

Bringing wisdom back to educational institutions



By [Dzulkifli Abdul Razak](#) - December 30, 2021 @ 12:15am



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THE launch of Keluarga Malaysia by the prime minister some months ago resonates with Malaysians because we are, by and large, family-oriented.

That is, the family comes first – relationships are prioritised with care, and trust and respect are built.

Although these values have somewhat waned of late, the overall family structure is kept intact and still functional.

Eating together seems to be a good barometer of the "family-ness" level since food is central to the Malaysian lifestyle. Eating durian together, for example, used to reflect the spirit of *muhibbah* – on a wider social dimension.

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Another is *gotong-royong*, a type of voluntary group work for the community's common good — from supporting a wedding ceremony to constructing communal infrastructure. This is especially so in rural areas.

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Wisdom as the essence of learning and knowledge, therefore, lost its place and relevance. Education was further reduced to a mere training exercise, even then within a limited scope.



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So when post-flood activities, such as donation drives and *gotong-royong*, come into force, statements like "Much is learnt when engaging with the community compared with just campus-based activities" begin to resurface.

Likewise, "We have encountered new aspects that our textbooks never even touched on".

These are vital touchpoints of experiential learning where wisdom emerges tacitly; where cultural intelligence takes root and grow by connecting all the dots.

Thus, a "whole-driven" approach — as envisaged by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation — that includes whole-person, whole-institution and whole-community approaches, is making a comeback, bringing with it the much-needed wisdom that our educational ecosystem is deprived of.

The writer, an NST columnist for more than 20 years, is International Islamic University Malaysia rector

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