

The United Nations' (UN) World Teachers' Day celebrates the role teachers play in providing quality education at all levels. This enables children and adults of all ages to learn to take part in and contribute to their local community and global society. Teachers are recognised for their contributions to society on World Teachers' Day on October 5. Various events are arranged in many countries around the world on or around October 5. These include celebrations to honour teachers in general or those who have made a special contribution to a particular community. The day may also be marked by conferences emphasising the importance of teachers and learning, extra training sessions for teachers, recruitment drives for the teaching profession among university students or other suitably qualified professionals and events to increase the profile of teachers and the role they play in the media. You too can do something special on this day to show how much you respect and appreciate teachers. (Source: <http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2009/10/04/jun01.asp>)

Those Who Can't Do, Were Badly Taught

By Zaair Hussain

I must confess my dismay as I find myself articulating a truism. "Teachers are important" should ideally occupy the same mental space, as "people should have friends". That is to say, tiny, because the premise is so apparently obvious that it merits little discussion or inner discourse before our thoughts once again turn to the more controversial issues, such as whether or not Sex in the City is the worst thing that HBO has ever made.

"Those who can't do, teach."

I begin this series of observations about the profession and art of teaching with this statement for it summarises beautifully the poisonous wool that too many have placed over their own eyes.

The etymology of the saying probably dates back to 1903, when George Bernard Shaw wrote, "he who can, does...He who cannot, teaches" in his Maxims for Revolutionists.

For the sake of perspective, maxims were at that time the contemporary equivalent of bumper stickers. Furthermore, in the same enumeration of revolutionary adages,

Shaw seemed no less bitter about parents, writing: "The vilest abortionist is he who attempts to mould a child's character".

Consider, for a moment, this statement:

"Those who can't live, parent."

Although this statement follows first, it would be considered almost universally absurd by the same chaps who are happy to go on blurting "those who can't do, teach" like emotionally scarred parrots who had terrible experiences in their younger days at Parrot Convent.

There are good teachers and bad, to be sure, just as there are good parents and bad. But it is prima facie outlandish to dismiss either parenting or teaching as unimportant, especially as a bad teacher (or parent) can do at least as much harm as a skilled teacher can do good.

We entrust our most profound responsibility -- our children and later our youth -- to teachers for some 26,000 hours of their lives not counting preschool, after-school and college. Are we a nation of terrible and reckless parents? Or do we merely have no more understanding of cause and effect than a barnacle has of King Lear?

How is it possible that we discourage some of our best and brightest from taking up their posts as the guardians of more enlightened tomorrows?

How is it possible that we poison the wellspring from which our children, and then our youths, and then our intelligentsia must drink?

How can we -- knowingly, willingly -- cripple the vanguard of our future?

Our woefully tenuous grasp of causal relationships is disappointing, but understandable. In our collective life as a species, we have matured little since the time we discovered the relationship between cuddling an adorable grizzly cub and being mauled to a horrific death by its enraged mother. By comparison, the impact teachers have on society is very slow indeed.

But if we fail to grasp this concept, we damn ourselves to a terrible fate: to be no better tomorrow than we are today. There are children on the opposite ends; those who have nothing within them for even the greatest and most creative teacher to foster, and the natural born geniuses who would excel no matter the external stimuli, or lack thereof. Those two extremes, if not entirely theoretical (neither I nor

anyone I know fell within those narrow margins) are very rare. And in between lies the balance of our future.

Those who can't do, teach? Socrates, Plato and Aristotle would like a word with you. In case you don't recognise the aforementioned teachers of antiquity (and if you don't, congratulations: all your teachers just felt a piece of their living soul wither and die), they are the men who, for lack of a better term, invented western civilization. Between them, they pioneered and/or astronomically advanced medicine, logic, the scientific method, dialectics and mathematics. It is no coincidence that these great thinkers appeared in overlapping generations; the one taught the second, who in turn was teacher to the third.

Pythagoras, known as the father of numbers (yes, all of them. Feelings of inadequacy at this point are entirely normal) became a teacher late in life, establishing an institution in Croatia, which fashioned students known as Exoterics and Esoterics.

Ibn Khaldun, perhaps the most prolific and prominent Muslim scholar of the medieval era, is considered to have fathered more disciplines than most men (even here) father children. He is not infrequently credited with being one of the (if not the) prime movers behind the creation of demography, cultural history, historiography, the philosophy of history, sociology and even economics as they exist today. At the apex of his career and towards the end of his life he devoted much of his time and energies to teaching in madrassas around Cairo.

