

Will the competition come to me? Don't train your child to be an exam-taking machine.



Written by: Mr. Victor Ching, Registered Psychologist, Child Psychological Development Association

I have been working in early childhood education for some time and has observed that many institutions and parents have distorted values, which ultimately harms the next generation. However, I also understand the pressure parents face, possibly due to excessive competition.

My educational philosophy is to inspire children's interest in learning. The child has attended various interest classes and participated in public competitions voluntarily. I never forced learning but instead exposed the child to different things from a "play" perspective to spark interest. Not everything introduced will capture the child's interest, but that's okay because there are many fun things in the world!

For example, the child once tried playing the piano at a nearby piano store and fell in love with it, insisting on learning. However, I did not immediately enroll the child in lessons but allowed for more exposure to confirm the interest. Even after studying for over a year, the child has not taken any exams because I believe the interest should not be overshadowed by the pressure of exams and does not want the child to lose interest in music.

Regarding a Mandarin recitation competition, when the child was in K1, the teacher selected students for the competition, but the child was not chosen. The

mother told the child to express the desire to participate directly to the teacher. The same situation occurred in K2, and the family's response was consistent. By K3, when the teacher was selecting students again, the child raised a hand and loudly stated the ability to speak Mandarin, leading to successful inclusion in the competition. Since then, the child has been eager to participate in competitions, happy with wins but also learning to face failures constructively. I believe that this sense of achievement motivates the next generation to participate and try spontaneously.



Taking ping pong as another example, the child wanted to learn after playing with their grandparent during a family church trip at a campsite. Of course, I did not agree immediately but bought a pair of ping pong rackets to play with the child in the park. When it was time to learn seriously, the child was diligent, and after a few months of practice, was able to rally with the coach for nearly two rounds, which is quite an achievement.

Learning from interest boosts confidence

Wouldn't it be better if all learning stemmed from interest? This is my philosophy.

I understand that kindergartens require interviews, but the "training" methods differ greatly. I also run interview and adaptation classes, and many students have successfully entered prestigious schools (nearly 76% of the interviewed students were admitted to the top 50 kindergartens or key schools/international schools in Hong Kong), but the approach used involves activities and games that not only make the children happy but also boost their confidence.

We all love the next generation, but can parents bear to train them into exam-taking machines?