Students and teachers must help each other

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Letters: Recently, I met several of my former students who are teaching Moral Education for exam-going classes. When I asked them how the students were faring, all provided similar answers: “Dr, they forgot whatever content they learnt before the Movement Control Order period. We have to start from scratch again.”
"I was not surprised to hear those comments as students come to school to score their grades and teachers prepare them to score those grades. If you do well, you are a great student, and if you don't, you are a failure.

What was more shocking is that during a course that I taught my postgraduate diploma students titled "Ethics, Akhlak and Legislation", the 1996 Education Act had a phrase which clearly stated that school is a place to prepare students for examinations.

Thus, what most teachers are doing is in line with the 1996 Education Act. Therefore, what my ex-students are facing is a typical day-to-day scenario that most teachers will face now with the MCO period ending soon and all the students slated to be back at school by end of July.

So, what matters most for everyone in school? If school is just a place to ensure that students study and score good grades in school and public examinations, then we definitely need some drastic transformation. Teachers are worried that they have not covered their syllabus for the calendar year.

Students on the other hand are excited to meet their friends and teachers in school once more. To ensure a soft comeback, the first few weeks of being back at school is crucial. Teachers as well as students need to settle down, share their experiences, reflect on their MCO period and learn to adapt in a new post-Covid-19 era.

If teachers are just going to focus on the contents of the subjects they are teaching without even understanding what they and their students had undergone during the MCO period, then holistic education will remain a myth.

However, if teachers start their classes by sharing and caring with their students, then the trust and rapport would be greater. That is what is expected from teachers towards students after this pandemic episode.

Nevertheless, do teachers understand their role and responsibilities? No one teaching in schools had experienced such a long break in their lives.

Many teachers were struggling with online teaching and frustrated because some students did not attend the online classes.

Are teachers going to reprimand students on the very first day they see each other face to face again?

Alternatively, are the teachers going to share how difficult it was for themselves as teachers to adapt to the new norm of teaching?

Then listen to challenges that the students faced when they were supposed to study using the online platforms.

At the end of their educational journey, students want to remember what a joyful time they had during their school life, pandemic or no pandemic.

They want to remember their teachers as individuals who supported them when they were frustrated during the Covid-19 period. That's what counts most.

Associate Professor Dr Vishalache Balakrishnan
Faculty of Education, Universiti Malaya

The views expressed in this article are the author’s own and do not necessarily reflect those of the New Straits Times