

University Is Not Just A Citadel Of Research But A Center For Quality Teaching

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I. Introduction:

Teaching is one of the most accomplished professions of every nation. It influences the life of every student and lays the foundation for a right academic journey. It is said that a teacher makes around 1500 decisions per day related to curriculum, instructional methods, feedback, assessment and reflection. Yet the teaching is devalued in higher education with laying emphasis on research.

It is said that strength in higher education teaching is a critical element in ensuring strength in the sector as a whole. Quality teaching involves the student experience, graduate outcomes and employer satisfaction.

The university needs to commit itself on

1. Intellectual quality – developing deeper understanding of concepts to be taught
2. Quality learning environment: ensuring positive lecture halls that boost student learning
3. Significance-connecting learning to student's lives and the wider world.

The consideration of giving importance to research and publication has taken away the value of teaching in undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

As a teacher I had the experience of teaching my students throughout my career as my own children.

The teacher in me taught them the tenets of the subjects I taught along with life lessons one needs to learn. I share those experiences as a narrative.

A teacher is considered as a professional who educates a student with lessons and life. I had the opportunity to become a teacher from 1972 till date. It is a great journey where like a sandalwood which emanates fragrance with continual rubbing meeting many students and learning being exposed to variety of students belonging to many cultures, ethnicity and geographies. The qualities of kindness, empathy and loyalty were my investments to reap countless love, affection and respect from the students I taught. The teaching demands hard work to understand the student who you teach, the choice of methods of teaching and the modulation of your voice to present your subject sprinkled with affection, care and anecdotes or experiences of life to be introduced in simple terms play a very important role as teacher. Rather a teacher is a learner from the student. Based on my experiences of teaching in different institutions and few countries, I have taken few examples to narrate the blessings of a teacher being an educator.

Being a teacher in an Arab nation:

As a teacher in an Arab Nation I made the choice to teach them in simple English and to write the concept in Capital Letters to teach for nearly 10 years. It endeared me to the students so much I had one of the most memorable farewell party for a teacher in his lifetime. The language of communication for Biochemistry was filled with a honest feeling of being a father-like figure to them during those ten year period. We had no social contact or any other communication outside the University as it was a country ruled by stringent control over social gatherings. I did not know that I had captured a place so deep in their minds that they would give me farewell with so much emotions of sincerity. The whole hall was filled with students with tears rolling over and a sadness that covered the entire ambience of the hall. It was like a sober and sombre occasion of parting of children from their parents. I felt so humbled by the occasion and understood the value of a teacher who is honest and true to his students.

A Farewell Party for a Medical Teacher

D.S. SHERIFF, Bangalore, India

It was January 3, 1990. The time was 12:30 PM. The venue was the central hall of Al Arab Medical University, Benghazi. The occasion was a farewell party organized by the medical students to honor and recognize an expatriate Indian teacher of biochemistry who had taught 10 classes of first- and second-year medical undergraduates. This may not be extraordinary to the readers of this journal or to the teachers at many universities. It may be commonplace to give a farewell party for a teacher, especially in places where expressions of thanksgiving and words of praise are routine utterances, like the speeches at Rotary Club meetings. But this farewell party was unique because it was the first time in the history of the university that such a function had been held, and it was being hosted in a central hall meant for greater occasions and moments when leaders of repute or scientists or VIPs are hailed. The farewell party was arranged spontaneously without reservations or recommendations.

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What I learned from such a teaching was language is not a barrier for teaching. Rather sincerity and true concern for the welfare of the students are the most valuable tenets of teaching apart from a good command over the subject you teach.

Knowledge and compassion are the hallmark of a good teacher:

First year in Medicine is the most important year for a student to lay the foundation of trust, confidence and understanding. The teacher has to have a command over the subject he/she teaches to send a message that the teacher knows his subject well and the compassion to express that the teacher has real concern and care for the students he/she teaches.

“Dr. Sheriff sir. He with his unique style of humor and sarcasm made an impact in the very first class. He took us to the most basics of this complex subject. I remember how he made us realize the importance of strong basics to become a thinking doctor. He made sure that we get the much-needed jumpstarts in our career – not only as a doctor but also as a teacher.

*Being the HOD of the department we had the opportunity to listen to many of his classes. In all his classes, the striking feature was that of an extempore style of presentation. He never required any notes, PowerPoint presentations, or OHP sheets which we all felt was different from usual – an indication of his mastery over the subject and that of his self-confidence. Such classes **not only imparted subject** knowledge, but it also taught us **how to believe in ourselves**. These classes, filled with clinical scenarios and real-life experiences have gone a long way to help us apply this knowledge at the right time, in the right way.*

During the batch excursion, Dr Sheriff sir was the obvious staff representative of our choice to accompany us. On that trip to Hyderabad (Andhra Pradesh) he taught us leadership. Till today, in all our batch meetings we remember that wonderful trip we had due to Dr Sheriff traveling with us.

I personally was fortunate to spend some time with him in close quarters. After 1st year of MBBS, I used to visit him regularly at his home. During the emotionally tough days I had in my college, he mentored me to stay strong and showed me the light at the end of the tunnel. This is beyond the call of an ordinary professor. This was the mark of a father who took care of all his students like children. Due to his cheerful nature, it was easy for every one of us to reciprocate the love he showered on us.

This is the age of the devil and Benevolence is not always a good quality to have. The selfless kindness he showed has come back to bite him hard. I feel life hasn't been very fair to this teacher par excellence. But be it rain or shine, he only wanted the best for people around him. This character of his has earned him many devoted students who will stand by him wherever they are around the globe.”

