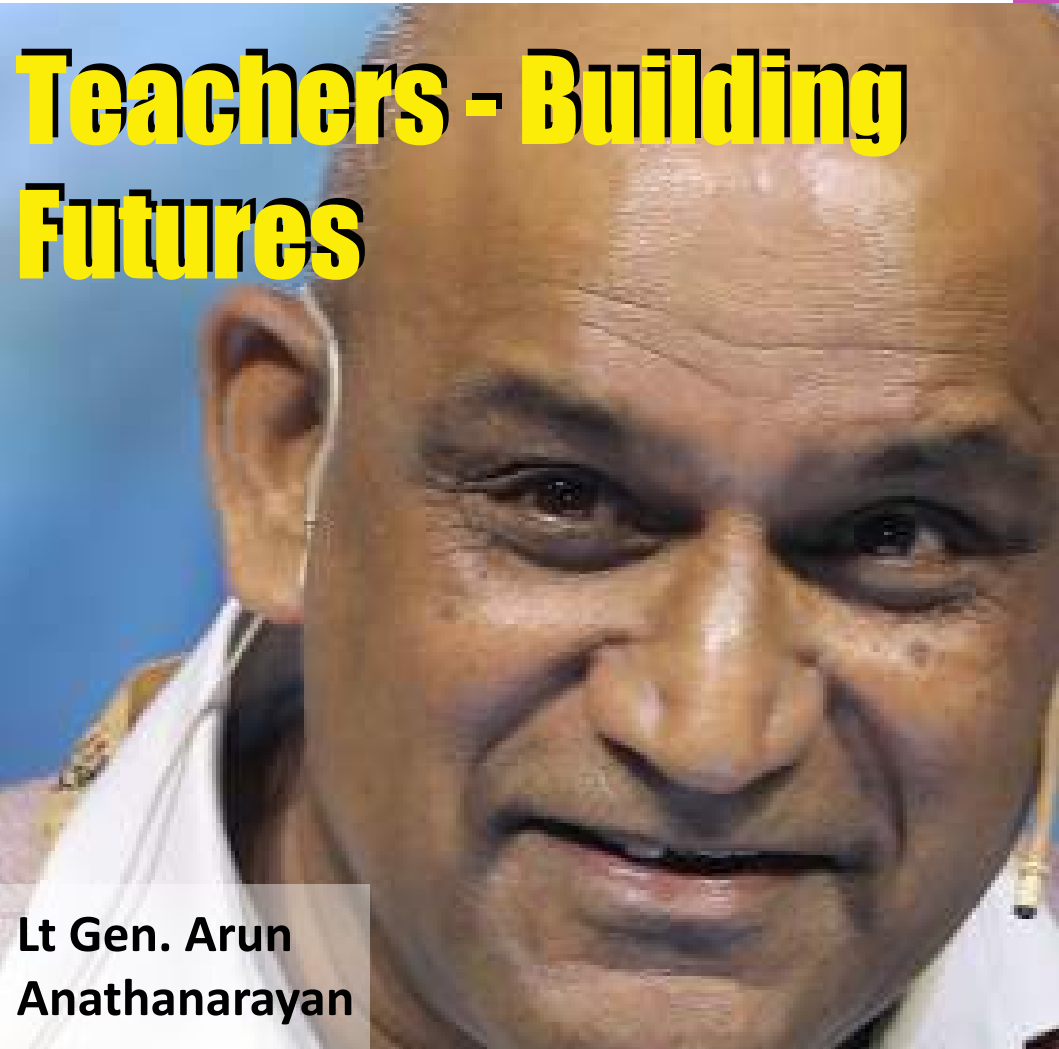


# TEACHER **TRIBE**.world

*Celebrating 10 Years*

September 2023

## Teachers - Building Futures

A close-up portrait of Lt Gen. Arun Anathanarayan, a middle-aged man with a serious expression, wearing a white shirt and a dark tie. The background is a clear blue sky.

**Lt Gen. Arun  
Anathanarayan**

Counselling In  
Schools: The  
Ever-Increasing  
Need

'Active' Learning  
& Learners

Why Do Children Ask  
So Many Questions?

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You can scan the code by using any free-to-download QR reader available on the App Store, Play Store and Windows Store. Wifi/Mobile data will be required.

## What does TeacherTribe.world represent?

### ■ RASHMI MARIAN FURTADO

Senior Editor, TeacherTribe.world



We embarked upon an important journey in September 2013. We launched TeacherTribe.world and this September, we turned 10! It's certainly a time for celebration but it also makes us want to evaluate TeacherTribe.world. This made me think about what TeacherTribe.world represents.

At a recent quiz that I hosted, a finalist lost an opportunity to be among the top 2 because of an immature and rushed reaction of his fellow competitor on stage. While the student understood that the outcome was not in my control, the teachers of the student were peeved. They initiated a discussion with me after the quiz and insisted that I reverse the decision. They did calm down after some time and understood the situation. The reason I recount this incident is because it provided me with the much-needed clarity on why platforms like TeacherTribe.world are the need of the hour.

You may wonder why I make this inference. The answer is just a simple, single word, PASSION! It's the passion that you teachers and educators have that doesn't allow you to give up on your students, that keeps platforms like TeacherTribe.world going. This passion and commitment towards the progress of your students that's ingrained in your system is the very reason why TeacherTribe.world is here to support you.




TeacherTribe.world has been around for 10 years and we will be around

# REFLECTIONS

for 10 years and more, bringing to you resources that will assist you in your journey as an educator. Promising lasting friendships with fellow educators, contests that will keep the child in you alive, welcome your ideas and articles, and just being a supportive partner and friend in your journey as an educator.

We promise the same passion and commitment towards your progress, as what you have towards your students. We look forward to sharing this journey of a lifetime with all of you. ■



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*A natural writer, teacher and a passionate content creator, Rashmi has authored the Cu and Rio series and created the Keystones program on Values Education from Greycaps Knowledge Tribe. She is one of the founders of TeacherTribe.world. She is a sought after speaker at educational conferences, facilitator programs and for motivational talks to students at schools across India. She holds a Master's Degree from the prestigious NIT Suratkal where she also taught before joining Greycaps Knowledge Tribe. Rashmi is also a popular quiz host for schools, colleges and large corporate audiences. She has co-hosted the Tata Crucible quiz, Canara Bank National School Quiz, Travel Quest by Thomas Cook and QNOW it ALL? World Teachers Quiz.*

# Counselling In Schools The Ever-Increasing Need

## ■ G. BALASUBRAMANIAN

*G. Balasubramanian is a doyen of school education in India. He has held several positions of leadership at CBSE, including Director Academics. He was the brain behind the introduction of several innovations at CBSE, which included frontline curriculum, communicative approach to language teaching, Information Technology, alternatives to homework, etc. He is also an author, poet and a sought-after speaker at educational conferences world over. This article has been taken from G. Balasubramanian's LinkedIn Page.*



The need for counselling in schools has been a matter of serious discussion on several platforms. Boards of education and affiliating agencies had been emphasising the role and relevance of counsellors in schools. A large spectrum of student-centric, parent-centric and teacher-centric activities could be improved with the assistance of counsellors. In the post-pandemic scenario, the remedial and interventional activities to be undertaken by the schools to re-engineer the school dynamics and rehabilitate the school ecosystem is felt at all levels. However, there appears to be a huge gap between the need and the action to be taken at the institutional levels.

