

Evaluation should be transparent

I REFER to the letter "What yardstick for excellence?" by Surajnaidu (*StarEducation*, July 16).

Having been in the teaching profession for over 30 years, I can understand the writer's unhappiness over the way teachers are evaluated and rewarded.

It is bad enough when one's efforts are not recognised but it is really maddening when the wrong candidates are rewarded. There is then a sense of grave injustice.

The rewarding or promotion of teachers should be a transparent exercise. The criteria for excellence in teaching should be spelt out clearly, and the decision to reward excellent candidates made by a committee comprising

senior teachers and the principal.

But what often happens is that the principal, acting like a little Napoleon, makes his or her own selection without consultation with senior teachers. And the principal tends to reward cronies who do the principal's bidding without question.

What the present system is doing is very damaging to the morale of the teaching profession as it gives principals the power to nurture cronyism instead of professionalism.

Recently, our Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak criticised civil servants for being too subservient. The impact of this problem is worse in schools because students are affected by the examples set by

teachers.

How can we hope to develop critical thinking skills in students when teachers themselves are meek and subservient?

The "rare" teachers who question rationales for directives or ideas put forward by their principals are often regarded as trouble-makers and subsequently blacklisted in promotion exercises.

Is it any wonder that many students in schools and universities then do not have critical thinking skills, or are unable to think out of the box?

Education Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein recently announced plans to revamp the education system. To do

so, we need teachers who can think rationally and critically, not just unquestioningly do the principal's bidding.

Unfortunately, years of subservience to the school authorities have nurtured a generation of teachers who generally dare not speak out. As a retiree, I wish the Education Minister the best of luck!

I would like to suggest the evaluation of a teacher's performance be carried out in a more transparent manner so as to encourage teachers to improve their teaching, not hone their skills at currying favour with the boss.

HELEN CHEW
Via e-mail