Aswin Padmanabhan

Head, Radiodiagnosis

Kollam Medical College, Kerala.

Be a listener-they too have stories (students)

“Dr D S Sheriff..., a big name in our life. I was privileged to start my medical education with his class. He has got that magical trick to draw attention with his presence and words . Each and every class were crisp and clear so that all of us in the batch were really attracted to the subject, The way he narrates the scientific

facts is awesome. His depth of knowledge in subject is remarkable. Sir is always a good listener and his communication skills are perfect for a great teacher. He is more than a teacher, could feel his fatherly affection in many occasions. He belongs to a rare group of elite teachers who allow the student to express himself or herself and without any interruptions he will listen to it and will guide to the right path. Sir is always approachable, understanding and as a student, I always feel confidence after speaking to him. Anyone can become a teacher, but to become a great teacher, an imprint has to be made in students' mind with words and deeds, which is easily done for everyone in my batch by Sir in style. That's why his name is something special to us. Sir, you are truly a great teacher. We are all blessed to have you as our mentor.

Dr Sandeep V T
MD Internal medicine

“A teacher affects eternity; you can never tell where their influence stops.” -Henry Adams.

A teacher's influence does not stop inside the classroom for it extends beyond boundaries. Therefore a teacher is more important than the subject he/she teaches. Prof. Wanis was my student about 40 years ago and he remembers me well to this day. His letter of recommendation is written from his heart and soul to vouch for that.

Prof. D. Sheriff is an exemplary and innovative teacher. His contribution and involvement in so many aspects of medical teaching have a huge impact on many students world-wide. He is a true role model for many students and doctors world-wide. He has published extensively in Medical literature. His lectures and presentations are well-valued and liked by all medical staff.

Prof. Wanis H. Ibrahim
Sr. Consultant Physician & Professor of Clinical Medicine, Hamad General Hospital
Weill-Cornell Medical College and College of Medicine, Qatar Univ.

1998

When I was teaching in a Caribbean medical school, I was asked to bring my son as a student to validate the medical school's credibility. The students were told that they have their clinical rotation fixed in USA after they complete their pre- and para-clinical subjects in the school. But they had no written contract for clinical rotation which made the students lose trust in the college and refused to continue their studies. ***I had to make a choice whether to take advantage of the situation*** to get my son a free medical seat or expose the reality of the school. I stood by the side of the students, in the process I lost my job and the confidence of my son.

One of the students of the college sent a letter of appreciation which has paid being a true and honest teacher to your students.

16327 Ginger Run Way
Sugarland, Tx 77478

Dear Dr Sheriff,

I am sorry for not writing you sooner. I could honestly say that I have been busy, but I do not think that being busy is a good excuse for not writing a friend.

I was accepted by the University of Saba, and I was hoping that they would offer you a position on their faculty (I sent them your resume). I regret not having you as my professor, but I know that I will have an edge on the other students. I have you to thank for the edge, because I had two semesters with the best biochemistry teacher.

Chuck told Harlan that your classes helped a great deal in putting him at the top of his biochemistry class. You made a difference in all of your students' lives, both academic and non-academic. You have a unique ability to share your wisdom with all age groups. I also admire you because you remain humble despite your many accomplishments. I hope that someday some-one will see in me what I see in you.



Dianne Parkin

I had to make another choice as a teacher. I was asked to be the chair-person of that institution. I remained as a chair-person for nearly a month or two. I realized that the management of the school gave me the job. I owe my gratitude to the management for giving me an opportunity to serve a wonderful community of students and so I left the country. Therefore, I took the choice of leaving the country forfeiting the offer made by the government to be chair-person of that medical school.

Therefore, I feel I am blessed to be a teacher and I am proud that I made the choice of being a teacher always.

My present teaching in Mauritius

The teaching and learning methods in Mauritius are a hybrid between Indian medical education and competency based medical education.

Medical Education and training:

With the advancement of technology and audio-visual aids and certain scientific studies the regulatory bodies of medical education have taken the task of preparing and training medical faculty to learn newer teaching and learning methods. From preparation of power-point slides to preparing short videos of lectures have become the tasks of such training institute of education. Many who join the medical colleges are exposed to teaching and learning as a most important tool of imparting learning as well as influencing the students in the most positive way to learn the facts of medical subjects. The training is personal, in a group, as a participant in computer simulated models, part of e-learning, and sometimes part of a team involved in artificial intelligence. The training imparts both hard and soft skills to the teacher/faculty.

Too much technicality and professional training take away the most important skill of teaching being natural, inbuilt capacity to influence, and above all being a part and parcel of the mindset of a learner. A learner wants a humane teacher who not only teaches but also understands and guides the student in the path of long journey of learning.

Above all a well-trained teacher is like a robot who does the tasks mechanically with precision and professionally. An inborn teacher touches the heart of the student by dedication, being honest and loyal to the student who gains the confidence and respect of the learner.

It is a profession where passion plays an important role. A teacher stands as a model reflecting through actions and deeds with no difference between what is being taught and what is being observed. There has to be an amalgamation between professed values and observed values. If there is a big gap between the two the teacher becomes an employee and the student being a stakeholder.

II. Conclusion:

To improve the quality of teaching nodal centers of medical education to train the Faculty with techniques have turned teachers into technicians of teaching.

Training can improve the technical skills but not the passion for teaching. Teaching is an art and an inborn quality that need to be nurtured over a period time which can train the students to learn, gain knowledge and develop them holistically.

Medicine is a science as well as an art We are building probably the science in medicine leaving the art behind.

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