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EDUCATION in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner.

This is to produce individuals who are intellectually and physically balanced, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God.

With such a comprehensive philosophy for our education system, there should be great advancement where holistic growth and development of students is concerned.

However, in reality when I teach courses on curriculum or philosophy and history of education in Malaysia, the scenario presented by my students in undergraduate or postgraduate levels is disheartening.

Usually we analyse the National Education Philosophy word for word. Then to make it impactful so that students can remember and educate their own future students, I ask them to rate their own school achievement (from a range of one to 10) for every
aspect mentioned in the National Education Philosophy: intellect, spiritual, emotional and physical.

In my two decades of lecturing at the university, students will rate intellect between four and seven but the other three components (spiritual, emotional and physical) between two and five. Some students from religious schools do rate spirituality between six and eight.

The worst is emotional skills — none rate what they have learnt for emotional management at anything above two or three.

Our National Education Philosophy is value-laden and comprehensive but focus is otherwise on reality.

It’s time we retrain our teachers from preschool right up to university on the aims and objectives of the National Educational Philosophy and how they can transform their own teaching to ensure their subject matters involve the different domains.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR DR VISHALACHE BALAKRISHNAN

Centre for Research in International and Comparative Education, Universiti Malaya