Do away with arbitrary measures of ‘success’

BY TEO CHIN KER

SINGAPORE’S rapid economic development has opened possibilities never known to my parents.

Consequently, my life is a succession of “firsts”: I am the first in my family to attend college, first to travel to the United States, even the first to achieve fluency in English.

But now the weight of expectation lies very heavily on my shoulders.

My parents have sacrificed many of their dreams to place me where I am today, and I feel a strong need to ensure that their efforts will not be in vain.

Thus I have developed an innate need to over achieve — losing is not an option. This has helped me succeed, but it is also responsible for my headaches.

Nevertheless, I believe that there are many students out there who feel stressed for different reasons — perhaps they feel pressured to study a subject they have no interest in, or to fit into a preconceived mould of how society wants them to be.

My call to schools and to society is: Stop imposing artificial barriers and structural limits on youths.

Not everyone is interested in engineering or the life sciences — equal priority should be given to, say, art history or philosophy.

Removing conformity will give youths space to explore our interests without worrying about arbitrary measures of “success”.

The writer has a place to read economics at Singapore Management University.