What’s missing from schools today

It is interesting to read Rita Sim’s comment “Chinese vernacular schools have open door policy” (NST, April 5).

She attempts to clarify the importance of Chinese vernacular schools in our education system by claiming that these schools have long been perceived as providing quality education because they emphasise discipline and academic excellence.

This perception of excellence in Chinese vernacular education is viewed against the national school education, which by inference does not meet the standard of education required by the Chinese community.

Thus, they have no choice but to send their children to Chinese schools.

Sim’s assumption that Malaysians who have a strong command of Mandarin and English will have an edge over others negates the national policy of upholding the sanctity of the national language.

Her statement could be misconstrued that the national language is less viable as a language of commerce and academia.

She also admits that there are Chinese pupils, who after undergoing the primary vernacular education, have difficulty adapting to the national language in the secondary schools. This is the bane of vernacular education that provides minimal exposure to the national language, besides creating an insular attitude.

What needs to be done is to develop a cohesive educational system that promotes academic and creative excellence using a medium of instruction that promotes national unity and international recognition.

To this effect, the powers that be should not be in a perpetual state of denial with regards to the state of our education system.

A vibrant educational system is one that fosters an understanding of the facts and figures that correlate to the natural and man-made phenomena; provides an arena for exploration and experimentation that involves the factual and the abstract, as well as developing critical and creative faculties.

More importantly, it should create an inquisitive mind that does not take anything and everything for granted.

For such an education system to flourish, there must be freedom of thought, expression and psychological safety. In other words, there has to be a conducive environment for the exchange and challenge of ideas without fear or prejudice.

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Chinese schools are popular even among the non-Chinese because of their emphasis on discipline and academic excellence.