As one who has worked with the school system for several decades and has brought to light the importance of counselling, I think a few myths do exist in the understanding of the role of counselling among the administrators. Here are a few issues to reflect:

## 1. Counselling is not nursing but it is nurturing.

Oftentimes, school heads, teachers and parents believe that counselling is needed only when there is a serious problem. They imagine a clinical approach to the issue and consider counselling more like a nursing process to one who needs attention. This idea is quite myopic. In many cases, diagnosis of a problem in context, and in the given time, framework and space helps to remove the possible impediments both to learning and behaviour through nurturing. A conversation, a dialogue, an understanding, an appreciation, an acknowledgement and a pat may be good enough to reposition the entire process in a short time. The learner would possibly need only a recognition of the identity and nurturing of the identity. As such many learners in schools need this support.

## 2. Counselling is not essentially an intervention; it may be a door to inspiration.

Many parents and educators believe that counselling is an interventional process and is needed only when there is a need for an external agency. They tend to deal with such cases like a self-medication process of a sick person without any professional prescription. I think this idea needs to change. Counselling is not essentially an interventional process. It could be a simple exercise to open the energy levels, performance patterns, creative faculties latent in the person. It could not have manifested due to several oppressive conditions and situations which make the learner depressed. Words and actions of the counsellor might open gateways to inspiration. This might help the learner towards self-learning, self-directed learning and self-actualisation

## 3. Counselling is not mere handholding; but it is collective path breaking.

There is a general misgiving that counselling is a process of hand holding the learner to a defined goal and thus the ecosystem starts dealing with the learner more like a challenged learner. Sometimes people start

showing sympathy and pity for no valid reasons. The situation could be a state of simple confusion in the mind of the learner or his ignorance of the existing possibilities or may be born out of some social challenges. All that the individual might need is one who would stand in support to explore a possibility, a new path and get a new hope. This is usually done jointly by the counsellor and the learner with mutual understanding and with enhanced confidence in each other's profile. With many emotional and career challenges, many learners would need this help. As such this process could extend both to the parents and the teachers as a joint venture to facilitate the learner to explore new paths with a sense of enterprise.

**Counselling often acts as a long term learning experience enabling and empowering the learner to take decisions at the personal level for growth.**

#### **4. Counselling is not a mere subjective correction; but it is a collaborative action to take the subject to an objective.**

In an environment where pattern forming is dominant to stay put in the race or to show relative aggression over others for irrelevant reasons, the path followed by the learner may need to be re-oriented or its direction changed. Timely actions might help the learners to avoid unwarranted challenges that trigger stress, aggression, violence and self-defeat. It is important to ensure that the learner is not engaged in unhealthy competition with others where one's aptitude or interest is not found. The experience and the understanding of counsellors who work in tandem with parents and teachers might help in positioning the career profile of the learner on track. This would not help one to learn with joy and passion but might trigger better creative indulgence and a sense of enterprise.

#### **5. Counselling is not curative or remedial; but it is constructive and reinforcing.**



Oftentimes, parents and educational institutions believe that counselling is waving of a magic wand and hence expect overnight results. Unfortunately, it is not so. It is not just a remedial action. It is a collaborative action of all the stakeholders in the system over a period to help the learner conserve one's energy, radiate a positive influence on one's environment with joy. Counselling, therefore, is both constructive and reinforcing. The results of such reinforcements are reflected over a period of time through the learnability and behavioural patterns of the individual. Thus, counselling often acts as a long term learning experience enabling and empowering the learner to take decisions at the personal level for growth.

It is time schools understood and engaged with this essential requirement in their school ecosystem. Schools need to educate the parents and the teachers on the holistic and encompassing impact of counselling. ■

## Teachers - Building Futures Part 1

### ■ Lt Gen. Arun Anathanarayan

*Lt Gen. Arun is the General Officer Commanding Dakshin Bharat Area, prior to which he was Director General, Strategic Planning at the Army HQ.*



*Lt Gen. Arun's stint with the armed forces began when he joined the National Defence Academy (NDA), opting not to join the IIT, despite an all-India rank of 13. He has enormous experience in planning and delivery of personnel management and logistics in International Task Forces across terrains like Cambodia and Sierra Leone, to forecasting and structuring of large at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. He has completed the prestigious Senior Mission Leaders Course conducted by the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.*

*Lt Gen. Arun has multiple master's degrees and is a Fellow of the 'Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies' in Canberra, Australia. A veteran of many a battle, he is a recipient of the Sena Medal for Gallantry, Yudh Seva Medal for Outstanding Leadership in Conflict, the Vishisht Seva Medal for Distinguished Leadership and Outstanding Service in Jan 2018. He has also been awarded the Chief of Army Staff's Commendation four times in addition to the 'North Star Medal for Excellence'.*

*He is also a sought-after public speaker who has conducted about 800 sessions across a variety of audiences on varied topics.*

## 1. What do you think is the role of a teacher today?

According to me, education cannot be captured by the confines of the two ends of a book. I keep asking the teachers I interact with, on what they teach. The normal answer I get is – I teach physics, mathematics, microeconomics, particle dynamics, and the list goes on. A very few people say, ‘I teach children’ or ‘I teach young adults’. If you were to teach only a subject, then your mandate only takes you from chapter 1 to chapter 12 of that book, and it ends there. What about the rest of the child’s needs? Who is going to address those? To me, these questions are critical, and this is what I speak to teachers about.

People who have interacted with children in the pre-primary and class 1 and 2 levels, will know that their teachers are Gods or Goddesses! They can do no wrong. What these children see their ‘Gods’ and ‘Goddesses’ doing, is what they tend to replicate later in their lives. Parents come a little later. That’s why a teacher’s role is extremely important.

