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Don't deny the `mahasitua' right to promotion

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THE numerous negative reports on the teaching profession in the local media could lead one to wonder whether it is worth celebrating Teacher's Day this year.

Once again teachers have been subjected to indignity by a recent circular from the scholarship division of the Ministry of Education requiring teachers pursuing degree courses to sign a declaration that they will not demand promotion upon graduation.

When I was the Dean of Education at Universiti Sains Malaysia in 1983, the then Director-General of Education Tan Sri Abdul Rahman Arshad asked me whether it would be possible to design a degree course suitable for non-graduate teachers to upgrade their professional qualifications.

I told him it would not be difficult as I had all the experts working with me. Thus, we were able to design the Bachelor of Education degree course which was approved by the Ministry of Education, the Public Service Department and the Treasury, and implemented in 1984.

Since then, a total of 584 teachers have obtained the degree.

Teachers have also taken other degrees at public universities and all of them have saved the Government a lot of money in manpower training.

All teachers are members of the Education service and are, according to the Aziz Commission, "directable and deployable to perform teaching, administrative or other duties that may be reasonably required of them".

The service also has an Education Commission and, therefore, classroom teachers should not be sidestepped when it comes to promotion.

Teachers who have made their way to the university do so with the permission of the Ministry of Education and take courses approved by it. These mature undergraduates, affectionately known as "mahasitua", have made great personal sacrifices to better themselves and, therefore, the Government should not deny them their right to promotion.

The Cabinet Report (1975) on the "Remuneration and Terms and Conditions of Service in the Public Sector", chaired by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad when he was Deputy Prime Minister, accepted the fact "that qualification and training are necessary preconditions for jobs in the Public Sector and should therefore be taken into consideration when determining appropriate salary scales".