This, mind you, was after having been a prime minister and having written his seminal *Al Muqaddimah*, which the incomparable British historian Toynbee considered the greatest work of its kind in history.

Confucius was a travelling teacher, though it is unknown if his famous quotations included caustic witticisms aimed at those who took the profession lightly. I shall not deign to highlight his accomplishments. In all seriousness, you should be ashamed for asking.

Oh, very well: he created the cornerstone of Chinese philosophy and education for the next two thousand years, give or take a century. Try not to think of that while celebrating your next "achievement"; the violent rush of perspective will knock you unconscious.

Had these beacons in luminescence been merely philosophers (literally, lovers of knowledge) their influence would have been as a candle in the darkness. As it so happened, they were passionate teachers and through their works and the works of

their legion of illustrious students their influence grew till it was no less than the noonday sun, illuminating us from across the heady span of millennia.

Too bad none of these people could "do", right?

Too many parents treat classrooms like black boxes: students go in and, x number of years later, productive, qualified members of society are churned out like cars on a production line. This is a tragically banal reduction of the profession.

Confounding the hopes of most parents, a good teacher does not aim merely to precipitate some osmosis of knowledge. They encourage us to question prosaic truisms and delight as they become exciting uncertainties. They help us take the critical step beyond the what into the territory we so dearly wished to explore as children but almost inevitably forgot in our youth: the why. Why do these sects war? Why has such and such country evolved the way it has? Why are these the social and cultural mores? Why is $E=MC^2$? And perhaps most importantly: Why do I think about certain things the way that I do?

True educators routinely challenge how we perceive the world, but their greatest gift is often to challenge how we perceive ourselves. They challenge what we assume to be true; they challenge our blind trust in parents and preachers and politicians; they challenge the limits that we imagine for ourselves.

The obvious becomes the unexplored, black and white issues run together till they are a glorious and terrifying grey. A good teacher does not try to mould young minds, as the saying goes, but rather seeks to free the reasoning and imagination of students bound only by fetters inside their heads. For freeing young minds, Socrates was executed by men who recognised the power of a teacher, and feared it would shake their world.

Among the tragedies of the world, and certainly of poorer nations, there are few so poignant as waste. Imagine, for a moment, those born writers and mathematicians and academics who, but for the want of a good teacher, would have filled the world with the bloom of their florid prose, the towering symmetry of their logic, the jubilant cries of newborn ideas. So many are wasted every year, and the world grows ever poorer. Teachers are almost uniquely able to see the raw potential of students, the stuff from which greatness is sculpted, and fashion from it a brighter future.

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World Teachers Day today

Monday, October 05, 2009/ The News
By Khalid Khattak
LAHORE

AMID cries over unsatisfactory salary, service structure, lack of facilities and opportunities, inconsistency in policies and above all the "stigma" attached to the noble profession of teaching, the World Teachers Day will be celebrated in Pakistan like other parts of the world on Monday (today).

It is a bitter reality that the profession of teaching especially school-teaching is no more a first choice of people in our part of the world and majority of those who go for this, join this profession under compulsion.

The deteriorating socio-economic status of schoolteachers should be an eye-opener and a matter of serious concern for those at the helm as no society can move forward without active participation of these agents of change.

The feeling of neglect is a strong sentiment our teachers harbour as they frequently complain that they are not consulted in key policy decisions even those directly related to education sector of the country.

Unfortunately, schools, colleges and universities' teachers can easily be differentiated in our part of the world on the basis of socio-economic status in the society despite the fact that they perform similar duty of imparting knowledge. It is a bitter fact that the college teachers are "envious" of university teachers while those teaching at schools want to get status and recognition of college teachers.

The condition of schoolteachers serving in private educational institutions, especially in schools, is a matter of serious concern as they frequently complain about low salary structure, unfavourable working environment and above all insecurity of job.

A representative of schoolteachers, Hafiz Abdul Nasir commenting over the issue said the socio-economic status of teachers especially schoolteachers needed to be improved. He said primary education is most important as it is like lying foundation of a building. Unfortunately this very part is rapidly deteriorating in the country owing to indifferent attitude of the authorities, he lamented.