You ask any teacher, ‘can you see the future?’ and ‘can you touch the future?’ They normally say ‘no’ or ponder upon what to answer. My answer is that the future walks into their class every single day, in different shapes and sizes! Some with little handkerchiefs tied to their shirts, some a little older, some with their laces untied, some with their shirts untucked and some with unkempt hair.

The teachers are given the privilege, the pleasure and the responsibility of shaping that future. A teacher’s remit is probably way more than what their employment contract says!

The difference between a teacher, a good teacher and a great teacher is that the great teachers are the ones we remember the most. That is the role of teachers and that is what I see teachers doing – Building Futures!

## 2. In a profession such as yours, one needs a focussed and steady mind. How do you mentor youngsters to stay on track?

The answer is very simple – ENJOY! Enjoy what you do! It is very rare to find people who are in a profession that is also their passion. Very few of us in life actually get to do what we really want to do, maybe because we may never find what we like to do. We may find this ‘liking’ much later in life! So, a choice you can make is either be unhappy in your job or stay happy.

I think there is an easier choice to make. Pursue your passion! A lot of us have to sacrifice our joys or likes when we are young or during our middle-age. When we get a little older, we usually say, ‘I used to love singing’. So, learn singing! During some of my workshops, some of the older people say, ‘I used to love flying kites on the terrace’. Then what is stopping you from doing it now? If you like writing poetry, dancing, keeping a pet, and many other things like that, go do it! It can be as simple as enjoying the company of people. If you like it, go to a nearby park and socialise. There are so many things that can give us joy and pleasure.

When you start enjoying life, the focus on your job is an automatic fallout. You do not have to ‘work’, it will automatically happen. The gist is ultimately two things – you enjoy what you do and pursue your passions, and greatest joys outside of your work. Mix these two together and its magic!

## 3. If we had to draw from your experiences, what would be the top 3 leadership traits the young students of our country need to have?

The first is **commitment**. It doesn’t matter what you do. You can be a janitor in a building, sell flowers by the road or run a successful business. You need to give a 100% commitment to what you do. If you are a student and you have a vision, a vision as simple as doing well in class, the word ‘well’ needs to be defined and you have to be committed to that vision.

Second, the **thirst for knowledge** should never diminish. If you want to be a leader, you HAVE to know more. You know more by learning more and listening more. You learn from everybody. It is not just from a book, but it is from friends, from peers and even from the watchmen, the house helps, and our surroundings. The thirst for knowledge should always remain unsatiated.

Third, you need to **laugh**. The more you laugh, the easier the first two will become! The list can go on...it is endless. But I think these three are the most important.

#### 4. **Top 3 leadership traits that educators and teachers need to have...**

In a generic sense, there is no difference between the qualities that human beings must have. The person can be a driver or a pilot, the characteristics traits remain the same, like you must be kind, humble, good to people, generous, etc. These are common to everybody. But every profession requires a set, which is specific to them, and teachers must also have that set!

For teachers, I would say **equity and equanimity** would be the first. The teachers will have to see every kid in the class and school as being equal. There will be some richer, some poorer, some taller, some better endowed intellectually, some little slow and some with learning disabilities and special skills. Teachers will have to see them all as 'individuals' and not as a group. So, if a teacher in class is talking to 30 individuals and if each of these 30 is hearing a different song, that is when a teacher has become a great teacher.

**Patience** is the second trait, a trait that is in short supply across the world today. In a profession such as teaching, patience becomes extremely important as children will make mistakes...they are expected to make mistakes. That's all schools are for. While some kids are sprinting, some might still be crawling. The teachers have to put them all together within the same 40-50 minutes of cycle

called education and impart the content. Parallely, teachers have other things happening in their lives too – they have their families, responsibilities at home, events, holidays, their own kids, their exams and studies, etc. But, when they come to class, it is only the children that should matter. For this, they will need a great degree of patience and balance.

A teacher today, as opposed to 25-30 years ago, is more of a **collaborator and a facilitator**. During my time in school, our only source of information was the teacher. But today, the teacher is probably the last source of knowledge. Most kids have so much access to information, be it from high-tech libraries or the internet, that they are already knowledgeable on the subject the teachers wish to teach in class. Now, the teachers' challenge is to get the best out of every student and put all that knowledge into the middle of the classroom and tell them that this is the 'well of knowledge' on a particular topic. Here every child puts in a paragraph worth of information for everyone to consume, and each child takes away what they wish to from it. Instead of learning just one perspective, which is compressed in a chapter of a book, the teacher is allowing everyone to bring in their little pieces of knowledge to class and share it. This comes with an acceptance from the teacher that they are not the end of the road when knowledge is concerned, but they are probably the ones who are coordinating the various bits of knowledge...

...Part 2 of the interview will be continued in the October 2023 edition of the TeacherTribe e-magazine.

## Why Do Children Ask So Many Questions?

■ **Ishita Verma | Team QEDRAK**

*Educator*

*With 30 years of experience in the corporate sector and school education, Ishita is a sociology graduate, PGDCA and a gold medallist in Educational Management. Her true passion lies in being with children, animals and nature. She excelled at designing and implementing innovative and sustainability-driven curriculum for the students of the schools she headed and helped set up. Ishita has conducted several in-service training sessions for teachers and parents; sessions for the Gyan Sarovar Sahodaya Schools (Gujarat); as well as webinars, chapter reviews and chapter frameworks for Collins India.*



*Quintessential EDucational Resources And KnowledgeWare or QEDRAK is an Educational Solutions provider catering to the pressing emergent challenges faced by all stakeholders of the school education arena – Students, Parents, Teachers and School institutions. These form the 4 pillars of the company: QED-WIZ for kids, QED-SYNC for Teachers, QED-TIPS for Parents & QED-HUB for school institutions, providing exact need-specific solutions.*

Following the Independence Day celebrations, the idea to put pen to paper around my thoughts on the concept of Independence, gradually crystallised on the concept of **Independence to Question!** While our country goes through confusing and tumultuous times regarding the pending reformations to the Right to Information Act, my ruminations focussed more on the free spirit and space of children's insatiable curiosity, and the uncountable, unavoidable **WH questions**.

From the moment a child is able to move around, s/he is constantly trying to make sense of what is visible, felt and experienced in the environment. If the understanding doesn't come naturally to the child, the only tool available is to use the WH questions from a familiar adult. According to Harvard-based child psychologist Paul Harris, a child asks around 40,000 questions between the ages of two and five. By the time the child is four, most of the questions asked are explanatory-seeking in nature.

## So, WHY do children ask so many questions?

At the tender ages, children have limited life experiences and their brains are developing rapidly. In an attempt to make sense of the world they live in; children are naturally very curious about everything. This leads to a thirst to understand, which results in the continual bombardment of questions; Qs of all kinds - Whys, Whats, Hows, Whens, Wheres and Which. By continually asking 'wh Qs' due to their natural interest, children are actually **fuelling their learning**.

