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The excellence of scholar-teachers



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THERAPEUTIC LEARNING: Open classrooms and open minds

THE inspiring kindergarten teacher shares most of the fundamental traits of the more renowned professors and vice versa.

The trainer in the world of work exhibits commitment, mastery of knowledge and teaching content and enthuses the adult learner much like the school teacher and the university professor.

While the teacher and the professor focus on different levels of education and interact with different learners, they share the same characteristics, responsibilities and competencies.

While there may be assumptions about differentiated roles, the point of their common significance as educators is usually missed.

Teaching and learning excellence in research-led universities and in teaching universities, or in the remotest rural schools and in well-endowed urban schools, can be achieved by the great scholar-teachers at all levels and in all types of educational institutions.

Excellence can be a way of life. Excellence does not occur by chance. Excellence does not just happen. People make excellence happen.

Discoverers, inventors, missionaries and writers do not demand preconditions for excellence. They create the conditions where excellence thrives.

Conditions and outcomes of teaching excellence can be created anywhere, without the need to set preconditions.

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Personal excellence in teaching-learning in any level and in any type of institution involves the 10 pillars of touch of greatness of the inspiring teacher.

The scholar-teacher possesses the following attributes:

A **PASSION** for knowledge and understanding of the mission of overcoming ignorance in human civilization. The spirit of inquiry (figuratively, that trait which kills the curious cat with nine lives) is the refreshing trait of the great scholar-teacher. The scholar-teacher is a lifelong learner who has a love for learners and learning.

THE scholar-teacher has accountability for self and professional development. He consciously understands his strengths and weaknesses and develops best personal habits and foundational soft competencies such as listening skills, attentiveness, coaching and mentoring skills.

APPRECIATION and motivation of others ensuring that unwilling learners become willing learners.

UPHOLDS that the art and science of the great scholar-teacher goes beyond mere professionalism into a covenant of accountability.

FOCUSES not just on the subject matter but in nurturing character development, including the intellectual character of learners.

HAS clarity of personal educational philosophy, curriculum, teaching and learning, assessment and the sciences of teaching-learning.

THE scholar-teacher has mastery of the range of competencies in the various models of teaching and multidisciplinary modes of thought of convergence and divergence of perspectives in different subject areas.

HAS a holistic view of life and work, a sense of urgency about the calling of the noble profession and truly believes and acts to provide the best of guidance to every learner in the belief that each child, each adult learner matters.

IS reflective and thinks deeply and is simultaneously intuitive regarding "doing the right thing" and is determined to "stand and deliver".

HAS wit and humour, a sense of drama, a sense of history and historical continuity as well as cultural literacy.

Beyond the 10 pillars, there are other cumulative competencies of the scholar-teacher.

The scholar teacher goes beyond the confusion of the distinction between pedagogy and andragogy regarded as exclusive, and even oppositional.

Pedagogy is what is popularly assumed to be the patterns of teaching-learning for younger learners and andragogy for adult learners, particularly working adults. Does it therefore mean that at university level, the approach to teaching is pedagogical because most of the students are 17 to 22 years old?

Critics of the confusion and scholars have begun to suggest the notion encompassing pedagogy and andragogy, referred to as "heutagogy", yet another label in the quest for understanding the simplicity and complexity of the acts of teaching and learning!

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Heutagogy is about "knowledge sharing" instead of "knowledge boarding or hoarding" and liberates teacher and learner from conventions and nurtures them in the time-honoured art and science of "learning how to learn".

For a society and country to be great and to achieve its vision, mission and programmes, it must have a critical mass of great scholar-teachers. The society has to ensure the return of the Socratic teacher, the teacher as intellectual, and, the scholar-teacher to humanise its communities.

Not to do so is to be oblivious of the unintended creation of robotic future citizenry with little self and civilisation knowledge, no sensitivity to calling, busily engaged in unreflective hedonistic pursuits as the be-all and end-all of life's mission-without the will of habitually practising "those little acts of kindness and of love".

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