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More Malay parents choose to enrol their children in vernacular schools for a promising future [NSTTV]

By Mohd Amin Jalil - February 19, 2024 @ 9:35pm

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KUALA LUMPUR: The desire for their children to learn Mandarin, combined with the comprehensive facilities provided by vernacular schools such as air-conditioned halls, better classrooms, and modern equipment such as smart TVs, has led to an increase in the number of Malay parents enrolling their children.

Despite concerns about their children being marginalised as a minority in these institutions, the number of Malay pupils in vernacular schools has recently increased significantly.

The National Union of Teaching Profession (NUTP) deputy president, Abd Ghani Zainudin, commented on this, acknowledging that there was now a significant increase in the number of Malay parents who send their children to vernacular schools.

Abd Ghani, who is also the state chairman of the Negri Sembilan NUTP, stated that the potential to acquire and master Mandarin among pupils in vernacular schools was more appealing to Malay pupils attending these schools than the options provided by national schools.

"In Negri Sembilan for example, previously there were Malay pupils who studied in vernacular schools at Batu Kikir, but fast forward to present day, there has been a significant increase in Malay pupils studying at vernacular schools.

"Although some regard Malay pupils in vernacular schools as 'stepchildren', this does not discourage parents from sending their children to these schools.

"They see children studying in vernacular schools as having advantages compared to national schools, especially in terms of mastering Mandarin," he said.

He added that in general, Malays placed a high value on language mastery, thus studying Mandarin would give their children an advantage, particularly in future commercial interactions.

"Moreover, economically, I see that this country has a good relationship with China, and therefore those who are capable of mastering Mandarin certainly have advantages," he said.

Abd Ghani said, in terms of management, vernacular schools, be it primary or secondary, had advantages in terms of fundraising for the school and for student development.

He said most vernacular school alumni were willing to contribute to school development and are seen to be more determined and better organised in launching various activities for the benefit of students.

Therefore, he added, it was no surprise that such matters attracted the attention of many parents.

For the Malaysian Muslim Teachers Association (i-Guru) president Mohd Azizee Hassan, he acknowledged that the parents' desire for their children to master another language had influenced them to send their children to vernacular schools.

He said, in line with current economic trends, many parents sought to help their children get an advantage, such as by learning Mandarin.

"Parents now see Malaysia as a pluralistic country, so they also want their children to learn other languages for economic and future career purposes.

"Furthermore, the improved quality of teaching and learning (PnP) in science and mathematics, particularly in vernacular schools, has motivated them to send their children to such institutions," he added.

Mohd Azizee emphasised that this was further compounded by the facilities provided in vernacular schools, which seemed to be a lot better.

Meanwhile, Che Wan Rosida Wan Hasan, 40, from Nilai, Negri Sembilan, admitted that her two children, aged 13 and nine respectively, were able to master Mandarin well after studying at a vernacular school in Nilai.

A teacher at a national school, she said she deliberately chose to send her children to a vernacular school.

"I feel this can have a great impact on attitude, thinking, and increased learning diligence.

"The advantage of children studying in vernacular schools can help them master Mandarin and English well because both languages are the mediums of instruction in such schools," she said.

She emphasised that her personal experience in witnessing her children's performance and achievements in school was commendable and on par with other students.

She said, generally, many Malay parents were concerned about sending their children to vernacular schools due to certain issues such as the availability of halal food, and also whether Islamic Education subjects were offered in vernacular schools.

"Usually, the main issue is about halal or non-halal food, and whether Islamic Education is prioritised or not.

"In fact, the school canteen in SJKC does provide halal food, but I provide food from home for my children, and in terms of Islamic Education subjects, there are male and female teachers teaching Kafa (Islamic Education) in vernacular schools," she said.

Meanwhile, for Rafizah Cian Ling Abdullah, 40, she said that although the intention to master Mandarin was good, parents needed to gauge their children's abilities if they intend to send them to vernacular schools.

"Don't be too eager for them to master Mandarin; it will have an effect on their academic performance.

"If the child doesn't understand Mandarin, they won't be able to follow the lessons, leading to them being left behind," she said.

Rafizah Cian Ling emphasised that there were no obstacles for parents to send their children to vernacular schools, but they needed to ensure that the child was ready to face a different environment.

She did not deny that some Malay students who studied in Chinese schools could master English and Mandarin better because generally, both languages were the mediums of instruction in these schools.

However, for national schools, emphasis is still being placed on the importance of students mastering English. This can be seen in Sekolah Rahang, which provides three mediums of instruction: Malay, English, and Mandarin.

Moreover, she sends her children to that school.

"For me, both types of schools, namely national schools and vernacular schools, have their own advantages," she said.