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No room for child abuse

by Gary Boyle

Read the following story by Yvonne Bohwongprasert from the *Bangkok Post*. Then, answer the questions that follow.



News regarding abuse of students at the Sarasas Witaed Ratchaphruek school has raised concern among parents and the public in regard to how young children should be treated.

Several video clips went viral recently in which Ornuma "Khru Jum" Plodprong, an assistant teacher at the school, is seen physically abusing students in her class.

The abuse case has raised issues on reforming the Thai education system. *Bangkok Post* spoke to three teachers about the abuse case.

Nancy, early years education teacher

Nancy was appalled when she first saw the clips of Khru Jum.

"I knew there was something horribly wrong going on from the vibe that can be felt from the other students."

Nancy hopes the media coverage of the incident will encourage the Ministry of Education to pay more attention to the manner in which both private and government schools are managed.

"A teacher's assistant holds important responsibilities. I would like to suggest that schools offer them training in various skills on managing young children and their development. Furthermore what has become obvious is that the school's management failed to hire staff that truly have a love for children."

Extra importance should be placed on the hiring process for staff that handles children in nursery and kindergarten as there are high levels of tolerance and patience required to care for them.

"It is unfortunate that Thai schools do not see the importance of training in basic early development in children. As for hiring a teacher's assistant, many private schools only look for a high school diploma and how presentable they look."

Vinnie, Filipino kindergarten teacher

Vinnie, who has worked in Thailand for 14 years, said that in her experience Thai teachers often don't realise that they are doing more emotional harm than good by using physical discipline on students.

"I have had to reprimand my teacher's assistant when I observe her getting too heavy-handed with students. It's not seen as a big deal because it is common in Thai schools."

However, the bullying of young students is not always physical.

"The more expensive the school, the less the chance of physical abuse taking place. However, I have still observed verbal abuse at good schools. I have seen how Thai teachers put fear in these children when they misbehave," she added.

Vinnie said the Khru Jum incident has made schools realise the need to carefully monitor their teachers and establish a closer relationship with the parents of students.

Chai, elementary science teacher

Chai, who has taught for two decades, said he would like to see the Thai education ministry get more involved in how schools manage their staff.

"The Khru Jum incident is a real eye-opener of what happens when schools do not use a hands-on approach to manage their teachers. Apart from schools, our Ministry of Education is equally to blame. They evaluate schools but much of their focus is on how classes are taught instead of looking at the qualifications of the teachers and the way the school is managed.

"For instance, they could make it mandatory for teacher assistants to attend workshops and training programmes."

Chai said it would be beneficial if the Ministry of Education offers courses for individuals with say a high school diploma who are interested in becoming a kindergarten teacher's assistant.

To ensure that history does not repeat itself, Chai said it is important to stop the common practice of saying: "I don't want to get involved."

"In the video clips, it was clear that the adults standing around chose to not get involved. We have to decide on standing up for what is right. The issue here is not just about hiring a teacher with the right qualifications."

Section 1: Write the correct answer in the space provided.

1. What is Khru Jum's surname?
2. Which teacher in the story is not Thai?
3. Nancy was shocked by the Khru Jum footage. True or false?
4. Chai has taught for 20 years. True or false?
5. Chai said he doesn't want to get involved with history. True or false?
6. Which teacher mentions verbal abuse?
7. Who mentions the hiring process?
8. Who mentions the parents?

Section 2: Write the noun form of the following words in the space provided.

9. cruel 10. encourage 11. important 12. failed 13. evaluate

Section 3: Read the following passage. Then, fill in the blanks with the correct words from the choices given.

"This is an age where children can be a ...14... . You have to channel their energy in a ...15... manner. This requires ...16... . This job should not be used as just a ...17... to earn a living. If that is the case, there is a high probability that when you are tired, your ...18... might make you do something that you ...19... later."

14. A. hand __B. handful __C. meaningful
15. A. active __B. protection __C. proactive
16. A. dedicate __B. dedication __C. dedicating
17. A. means __B. mean __C. meaning
18. A. emotions __B. emotion __C. motions
19. A. regrets __B. regret __C. regretted

Section 4: Find words that match the following definitions.

20. shocked and horrified
21. the mood of a person or place
22. the ability to deal with something
23. the responsibility for a problem
24. required by a rule or laws

For the answers, find the story online at www.bangkokpost.com/learning. If you have any questions or feedback, please contact the Editor at garyb@bangkokpost.co.th