

Apr 7, 2010

## **One voice still unheard in SJI episode**

I AM happy that the annual general meeting of the St Joseph's Institution (SJI) Old Boys' Association on March 26 attracted much interest, especially among the alumni.

SJI has a legacy and a tradition to be proud of and uphold. I recognise that there is a new educational landscape to respond to, but find it painful to accept the contention that an "affiliate-based policy" is going on the path to mediocrity.

I did not propose an SJI for only SJI Junior and feeder school students. Neither did I propose that there be automatic "walk through" for them. I proposed that half of the places should be reserved for SJI Junior students and 25 per cent for feeder schools. Why?

At the time when St Michael's School was renamed, a 10-year Josephian Programme was introduced to give the junior students a uniquely Josephian "through train" programme - good for the boys and the alumni and the community.

There are many other feeder schools that are part of the Christian Brothers Schools family which SJI needs to care for also.

On the issue of cut-off points, I had suggested a cut-off point of 225 or even 220. In a table that compares the cut-off points of affiliates of selected schools, SJI's 238 points was tabulated among others that ranged from 234 upwards. There were four other schools which had cut-off points for affiliates far lower, yet, these four had consistently performed better than SJI. These same schools are ranked within Band 1 too.

This is the reason why I find it difficult to accept the assertion that SJI needs to attract "higher ability" students (based on their cut-off points) and the suggestion that, otherwise, it will be putting the school on the path to mediocrity.

For some time, I have believed that SJI can be true to its mission and yet respond to the new educational landscape. Sharing the mission or the aspirations of the SJI board is a challenge that requires a response from all stakeholders - not just the alumni, but also the community, and the teachers. There is also one group we have yet to hear from - the Brothers.

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