**And here is a truth** that parents and teachers may not wish to accept! The reason why toddlers and young ones ask so many questions, is not because they wish to annoy you, but because they really want to know more about something. This was clarified in a study conducted at the University of Michigan. Studies indicate that children ask questions for one of the following reasons:

- the need to know;
- to seek attention; and yes, at times...
- to defy authority.

**Need to know** – As little ones grow up, they realise that there are so many amazing things around them, and Qs are a way of finding out more about the world they live in. For little Radha, who is still coming to terms with the world, everything is overwhelming for her; beyond the



scope of understanding for her young brain — hence the **need to know**. Agreed, it may be difficult to answer ALL her questions, and yes; some of her Qs could be quite difficult to answer - “Why is only this flower purple?”. However, by allowing her the opportunity, freedom and space for Qs, we are allowing Radha’s brain to grow and develop, and as we give time to answer her Qs we feed her curiosity.

Kindergarten and primary school years are the best times to promote children’s knowledge and inculcate the curiosity to learn. As we have all seen, children ask fewer questions as they grow up and this often corresponds with less engagement and less meaningful participation in school, as well as, at times, lack of time and patience by adults to answer these Qs.

**Seek attention** – Mr. Hal Gregerson (INSEAD professor and questioning expert) says that a child asks Qs over and over again, either because adults do not understand their question or because they are not listening to them. Such scenarios can very easily go out of hand and flare up into a nasty altercation, with the adult taking on a tone of authority, anger and power to end the fracas.

Children can behave in the strangest of ways in order to **seek attention**. Repeatedly asking Qs is just one of them. In such cases, it is often better for the child’s spirit and the adult’s peace of mind, to take a short break from what the adult is doing and give the child time to talk to them. Once the child has undivided attention, time and a plausible answer, the adult can explain that s/he now needs to get back to work.

**Defy authority** – At times, children come up with Qs that we adults think warrants no answer and it may appear stupid or annoying, to say the least, like – “Why should I have a bath?” Such Qs are actually just a way of **being defiant**. This can often be frustrating, especially when it comes at the end of a long, tiresome day. But losing one’s cool and taking off with a volley of angry words is just going to make the situation

worse. Rather than saying, “Don’t ask stupid Qs. You need to because I tell you to!” it would be better to explain what happens if the child doesn’t bathe; even if it means you are repeating an answer explained many times over.

## Handling the Questions

Listening to and responding to the unending ‘wh’ questions can be time-consuming and exhausting. Also, there isn’t a single prescription that parents and teachers can generically apply to all the curious creatures in our homes and schools. Having said that, here are a few tips that we have collected from those who have been able to handle the Qs sessions quite well:

- **Answer the Qs:** Sometimes, all a child needs is a straight answer to the question asked. Instead of ignoring the question, “Why should I wear my pants?” answer it with something like, “Because you may feel cold or get bitten by mosquitoes.” If your child is satisfied with the answer, chances are s/he will stop repeating the Qs and may allow you to get back to work. If a question needs a longer explanation, try to elaborate on the answer in a way that the child will understand.
- **Turn the question back:** At times, countering a question by asking it back to the child, fishing for what the child thinks could be the answer, works like magic and opens the door for more discussion and quality time. Like, “What do you think? ...What do you feel?” could help to develop the child’s critical thinking skills by self-reflecting upon the Qs, rather than getting a ready-made reply. This will encourage the child to figure out what’s on his/her mind. It’s quite a treat (rib-tickling) listening to imaginative answers kids often come up with.

A word of caution here: the kind of tone you use will make a lot

of difference. If you seem annoyed while using the counter Qs, it may have the opposite effect of what you were aiming to achieve.

- **Answer simply:** At the tender ages, children don't need a long explanation. For example, your child might ask, "Why do you wash my huggy-blanket?" The simple answer could be, "To make it clean and smell nice." Children at this age aren't able to understand abstract concepts such as germs they can't see.
- **Accept that you don't know:** We aren't walking encyclopaedia, right? So, when caught with Qs that we have no idea about, it is OK to say, "I don't know. Let's see if we can find the answer together". That is because children observe and analyse so much more than we adults do. You can take out an encyclopaedia and figure out the answer together or do some web browsing research together, or you can read up on the topic when you have time and explain it in a language the child understands. This helps further develop a child's quest for learning. And of course, as a bonus, the researching (alone or together) helps us to brush up our general knowledge while feeding our child's curiosity and natural desire to learn things. If children see us looking up something that we do not know, they will feel encouraged to do the same.
- **Setting aside a regular 'let's know some more...' time:** Some parents at home and teachers in class (for the first 5 mins) make it a point to regularly spend some time with a picture-filled encyclopaedia, or share some new facts through PPT or watch a short video film. With the really little ones, one may end up going to the same familiar pages at first, but the process of exploring knowledge together opens doors for seeking new information and further fuels inquisitiveness in children.

- **Patience, patience, patience:** And last but not the least, in order to make any sort of progress with curious, inquisitive, answer-seeking kids, one needs patience – tonnes and tonnes of it. Patience and persistence help most of the time; as well as the ‘sure, I can be approached’ disposition. When these don’t, just grit your teeth, ignore and keep at it!

Handling children’s innate and insatiable desire to seek answers, at times with Qs that aren’t even age-appropriate, can be very challenging. Remember, no matter how age-inappropriate they may seem, not giving any answer to such Qs can be dangerous. The question they are asking are the doubts they have in their mind. If known and familiar adults don’t answer them, the doubts will remain in their mind or in the worst case, kids will ask their questions to someone else. No one knows better how to answer them than parents and familiar teachers.

And remember, you are not alone in this! So, embrace the unending ‘WH’ Qs and use them to spend time, nurture the children; and expand your own GK. ■

# Lemons – 7 Amazing Health Benefits

■ **Dr. Vivek Baliga**  
Cardiologist and Consultant Physician

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*Dr. Vivek Baliga B. is a consultant physician and cardiologist, and director of Baliga Diagnostics in Bengaluru. He is a keen advocate of patient education and loves to blog about all things health-related. Learn more about him at [drvivekbaliga.com](http://drvivekbaliga.com).*



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Lemons are a popular part of many diets because they are good for your health in many ways. Here are seven ways that lemons might be good for your health, with a little more information:

## 1. Boosts immune system

Lemons are a great source of vitamin C, which helps the immune system by making white blood cells. Getting enough vitamin C can also shorten the length and severity of colds and flu.

