

Modelling Values

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During the last Parent Teacher Meeting a parent told me that her son was always watching TV. Another parent said that his daughter was not fond of reading. Still another parent confided in me and discussed at length all the changes that were coming in the thinking and personality of his child. The list can go on endlessly. The problems varied but every parent looked at me expectantly as if I, the teacher, had the magical wand to set everything right. Parents expressed not only their complete helplessness but also the desire to see a positive change in their children.

Back home I started thinking: do I really influence the lives of young adolescents this much? Why did the parents have such faith in me? I started introspecting and continued to observe my own behaviour for a period of time. I became mindful of my words and actions. I realized that children learn more by what they see than what they hear. It is easy for them to follow foot prints than advice. I may be able to escape the eagle eyes of my Principal but never my students. It is

both verbal and non-verbal language used by me in the class or outside the class that students observe so minutely. I think I am the magician performing live on the stage every day.

As a teacher of English, I decided to make a deliberate attempt to ensure that students pick up values and grow up to become sensible and responsible citizens. I decided to utilise 'Arrangement Periods' and also spend some time from my regular classes interacting with students, trying to help them unfold. Narrating personal experiences, anecdotes and relating them to the text served a very useful purpose.

I observed that all the lessons that I taught in the class have scope for inculcating values among students. While teaching, I touched upon various values in a very subtle way. Students imbibed life skills naturally. They developed self awareness, decision making, creative thinking, inter personal communication, critical thinking, empathy, and problem solving. They learnt effective communication, built

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self esteem, learnt refusal skills and negotiation. Values were integrated in such a manner that students and teachers did not even realise how and when students picked up skills of compromising, accommodating, mediating, sorting out interpretations from fact and developing a sense of forgiveness.

I give a lot of importance to character building and always remember that I am being observed minutely by my students every day. Setting Ground Rules in the beginning of the session really helps teach students life time values. Every lesson of the textbooks teaches a value. I make a deliberate attempt to sensitise students about the value learnt. As and when time permits, I tell students about legends and heroes, people we look up to and relate well to them.

I lay special emphasis on values of respect, responsibility and discipline. Reinforcement of the values learnt and practised definitely pays off. I take the core values and ask students “Is anyone opposed to respect, opposed to responsibility, discipline or self-control?”. With experience I have realised that all the students recognise the importance of values, they may not be able to demonstrate them, but they at least agree that values are significant.

I do not like my students coming late to the class. But sometimes they do have a genuine work. Therefore, I have told my students that they will be allowed to do their work provided

they wait for me to come to the class and go with my permission. It has been found that students remain seated in the class.

Recently I gave students a project on how to resolve conflicts. The project included a lot of reading by the students, interviewing different age groups, preparing a magazine and a classroom presentation. Students keep a daily record of the value picked up from the environment.

Loving appreciation and words of encouragement have become my most important aids. I have pledged not to lose temper whatever be the situation, always encourage and motivate students, write positive remarks in their note books, give them the confidence that they are improving and the result is going to be brilliant.

Soon I won their faith and gave them the assurance if they showed signs of improvement they would be suitably rewarded. The small steps I took were not anything unique or difficult to take but I made them my habit. I practised what I wanted to teach my students.

I arrived at the conclusion that all students actually wanted to learn English language and groom their personalities. They understood that the language would enable them explore job opportunities and raise their self esteem. They did take small steps and I realised that I must not lose hope and continue to show them the way. If I remained consistent in my efforts, my students would be

encouraged to continue the effort. It was using the language in and outside the classroom that would build their vocabulary gradually. If students were properly guided and directed how to make optimum utilisation of opportunities there was no reason students would not do the task.

Children become what they live with. Their experiences at home and school give them the foundation to build their own lives. Hence it is very important for the teacher to possess all those virtues which she wants her students to possess. In order to teach patience, sincerity, and diligence to students the teacher must practise these qualities. Positive reinforcement is a miraculous tool which guarantees improvement. A pat on the back or light humor in the class does wonders. I believe in the maxim: I can do it, I will do it.

I agree that the modern scenario is not very encouraging and motivating. There is fast deterioration of values among students. Ill effects of media, negativity widespread in the society, influence of friends and of course the fact that students do not respect parents and teachers are grave issues which need to be addressed without further delay. I strongly believe that if we become role models of our students and empathise with them we will certainly command a lot of respect.

All is not yet lost. There are still a large number of students who value advice of their teachers and look up to them for direction. A teacher's word is

Bible for them. It is up to the teacher to use different tricks from her bag and never quit. As a teacher I must never surrender to the whims and fancies of the immature young heads who are actually not mature but confused and muddle headed. Students test the teacher, her patience and knowledge. If the teacher remains firm, students also learn to obey the teacher sooner or later

C. S. Lewis said, "Education without values, as useful as it is, seems rather to make man a more clever devil". Crimes by juveniles raise questions on the quality of education specifically the value education imparted in our schools. There is a need to sensitise adolescents and develop commitment in them so that their hateful behaviour diminishes significantly. The climate of school encourages expression, enquiry and dialogue, and therefore it becomes my sacred duty to inculcate sense of duty, tolerance and mutual respect among my students and help them become morally upright.

Children pick up values from different sources like home, friends, school, neighbourhood and religious places. Each source contributes significantly in their lives and leaves an indelible impression on their vulnerable minds. Being a teacher, we can help our students choose what is right and beneficial for them. Our students must be taught that if they stand for nothing they fall for anything. It is not doing the things

right but doing the right things that really matter. They must purify their hearts, aim at inclusive society and continue to express gratitude to god.

Experience has also taught me that most of the children can be easily tamed. A tall well-built child who appears to be very rough and tough from outside is actually very insecure at heart. An aggressive teenager also appreciates the compassionate attitude of the teacher. Since we, the teachers, deal with young lives we cannot ignore them and let society degrade further. School plays a pivotal role in developing the healthy personality of a child and the

responsibility of a teacher cannot be underestimated and undermined. School remains the prolonged arm of the family and a teacher remains the guardian nurturing children.

Let us not expect miracles to happen overnight but at the same time, I have the indomitable conviction that if I do justice to my profession I will reap a number of benefits, viz. contentment in personal life and an opportunity to live in a better society where my students have grown up to become dynamic leaders, policy makers and honest human beings commanding respect from one and all.