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SJKC more than academics, say Malay parents

By Nuradzimmah Daim - March 18, 2024 @ 5:30am



Parents find that at vernacular schools, teachers keep them highly involved in their children's development by regularly updating them on their progress. FILE PIC

Learning Mandarin is the initial reason why many Malay parents enrol their children in Chinese schools, but they quickly learn that the primary education institutions offer more than just academics.

A parent, who wanted to be known only as Aminah, said she initially decided to send her child to a vernacular school mainly due to the language advantage.

"These days, it is common to see people having a good command of English, so Chinese schools are a good avenue for my daughter to learn Mandarin.

"As we went along, however, I found that the school offers more than academics and parents are highly involved in their children's development, something I didn't see much when attending national schools," said Aminah from Seri Kembangan.

She said the teachers updated her regularly on her daughter's academic performance and pushed her to be more supportive towards her daughter's overall development.

School administrators provided an after-school daycare nearby for parents who were only able to fetch their children after office hours, she said.

While she spent a lot on books, Aminah said nominal fees were imposed on the various extracurricular activities.

"I paid an annual computer class fee of less than RM100 and about RM50 for a ukelele monthly class at the school, while I don't remember paying for other activities.

"I heard that the alumni always contribute to the school and would hold an annual dinner to raise funds."

Another parent, who wanted to be identified as Noor Hazwani, 36, from Ampang Jaya, also cited Mandarin language for her reason to enrol her three children at t a vernacular school.

"All of them go to a Chinese school, so I can't compare my children to others who enrol in national schools today, but I observed that they get a lot of homework on a daily basis," said the mother of four.

Hazwani said extra-curricular activities provided by the school such as gymnastics and robotic classes were also cheaper than the ones offered by private companies.

Over the last decade, the enrolment of non-Chinese students, particularly Malays, in Chinese vernacular schools has steadily increased, climbing from 9.5 per cent in 2010 to 15.33 per cent in 2020, according to the Education Ministry.



Datuk Professor Emeritus Dr Noraini Idris

National Union Teaching Profession secretary-general Fouzi Singon said some parents tended to choose vernacular schools because they believed their children's education, in terms of culture and mother tongue, would not be affected.

"They feel that it is better because they still learn 3M (reading, writing and counting) in addition to being able to socialise and communicate in Mandarin .

"I think now is the right time for a third language to be offered to pupils in national schools.

"This will offer parents the option for their children to learn and master the language," he said, adding that parents had begun to open up wider career opportunities for their children with the mastery of Mandarin.

Educationist Datuk Teo Kok Seong said many parents enrolled their children in the vernacular schools due to the quality of education.

"Many Malay parents I spoke to also cited excellent work culture among the teachers at Chinese schools, as well as good leadership by their headmasters.

"I have posed this question before; and the ministry, in admitting this in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, said we should see improvement by the third wave, between 2021 and 2025, with the national schools becoming the school of choice regardless of ethnicity," said Teo.