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Dr M should justify conviction in policy

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IN view of former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's continued support for the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English in the national school curriculum, it would be appropriate for him at this stage to justify his convictions and to say precisely why teaching just two subjects in English would be better than to have all subjects in one language.

There was a time when people, including politicians and policymakers, followed their heart. But the time is right now for solid reason and convincing scientific proof.

I don't think any present-day educated person would be happy to follow a policy or to submit to new guidelines unless he or she had a clear demonstration that the new course of action would indeed be beneficial.

One of the main reasons given for the introduction of the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English in 2003 was to help graduates increase their employability by ensuring that they can speak better English. Thus, English was even then recognised as an edge for greater career success.

Yet, there is nothing scientific in a job interview. Even the most qualified and academically successful prospects need to satisfy their future employer's need for likeability.

After all is said and done, people will give you the job because they like you. No

more and no less.

Education is a comprehensive endeavour. That means that education develops both the physical and mental abilities of a person, besides bringing to light new resources and possibilities that the person was not aware he or she had.

We have known quite a number of scientists, including Nobel prize winners, to have perfectly unsatisfactory personal lives.

There always comes a time when these people had to put their achievements into perspective and recognise that they were, after all, not as happy as they would have liked to be.

In fact, the purpose of life is to be happy — happy with oneself first, and then happy with everyone around us. Many people these days look for happiness in their jobs, too. Being happy in a job means to be doing something that one likes to do with people one likes to be with.

Quite a number of people have given up high-paying jobs and started a new career doing what they felt they were meant to do from the beginning.

Invariably, these "love the job" advocates report that they do not miss their former well-paid position, and that the happiness and satisfaction they find in their new profession well compensate for the loss of wages.

I would also like to point out that many students today opt for the humanities, business and the liberal arts, all of which

demand a high degree of language proficiency in order to put in a good performance.

Some business conversations, although aimed at highlighting assets and balancing figures, have very little to do with Mathematics and Statistics, and nearly all to do with perception and credibility.

Indeed, much of the facts prove that having a school curriculum taught consistently in one language would be more beneficial to the students' academic and emotional wellbeing and future success in life than a multilingual approach.

Due to the high level of present-day international trade and travelling, the argument for that language being English is very strong indeed.

Nevertheless, having a very high respect for the former prime minister, who has a high level of education, experience and love for his country, I am quite sure that there is some merit in his theory.

It would, therefore, be appropriate for Dr Mahathir, at this point in time, to clearly state why it would be better for Malaysia's national schools to teach Science and Mathematics in English, and to show, with both figures and validated case studies, that only Science and Mathematics would be better taught in English while all other subjects should continue with Bahasa Malaysia, which is the national language.

Marisa Demori, Kuala Lumpur