

## Behind the science of fingerprints

Thousands of scientific studies on fingerprints have been done over the years, but they have received little media attention, probably due to the public's association with palmistry and fortune telling rather than as an object of scientific interest.

Harold Cummins (1893-1976) coined the term "dermatoglyphics" for the scientific study of fingerprints and is derived from an ancient Greek term which means "skin carving". Cummins achieved world recognition as the "Father of Dermatoglyphics".

The findings of a lifetime of study and technique development, known as the Cummins Methodology, are accepted as important tools in tracing genetic and evolutionary relationships. The methodology is commonly used to diagnose some types of mental retardation, schizophrenia, cleft palate and even heart disease.

A more recent trend is to look for the genetic basis of certain psychological disorders or characteristics by studying the dermatoglyphics of the hand, and even more recently, finger digit ratios. In the early 1990s, a Singaporean couple and their Chinese partner saw the opportunity to use known dermatoglyphics data to statistically study and generate a pattern in the area of learning styles and intelligence potential.

A team of programmers was commissioned to study the known results of dermatoglyphics studies, and in collaboration with Chinese and Taiwan education entities, the first version of the software -- Multiple Intelligence System (MIS) -- was developed.

It was marketed in different versions to suit respective local markets -- mainly the Chinese and Taiwanese markets -- and was a big success.

In the late 1990s, the program was marketed in Singapore and the rest of Southeast Asia, but was canceled after about six months.

"The owners decided to call it quits as they expected quick profits similar to the Chinese and Taiwanese markets," director of Comcare Interprise Singapore Eric Lim Choo Siang told *The Jakarta Post*. Lim, who has been involved in the project since its inception, bought the software and engaged programmers to study it, eventually revamping it to what it is today.

Since 2000, the program has been developed under the Singaporean Comcare Group of Companies, owned by Lim and his partners.

The group lists education consultancy as one of its core businesses and has interests in software development in education areas as well as in promoting a revamped Singaporean curriculum.

Dermatoglyphics' multi-intelligence measurement is displayed via computer graphics at DMI Primagana's office in Mayestik, South Jakarta. (*JP/Ricky Yudhistira*)

Under Comcare, the program was renamed Dermatoglyphics Multiple Intelligence (DMI) System and since 2004, has been marketed and represented by companies or individuals in Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Maldives, Australia, the United States and the Philippines. Botswana, Burma and Vietnam are in the negotiations stage.

Indonesia's Primagama learning center, which has been involved in learning consultation for 26 years, saw the future of the technology so they bought the license from Comcare.

"Many people have wasted millions of rupiah only to find out that what they received from the university

was not what they needed in real life," DMI Primagama's marketing manager W. Afifatiningsih told the *Post* recently.

When it comes to education, she said, parents usually imposed their own will or followed their children's liking.

In fact, "liking" is a social construction. Children might like certain activities or study certain subjects due to the influence of the media, parents, idols or role models, although they might not have a talent in that area.

"Too many parents force their own will on their child because they don't really understand the child's potential," Afifatiningsih said.

The DMI Primagama assessment package includes fingerprint sampling of all 10 fingers and a detailed report elaborating the following: Left or right brain dominance, multiple intelligence potential, psychological dominance, preferred learning styles and methods, learning communication character and work management style.

As soon as the test reveals the child's intrinsic qualities, a psychologist will help the parents and teachers to understand the details of the computer report.

"The assessment tells us what we need and how we learn. We can then transform our lives through a greater holistic educational approach and lifestyle."

Since its May launching, the DMI test has been available in Primagama's 667 branches throughout the country. Primagama has over 120 agents who are available to take fingerprint samples which are later assessed and analyzed at Primagama's branch office.

Beside adopting the test for its own kindergarten link, Primagama is also facing an increasing number of clients from pre-schools and kindergartens. Some prominent schools such as Jakarta Al Azhar kindergarten and Yogyakarta's Budi Mulia schools have become their clients because parents wanted to know their child's potential earlier.

By November, more than 4,100 individual and institutional clients had taken the test.

It has also been used by senior high schools and parents to determine the field of study for their children. "We hope that after students take the test, our curriculum will be based around the student's talent."

Some companies, especially financial companies, have also used the test for their recruitment process while Yogyakarta, Central Java and East Java regional administrations will soon use the test for their staff replacement, Afifatiningsih said.

Source from: The Jakarta Post