

Education: The moral of moral studies



By **DR VISHALACHE BALAKRISHAN** - August 29, 2017 @ 10:05am

I REFER to a letter by Puvananderan Ganasamoorthy titled "Crime Prevention Club in schools a big help to cops" (NST, Aug 23).

In that article, he said the Education Ministry should reintroduce the Civics subject, which was replaced by Moral Studies.

I would like to verify once and for all what we know about Civics Education and Moral Education, known as Moral Studies.

Civics Education started in the early 1960s and took a stronger foundation in 1970s after the May 13, 1969, incident, which is learned until today in History and other humanities subjects.

Moral Education got its life through the Cabinet Report 1979.

Moral Education came about as a subject to complement Islamic Education.

Muslim students study Islamic Education, and non-Muslim students study Moral Education.

As such, concerns that Moral Studies has replaced Civics Education are not valid.

Moral Education is a core subject for non-Muslim students and complements Islamic Education in the curriculum, from pre-school to secondary school.

Moral Education has grown over the past three decades.

A subject that started with ambiguous orientation and philosophy since 1983, it is moving up the ladder as an important subject to educate students about life choices, how to make such choices and live with the consequences of these choices.

On the other hand, Civics Education, which started in the 1960s, gained momentum after the May 13, 1969 incident and died a natural death in 1990s.

It was revived in 2004, was developed as a subject to bring unity through diversity in action, especially in its 10 hours of project and volunteerism activities suggested for each year and form.

However, this subject has died a sudden death and is being replaced by History in primary schools.

It was a subject much enjoyed by students, if taught with passion and care. It was a subject that brought Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak together as one nation with diverse cultures, explained and accepted by students.

But, as usual, we expected results overnight. Investment in civics and citizenship education has been in vain.

However, some topics in the Civics and Citizenship curriculum were transferred to the Moral Education subject.

Topics such as international law and human rights are being learned only by Moral Education students, who do not make up even 40 per cent of the student population.

My hope is to see more people paying attention to what has happened in our education system in the past three decades, and suggesting strategies to make our education system more progressive.

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