## 2. Helps digestion

Lemon juice can help digestion by stimulating the production of digestive juices and promoting healthy bowel movements. This can help digestion and keep you from getting constipated.

### 3. Helps in dieting

The soluble fiber pectin in lemons can help reduce hunger and make you feel full, which makes it easier to stick to a calorie-controlled diet and lose weight.



### 4. Reducing inflammation

Antioxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds in lemon juice can help reduce inflammation in the body, which could lower the risk of developing chronic diseases.

### 5. Protects the skin

Vitamin C and other antioxidants in lemons can help protect the skin from the harmful effects of free radicals, which can cause premature aging and damage to the skin.

### 6. Lowers cancer risk

Some studies suggest that the antioxidants in lemons may help lower the risk of certain types of cancer, such as breast, colon and pancreatic cancer. But more research needs to be done to confirm these results.

### 7. Reduces cholesterol

Flavonoids, which are found in lemons, may help lower cholesterol and lower the risk of getting heart disease. As part of a healthy diet, drinking lemon water or eating more citrus fruits may help improve heart health. ■

## Nurturing Kindness and Happiness: Building Compassionate Hearts and Joyful Minds

### ■ Manjula Veeranna

Founder & CEO,  
International Institute For Cognitive and  
Learning Sciences®



*Manjula Veeranna is a former classroom teacher, Principal, Neural Educator, and Learning Scientist who has spent the last two decades empowering teachers and students with scientific knowledge and human values. With a multidisciplinary background that includes post-graduation in Arts, Science and Education, as well as certifications in Educational Psychology from YALE University and Neural Education, USA, Manjula is the Founder & CEO of the International Institute For Cognitive and Learning Sciences®. She is an expert in skill-based knowledge innately related to children, parents and teachers.*

In the bustling city of Bengaluru, Riya, an enigmatic adolescent, found herself entangled in the web of stress and anxiety caused by academic pressures and societal expectations. Concerned about her well-being, a collective of passionate educators, parents and researchers embarked on a quest for a transformative solution. Together, they explored the depths of mindfulness, rewiring Riya's brain to navigate stress with resilience. They nurtured emotional intelligence, fostering empathy and self-compassion within her. The program's success attracted educators from all over the world, sparking a global revolution in neuroscience-based methodologies. Empathetic and resilient learners emerged, ready to conquer the challenges of an ever-changing world. Her transformation illuminated the path for the future, leaving a lasting legacy of positive change.

## Case Study: Rewiring Riya's Mind for Kindness and Happiness

Riya, a bright and vivacious girl, was enrolled in one of the top CBSE schools in Bengaluru. Coming from an elite family, she had always excelled academically and enjoyed the support of her loving and caring parents. However, as she progressed to grade 10, the pressures of maintaining academic excellence and fitting into societal expectations began to weigh heavily on her young shoulders.

As Riya's school life became increasingly demanding, she found herself constantly comparing her achievements to those of her peers, which led to feelings of inadequacy and fear of failure. The mounting stress and anxiety gradually started taking a toll on her mental well-being, leaving her feeling overwhelmed and lost.

Recognising the gradual change in their daughter's demeanor, Riya's parents grew concerned and knew they had to intervene to help her regain her positivity and emotional balance. Riya's parents decided to take action and went to the school to discuss her struggles with the principal and teachers. To their surprise, they discovered that Riya was not alone in facing these challenges. Many teenagers in the school were experiencing similar issues with academic pressure and emotional well-being.

Realising the widespread need for support, the school decided to take a proactive approach to help their students. They reached out to the International Institute for Cognitive and Learning Sciences(R) (IICLS), a beacon of innovation harnessing the power of neuroscience in education. Armed with an alchemist's elixir of knowledge, Riya's teachers bridged the gap between science and emotions.

The IICLS team, consisting of neural educators and champions who understood the science behind learning and emotional development, designed an intervention program tailored to the needs of both students and teachers. The program aimed to equip teachers with the knowledge



and tools to support their students' emotional well-being seamlessly.

In the nurturing environment of the neuroscience-based program, Riya and her peers began to explore mindfulness and meditation techniques. Learning to be present in the moment and observe their thoughts without judgment, allowed them to gain valuable self-awareness and emotional control. The program also introduced practices like gratitude journaling and acts of kindness, which had proven neuroscientific benefits in promoting positive emotions and social connections.

Armed with a newfound understanding of the neuroscience behind their emotions and reactions, Riya and her classmates became empowered to face their challenges head-on. Together, they embarked on a journey of personal growth and emotional resilience, all the while supported by Riya's parents, who were thrilled to witness the positive changes in their daughter.

As Riya's story unfolded within the neuroscience-based program, she would soon discover the true power of science in nurturing her mind and soul, and the world around her would begin to shine a little brighter with each step she took on her path to well-being.

For Riya and other students who may have experienced past traumas or stresses, the program's inclusion of trauma-sensitive practices can be instrumental in ensuring they feel seen, understood and cared for during their learning journey. This nurturing care, combined with the other program components, can help Riya and her peers develop emotional resilience and foster kindness and empathy towards themselves and others.

## Teachers' Role in Nurturing Kindness

- **Create a Positive Classroom Environment:** Foster a classroom culture that values kindness, respect and empathy.

- **Incorporate Social-Emotional Learning (SEL):** Integrate SEL into the curriculum to help students develop self-awareness, empathy and interpersonal skills.
- **Model Kind Behaviour:** Lead by example and demonstrate kindness and empathy in interactions with students and colleagues.
- **Teach Conflict Resolution:** Help children develop problem-solving skills and conflict resolution strategies that encourage compassionate communication.
- **Organise Kindness Projects:** Plan activities centered around acts of kindness and community involvement.
- **Encourage Empathy and Perspective-taking:** Promote discussions about empathy and understanding others' feelings through literature and real-life scenarios.
- **Provide Positive Reinforcement:** Recognise and praise acts of kindness and prosocial behaviour in the classroom.

## Parents' Role in Nurturing Kindness

- **Demonstrate Kindness at Home:** Parents should model kind behaviour in their interactions with family members and others.
- **Encourage Emotional Expression:** Create an open and non-judgmental space for children to express their emotions and practice empathetic listening.
- **Practise Mindfulness Together:** Introduce mindfulness practises as a family to promote emotional awareness and connection.
- **Promote Acts of Kindness:** Encourage children to perform acts of kindness within the family and in the community.

- **Foster Positive Relationships:** Teach children the value of cooperation, sharing and supporting one another among siblings and family members.
- **Practises Gratitude:** Cultivate a culture of gratitude at home by regularly expressing appreciation for one another.
- **Address Conflicts with Empathy:** Help children navigate disagreements with understanding and empathy.

