

IN-SERVICE TRAINING

CHRISTIAN SCHOOLING – MORE THAN JUST ACCUMULATION OF KNOWLEDGE

When a potter holds a lump of clay in his hands, he begins to dream about what he is about to produce. Similarly as Christian educators, we can never be satisfied with regarding education as simply the accumulation of knowledge by the student. We must handle each student as a lump of clay embarking on a journey to be moulded into a passionate Christ-follower, eager to serve their fellow man and to love and receive 'good and perfect gifts' from their heavenly Father.

Not that every student is as passive as a lump of clay; we know that many are hostile to the moulding process and the things of God. **BUT THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER RECOGNISES THAT A STUDENT'S HEART THAT IS INCLINED TOWARD GOD IS THE RESULT OF THE WORK OF GOD'S GRACE IN THAT HEART.** This is why we pray for our students. Teachers must also display

- **A FORGIVING HEART** (no harbouring of grudges),
- **A PURE HEART** (through role modelling),
- **A GUARDED HEART** (to show discernment), and
- **A LOVING HEART** (to encourage others)

We want to challenge the paradigm that our lessons are primarily to facilitate students towards mastery of intellectual reasoning. **CHRISTIAN TEACHERS MUST UNDERSTAND THAT THEIR STUDENTS ARE NOT FIRSTLY ANSWER GIVERS BUT MEANING SEEKERS.** It is our delight and privilege to be in a position to shed light on this search for meaning, purpose and destiny. As we lead students towards understanding the call of God on their lives, they come to know that **THEIR WORTH IS NOT ULTIMATELY A FUNCTION OF THEIR PERFORMANCE IN CLASS.**

What would schools do to gain the kind of commitment to Christ that we desire for our children? What responsibilities do students have in class? Do they spend the day passively receiving information in the manner of traditional education? In most cases, that approach merely reinforces the tendency to self-absorption that predominates in society. Are any responsibilities given to them that enable them to shift their concern and interest from themselves to others? Jesus tells his followers that those who love Him keep his commandments. (John 14: 15) James says that 'anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.' (James 1: 23, 24) Teachers need to structure in opportunities to help students remember what they 'look like'.

Each child 'looks' unique, prepared by God to be asking different questions about the world around them – the why, what, how and what-if types.

Imaginative learners

God has made some learners to see the world reflectively and experientially. They love to listen to the stories of others, and to journal about their own. They often enjoy reading and writing poetry. Because they see all sides, sometimes they have difficulty making decisions. They seek meaning and clarity. They find school too fragmented

and disconnected from the personal issues they find most interesting. They struggle to connect the content of schooling with their need to grow and understand their world. They are absorbed with the question *why*, and enjoy school when their *why* questions are answered.

Analytic learners

These learners are endowed by God with logical minds that enjoy critical thinking. They often learn best by thinking through ideas. They enjoy traditional classrooms and find book-centred learning interesting. Sometimes they enjoy ideas more than people – they can be cool and aloof. They ask the question *what*, and find that school facilitates their finding the answers to their *what*-type questions.

Common Sense learners

These students are trial and error-type learners who enjoy experimenting to find solutions to problems. They are likely to feel most comfortable in the science laboratory, the Technology Centre, or doing projects in the classroom. They integrate theory and practice, learning by testing theories and applying common sense. Because they feel a strong need to work on real problems, they find the typical classroom practice of reading, writing, and reciting frustrating. They want to see how what they are learning is of immediate use to them. They are usually intrigued with the *how* of things and tend to ask *how*-type questions.

Dynamic learners

These learners enjoy school when they can become emotionally involved in what they are doing. As a result, they often find extra or co-curricular activities most to their liking. Enthusiastic about new things, they are adaptable people who relish change. They excel when flexibility is needed. They are intuitive thinkers who reach interesting conclusions in the absence of logical justification. They are risk takers who are at ease with people, and sometimes they are seen as manipulative and pushy. For them school is often tedious and overly sequential. Because they seek to pursue their interests in diverse ways, they too are frustrated with the structure of our schools. But they do enjoy small group work and like to ask *what if* type of questions.

Research into learning styles indicates that the majority of students fall into either the common sense category or the dynamic category. By contrast, fewer than 25% of pre-college learners fit the analytic learner profile. These student differences should not surprise us, given that students have many God-given dimensions to them. The problem is that many teachers tend to treat all of their students as if they were analytic learners.

To be sure, all students need to develop their analytic capacities in school, but also it is critical for teachers to devise lesson plans that fit all the learning styles of their students.

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