

“Prepare children for unusual circumstances” (Choo Yin Lai, ST Forum, 13/10, pH7)

LIKE most parents of children who sat for the PSLE, I was anxious to know how my son's performance in his mathematics paper had been affected by the flawed question. When I told him that all candidates would be allotted two marks irrespective of the answer given, he said: 'Oh, that would make that question invalid.'

His reply on the invalidity of that question contrasted with a parent's desire expressed on national television that the examiners be lenient in their marking.

My son had just highlighted that in the PSLE, it is one's relative score among the cohort that matters and not the absolute score.

Thus, it is important that the examination paper be set at a level which is high enough to clearly differentiate the diverse abilities of the candidates rather than an easy paper where the majority attain similar high scores.

An examination is not only about how well a candidate does in a normal situation but also how he reacts to unusual circumstances. Singapore has celebrated the victories of many who scaled high mountains and swam across the sea under unpredictable, adverse weather conditions. Parents, too, have to encourage and prepare children to face and overcome challenges in life which are usually pretty unpredictable.

We are probably all upset over the mistake made in the PSLE paper but we need to exercise some caution in expressing negative emotions openly to our children.

Take this as an example for them to understand that life is not a bed of roses where everything is perfectly in place for them all the time.

The children will be facing more challenges in their life and it would be to their benefit to learn early that whatever difficulties they face, they must learn to overcome and move on. Had they fallen, to fall forward.

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