He further said primary schoolteachers should be offered better pay packages so that they perform their duties with more devotion and commitment without worrying for bread and butter issues. He also demanded the government to announce housing scheme for schoolteachers saying the ever-increasing inflation had made it impossible for teachers to build a house despite after serving till retirement.

A college teacher said teaching is highly paid and highly respected profession in the West but unfortunately the same is not the case in Pakistan. He said with the rapidly changing world the profession now required highly skilled individuals adding unfortunately no practical measures were being taken by the authorities for capacity building of teachers. (Source: http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=201646)

World Teachers Day: 18mn more teachers needed

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ISLAMABAD: Amid low salaries, overcrowded classrooms, low job security, inadequate training – World Teachers' Day, celebrated annually on 5 October, is the occasion to pay tribute to a profession whose role in the education of young people and adults remains essential.

The emphasis this year is on developing teacher policies, the only foundation for ensuring sustainable and high-quality recruitment.

The shortage of qualified teachers remains a crucial problem. UNESCO estimates that 18 million more teachers are needed to reach the goal of universal primary education (UPE) by 2015. The shortage is particularly acute in Africa, where an additional 3.8 million teachers are required to achieve UPE.

The shortage of teachers in countries such as Rwanda and Mozambique means that classes can have as many as 60 pupils. It is generally recognized that quality education cannot be provided in classes with more than 40 pupils.

"Even when the overall supply of teachers is sufficient, remote and disadvantaged areas across the globe may suffer persistent problems in recruitment and retention. This shortage of qualified teachers is one of the biggest challenges to achieving the Education for All (EFA) goals," stresses the Joint Message delivered to mark the Day by the Director-General of UNESCO, Koichiro Matsuura, Juan Somavia, Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Ann M. Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, Kemal Dervis, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Thulas Nxesi, President of Education International (EI).

Quantity is not the only problem. Insufficient training is another serious handicap. In developing countries, it is not unusual to find teachers who have no advanced education themselves (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, UIS).

To improve the situation, only coherent policies can promote the recruitment of teachers in sufficient numbers, guarantee their status and ensure quality training. As a result of UNESCO's Teacher Training Initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa (TTISA), Congo has thus been able to develop an overall policy on teachers aimed not only at hiring more, but also at handling questions of status, working conditions and management.

World Teachers' Day underlines the importance of the 1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers. Another UNESCO recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel was adopted in 1997.

Both recommendations lay down the guidelines on issues such as training and employment conditions for teachers; participation of teachers and their representatives in educational decisions; and measures that should be taken in each country to promote quality teachers and learning environments. They are the only comprehensive international standards for the teaching profession in existence. <http://www.thearynews.com/english/newsdetail.asp?nid=13015>

Salam Teachers' Day observed

KARACHI, Oct 6: The Salam Teachers Day was marked here on Friday with the commitment to achieve 100 per cent enrolment in the country by the year 2015.

This was the part of the International Teachers' Day being observed on Friday.

Various programmes highlighting the teachers' role and importance of the occasion were also organised.

The World Teachers' Day represents a significant token of the awareness, understanding and appreciation displayed for the vital contribution that teachers make to education and development.

The National Commission for Human Development in collaboration with District Education Departments in 23 programme districts of Sindh jointly celebrated the 'Salam Teacher Day' to pay respect and tribute to the teaching community of the country for their selfless role in nation building.

Banners highlighting the importance of teachers' role and their due contribution to society were displayed on the main entrances in cities and towns of throughout the 21 programme districts.

Similarly, seminars at Districts and Taluka level were arranged throughout program districts, wherein district Nazims/Naib Nazims, DCOs/EDOs, educationists, civil society representatives and teachers participated. The best teachers' awards/certificates were also presented to best teachers to appreciate their extraordinary efforts.

The Senior General Manager National Commission for Human Development, Sohail Rajput,

while addressing a "Salam Teacher Day" acknowledgment gathering said the teachers have the pivotal role in any education system and the role of teachers at primary, secondary, high and university level. He said National Commission for Human Development was committed to ensure 100% enrollment by the year of 2015 , also trained the teachers so that they could play their role more effectively in increasing literacy rate.

"There is need to march forward as an educated and disciplined nation to meet the future challenges", Rajput stressed that the teachers are important and integral part of promoting and providing education, therefore, the teachers should be given due respect and distinction.

"I beseech all to vow and pledge on this day that in our every gesture in life, we will respect teachers and give them their well-deserved eminent status, as the true builders of Pakistan", he said.

