need to identify who these children are, whether they are poor and if they are from indigenous or migrant communities.

"Another challenge is the need for early detection and intervention of children with special needs so that they won't end up as dropouts," he said in his speech read out by Special Tasks Minister Datuk Teo Chee Kang.

Musa said access to quality education was still a concern in Sabah amid efforts to reduce the gap between urban and rural areas.