

Aspects of LOVE in the Classroom

'Love' is a much-used word when speaking about teacher-pupil relationships, and yet it is usually glossed over, and often dismissed as a pious platitude. Yet we know that we teachers, parents and educators are nearly always motivated by some love or other, in our decisions. If it is not love for our pupils, it is love for something else. In fact, our students are quick to pick up a teacher that loves them from among those who don't.

Mukesh's Request

Mukesh was a troublesome boy, and Miss Helen his geography teacher, did not exactly relish his company. So when he requested her for special help to prepare for his ICSE exams in geography, she was tempted to shrug it off. But a different voice in her, softer and gentler, prompted her to conquer that barrier of indifference, and agree to help 'for this one last time', as she put it. Strange to say, that made all the difference.

Mukesh did his papers well, and developed a deep respect for Helen-teacher. Their relationship progressed, and the boy asked her for guidance even his college days. To crown it all, he wrote to her years later to say he is opting to do his Ph. D. thesis in her subject, geography.

Teacher's love is important to Students

Riaz Shakir Khan in his book 'Teacher Education and Students' Perception', p.48, quotes a study he had done which showed that students, irrespective of the type of school they came from, government or public gave high priority to the statement 'Teacher is loving in rating successful teachers. He also found that though the students of Classes 9 and 10 did not give it top ranks, the middle school children considered it more important, and the grown up students of Higher Secondary level gave it first rank in order of importance. (p.54)

Teacher and the Subject

Many of our students say that their interest in a subject is correlated positively with their liking for its teacher. When they feel warm towards a teacher, they find interest and excitement to study that subject well. Otherwise, it feels like a drag, they claim. It is as if the negative image of a teacher makes his or her subject difficult.

Love needs showing

A lot of teachers say they lay greater emphasis on showing their love in loving actions and behaviors rather than talking about it. They also claim that this convinces students better than anything else.

1. Miss Nandini Chakrabarti shows her love for her students by generously using encouraging words like “excellent”, “fantastic”, etc.
2. Mrs. Jayasree Bose says she shows her love by ‘liking what the young people like and showing it’.
3. Many successful teachers are seen to give lot of understanding and trust, taking the trouble to listen to their students, especially outside class hours.

Successful teachers are more flexible than usual. Students seem to feel such teachers care for them.

Arobindo Banerjee

A flash strike on the railways is what caused 14-year old Arobindo to come 2 hours late for school. He knew the Headmaster was a strict man. So he tried to hide his fear and guilt when he entered the office. Having prepared himself for the worst, young Arobindo explained the reason as honestly as he could, and waited for the ‘judgment’ to be pronounced.

The Headmaster, looked at him for a while, noticed the boy’s goodness waiting eagerly to be recognized entangled though he was in fear, and guilt. With a smile he spoke, “Arobindo, you have shown much strength of character in coming to school even under these circumstances. Do not worry, go to your class”.

Today for Arobindo who is an official in the Indian Airlines, all his love for his school days is somehow linked to that one incident.

How students measure Teacher’s love

A loving teacher gives the students, feelings of being understood, of being attended to, and of security. Students seem to give much weight to these feelings when they measure a teacher’s love for them.

Anamika Kabir and Marianne John feel sure of their teacher’s love when the teacher corrects mistakes with respect, ‘in a gentle and firm manner’. Without such respect, corrections only make them feel put down, threaten their security and make them defensive. ‘Then it is difficult to improve ourselves’ they say.

Santanu Chakrabarti, on the other hand, suggests that a student is always dealing with an inner world which is much larger than the lesson being taught. He requests teachers to be in touch with this bigger struggle of the student, even when he is teaching the lesson. “If teachers try to

understand the students' problems in grasping a particular subject without resorting to rancour or anger, and devote more time to contact the student's inner world, with all the conflicts and troubles faced by him at home and at school, I would feel they love us", says he.

"When teachers take interest in me, not only about things concerning my studies but also, like home, hobbies, friends etc., and helps out when I do badly, I know that the teacher love me" says Kajori Chaudhary.

Love makes demands. Quite often, it challenges the teacher or parent to be affectionate, gentle and caring, even when dislike, anger, or embarrassment would seem the natural and easier response.

What love does?

Teacher's love helps the student to freely approach him/her. It gives the students confidence and openness to explore their own lives and extract the learning potential contained in them.

Love makes the teacher watch out for needy moments of their students. It helps him/her to be accurate about the diagnosis he makes about the student's needs. Love gives the teacher the inner readiness to respond to those needs in helpful ways.

Love versus Fear

Gerald Jampolsky, M.D., renowned psychiatrist says that our attitudes to a thing or person, is characterized either by love or by fear. When we love something, we desire to be near it, to encourage its growth and development. But when we fear something, we try to make it more distant from us, by behaviors characterized by anger or sorrow. We do the same with our students. Either we love them, or we fear them. And our students interpret our behaviors well enough.

Students are in movement

J.Krishnamurthy suggests that one way to deal with fears is to see our students as persons in movement, on the journey of making sense out of the events in their live. Everything that happens to them helps them to build up this picture of meaningfulness. If teachers can keep in their mind this bigger task they are engaged in, then it may be easier to see the positive purposes in even unpleasant incidents that happen. Once we see its purpose, the incident need not frighten us. It will be a matter of dealing with it in a way that will make it educatively fruitful. Unpleasant events then, need not block out love.