## School-Based Strategies

- **Value Education:** Include a dedicated subject or class for value education, covering compassion, empathy and gratitude.
- **Mindfulness and Meditation:** Introduce mindfulness and meditation exercises as part of the daily routine or during special sessions.
- **Incorporate Literature and Stories:** Select stories that promote kindness and empathy from Indian mythology and folk tales.
- **Community Service:** Organise community service projects or volunteer opportunities for students to experience the joy of helping others.
- **Kindness Days:** Designate specific days or weeks in the academic calendar to focus on acts of kindness and compassion.
- **Gratitude Journaling:** Introduce the practice of writing down three good things or expressing gratitude in daily journals.
- **Environmental Awareness:** Integrate lessons on caring for the environment and being responsible global citizens.
- **Cultural and Religious Values:** Highlight teachings from different

cultural and religious backgrounds that emphasise kindness.

- **Emotional Intelligence Workshops:** Conduct workshops on emotional intelligence to help students understand and manage their emotions.
- **Peer Support Programs:** Implement peer support or mentorship programs to create a culture of caring within the school community.
- **Art and Creativity:** Encourage students to express emotions and values through art, music and drama.
- **Conflict Resolution Training:** Introduce conflict resolution training to develop harmonious relationships.
- **Parental Involvement:** Involve parents in school activities that promote kindness and happiness.
- **Teacher Training:** Provide workshops and training on incorporating kindness, compassion and mindfulness into teaching practices.
- **Assessment and Recognition:** Recognize and celebrate students who consistently exhibit kindness and compassion. ■

## ‘Active’ Learning & Learners

### ■ S. Indira Narayan

*Educator*

*S. Indira Narayan is an educationist with more than 35 years of rich experience in the teaching field. She has held multiple portfolios. She has been associated with St. Ann’s High School, ICSE, ISC, Secunderabad, for over three decades, teaching English language and English literature for classes 10, 11 and 12. The last portfolio she held was as Academic Coordinator, St. Ann’s High School, at Kompally Hyderabad, under the same management.*



*Indira Narayan has conducted numerous workshops for school teachers and continues to do so. She is also interested in writing and blogs regularly on - <http://vinplaksha.wordpress.com/>*

Learning, a perennial process in our lives, has two facets - active learning and passive learning. The latter, passive learning, has been around for a long time, almost a steady pattern in our education system. The minute we use the term ‘passive’, this following visual comes to my mind - A classroom with teaching in progress, students at their desks, text and notebooks open, pen poised to note down points, all eyes, mostly focussed on the teacher or the black board, etc.

On close observation, you can see the ‘interest’ factor in each student, like this - absorbed and listening intently; eyes on the teacher or blackboard, but mind a bit distracted; total attention missing; blank look,

yet appearing to be listening; signalling lack of interest, etc. The need of the hour is constant updates of the learning environment and learning processes. A developing society needs a developing education system. **Active learning happens when students participate in class, analyse, ask questions, give their understanding of the lesson, and thereby get trained in developing their critical thinking skills.** From here, creative thinking is fostered and collaboration and, communicative skills follow. These make the 4Cs the NEP seeks.

It is a belief that active learning creates better academic outcomes for students. It promotes thinking skills to a higher order by encouraging application of knowledge, engaging students in deep learning, not just surface learning. **Applying what has been taught in class, to matters outside the textbook and outside the class can be defined as effective learning.** Such a system of learning, which is active learning, goes against some students' traditional views of learning and teaching because it requires taking risks and trying to learn new methods. It requires interest and involvement, and a strong desire to 'learn by understanding and applying matter'. It requires students to engage in their learning by thinking, discussing, investigating and creating.

As mentioned earlier, over the years teaching and learning followed the passive teaching and learning mode, with exceptions to the rule as is always so. Recall, question and answer, general discussion and written work, were a part of the teaching. But it was more of content learning than applying the content, thereby bringing it under the passive learning category.

Today, research and with it, knowledge, is growing and advancing in leaps and bounds bringing new thoughts, more interpretation, more need to analyse, thereby creating a 'rush' to move with this. In this kind of situation, learning can happen if students are encouraged to listen, absorb and assimilate almost simultaneously as the teaching happens. An ever alert mind and focus is required.

To incorporate active learning, the teacher needs to plan in detail, because in the span of time called 'one class period' which is usually 40 to 45 minutes, a teacher has to teach with explanation, ask questions intermittently, scan the class and observe if all students have 'understood' what had been taught, answer questions or clear doubts asked by the students. Add to this, the requirements to promote active learning by way of creative methods of involving all in the class, like forming small groups and asking them to discuss the lesson taught and present the points to the entire class; or making pairs and instructing them to jot down their interpretations and from there debate on it.

These are just a few ideas which may take up some class time. Each subject allows a teacher a vast canvas for creative strokes that may take less time but may be more effective - definitely a challenge for an active teacher. Moreover, to bring a class which usually has a mix of active and passive learners to a common level of good learning, is not an easy task.

For a syllabus bound education system, going out of the way to encourage active learning, a teacher may have to cut content to make room for discussions and activities. Here again, it requires an involved and well-informed teacher to know what to delete or brush through in a lesson, and what to explain in detail.

The tilt of this article may seem to project the importance of active learners only. That is not so. It seeks to help look at one phase of learners and learning, which is the active phase. The National Education Policy (NEP) is framed to bring out active learning and wean the passive learning out, in the larger interest of students. Self motivated students with a focussed mind will shine irrespective of whether they are in an active or passive learning environment. ■

## Understanding The ‘Pros’ Of Project-Based Learning

### ■ Sanjhee Gianchandani Educator

*Sanjhee Gianchandani works as an English language curriculum designer and editor in the Ed-tech space. She has a Master’s degree in English from Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi and a CELTA from the University of Cambridge. Her rich and varied experience ranges from working as an English language assessment specialist to being a writing/speaking examiner and managing content for the K-8 segment. She is passionate about writing and her articles on ELT pedagogy and learning strategies have been published in several educational magazines, journals, and blogs.*



As responsible educators, we are always thinking, strategising and constantly making ourselves aware of new pedagogical approaches which can be easily implemented in a real or virtual classroom setting. The challenge that most of us face very often is to be able to link classroom teaching to a real-world scenario and to be able to make teaching more effective and relevant to 21<sup>st</sup>-century learners. Project-based learning comes to us as an easy-to-implement and cost-efficient solution for this problem.