Sohail Rajput further said that importance of quality teachers in providing quality education to children and in this way working towards sustainable development has been acknowledged throughout the world. Through their daily work, teachers make a tremendous contribution to sustainable development by building its human foundation - developing a child's capacity and desire to learn.

The quality theme, launched initially in 2004 by UNESCO and ILO, covers a wide range of issues of crucial importance to both teachers and learners worldwide. In this context, World Teachers Day provides the perfect opportunity for educationist and education supporters to lobby their governments to release the necessary financial and human resources for a true quality education for all.

He said that better teaching conditions are necessary, because they mean better learning conditions for learners.

Quality education for all cannot be achieved without improving schools and teachers working conditions. App

(Source: <http://www.interface.edu.pk/students/Oct-07/Salam-Teachers-Day.asp>)

Shortage, quality focus of World Teachers Day

Islamabad: World Teachers Day being observed on Monday spotlights global teacher shortage and challenges of being an educator today, besides mobilising support for the teachers.

Teachers play a leading role in giving students the knowledge, attitudes and values that help them understand the world and become agents of change.

Analysis of a report commissioned by OECD shows that teacher quantity and quality issues are clearly inter-linked. School systems often respond to teacher shortages in the short-term by some combination of lowering qualification requirements for entry to the profession; assigning

teachers to teach in subject areas in which they are not fully qualified; increasing the number of classes that teachers are allocated, or by increasing class sizes.

The findings and policy concerns could be taken as evidence that teaching is a profession in long-term decline. As societies have become wealthier and educational qualifications increased and employment opportunities expanded, teaching's appeal as a path to upward social mobility and job security does seem to have diminished.

At a time when the global economic slowdown risks putting tight constraints on education budgets, it is critical that governments support the recruitment, training and professional development of teachers, according to Unesco.

Countries are committed to reaching the goal of Universal Primary Education by 2015. In order to achieve this, they need to ensure that sufficient school places are provided, enough teachers for quality instruction employed and school systems function effectively. Many of the countries that are challenged to reach UPE are also facing population growth which further increases the pressure to expand school systems and teaching forces.

Unesco says countries striving towards 'Education for All' around the world will have to ensure that there are 1.9 million more teachers in classrooms than there are today. In addition to creating these new posts, school systems will have to compensate for attrition as older teachers retire.

So to meet the needs associated with EFA and attrition, an estimated total of 10.3 million teachers will need to be recruited in just eight years.

In Pakistan, the National Education Policy 2009 underscores the need for reforms in the teaching profession and admits that the presence of incompetence in such a huge quantity and permeation of malpractices in the profession have eroded the once exalted position enjoyed by teachers under the eastern cultural milieu. In fact, teaching has become the employment of last resort of most educated young persons, especially males.

The education policy recognises that the quality of teachers in the public sector was unsatisfactory. Poor quality of teachers in the system in large numbers is owed to the mutations in governance, an obsolete pre-service training structure and a less than adequate in-service training regime.

The policy states that reform is required in all areas: pre-service training and standardisation of qualifications; professional development, teacher remuneration, career progression and status, and governance and management of the teaching workforce. The growth of private sector was adding new complexities to the teaching profession and needs to be taken into account in any reform of the system.

Though the government pledges to provide opportunities to all teachers for professional development and ensure teacher recruitment, professional development, promotions and postings on the basis of merit, the prevailing situation speaks of alarming situation.

Teachers in Pakistan often complain of low salary structure, poor working conditions and inadequate career development opportunities in addition to politicising of appointment in public sector institutions. The situation in rural areas is much worse than in urban areas.

The Punjab government has taken a good initiative to recognise the brilliance of students by awarding position holders with cash prizes and inviting them to Murree as state guests. But teachers also need to be encouraged and a reward system should be initiated based on performance measures.

APP adds: Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani has called upon the people to acknowledge their teachers as a role model and source of inspirations.

In his message on World Teachers' Day, he said, "Today, the entire world is celebrating the teachers' day. We too in Pakistan join hands with the world community in paying homage and respect to our teachers, who in so many ways have made a difference in our lives."

He said if one recalls one's student life, he or she can definitely identify the period of his or her education not with subjects or books but with the teachers who inspired them. (Dawn)
<http://www.interface.edu.pk/students/Oct-09/Books-on-universites-research-projects.asp#2>