

Teaching and learning as scholarship

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A teacher is the embodiment of scholarship. By imparting knowledge to the learners, the essence of scholarship is achieved. What I wish to share is my philosophy as a teacher in achieving a two-way scholarship involving both learner and teacher.

My teaching philosophy has not fundamentally changed since I started teaching in high school back in the sixties. Teaching is the extension of oneself into the persons - the students - placed under his guidance. Teaching guides these persons to transcend their human limits in order to achieve the self-actualization of their innate potential to live a life that is happy, successful, and fulfilling. How does the teacher perform this monumental task and responsibility?

A true teacher lives the truth that he conveys in the classroom. This means that what he does in the classroom is beyond the concept of simply working for a salary. Teaching is more than a job; it is a vocation. Teaching is not just a way of life; it is living itself. I breathe it, I carry it with me wherever I go, whatever I do. This is one reason why I always dress up for the occasion. Teaching is the embodiment of one's personhood. Therefore, in the classroom, the teacher is congruent with what he says. He is a role model to his students whose welfare, development, maturation, and happiness are his concerns. He does not only provide them with new knowledge, skills, and abilities; he facilitates the application of such knowledge, skills, and abilities by the students beyond the classroom, beyond the textbook. The teacher is a catalyst for change, for growth, for appreciation of what is positive and beautiful both inside and outside of a person. This is how he regards each of his students - a person with dignity, promise, uniqueness.

A true teacher is a professional in how he appears to his students. He is a true person who does not hide behind a mask of pretension, superiority, or authority. He knows his own limitations, he knows he is not perfect (albeit he aims toward it), and he humbly accepts these limitations and imperfections to his students when called for without any iota of remorse or defensiveness. He rectifies his own mistakes and has a sense of humor about them. He learns from his students as much as he teaches them. Together they become self-actualized reciprocally, synergistically through their interactions inside and outside of the classroom. The teacher and the student are the cotyledons of the seed of learning; without the synergy, the seed will not grow. Is there a better way to symbolize scholarship than a seed of life?

I strongly believe that teaching is a gift like life itself. As I value the gift of life, so do I value teaching by wisely investing in the growing "stocks, bonds, and mutual funds" of a) constant professional development, b) tireless search for the truth within my field, and c) effective communication and interaction with the community of both my colleagues in the profession and individuals in other professions and trades. The true teacher integrates himself with the world for the good of all. He is flexible, adaptable. He follows a sound philosophy of life. He is the embodiment of scholarship.