

Students must be taught how to develop their emotions

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By [VISHALACHE BALAKRISHNAN](#) - December 28, 2018 @ 9:02am

SEVERAL days ago, American Professor Darcia Narvaez wrote on her blog about how to develop and educate children in distress.

She wrote, “I heard the toddler wail across the store. He kept up his protest as we passed him in a cart along the checkout lines. He sounded both angry and heartbroken. After our purchases, he was still crying as he sat next to his mother in a booth. She asked him if he wanted to try his pizza. Distressed, we walked on by, not knowing what to do. I now consider that an ethical failure. I became haunted by my failure to help.”

I have experienced similar situations in Malaysia — at shopping complexes, places of worship, functions in private homes, functions in public places and the list goes on. I get very disturbed when parents ignore the cries and screams of their children, and continue with their business.

It is as if they find it normal to have their children wailing and screaming.

When I was young, my mum, an authoritarian type of parent, used to give stern stares and sharp but brief phrases like “no more or you will be sent to the corner ” to my older siblings. I, being the youngest, learnt to control my own emotions when I saw the consequences of my older siblings being punished. Nevertheless, what was more important was that my mother would later explain the reason for the punishment, and we should learn to become better children. My reasoning and guided emotions became key adaptations that have been guiding my way of life.

Emotions are a big part of education, which our education system is hoping to focus on now. My biggest fear is the role that an educator has to play in building confidence in students to develop their emotions. As I recall my days in primary school, I remember them with fear. In Standard 1, one of my friends was slapped so hard on her thin cheeks for not putting a sewing knot correctly.

Until today, my friend hates that particular teacher. In Standard 3, we had a teacher who hit pupils' knuckles with a wooden ruler for not writing neatly.

Next year, with no examinations for Year 1 to Year 3, there is a lot of unlearning and relearning to be done, especially for our early primary school educators.

With projects and out-of-classroom activities to be conducted to develop children's character in school, these educators need to be trained to bring actual transformation as aspired by the Education Ministry.

Primary school pupils need help with their emotions. Will the teacher encourage joy and fun, building that into their personality, or will the children's emotional cues be ignored, leaving them underdeveloped in emotional intelligence?

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