### Definition

An important instructive approach to teaching is through ‘Project-based learning’. Defined simply, project-based learning (PBL) is nothing but a dynamic classroom approach wherein students take responsibility for their learning by acquiring deeper knowledge about the subject matter



through active exploration of real-world challenges and problems. In this process, students become autonomous learners as they work for an extended time to investigate and respond to a complex question, challenge or problem. Thus, PBL presents a viable alternative to rote memorisation techniques or completely teacher-led deliveries of instruction which are often critiqued in classroom situations. Thomas Markham (2011) describes PBL as, ‘PBL integrates knowing and doing. Students learn knowledge and elements of the core curriculum but also apply what they know to solve authentic problems and produce results that matter. PBL students take advantage of digital tools to produce high-quality, collaborative products. PBL refocuses education on the student, not the curriculum— a shift mandated by the global world, which rewards intangible assets such as drive, passion, creativity, empathy and resiliency. These cannot be taught out of a textbook, but must be activated through experience.’ The draft of the National Educational Policy (NEP) 2020 India has also recognised the need to incorporate this approach in the school curriculum across the breadth of the country.

## The Importance of PBL

PBL is important because it places the textual content in real-world scenarios and encourages students to invoke their cognitive skills, broaden their existing knowledge base, enhance their creative skills and draw on their lessons across several disciplines and practically apply them. The promise of seeing an actual impact of learning becomes the motivation for choosing this approach. PBL has now come to replace other traditional and dated models of instruction such as lectures, textbook or workbook-driven activities and emphasises ‘inquiry’ as the preferred delivery method for key topics in the curriculum. But this passive recollection and regurgitation of facts are not enough to equip today’s students for the challenges of the real world. Using a combination of fundamental skills (Reading, Writing and Mathematical Ability) and 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills (Communication, Collaboration, Creativity, Critical thinking, Digital Literacy, Citizenship, Scientific Temperament,

Ethics, Social Responsibility, etc.) students need to become directors and managers of their learning guided by a skilled facilitator. In addition to this, PBL-

- Allows a student to demonstrate his or her capabilities while working independently.
- Shows the student's ability to apply desired skills such as doing research or solving complex problems.
- Develops the student's ability to work with his or her peers, building teamwork and group discussion skills.
- Allows the teacher to learn more about the student as a person.
- Helps the teacher communicate in progressive and meaningful ways with the student or a group of students on a range of issues.
- Promotes lifelong learning.

## Implementing PBL in the classroom

PBL as an approach is very flexible and can be customised to fit any classroom scenario and can be woven seamlessly into a daily lesson plan for any curricular subject. Traditionally, we have only seen projects to be an extra or add-on to a unit or a lesson that finds its place in the garbage dump at the end of the unit or semester, an approach Dayna Laur calls the 'garbage project' approach. But we need to understand that projects are not just for ornamentation but they are critical to building the foundational understanding of students towards their course materials. We need to keep in mind that the end goal is to make students producers of content rather than mere consumers of it. At the same time, projects need not overtake the curriculum. So, there must be a healthy balance of learning between the two.

Although projects are the primary vehicle for instruction in project-based learning, there are no commonly shared criteria for

what constitutes an acceptable project. Projects may vary in the depth of the questions asked, the purpose of the learning goals, the content and structure of the activity, and guidance from the teacher. The role of projects in the overall curriculum is also open to interpretation. Projects can guide

the entire curriculum or simply consist of a few hands-on activities based on a specific unit from the course content. They might be multidisciplinary (for lower grades) or could focus on a single subject (for middle and higher grades). Some projects involve the whole class, while others are done in small groups or individually. So, there is no set rule for what should constitute a proper project. Artefacts may include a variety of media such as writings, art, drawings, three-dimensional representations, videos, photography, podcasts or other technology-based presentations. Sylvia Chard, an education researcher, opines that 'One of the major advantages of project work is that it makes school more like real life. It's an in-depth investigation of a real-world topic worthy of children's attention and effort.'

**PBL refocuses education on the student, not the curriculum—a shift mandated by the global world, which rewards intangible assets such as drive, passion, creativity, empathy, and resiliency.**

## Thinking Ahead

PBL relies heavily on learning groups. Student groups determine their projects, and in so doing, they engage student voices by encouraging students to take full responsibility for their learning. This is what makes PBL constructivist. Students work together to accomplish specific goals and are constantly making choices on how to obtain, display, negotiate with or manipulate information. Technology makes it possible for students to think actively about the choices they make and execute. The teacher's role in PBL is that of a facilitator. Consequently, they do not relinquish control of the classroom or student learning but rather develop an atmosphere of shared responsibility. The teacher must

regulate student success with sporadic and interim goals to ensure student projects remain focused and students have a deep understanding of the concepts being investigated. The students are held accountable for these goals through ongoing feedback and assessments. The ongoing assessment and feedback are essential to ensure the student stays within the scope of the central challenge in the PBL and the core content standards the project is trying to unpack.

To conclude in the words of Thomas Markham, ‘PBL integrates knowing and doing. Students learn knowledge and elements of the core curriculum but also apply what they know to solve authentic problems and produce results that matter. PBL students take advantage of digital tools to produce high-quality, collaborative products. PBL refocuses education on the student, not the curriculum—a shift mandated by the global world, which rewards intangible assets such as drive, passion, creativity, empathy, and resiliency. These cannot be taught out of a textbook, but must be activated through experience.’ ■

# Negotiating Home Loan Rates & Balance Transfer

## ■ Aarti Tibrewala Darooka

*A chartered accountant and MBA, Aarti is an entrepreneur and financial literacy advocate. She has over 15 years of combined experience in consulting, advisory and travel industries. A national ranker in CA, Aarti is a published author, who has written a plethora of books for children's financial education and is currently helping build awareness for financial literacy for women through her platform, Sthreedhan.*



Vandana is a music teacher. She takes classes for students not just in a school, but also teaches privately. While her school job helps her maintain a steady income, the extra teaching has helped her create a separate stream of income that helps her plan for her future. Using this income, Vandana has purchased a small flat near her current home and has put it on rent. When Vandana took the loan, the rate of interest was 7.1% . But over a period of 1.5 years, the rate of interest has been increased by the bank to 9.4%. Vandana was not aware of this until she asked her bank for the interest certificate and loan schedule while filing her income tax returns for the previous financial year.

What can Vandana do about it? Is there any way to reduce her interest burden?

Firstly, it is wrong on the part of the bank to not have informed Vandana about the rise in interest rates and the increase in the tenure or repayment period of her loan. The RBI has made it mandatory for every

bank to inform its customers of any change in interest rates. Further, the customer has the choice to either change the EMI amount or the repayment period, whichever suits them, in case of change in interest rates. Vandana can write to the bank or talk to her relationship manager and escalate the same.

