

EDUCATION

Expert teacher urges 'friendly' classrooms

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Friendly, interactive classrooms are the way forward in educational reform, says a Japanese education expert.

"Unfriendly environments in classrooms make students reject participating in the learning process," said Eisuke Saito, assistant professor at the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Academic Group of the National Institute of Education in Singapore.

Mr Saito was speaking at an international conference on "Lesson Study for a Learning Community (LSLC)", a framework on education reform, at Impact Forum in Muang Thong Thani, Nonthaburi yesterday.

He said reform could not happen unless classrooms were organised and encouraged students to be engaged.

"Well-organised classrooms will liberate children from feelings of isolation and alienation and then, an exchange of interaction and knowledge can start," he said.

The conference was co-organised by the Office of Basic Education Commission (Obec), Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Education and the Thai Association of Science and Technology Education.

Mr Saito said he placed top priority on making learning more collaborative, and including not only cognitive, but also social

and ethical aspects in the curriculum.

He said a professional learning community could develop among teachers when classrooms were organised.

He also suggested teachers should carefully observe students in classrooms.

"Teachers do not have to work hard on a blackboard or with textbooks. Just observe what their students' non-verbal actions are, and how students interact with each other," he said.

Mr Saito added that schools must consider the roles of local citizens and students' parents as part of educational reforms.

Students' marks were not the ultimate goal in education, he insisted. According to Mr Saito, the LSLC reform model has been practised since the 1990s in Japan. It has also been adopted by other Asian countries including South Korea, China, Taiwan, Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand.

Anusorn Fuchareon, Obec deputy secretary-general, said the military government aims to pave the way for sustainable educational reforms allowing Thai children to "think ahead, think again and think across".

"We are working to foster continuous professional development of teachers in targeted groups, including service teachers, principals, faculty members and students," he said.