

Mentors Inspire. Lecturers Despair



*Mentors are the frontline warriors who protect society from social evils, asserts **Mujeeb Jaihoon***

Excellence in Education

We must try as much as possible to bring about excellence in every aspect of our lives. Be it even a cup of tea or coffee. Pursuit of Excellence starts from the morning cup of tea: well prepared and served with grace and glamor. Like with the Japanese, tea serving should be enjoyed and revered as in a ceremony. The aesthetics of the tea party should be taken seriously. Excellence can be brought about in any work we do,

from riding a bicycle to space travel.

Excellence brings harmony of perception in the eye and mind of the beholder. Excellence can be brought about not only in interior design, paintings, music and films, but technology too.

Education also deserves the same midas touch of excellence. It will help to transform education into a joyful and memorable experience, for both the mentor and student. The whole business of education

will make no sense without the element of excellence. School and mentors must pursue excellence so that learning becomes transformational, not just transactional in nature.

Teaching

Teaching is a generation transformational experiment. Every teacher is a scientist. But the specimen of this experiment is not chemicals or semiconductors. Rather, live human children's minds. It is a divine entrusted

responsibility. Teaching is a holy task. A child spends more active time at campus than at home. The remote control of a child's mind is in the hands of the teacher than the guardians'. A child's time spent at home is split between assignments, gadgets and daily chores. An active engagement between child and parent is a rare possibility in our modern life.

Knowledge and Nature

The majority of Knowledge is planted in Nature. Education, the

institutionalized process of imparting knowledge, must be organically linked to Nature as well. Educational institutions should make efforts to have a part of their classes conducted outdoors. Students should never feel Campuses as pressure cookers. Fresh air and sunlight are icing on the cake which adds to the rejuvenation of the body and ultimately the mind as well. Proximity to nature, hence, is beneficial to the knowledge givers and takers too. Saints and sages

are said to have sat under some tree during their illuminating moments. The Holy Quran repeatedly asks humanity to observe nature to discover the signs of God. A major portion of knowledge can be found in Nature. Distance from nature is actually distance from our humanity.

Spiritual Basis

Our humanity involves compassion to fellow forms of life, including nature. Environmental pollution, deforestation and

climate change are some of the calamities going to affect humanity. Unless we see these challenges from a spiritual dimension, our fight against them will end in mere lip service without significant results. We can't afford to maintain environmental crises as mere scientific phenomena. Man is quintessentially a spiritual animal, not just social or rational. There is a spiritual basis for every problem that plagues our planet. Else, the rich and famous, the talented and

scholarly, would not end their lives as they possessed many of the blessings we otherwise ambitiously seek in our lives.

The Box: Within and Outside

Today's children are way ahead of teachers and parents in many respects. We may score over our children in wisdom. However, age-old wisdom is also inherent with traditional ways of thinking. Children can think outside the box. Parents being outdated is okay to some extent. But teachers cannot

afford to remain traditional in their knowledge base and outlook. Even the shade of meanings of the words we traditionally used have changed over time. Teachers need to be well informed of these transformations in order to better interact with their students.

Universal Human Sins

Since the advent of humanity, certain misdeeds have been universal to their mindset. Greed, envy, pride and violence have haunted men and women in all

ages and places. Corporate competition is actually greed sweet-coated. The much-hyped personal success talks that we see and hear today are mostly founded on greed. Not to mention the ‘how to be millionaire’ preaching on social media which creates an insatiable gold hunger in the ‘users’.

Although technology and lifestyle changes are infinite, the human cravings mentioned above remain constant. Teachers can mentor

their students to stay away from these universal evils.

Dream beyond Grades

Every teacher aspires for their students to score well in their subjects. However, grades should not be the only dream that teachers wish for their students. It is important to inculcate other humane and practical values in their students. Every student should be given training in entrepreneurship which will help

him or her in their future survival in this fast-paced world.

In short, education is not just the hurried completion of the textbook ‘portion’.

Boredom is Devildom

Children’s boredom today has skyrocketed in overwhelming proportion, thanks to the infinite screen life they indulge in. They resort to self-harm and anti-social actions to overcome boredom.

Teachers and mentors have to recognize this reality and reach out

to the young minds accordingly. Academic excellence is possible only when the child is safe from self-harm which includes substance abuse. Addiction to drugs, alcohol and tobacco is a major threat to the psychosocial wellbeing of students. Drugs are a cancer on our society but strangely our textbooks hardly warn about this deadly menace in a deserving manner. What, then, is the meaning of education if it does not protect our students from the life-threatening forces? Mentors,

hence, are the frontline warriors in protecting society from social evils. Fight against drugs should not be assigned to NGOs and social workers alone. Teachers are the primary guardians of children who can save them from the devil of addiction.

The Attention Deficit Challenge

The increasing attention deficit disorder is a grave threat to traditional pedagogical methods. Teachers need to be specially equipped to handle this

psychological crisis among students. Lack of span of attention also hurts child-parent communication in homes. The modern parent is unable to garner the attention of their child while engaging in a discussion.

Inculcation of ethical values

Inculcation of ethical values is perhaps the most rewarding experience of education.

Mathematical equations, laws of physics, properties of chemicals and parts of speech can do little to

make this world a better place if devoid of ethical practice. If education be the throne, then Civility is its crown.

Mentors vs. Lecturers

Students and parents tend to cherish mentors more than mere lecturers. Mentors intervene in the behavior of the child, while lecturers coldly feed them with syllabus. Mentors inspire, while lecturers leave students in despair. When mentors guide, lecturers dictate in black and white.

Mentors provide confidence to handle challenges, lecturers simply provide black and white answers to questions. Mentors train to face and learn from failure while lecturers spoil with success.

Summarized from Mujeeb Jaihoon's address to the teaching faculty of Red Bricks International School, Kottakkal, Kerala – March 14 2022.

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