**Balance transfer means the transfer of the loan amount outstanding at present from one bank to another.**

With respect to increase in interest rates, it is also worth noting that while the bank will increase the rate of interest directly whenever the RBI increases the rate of lending to banks, it will not reduce the rate of interest when the RBI reduces the rate of interest. While this is totally unfair, it means that we need to keep ourselves updated on the changes in interest rates in order to ensure that we are not paying higher interest unnecessarily.

What Vandana can now do is talk to her relationship manager and ask them to reduce the interest rate to match what the bank is offering to its new customers and as per what is in line with the rates being taken by the RBI. This rate would typically be around 0.25-0.6% higher than the RBI's rate of interest. The bank is obligated to revise the rate of interest in her favour.

If the bank refuses to do so, Vandana can easily opt for something called a balance transfer. Balance transfer means the transfer of the loan amount outstanding at present from one bank to another. Vandana can check with other banks to see whether they are willing to offer her a better rate of interest and the tenure in accordance with the market rate rather than paying the higher rate being charged by the bank. In case of balance transfer, the procedure is much simpler as the new bank knows that the loan has been whetted by another bank previously.

In case of balance transfer, the new bank may charge Vandana a smaller fee than the loan processing fees that she paid at the time of taking her original loan. She can bargain with the bank to reduce the balance transfer fees depending on how good her credit score and documents are. Any negotiation will help you save some amount of money.

If Vandana manages to get a better offer from another bank and informs her existing bank of the same, the chances are that her existing bank will be forced to revise their terms and see the light of day rather than lose a customer. So, it's worth the effort of not just keeping oneself updated on the economic matters of the country but also ensuring that you are not being taken for a ride.

After all, ignorance is not always bliss! ■



 @sthreedhan

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## We Recommend - Additio

Additio is a learning management system (LMS) with communication built in, making it easy to customise a student group and adjust data for each student. It is also integrated into the Google classroom.



# Additio

### Features

- Teachers can add students, groups, track attendance, create assignments, either with or without rubrics.
- It allows teachers to create tasks, meeting notes, student profiles and other tools available.
- Additio allows grouping of students as per their needs and customise lesson plans as well as keep families informed.
- Rubrics features help evaluate student profiles.
- The Group feature allows teachers to differentiate projects based on interest or difficulty level.

### How does it help teachers?

- It allows to switch between tasks, meeting notes and student profiles, to check how the students are progressing.
- Google classroom can also be integrated.
- Keep track of student's attendance and make it into final assessment or grades.
- Create reports with graphs and statistics for a group of students.
- Plan classes by units and sessions.
- Evaluate assignments using rubrics.
- Contact families and students to send them reports and marksheets.
- Manage student's marks and calculate averages with a digital gradebook. ■



## The Changing Roles of Teachers

■ **VARSHA PRASAD**

Editor, TeacherTribe.world



Recently, I was part of a panel discussion, where teachers and educators from various walks of life had gathered. As per the current trend, the discussions were all about ChatGPT, technology and artificial intelligence in education. There were many wonderful questions asked and answered. But this simple question from a senior teacher had me thinking. She asked the panellist – ‘How do we teach children, when they already know everything that is being said and taught in class?’ The teacher’s dilemma prompted me to pen this editorial.

As rightly answered by the panel during the discussion, gone are the days where teachers’ major role was to ‘teach’ students. There was a time where the teacher’s word was absolute. It was accepted without a second thought. But with changing times, improving technology and easy access to knowledge, a teacher has tuned into a facilitator. The major goal of the teacher these days is to make sure that the information that is already available with the students, is correct, valid and is put to good use. But does this make a teacher’s job any less? No!

As the teachers would prepare and make notes for class and ‘teach’ children earlier, teachers of today need to do a lot more homework! Entering a class full of young, energetic and knowledgeable students who are full of questions, is not an easy task. In this generation where children come prepared to quiz the teacher about his or her knowledge on various topics, the teachers should be a few steps ahead to tackle questions thrown at them.

But are teachers ready to accept their new-defined role as facilitators? While some accept it easily, some find it hard to adjust. This being said, the teachers today have no choice but to don the new hat and blend into the role with changing times.

Back to the question asked by the teacher to the panel, what kept me thinking about it was the fear teachers these days face to stay relevant in the dynamic classrooms. In my personal opinion, such changes in and around us helps us learn so many things –

- 1. Unlearning and relearning** – Teachers, while interacting with students will realise that what was once the correct method or the correct way of doing something might not be relevant now. But continuing to follow the older method will not only make them outdated, but it will also make them irrelevant in today's classroom. It is like reading an older version of a book when the upgraded versions are already in use in the market. This will prompt teachers to unlearn the old methods to relearn newer ones.
- 2. Knowledge expansion** – In order to stay relevant and unlearn older methods, teachers can learn additional things that will add to their knowledge. These things come handy during interaction sessions in class, where the teacher can relate to the questions and discussion among students.
- 3. Openness to feedback** – Once teachers start adjusting to changes and start adopting newer approaches, they will become more open to feedback, from both peers and students. This can help them enjoy the process of learning newer things.
- 4. Tolerance and temperament** – It goes without saying that the teaching profession requires a lot of tolerance – tolerance to interact with different types of students, tolerance towards different learners and tolerance to be inclusive. The tolerance develops a positive

temperament in teachers to make them better equipped to different kinds of classrooms they might encounter.

5. **The experienced touch** – Though information is accessible and available at large for students to consume, what is important to ask is if the right information is received by the student. There are multiple sources of information giving out answers for the same question. But which of the given options are right? What is accurate? What should the child know and not know?

This according to me, is the answer to the teacher’s question during the panel discussion. It becomes the teachers’ duty to validate and ensure children that what they already know about the topic is right or wrong. It becomes the teachers’ duty to pat the child’s back for knowing it right or correct a child if they have got it wrong. It becomes the teachers’ duty to set an example that learning, unlearning and relearning is a part of the process.

To sum up teachers’ role, it was, it is and will always be that of a facilitator, a mentor and a guide, but with upgraded jargons to suite the changing times. ■

**Varsha Prasad**



**#ProudToBeATeacher**

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*Varsha Prasad is leading TeacherTribe.world initiative from Greycaps Knowledge Tribe, exclusively for teachers, as its Editor. She is also the Editor of TeacherTribe.world magazine. It is created by Greycaps Knowledge Tribe to celebrate the contributions of our teachers. She has played a vital role in creating many products, which ignite the curiosity of children, including the Global Awareness Program, also known as GAP in schools.*