

POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

'Teacher Education on Bullying Prevention and Positive Discipline' A project by UNICEF, HELP University College and the Ministry of Education

ISSUE

A child has the right to be in a safe schooling environment, which includes not being subjected to any violent form of discipline, such as corporal punishment.

In Malaysia, corporal punishment in schools is seen as a disciplinary action to control students who misbehave. It is often dealt as a punishment for "serious" disobediences such as stealing, smoking, gangsterism, vandalism or bullying.

However, it is generally acknowledged, and has been demonstrated through research, that such punishment would result in emotional and psychological scarring due to humiliation, stigmatisation, denigration, fear and ridicule. Studies have also shown that children who have experienced cruel, inhumane treatment are more susceptible to subject others to similar degrading actions.

Many studies have shown that corporal punishment is positively related to bullying behaviours. Children who live in punitive environments rate higher on aggressive behaviours. Therefore, if corporal punishment is to prevail, so will bullying, and the vicious cycle of violence is perpetuated.

Hence, there is a pressing need to replace corporal punishment with positive discipline, which encourages children to develop self-control, confidence and respect for others through an ongoing educational process using non-violent approaches.

ACTION

The Teacher Education project, carried out jointly by UNICEF, HELP University College and the Ministry of Education, serves as a follow-up of a previous project that ran from 2006-2007 entitled "*Increasing Psychosocial Wellbeing in Schools through Bully Prevention*", which has established a successful school-level intervention program to reduce school bullying.

This current project will look into the preparation of materials as well as training teachers to use alternative models of discipline instead of corporal punishment as a means of disciplining students, while conducting bullying intervention programs.

The current project aims to accomplish the following:

- Widen and deepen awareness of bullying and bullying prevention models among primary and secondary school teachers in Malaysia.
- Equip teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to manage and discipline their classes without the use of physical and psychological violence.

IMPACT

What?

- Development of teacher training manuals: To guide existing teachers and teacher trainees to understand and manage bullying incidences, as well as implement positive discipline, in line with the rights of children.
- Pilot intervention on positive discipline: To compare non-violent interventions in eight classrooms from four schools (two primary and two secondary), against control classrooms. Non-violent forms of discipline will be introduced, and teachers' responses on the efficacy of these interventions will be surveyed and assessed. Data will also be collected on the bullying incidences to measure whether the interventions have reduced bullying.
- Recommendations to the Ministry of Education: To present a white paper on the findings of this study, which would contribute towards making major reforms in the education system with regards to positive disciplinary measures in schools

Who?

Primary beneficiaries:

- 2,560 Primary Five and Secondary Two (aged 11 and 14 years) students from eight selected schools in Perak. Eight classrooms per level, per school, are expected to be involved in the intervention.
- 200 teachers from the eight schools who will be receiving training in positive disciplinary measures.

Secondary beneficiaries:

- Pre-service teachers in teacher training colleges all over Malaysia, who will receive training on positive discipline methods, using the teacher training manual.
- The entire primary and secondary school student population who would be on the receiving end of positive disciplinary measures.

How?

Primary and secondary school teachers will be:

- Better equipped to understand and implement positive forms of discipline in the classroom.
- Better equipped to understand and manage the problem of bullying among school children.

When?

April 2008 to December 2009.