

Apr 7, 2010

## **Chance to groom future leaders in De La Salle values**

I WOULD like to respond to Mr Benny Ortega's letter "If SJI goes elite" (April 1).

His lament is understandable; many Josephian alumni feel increasingly alienated from their alma mater. For my part, my PSLE score of 229 would not have gotten me into the school that I love dearly to this day.

Mr Ortega is justified in saying that SJI's higher entry requirements deviate from the spirit of the De La Salle education. However, I would like to add two points to this discussion.

First, SJI is not alone in driving the mission of John Baptist de La Salle in Singapore. St Patrick's School, for example, is also run by the LaSalle Brothers and accepts students from all four feeder primary schools. Today, schools under the De La Salle umbrella in Singapore increasingly function as a cooperative family, catering to the wider spectrum of students' needs.

As the students progress onwards, the De La Salle values stand a higher chance of taking root at the upper echelons of government, industry and society. Within the family of schools, it is imperative that one taps into the upper tier of the academic cohort. In meritocratic, qualification-obsessed Singapore, good academic results remain one of the prime factors for career success.

My second point is about mindsets. Mr Ortega rightly observes that De La Salle's original schools were revolutionary. They challenged the entrenched notion that education was the exclusive domain of the rich and nobility.

Likewise, a LaSalle education today cannot remain stagnant, clinging dogmatically to tradition. De La Salle's heritage to us today is not merely to educate the less fortunate, but to be courageous and embrace those educational trends that will benefit society in the long term. I am satisfied for now that the spirit of his mission remains alive and well in Singapore.

Which would be a greater injustice to SJI's (and De La Salle's) heritage? To leave out some students every year due to higher entrance standards or to lose out on grooming future leaders in the De La Salle values? For me, the answer is the latter.

Benjamin Tan